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# Letter from the Editors:

The Department of Theological Studies is an admittedly small one, and too often the work that goes on here can seem somewhat clandestine. The students of this department study and write out of a passion for the subject of theology, hoping to make some sense of cosmological questions, ancient language, current trends, and to give some semblance of honour to the myriad of theologians who came before us. Theology is a humble pursuit, lonely at times, but infinitely worthwhile in the minds of those who study it. This journal is one of many ways we attempt to break out of hermitic selves and embrace theological traditions in a communal format. We owe so much to the professors, students, and affiliates of the Department of Theological Studies, and we thank them for their continued support. Thank you for reading, writing, and continuing to study the mysteries of life with such passion.

With our appreciation,

Your Editors

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# Could this be a form of atonement: A theological discourse between Trɔkosiwo and Christ

*Ernest Okyere-Twum*

IN GHANA, THE PRACTICE OF THE TRƆXOVI SYSTEM is predominantly among the Èʋe and Dangbes of Southern Ghana, particularly the people of North Tongu, Ketu, Akatsi, Keta, Dangme East and West districts.[1] The *trɔkosi* practice is regarded as a socio-cultural practice that involves averting a crime committed by a family member by sending a young virgin girl to a shrine. Most discussions and scholarly work have often centered on servitude, slavery, the social order, human rights, ritual bondage, and so on. However, per my knowledge no scholarly work has been done from the perspective of pastoral care for the liberated girls.

The *trɔkosi* practice is found within a traditional system called *Trɔxovi* which involves child receiving deity that receives children for services rendered to people. *Trɔxovi* comes from the syllables of *t̲rɔ* which means "deity", *xo* which is a corrupted version of *xɔ* meaning 'receive' while *vi* refers to a 'child'. In other words, the word *trɔxovi* infers 'the deity which receives a child', and the child in this context is referred to as *trɔkosi*.[2]

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[1] Aziza Naa-Kaa Botchway. "Abolished by Law—Maintained in Practice: The Trokosi as Practiced in Parts of the Republic of Ghana', *FIU Law Review* 3, no. 2 (2008): 370

[2] Elom Dovlo. "The Trokosi Practice". Interview by Ernest Okyere-Twum. August 14, 2017

*Trɔkosi* also also comes from the root words *trɔ, ko,* and *si* meaning the 'slave of a deity'. A more better rendition and etymology of the word *trɔkosi* should mean someone who has been made into a wife because of indebtedness or poverty.[3] In its practicality, the word should be translated as '*ko trɔ si* (the *kosi* of the *trɔ)* that is, the poverty wife of the deity'. The idea of indebtedness seems to be mislaid when attention is focused on just the etymology of the word. Hence, this assertion of Ansre presents an interesting meaning of the etymology of the word. As such, this paper will rely of this understanding of the word.

The origin of the practice is based on oral accounts and traditions but offers various disparities in perspectives. There seems to be no comprehensive account that leads to the genesis of the practice. Nonetheless, based on the available literature, this paper recognizes two main accounts associated with the practice, that is, as a form of a social control mechanism and payment to deities for services rendered. This recognition derives from the etymological understanding of *trɔkosi,* the *trɔxovi* system, and the functionality of the practice.

### THE *TRƆKOSI* PRACTICE

The practice of *trɔkosi* involves a curse invoked on a family for a crime committed by a member of that family. This curse is often an action initiated by the victim of the crime who seeks redress from a deity, who is believed to have the power to expose and punish the offender.[4] The offender's family is then afflicted by some calamity such as frequent and sudden deaths of members, failures of life activities and diseases, and so on. As the offender's family experiences those disasters they seek help through another deity. This deity then reveals the cause of the misfortune and instructs the offender's family to the shrine and the deity at the center of the punishment. Thus, if the victim visited a *trɔxovi* shrine, then 'atonement

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[3] Gilbert Ansre. "The Trokosi Practice." Interview by Ernest Okyere-Twum. September 4, 2017.

[4] Kodzovi Akpabli-Honu. 2014. Female Ritual Bondage in Ghana: A Study of Trɔxovi System among the Ewes of Ghana. (Accra: Woeli Publishers, 2014). 1

may include a virgin female child depending on the sanctions' as was initiated by the aggrieved individual.[5]

The *trɔkosi* practice is described within a model of the *trɔxovi* system where a *trɔ* (deity) has devotees and one of the devotees is a recipient, that is, *trɔ nua* (priest or priestess) who acts as a spokesperson or representative of the *trɔ* and another is the donor (a person, group, family or community). The donor is informed by the *trɔ nua* of the offense and is instructed on what to do to avert the calamities. Thus, the donor is indebted to the *trɔ* due to the offense committed by a member of the donor's family.[6] The understanding is that it is in the rendering of service to the deity through the victim that the donor becomes indebted to the point that the *trɔkosiwo* (virgin girl) is offered to rectify or pay for the indebtedness. Thus, the etymology of *trɔkosi* rendered *ko trɔ si,* that is, the poverty wife of the deity or someone who has been made into a wife because of indebtedness or poverty, sheds light on the understanding of the practice. The donor hence offers the *trɔkosiwo* to the *trɔ* through the *trɔ nua* to avert the misfortunes. The practice requires the virgin girl to be the wife of the *trɔ* but since the *trɔ nua* acts as a proxy of the *trɔ* he then becomes the husband of the girl.[7] Moreso, one condition that determines whom to be used as reparation is a girl who is yet to experience her first menarche.[8]

## THE CONCEPT OF ATONEMENT

In appreciating the concept of atonement, it is important to understand the word from its original context. The English word atonement is often denoted as 'at-one-ment'.[9] Atonement comes from the Hebrew root

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[5] Robert K. Ameh. 2001. "Child Bondage in Ghana: A Contextual Policy Analysis of *Trokosi*." Unpublished PhD Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2001: 154

[6] Ansre, Interview, 2017

[7] Ansre, Interview, 2017

[8] Akpabli-Honu, Female Ritual Bondage in Ghana, 2

[9] The root word of the English word 'atonement', that is, 'at-one-ment' originates from early 16th century, 'at one + -ment' which was influenced by medieval Latin adunamentum (unity) and earlier 'onement' from an obsolete

word *k-ph-r* (Kippur). *Kippur* is used to refer to the day of the feast called *Yom Kippur* or *Yom Hapkippurim*. This Jewish feast is recorded in detail in Leviticus 16.[10] Though the etymology and its meaning are uncertain, two main possible derivations are often cited. The first is related to the Akkadian verb *kuppuru* which is 'to cleanse or wipe'.[11] This understanding focuses on the sanctuary or the altar and the covering of them with blood. The second possible derivation is *kipper* 'to make atonement' which is from the Hebrew word *Koper* or *kopher*.[12] A *kopher* is a ransom price or payment, specifically a 'sum paid to redeem a forfeited life' or a ransom paid for a person's life.[13] The ransom price could be seen as money paid to redeem someone condemned to death. In some cases, the ransom price could be in the form of 'articles of gold, armlets, and bracelets' as a means of 'averting someone's wrath, either humans' or divine.[14]

Jewish and contemporary Christian understanding of the word atonement denotes the reconciliation and restoration of a broken relationship. Thus, for this work, atonement will imply the reconciliation of the relationship between God and humankind through blood sacrifice.

## Old Testament Concept of Atonement

The biblical perspective of the English word 'atonement' is derived from the narrative in Leviticus 16 which deals explicitly with *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) from the Judaic understanding. The themes of sin, sacrifices, covenants, punishment, and forgiveness are central to the Hebrew

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verb one (to unite). Thus, the word 'atone-ment' denotes unity or reconciliation, especially between God and humanity. John Bowker, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[10] Gordon J., Wenham. *The book of Leviticus*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 28

[11] Wenham, The book of Leviticus, 24.

[12] Wenham, 28

[13] Leon Morris. *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans, 1965). 24.

[14] Stephen Finlan. *Options on Atonement in Christian Thought*. (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 11.

understanding of Yom *Kippur*.

Central to the concept of atonement in the Old Testament is sacrifice. Sacrifices among the people of Israel were meant to restore their relationship with God and amongst themselves. The covenant by God with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai precipitated their fellowship with God which was characterized by order and life. Hence, everything that distorted this very order be it death, disease or sin was a threat to their relationship with him. It is believed that in 'committing a sin, a person harms the one sinned against and simultaneously commits an offense against God'.[15] Sacrifices were the means to restore harmony in the society and the distortion of fellowship between God and the people (Exodus 19:1-20:38; Numbers 15:22-31).[16] Because of this, individuals were required to make atonement privately to anyone who they have wronged or else they were not forgiven by Jehovah (Yoma 8:9).[17]

Conversely, the penalty for sin against Jehovah is death and righteousness are the only means to escape his divine wrath. Thus, sin and punishment are inevitable. Death was inevitable if any sin was left unatoned for by sacrifices. Various kinds of sacrifices were performed to deal with disorder or sin. Sacrifices were made to cleanse the unclean making it possible for a holy God to engage sinful man.

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[15] J.E Hartley. 'Day of Atonement', in Desmond T. Alexander & David W. Baker (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. (Illinois: InterVasity, 2003): 55.

[16] In Numbers 15:22-31, atonement is made for any sin committed unintentionally. Whether it is a sin committed by the people or by an individual. The people are to offer a burnt offering and a sin offering as a way of receiving forgiveness for the sins. However, any individual who commits an intentional sin 'shall be cut off'.

[17] Yoma 8:9 'I will sin, and the Yom Kippur will atone." Yom Kippur will not atone. Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between a person and God, but for a transgression against one's neighbour, Yom Kippur cannot atone until he appeases his neighbour'. This passage resonates with what is written in Matthew 6: 14-15 and Matthew 18:15-20, where an individual is required to forgive a fellow in order to restore peace and restore their fellowship.

Thus, to avert the wrath and anger of God, forgiveness was needed to keep the relationship.[18] Accordingly, on *Yom Kippur*, 'sacrifices reached their annual climax in the Day of Atonement ceremonies when each part of the tabernacle was smeared with blood to cleanse it and sanctify it from the uncleanness of the Israelites'.[19] As a result, forgiveness and reconciliation are essential to the concept of atonement. *Yom Kippur* required 'the appropriate sin offering, God's forgiveness of the sinner and the believers' reconciliation to one another by repenting and forgiving one another'.[20] Thus, the ceremony and the rituals during the day achieved three main objectives-firstly it 'expiated the sins of the priest and the entire congregation', secondly, it 'cleansed the sanctuary from the pollution of those sins' and lastly 'the release of the goat to Azazel removed from the community all liability for those transgressions'.[21] *Yom Kippur* provided a means by which cleansing, removal of sin, and sanctification are achieved through the appropriate blood sacrifices to God.

### New Testament Concept of Atonement

*Yom Kippur* is regarded as a type of the self-sacrificing work of Christ in the New Testament. The book of Hebrews records the association between what happens within the Jewish temple and that of Jesus the Christ. The book of Hebrews notes that 'indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins' (Hebrews 9:22, ESV). The concept of the atonement of Christ from the New Testament was derived from the Jewish understanding. The need for atonement was because sin affects the human-divine relationship. Thus, in the New Testament 'atonement denotes the work of Christ, who by His perfect obedience, provided salvation for men from the

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[18] Bryan Bodien.'Sacrifice and Covenant: A Study of the Early Development of Atonement Theology' (Unpublished STL degree, Boston College School of theology, 2010), 42.

[19] Wenham, *Leviticus*, 26.

[20] George Wesley Buchanan.'The Day of Atonement and Paul's Doctrine of Redemption', *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 32, Fasc. 3 (1990): 240.

[21] Hartley, 'Day of Atonement', 55.

curse of the law and reconciliation to God by the blood of His Cross'.[22] The themes of sin, repentance, and forgiveness as seen in the Old Testament are also present within the New Testament concept of atonement.

In the New Testament, the central focus of both the priestly office and sacrificial offering is Christ. He is seen as the sacrificial lamb for the atonement of sin and the change in priesthood order. The epistle of Hebrews talks about Jesus making an offering for atonement for humankind which is compared with the offering made on the Day of Atonement by the high priest (Hebrews 7:26-27). The concept of sin is central to the idea of atonement in both the Old and New Testaments. Sin is regarded as a rebellion against God and the orderly manner of his creation. John Stott argues that 'sin is not a regrettable lapse from conventional standards; its essence is hostility to God issuing in active rebellion against him'.[23] Sin only creates hostility between God and humankind which can be restored through sacrifice, 'so repentance [through] faith in Jesus [as] exemplified pre-eminently in his death, is the basis of forgiveness and acceptance with God'.[24]

The holiness of God is fundamental to biblical religion which makes sin incompatible with the nature of God. As such, sin only brings separation between humankind and God and the only means of restoring that fellowship unto righteousness is through sacrifice. The sacrifice required to restore the God-humankind fellowship is blood sacrifice through which humankind receives forgiveness from God (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22). This blood sacrifice was expedient in dealing with the sin problem of humankind. This is because God is love, and he does not overlook the sin by his love but there is a seemingly difficult situation for God to love the

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[22] Olatunde Allen Timilehin, 'A Comparative Study on Biblical Salvation with Ideas of Salvation of Other Religions', in *African Missiology*, last updated 29 March 2014. Accessed 21 March 2018, http://africanmissiology.blogspot.fr/2014/03/a-comparative-study-on-biblical_29.html_29.html.

[23] John, Stott. *The Cross of Christ; with Study Guide 20th Anniversary Edition* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 107

[24] John M. P. Smith and Ernest De Witt Burton. 'The Biblical Doctrine of Atonement: XIII. Conclusion', *The Biblical World* 33, no. 1 (1909), 31.

sinner whiles condemning the sin. To this, Stott rhetorically writes that: 'how, then, could God express his holy love? His love in forgiving sinners without compromising his holiness, and his holiness in judging sinners without frustrating his love?'.[25] The response to Stott's question is embedded in God's divine plan through the sacrifice offered on the cross. God offered Christ as the sacrifice needed to restore the broken relationship between humankind and God. The sacrifice on the cross through Christ became the price paid for the consequences of the sin of humankind. The sacrifice of Christ has its resemblance to the Day of Atonement which is meant to achieve two objectives; to atone for and to remove sin.

Whereas the old High Priest entered the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle once a year, on the Day of Atonement, bearing sacrificial blood, Jesus has now entered the heavenly sanctuary, where God is, bearing his own blood, the evidence of a sacrifice that does not need to be repeated, and which does away with sin once and for all (Hebrews 9:26). The result is a whole "new covenant": that is, the relationship between God and his people has been placed on a wholly different footing.[26]

In other words, Christ replaced the Levitical priest in acting as an intermediary for all people. The Jewish Christians 'could appreciate references to blood as cleansing and death as a means of putting away sins. And what was no more dimly hinted at in the case of the animals they could see perfectly accomplished in Christ'.[27] This was because 'it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins', but it was also true under the Old Covenant, that the blood of goats and bulls were offered to 'sanctify for the purification of the flesh'.[28] Christ being divine offered the sacrifice

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[25] Stott, The Cross of Christ, 105

[26] John Stott. 2017. *Basic Introduction to the New Testament*, Revised Edition. (Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans, 2017), 137

[27] Leon Morris. *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance*. (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), 83.

[28] Hebrews 10:4; Hebrews 9:13. Also, the text of John 1:29 '…the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' is relevant to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. This text by John provides an idea of the salvific work of Jesus. His mission is realized through his death. According to Derrick Greeves, John 1:29 'encompasses the essential elements in the doctrine of salvation'.

of his life as a much better sacrifice than that of the Levitical animals. Christ was not only sacrificed to save sinners but to serve as the atoning sacrifice in fulfillment of both the guilt and consequence of sin unto justification. Hebrews 7:11-12 (ESV) reads

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.

Therefore, Christ's sacrifice revealed the incompleteness of the Day of Atonement as being a ritualistic ceremony without salvific power by bringing a change in the divine and human relationship. Luke Johnson writes that 'in the case of Christ, Hebrews avers, God has made contact with humans; at the most intimate level possible and thus enables humans to enter into contact with God at the most intimate level'.[29]  For the author of Hebrews, the Day of Atonement heralds the crucifixion of Christ, and that the work of Christ completes what the high priest of the Old Covenant could not do on the Day of Atonement. This, we are told affirms that the veil of the temple being torn into two demonstrates the 'tearing of the Christ's flesh' and because of that 'all believers have the right to enter into the presence of God'.[30]

### A THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

Discussion on the practice of *trɔxovi* system has generally focused

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Derrick. Greeves, 'First Sunday after Epiphany: The Recognized Saviour', The Expository Times 93, No. 3 (1981), 84-86. Whiles G. L. Carey describes the text as introducing 'the scarlet thread which will now run throughout the Gospel to culminate in the cross itself'.  George L. Carey, 'The lamb of God and atonement theories', Tyndale Bulletin, Vol 32, No. 1981 (1980), 97-122.
[29] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox, 2006), 186
[30] Wenham, *Leviticus*, 237.

on servitude, slavery, the social order, human rights, ritual bondage, and so on. Although a biblical concept, the word atonement has often been used to describe the practice from social, cultural, and legal perspectives. Advocates of the *trɔxovi* system characterize the *trɔkosiwo* as an object of atonement for crimes committed by a family member. Some writers describe the abuses the maidens endure as a type of 'atonement slavery'.[31] This identification as a type of atonement or a sacrificial lamb is due to the punishment, the maiden endures for crimes in which she was not involved.

The theological discourse of atonement and the practice of *trɔkosi* is discussed using the framework of context, concept, and content (3Cs) developed by the researcher through his interaction with Elom Dovlo. The use of the 3Cs is to engage in a comparative discourse in ascertaining the commonalities between the practice of *trɔkosi,* the Old Testament concept of atonement, and the work of Christ. The 3Cs provide a framework in engaging in a theological discussion to contribute to the question of whether the practice of *trɔkosi* qualifies to be considered as atonement from the biblical perspective.


### Context

In the framework of atonement, the initiator is central to the process thus contributing to its understanding. The first framework of the theological discourse is the context. By context, the work seeks to discuss both the practice of *trɔkosi* and Christ by answering the question of the initiators within both situations-whether the divine or human? There are basically two essential elements in discussing the *trɔxovi* system within the framework of context. Firstly, who initiates the process regarding the crime

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[31] S. A., Gadri. *The Revealed Myths about Trokosi Slavery: Human Rights Violations* (Milton Keynes: Author House, 2010), 49. A few works that also reference the maiden as a kind of atonement are Kodzovi Akpabli-Honu, *Female Ritual Bondage in Ghana: A Study of Trɔxovi System among the Ewes of Ghana,* (Accra: Woeli Publishers, 2014); Robert K. Ameh, '*Child Bondage in Ghana: A Contextual Policy Analysis of Trokosi'*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2001).

and secondly, does the initiator intend to atone for, or demand revenge for the crimes committed. This is to help determine if the practice of *trɔkosi* fits the description of biblical atonement or not.

In the *trɔxovi* system, a victim of a crime endeavours to seek redress for an offense committed against him or her and this redress is often done at a shrine. This is because in most cases the offender is unknown, which prompts the aggrieved person to visit the shrine to unravel the identity of the offender. Thus, a curse is invoked on a family for a crime committed by a member of that family. The offender's family is afflicted with calamities. The quest for truth prompts the offender's family to investigate the afflictions. The offender's family consults a deity to establish the cause of the afflictions and how to avert the afflictions. It is during this consultation that the offender's family is directed to the shrine at the centre of the calamities. If the shrine at the centre of the calamity is a *trɔxovi* shrine then the *trɔnua* (traditional priest) may demand certain things including a *trɔkosiwo*, depending on the sanction. If the sanction demands a *trɔkosiwo*, then the offender's family will have to offer the maiden to the deity through the *trɔnua* to avert the calamities. It is in this vein that the idea of atonement is employed by advocates, because the virgin girl is offered to avert the calamities. It is worth noting that the *trɔkosiwo* undergoes certain rituals before being admitted at the shrine. Her time at the shrine entails various activities at the shrine such as cleaning, farming, sexual demands and other activities as directed by the trɔnua. The offender's family need to pay for the crime to the deity who is implored to seek vengeance on behalf of the aggrieved person. The *trokosi* process essentially begins with criminal act or wrongdoing. This criminal act or wrongdoing by the culprits against the aggrieved person compels the aggrieved individual to seek redress through vengeance and sanctions certain calamities which prompts the offender's family to seek help in dealing with the calamities. Thus, it is a human being in this case the aggrieved person who initiates the *trokosi* process within the practice.

The traditional Èʋe society upholds punishment as a vital crime control mechanism and the deities, through their supernatural powers, are

central in detecting crime.[32] As such, the aggrieved person visits the *trɔxovi* shrine to seek justice and revenge for the act of wrong. The aggrieved person specifies the exact sanctions he or she desires, which may include death, sickness, or the collapse of business. To reinforce the idea of the initiator, Dovlo recounts that in soliciting the release of maidens from the shrines most of the *trɔnua* believed that for the practice to stop, advocates will have to discourage individuals from imploring them for the use of their services. In other words, if people do not visit the shrines they will not be in any position to invoke curses leading to the acceptance of the virgin girls. Therefore, the abolishing of the practice depends to some extent on individuals not soliciting the services of the deities.

The offence within the *trɔxovi* system is between humans that is between the victim of crime, and the offender and his or her family at large. The aggrieved person seeks redress for revenge of the crime committed against him or her. The aggrieved person does not intend to encourage reconciliation or forgiveness but vengeance and retaliation. An important aspect of atonement is reconciliation and forgiveness. The intention of reconciliation and forgiveness within atonement does not seem evident as the victim approaches the shrine for retribution. As seen previously, reconciliation is one of the theories and models adopted in explaining the atoning work of Christ. The purpose of atonement is not about revenge but rather the idea of forgiveness and reconciliation. Within the biblical atonement, the initiator of atonement is the divine that is God as compared to the *trɔkosi* practice. Atonement in the Old Testament was initiated by God as a means of cleansing the sanctuary and removing sin through the sacrifice of animals, thereby providing a conducive environment for the uninterrupted, unstained and unhindered worship of the divine. The New Testament concept takes the form of the self-sacrificial work of Christ. Christ became the object of sacrifice by which wrongdoing and sin are

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[32] Chris Abotchie. 1997. 'Legal Processes and Institutions', in *A Handbook of Eweland, Volume 1: The Ewes of Southeastern Ghana,* edited by Francis Agbodeka, 77. (Accra: Woeli Publishers, 1997)

forgiven and reconciliation between the divine and human is accomplished. Atonement in both the Old and New Testament reveals the divine as the initiator of the process with the purpose of reconciliation and forgiveness whereas in the *trɔkosi* practice the human initiates by seeking revenge, retaliation and vengeance. In fact, the *trɔkosi*wo is used to deal with calamities released upon her family and not necessarily in dealing with the actual crime committed. If this was to be the case, then there will be a possibility of reconciliation and forgiveness between the offender's family and the victim. Unfortunately, the practice is silent on the aftermath of the crime and offender after the *trɔkosi*wo is presented to the deity through the *trɔnua*. Indubitably, for the practice of *trɔkosi* to meet the biblical understanding of atonement, the initiator ought not to be the human but the divine and the purpose ought to be forgiveness of sins and reconciliation.

### Concept

The second framework of the theological discourse is the Concept. The section has its focus on answering the question, who is atoned for, that is, whose wrongdoing is dealt with through the ritual of atonement? This is to help appreciate whether biblical atonement is the right fit for the *trɔkosi* practice. Contextually, it is demonstrated that the initiator of the *trɔxovi* system is human and not the divine. Hence, unlike biblical atonement where the initiator is divine, the *trokosi* process fails to meet the first litmus test of biblical atonement thought which says, the initiator ought to be the divine or God.

In the Èʋe worldview, the divine being is central in detecting crime and the appropriate sanctions. The means of detecting crime are mostly through charms, magic, or sorcery. The belief is that criminal acts affect not only the moral or the social life but are an offence to the supernatural powers as well.[33] Thus, crime by a person damages both the individual and the community as well as the deities. Consequently, crime is expiated when the offender is punished, or else the community or the clan suffers. The purpose of punishment within the Èʋe society is to remove stains of impurity and to

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[33] Abotchie, 'Legal Processes and Institutions', 77

prevent the deities from wreaking vengeance. In case of wrong doings, deities are pacified through certain rites or exiling the wrongdoer or punishing the offender.[34]

The aggrieved individual uses the method of oracle consultation and hexing in detecting the crimes and subsequently redress for the offence.[35] The aggrieved person engages the act of hexing by invoking the supernatural forces to pass judgement on unknown offenders or invoking their wrath against wrongdoers. Practically, an aggrieved person visits a *trɔ* (deity) and requests that judgement be given against an offender of a crime against him or her. This person, the aggrieved, specifies the precise sanctions including sudden death, accidents, incurable illnesses and different afflictions. Using their power, the *trɔ* detects the offender and unleashes different misfortunes on the offender's family. The offender's family quest for help leads them to the deity at the centre of the calamities. The family are demanded to offer a *trɔkosi*wo to rectify the calamities. Although the belief in Èʋe cosmology is for deities to detect crime with its appropriate sanctions in restoring harmony, the *trɔxovi* system seem to differ. The *trɔkosi* practice operates in a rather salient manner outside this jurisdiction. In *trɔkosi* practice, the offender is not known, and the aggrieved person seeks a deity's help in unveiling the offender by unleashing various calamities on the offender's family. The calamities are visited on the family of the offender with the understanding that the offender ought to live to confess the crime. The process appears to end when the *trɔkosiwo* is offered to the *trɔ* as a retribution for the calamities bestowed on the family.

The question asked, is someone atoned for and if yes who is atoned for? Apart from this question, several issues arise from the practicality of *trɔkosi*. For instance, does the offering and acceptance of the maiden satisfy the aggrieved person or the maiden is just an added gratuity to the *trɔ*. Also, who benefits from the occurrence of the calamities-the aggrieved or the *trɔ*, knowing that the aggrieved is the one who specifies the kind of sanction to be meted out to the offender's family? Better still, does the offering of the

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[34] Abotchie, 'Legal Processes and Institutions', p.75
[35] Abotchie, Social Control in Traditional Southern Eweland of Ghana, pp. 70-85

maiden a satisfactory requirement to rectify the calamities visited on the family or the actual crime committed by the offender.

The main origin of the practice adopted by this paper is social control mechanism and payment to deities for services rendered. The social control mechanism means that the offender has to be punished for the acts of crime and wrong doing. Though the offender is detected and his or her family afflicted with calamities, the practice is silent of what happens to the offender. That is the offender is indeed punished to serve as a deterrent to others. Rather, the *trɔkosi*wo is offered to deal with the calamities unleased on her family and in some cases when she dies, her family ought to replace her with another girl. It will then be assumed that the whole Èʋe cosmology of crime and punishment is defeated and rendered futile by the *trɔkosi* practice in its functionality.

It is evident that the aggrieved person's anger and displeasure is satisfied as calamities befall the offender's family. After all, that was his or her purpose in seeking redress. The *trɔkosi* practice appears to validate the opinion that the maiden is only an added value to the whole process initiated by the victim. It is obvious that the *trɔnua* is the sole beneficiary of maiden at the shrine. This assertion is from the activities that the maiden is used for at the shrine. However, the victim's grievance and anger are satisfied upon seeing the offender's family suffer for the crimes committed. Thus, if there is any sort of atonement within the practice, it is the victim who is atoned for whiles the *trɔnua* only receives the *trɔkosi*wo for services rendered. Hence the victim is uninterested in the aftermath as long as he or she envision justice through the calamities unleased on the offender's family.

The biblical conceptualization of atonement positions the divine as the one being atoned for and not the human. In the New Testament, the victim or the aggrieved person at the center of atonement is the divine. The divine is offended by the human through acts of disobedience, sin and wrong doing and the onus is on the human to seek forgiveness from the divine through sacrifices by the shedding of blood. These sacrifices are to satisfy the anger and displeasure of the divine. Nonetheless, the divine takes the initiative is restoring the broken relationship with the human. Biblical atonement thus requires the anger of the divine to be satisfied by means of

removal of sin which leads to reconciliation and fellowship between the divine and human. In the New Testament, God initiates atonement by offering Christ to be sacrificed for the removal of sin thus satisfying his anger and displeasure. On the other hand, the *trɔkosi* practice functions based on vengeance and retaliation as initiated by the human, that is the aggrieved person. As a result, the concept of atonement is absent within the *trɔkosi* practice as the person atoned for is the human, the aggrieved person and not the *trɔ*. The offence is between humans which means that any idea of atonement or appeasing anyone will be the human and not the *trɔ* or divine.

### Content

The thrust of atonement is embedded in the ceremonial ritual of the object of sacrifice. The third C-Content focuses on process involve in these ceremonial rituals. Christian Gaba provides a detailed analysis of sacrifice within the Èʋe worldview from the stage of presentation, invocation and immolation. With an animal as an example, he provides step by step procedures on how these three stages function together within a *nuxexe* sacrifice.[36] The process starts with the presentation of the object of sacrifice followed by the invocation and then concludes with immolation. During the presentation stage, the individual seeking help from the *trɔ* presents his or her object of sacrifice to the *trɔnua* or the ritual specialist. In some cases, the presentation could be done by a representative. This could explain why a family could offer a maiden to the *trɔ* on behalf of the offender. The sacrificer will kneel before the *trɔnua* as a sign of respect and then either holds the object of sacrifice in his hands or lay his hands on the object of sacrifice. He or she then explains the purpose of the offering of the sacrifice. At this point the *trɔnua* takes the object of sacrifice from the sacrificer.[37] This is followed by the act of invocation or prayers. It represents the real

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[36] Christian R. Gaba. 'Anlo Traditional Religion: A Study of the Anlo Traditional Believer's Conception of and Communion with the 'Holy'. (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1965) p. 295
[37] Gaba, Anlo Traditional Religion, p. 296

presentation because the object of sacrifice is now being dedicated to the *trɔ*. The *trɔnua* by his mediatory role kneels before the *trɔ* with the object of sacrifice and formally informs the *trɔ* of their presence. The *trɔ* is beseeched to heed to the petition of the sacrificer through invocations. These invocations are often appellations, calling out the deity's personal names and accolades. The process ends with immolation.

The *trɔkosi* practice follow the sacrificial process of *nuxexe* where sacrifices are offered for the removal of a pendulous danger or the stopping of a threatening peril. The *trɔnua* who acts in proxy of the *trɔ* leads the ceremonial rituals for the *trɔkosi* admission into the shrine.[38] The maiden is subject to committal ritual beginning with *godede*.[39] After the rituals of *godede*, the maiden is given a ritual bath called *agbametsilele* for seven days.[40] The ritual bath is to purify the maiden and to make her ceremonially clean for the *trɔ*. A dried raffia fibre known as *la* is worn as necklace for the maidens.[41] This shares a close resemblance of the sacrificial animal awaiting immolation. These animals often have strips cords of red, white and black cloths around their necks. Before immolation, these pieces of cloth are cut off from the neck of the animal as a symbol of removal or release of calamities or danger from the sacrificer.[42] According to Gaba, an object of sacrifice within the *nuxexe* rituals assumes the sins and evil consequences of the sacrificer.[43] In other words, the sacrificer is made whole and free because of the object of sacrifice taking the stead of the sacrificer. During the immolation rites, the scarificer is the one who is figuratively destroyed when the object of sacrifice he presents is killed. This is made possible

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[38] Ansre, Inteview, 4 September 2017

[39] Godede is a practice done to secure the private part of the maiden using a deep blue piece of cloth called bishi or avɔyibɔ. The securing of the private part of the maidens is believed to signify that they are forbidden from any sexual activity with any individual. This is done to deter any male who intends to have sexual intercourse with the maiden.

[40] Dovlo, Interview, 14 August 2017; Akpabli-Honu, Female Ritual Bondage, pp. 88-89

[41] Akpabli-Honu, Female Ritual Bondage, pp. 88-89

[42] Gaba, Anlo Traditional Religion, pp. 297

[43] Gaba, The Religious life of the people, pp. 92-93; Gaba, Anlo Traditional Religion, pp. 292

through immolation. The *nuxexe* sacrifice requires that these animals are immolated immediately because of the severity of the sin or evil. The rite of immolation requires that a special recital is made by the *trɔnua* amidst the observance of silence. At the last words of the recitals by the *trɔnua*, life is forced out of the animal.[44] This is often done by the cutting of the throat of the sacrificial animal with a knife or wringing of the animal's neck. Thus, for immolation to be complete the object of sacrifice must die with the blood spilled and the parts divided which may either be offered to the *trɔ* or the worshippers. It is worth noting that, though immolation means total destruction or burning, the idea of immolation within the *nuxexe* sacrifice is when life is forced out of the object of sacrifice usually by cutting the throat of the with a knife. However, the remains of the object of sacrifice are offered to the *trɔ* as holocaust which is buried outside the community or left to rot. In some cases, part of the remains is given to the deity whiles the worshippers make use of the rest.[45]

Thus, immolation is a major and important aspect of atonement. The ceremonial rituals of immolations require that the object of sacrifice is killed with the remains left to decay. Though immolation is complete destruction, the idea of the object of sacrifice buried or left to rot to some extend indicates complete destruction. The maiden in the *trɔxovi* system is offered as an object of sacrifice for the offence committed by a family member. Although the *trɔxovi* system assumes a *nuxexe* sacrifice, the maiden as an object of sacrifice taking the stead of the offender, is neither killed, buried or left to rot. The committal rituals performed for the admittance of the maiden into the shrine do not involve immolation, in this case, killed or left to rot. Rather, the rituals of *godede* and *agbametsilele* are the major ceremonial performance for the maidens. Though *nuxexe* sacrifice involves the shedding of blood of the object of sacrifice, the *trɔkosiwo* in no circumstance is killed but rather becomes the wife of the *trɔnua* who acts in proxy of the deity.[46]

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[44] Gaba, Anlo Traditional Religion, pp. 297-298
[45] Gaba, Anlo Traditional Religion, pp.297-299
[46] This scenario might have some similarities to the concept of *korban* or *qorban*. However, it is difficult to ascertain if this is the case taking into

Like the Old Testament Day of Atonement, the High Priest leads the people in a purification ceremony of their sins through the shedding of blood of an animal as well as the cleansing of the sanctuary. This is to restore their worship fellowship among themselves and God. He also leads them in

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consideration the etymology and purpose of *korban*. *Korban* is not just something dedicated to the holy but it is a sacrifice offered in aiding the divine human relationship. The question will be, does the offering of the maiden serve the purpose of reconciling or restoring relationship? In Judaism, the *korban* involves variety of sacrificial offerings as described in the Torah. *A korban* was a kosher animal sacrifice like a bull, sheep, goat or dove that often goes through *shechita*, the manner of the Jewish ritual slaughter (Rabbi Michael Skobac. "Leviticus 17:11", *Jews for Judaism*. https://web.archive.org/web/20160330140559/http://jewsforjudaism.org/knowl edge/articles/answers/jewish-polemics/texts/scriptural-studies/leviticus-1711/ ; Straight Dope Science Advisory Board (17 April 2003). "Why do Jews no longer sacrifice animals?", *The Straight Dope*. Accessed 05 March 2020 http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2091/why-do-jews-no-longer-sacrifice-animals/).
The Semitic root word for *korban* or *korbanot* in plural means "be near" and in the Akkadian language it means "act of offering" whiles the Septuagint translates the term into Greek as "gift, sacrifice or offering up". It is believed that the traditional etymology of the word indicates the idea or purpose of bringing man close to God or to facilitate the approach. (Solomon Schechter *in Understanding rabbinic Judaism, from Talmudic to modern times* (ed.) Jacob Neusner p229; Rick Goldberg, Judaism in biological perspective: biblical lore and Judaic practices – 2008; S Zeitlin, Korban, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1962).
On the contrary, some have argued that it is difficult to attribute *korban* for mainly the purpose of obtaining forgiveness of sins though it has some element of expiating sins especially unintentional sins but this is often incidental. In other words, the *korbanot* in itself could not be used for atonement but mainly for the purpose of communing and aiding in becoming closer to God. ("Jewish Practices & Rituals: Sacrifices and Offerings (Karbanot)", *Jewish Virtual Library*. AICE. Accessed 5 March 2020 https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/sacrifices-and-offerings-karbanot).
Though the *trokosi* as an object of sacrifice after her committal at the shrine undergoes rites to be dedicated to the deity through the *trɔnua*, the purpose is not in helping the sacrifice or her family or the victim in communing or becoming closer to the deity or divine. However, there is some level of resemblance to the offering of *korbanot*.

confessional prayers which often involves asking for forgiveness from God and declaration of their desire to adhere to purity and truth. The High Priest is required to purify himself, the sanctuary and the sins of the people. During the day of atonement, a bull is sacrificed as a sin offering for the High Priest as an atonement for himself and his house. The High Priest further sprinkles the blood of the bull in front of the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:11-14). Two goats are offered during the day of atonement-one for the Lord and the other for Azazel. The goat for the Lord is killed as a sin offering for the people and the blood is sent inside the veil and sprinkled over and in front of the mercy seat. The blood of the goat together with the blood of the bull is also sprinkled at the tent of meeting, the Holy Place and the altar to cleanse and consecrate them from the uncleanness and the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:15-19). The people of Israel deserved to die for their sins, but the Lord provided the goat as a substitute to die in their place. Hence, the people can live since the goat has died in their place. The Lord then reminds the people that 'the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life'. The outcome of atonement through the sacrifice of the first goat precipitated what happened to the second goat. The live goat is then presented after atonement is made for the High Priest, his household, the sins of the people, the tent of meeting, the Holy Place and the altar. The sins of the people are transferred to the live goat and is driven far away. Comparably as noted within the Èʋe sacrifice of *nuxexe,* the Old Testament Day of Atonement reveal the sacrifice of immolation element. This is evident in Leviticus 16:27 where the Lord instructs that the remains of both the bull for sin offering and the goat for sin offering used for atonement should be carried outside the camp. The remains, that is, the skin, flesh and the dung of both animals are burnt with fire.

Alike, the Old Testament, the provision of the object of sacrifice is offered by God in the person of Christ in the New Testaments (John 3:16). Paradoxically, Christ being God incarnate became both the sacrificial animal and High Priest. Thus, presenting himself to be slaughtered and his blood offered for the forgiveness of sin and restoration of fellowship between God and humanity (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:5). Christ is depicted as a better high priest who fulfilled his priestly duties and achieved sacrificial

demands through his death on the cross. The writer of Hebrews asserts that what happened was a shadow of things to come and subsequently blood of bulls and goats are impossible to wash away sins forever (Hebrews 10:1-18; Leviticus 16:29-34). Though Christ was not burnt as in the literal meaning of immolation, yet his body was carried outside the camp to die or in other words to rot.[47] It can be said that immolation was fulfilled with Christ when he was crucified as a result of the sins of humanity imputed on him.[48] The

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[47] This was the way the remains of animals culminate the process of atonement as seen in Leviticus 16 and the *nuxexe* sacrifice. Christ, upon his crucifixion was carried outside the gate or camp (that is Golgotha or Skull) to be crucified and to die. However, God did not allow the body of the crucified Lord to decay or rot or burnt in the case of animal immolation. Both Peter and Paul address two groups of people by making the point that it was in God's original design for the sacrifice of Christ to be the perfect atonement ceremonial rituals as such the day of atonement under the law of Moses was only a shadow of the perfect. Peter declares in Acts 2:29-32 (NIV) "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it." Whiles Paul informs his audience that "when they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. "We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: "You are my son; today I have become your father.' God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, "'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.' So, it is also stated elsewhere: "'You will not let your holy one see decay.' "Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses". Acts 13:29-39 NIV

[48] The writer in Hebrews 13:11-12 then say that "for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a

writer of the book of Ephesians rightly admonished that 'for our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Christ] we [humanity] might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21). Humanity had offended God through the act of disobedience resulting in sin. Humanity was thus to atone for her act of sin by offering a sacrifice acceptable to God. However, God in his infinite demonstration of love, offers humanity the object of sacrifice in the person of Christ and fulfilled the removal of sin and restoration of relationship through immolation of Christ.

Though the *nuxexe* sacrifice is attributed to *trɔxovi* system theorically, it is not so much in practice. The *trɔxovi* system does not provide a procedural description involving the death or immolation of the *trɔkosi*. Nonetheless, there is evidence of presentation of the maiden as an object of sacrifice and the invocations by the *trɔnua*. However, if death or immolation culminates the *nuxexe* sacrifice, then the *trɔkosiwo* lacks the final stage of immolation which culminates atonement. Thus, it becomes difficult to attribute the *trɔkosi* as atonement phenomenon. In Richard Neibuhr's proposed theory of 'Christ the transformer of culture' he acknowledges that this theory has more 'hopeful view towards culture'.[49] John Calvin advocates that the utmost relationship that should exist between the Christian and culture should be that of re-formation or transformation. For Calvin there are basically three things the Christian must know: that culture is part of the manifestation of God's creation, secondly, creation was affected by sin including culture and lastly through Christ, culture can be redeemed.[50] This theory sees God as creator and that God throughout history interacts with people within their cultural settings and that culture can lead to 'a transformed human life in and to the glory of God'.[51] *Trɔkosi* as an

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sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So, Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

[49] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, p. 191.

[50] Calvin, John. 'Critical Evaluation of Technology'. In being fluent & faithful in a digital world, edited by Steven H. VanderLeest, Jeffrey Nyhoff, and Nancy Zylstra. Accessed October 30, 2015.

https://www.calvin.edu/academic/rit/webBook/chapter7/niebuhrTech.htm,

[51] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture,* pp. 194–196

African traditional practice only serves as an example and a shadow of what God intended to achieve through Christ Jesus. The Christian then has a responsibility to use the practice and its intricate nature to direct the partakers to Christ the transformer of cultures and traditions. Christ died for humanity that he might bring humanity to God; He died for sins in the stead of humanity including the *trɔkosi*.

### Conclusion

Here, the *trɔxovi* system is not condemned as a religio-cultural practice by the Èʋe. The basic characteristics of biblical atonement, that is, punishment for sins and the means of sin being atoned for is evident with the *trɔkosi* practice just like the Old Testament idea of atonement. However, based on the framework of context, concept, and content, the study concluded that though the *trɔkosi* presents an idea of atonement like the Old Testament concept, it is inadequate as a means of atonement necessitating the death of Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice for atonement for sins.

Contextually, it has been argued that, though the victim reports an offence to the deity, thus initiating the process, that is immaterial to the theoretical basis of atonement. The idea of atonement is to avert punishment for sin. It is eventually the deity that handles the punishment for sins and determines how the sins must be atoned for. God through Christ takes the initiative in dealing with the punishment for sin, thus, providing a better sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of humankind with the purpose of forgiveness of sins and restoring humankind to himself.

Conceptually, sin is central to the idea of atonement and the intended punishment as well as the means of atonement. The wrongdoer or offender must be punished for the acts of crime or sin. Both the Old Testament and the *trɔkosi* practice reveal how the punishment for sins are transferred to the goats and virgin girl, respectively. Thus, the sins of the offender are atoned for within the *trɔkosi* practice through the 'sacrifice' of the virgin girl, just like the sins of the people of Israel are atoned for through the goat that is killed and the scapegoat. Humankind had sinned against God and was in enmity with God, being obliged to seek forgiveness from the

divine through sacrifices by the shedding of blood. Nonetheless, the divine, that is God, takes the initiative by offering Christ as the atonement for the punishment for sins and the removal of sin in restoring the broken relationship between the divine and humankind. Thus, leading to reconciliation and fellowship between the divine and humankind

Shedding of blood through sacrifices is key to atonement. The Old Testament atonement ceremonial process involves the offering of two goats, where one is killed and the other sent away alive into the wilderness. On the other hand, though the virgin girl is not killed, her offering to the deity to atone for the wrongdoing of the offender means that she is effectively dead, becoming a living sacrifice. This may be likened to the scapegoat sent away into Azazel.

As noted in the work, both the Old Testament and the *trɔkosi* practice were all forms and types of atoning sacrifices yet they were inadequate. The atonement of Jesus deals with the problem of sin and its associated consequences once and for all. The Bible reveals the universality of sin 'for there is no one who does not sin' and, 'there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins' (1 Kings 8:46: Ecclesiastics 7:20). Paul argues that 'there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' and John adds that 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves' and 'if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar' (Romans 3:22, 23; 1 John 1:8,10).

The consequential judgment pronounced on humankind for sin is spiritual death, the separation from God, who is the source of life. John Stott reiterates the consequence of sin by asserting that 'sin does not only estrange; it enslaves. If it alienates us from God, it also brings us into captivity'.[52] The captivity of humankind could only be dealt with through the shedding of the blood of a perfect sacrifice. This was made possible by 'God's deep love for the sinner with his uncompromising reaction against sin'.[53] Thus, the appeasement of God for the sin of humankind was fulfilled through the blood of Christ which was offered once for all sins. The sacrifice

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[52] Stott, Basic Introduction, 83.
[53] Morris, The Apostolic Preaching, 210.

of Christ was a single offering that dealt with sin and perfected for all time without any continuous offering of sacrifice as was practiced in the old covenant (Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 10:14).

However, the practice of *trɔkosi* just like the Old Testament Day of Atonement was devoid of such a single sacrifice. Furthermore, the virgin girl unlike Christ could not offer herself freely for the payment of the crime of her family member nor redeem herself after her reparation. Yet this paradoxical phenomenon was fulfilled by Christ when he 'offered himself without blemish to God' for the atonement of sins. Christ was not bound to sin because 'the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God' (Hebrews 9:14; Romans 6:10). The words of John Stott summarize God's redemption plan of atonement through Jesus Christ, in that,

the Lord Jesus Christ who was eternally with the Father, who enjoyed unbroken communion with him throughout his life on earth, was thus momentarily abandoned. Our sins sent Christ to hell. He tasted the torment of a soul estranged from God. Bearing our sins, he died our death. He endured instead of us the penalty of separation from God which our sins deserved. Then at once, emerging from that outer darkness he cried in triumph, 'it is finished'. The work he had come to do was completed. The salvation he had come to win was accomplished. The sins of the world were borne. Reconciliation to God was available to all who would trust this Savior for themselves and receive him as their own.[54]

The practice of *trɔkosi* is real and present among the southeastern Èʋe of Ghana. The nature of the practice is multi-dimensional, and this allows for several directions of research exploration. Even though most scholarly works attribute the practice to an atonement phenomenon, this work focused on a theological discourse in ascertaining the appropriateness of that classification.

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[54] Stott, Basic Christianity, 104.

Importantly, the study recognizes that the *trɔkosi* practice as an African traditional religious practice reveals a shadow of what God intended to achieve through the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

### Recommendations

The study was unable to propose an alternative classification for the practice as the work was limited in scope and discussion. As such, there is the need to engage in further theological analysis and discussions for a more appropriate classification other than atonement.

# St. Thomas Becket, Archbishop and martyr (1119/20 – 1170)

*Efstathios Fokas*

*THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THOMAS BECKET'S MARTYRDOM*, were, to many modern scholars, an enigma.[1] To his biographers, however, many of whom were present throughout most of his episcopal tenure and his violent murder, these events were the planned works of God and the sufferings that a would-be martyr needed to experience in order to gain eternal life.[2] Thomas's six-year quarrel with King Henry II of England

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[1] Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986) and W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), are two seminal works that provide extensive detail of Thomas Becket's life as Archbishop of Canterbury. While both these scholars seem to imply that Thomas' actions were rash and haughty, it is unclear, even to them, as to why he went through with them.

[2] The most important biographical works that detailed the latter stages of Becket's life, cause, and martyrdom are *The Life and Passion of Saint Thomas, Archbishop and Martyr* by William fitzStephen, and *Martyrdom* or *The Murder of Thomas Becket* by Edward Grim. Both fitzStephen and Grim were present at

pitted two strong-willed individuals against each other, and many of the events throughout that time provided the bases for Thomas's murder in Christ Church, Canterbury, on the 29th of December 1170. Thomas's martyrdom displayed evidence of potential sanctity, associated with many well-documented miracles from 1170 until his formal canonization by Pope Alexander III in 1173. Despite being one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Western Christendom for almost fifty years, by the mid-1530s – the beginnings of the English Reformation – King Henry VIII would lead a vicious war of suppression and defamation against Thomas's cult with many of his agents labelling his death as "untruly called martyrdom".[3] This paper will be divided into three separate parts. The first part examines important historical events of the Anglo-Norman world in the 1140s-60s, touching upon important figures as well as crucial political and social trends. The second part will analyze the quarrel between Thomas Becket and Henry II from around 1163/64 until 1170. Particular focus will be on the Constitutions of Clarendon, the trial at Northampton, and Becket's murder in 1170 as described and witnessed by some of his biographers. The third part will explore Becket's saintly cult in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. A large portion of this section will be devoted to a detailed investigation of the miracles performed at Becket's tomb at Christ Church, as well as an examination of the early stages of the English Reformation and the aggressive denunciation and suppression of Becket's cult by Henry VIII. As such, the point of this study will be to assess the reception of Becket's cult in the various religious and lay communities of the Anglo-Norman world in the late 12th and 13th centuries, and, to identify the reasoning behind Henry VIII's vehement desolation of Becket's cult in the mid-1530s.

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Thomas's murder, and their works are of vital importance. Also, the *Letters of John of Salisbury* is another crucial and very eloquently written work. As Thomas's archdeacon while at the See of Canterbury, John of Salisbury's work is short, but provides an authoritative stance on Thomas's deeds, and was the first of the biographers who petitioned to the Pope in recognition of his sainthood.

[3] Kay Brainerd Slocum, "Henry VIII and the specter of Thomas Becket," in *The Cult of Thomas Becket: History and Hagiography Through Eight Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2018), 154.

**Part 1 – The Political Climate of the Anglo-Norman World, 1141-1162**

Before analyzing the latter stages of Becket's life as Archbishop and his famous struggle with Henry II, it is important to understand the historical events happening during Becket's youth. As a young man of either 19 or 20 years old, he would have been exposed to an environment of intense political turmoil and destruction. Much of the reign of King Stephen of England had been contested in a bitter war of succession with his cousin Matilda, the only legitimate surviving child and daughter of Henry I of England. Stephen's kingship had been challenged not simply because of his timely usurpation, but because Matilda had the proper claim to the throne; she was the daughter of the previous king, and – even if the final years of her father's life were spent in rebellion against him – she still managed to get the support she needed from many influential barons of England and Normandy.[4]

### 1141

For a time, it seemed as if Stephen had the upper hand over Matilda. War broke out between the two factions in 1139, and by 1140, Stephen controlled most of the interior of the kingdom, had regular communication with Normandy and Blois, and had a worthy ally in Henry king of Scots to keep the contentious northern barons in check.[5] One of these barons, Ranulf de Gernon, who was the earl of Chester, resented Stephen for disinheriting him from the castle of Carlisle, a stronghold that Ranulf claimed from his father, which had now been given to the King of

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[4] George Garnett, "Conquered England, 1066-1215," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England*, ed. Nigel Saul (London: BCA/Oxford University Press, 1997), 82. Garnett was explicit in mentioning that Henry I had virtually no other option but to choose Matilda as his successor; it was either her, or the possibility that William Clito, the son of his brother Robert Curthose, would have taken up the claim, aiming at potential vindication for his imprisoned father.

[5] Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England, 1042-1216* (London and New York: Routledge, 5th ed), 174.

Scots.[6] According to Garnett, Stephen understood that Ranulf was possibly selfish, wealth-driven, and power-hungry; by giving the fiefdom of Lincolnshire to the Beaumont family, Ranulf's rivals, the king thought he was avoiding potential conflict with a powerful enemy in the North-east.[7] However, the opposite happened. Angry and bitter, Ranulf and his half-brother William gathered their forces, besieging and capturing the stronghold of Lincoln sometime before Christmas 1140.[8] As Lincoln had been an important settlement in the alliance between Stephen, the king of Scots, and now the Beaumont family, the king raced north to reclaim it.[9] What happened next was the event that changed the fate of Stephen's reign, and one that would lead to his eventual downfall. Ranulf returned to Lincoln a month later with the forces of Robert earl of Gloucester, Matilda's half-brother, accompanied by the troops of two Welsh princes. On 2 February 1141, Lincoln castle was re-taken by Ranulf, Stephen's forces were overwhelmed, and the king was taken captive to Bristol.[10]

With Stephen out of the picture for the next couple of months, Matilda's position was strengthened but it was nowhere near absolute. Just as her father and the usurper had previously done, she presented herself to the people of Winchester. According to tradition, they were to hand over the royal treasury, anoint and crown her as queen.[11] What may have been simple for Henry I and Stephen, was slightly more complicated for Matilda. Stephen's younger brother, Henry, was Bishop of Winchester as well as a papal legate, and he needed Matilda's assurances that he would be advised on all ecclesiastical matters of the kingdom, which she obliged; both Henry and the castellan of Winchester accepted her as *domina* and she was given the royal treasury.[12] After receiving support from the

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[6] Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 171. The Treaty of Durham in 1139, formally ended the animosity between Stephen and Henry King of Scots. As a result of this treaty, Ranulf lost lands, and a significant claim to the castle of Carlisle.
[7] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 171.
[8] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 174-175.
[9] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 175.
[10] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 175.
[11] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 175.
[12] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 175.

castellan of Oxford, a council was called at Winchester in April 1141 where representatives from London came to confer their blessing and acceptance of Matilda. While Henry and the Church sided with her, the Londoners persistently asked for Stephen's release.[13] This was a hammer blow for Matilda, and unfortunately, it only started getting worse from here.

1141 was somewhat of a bittersweet year for the Angevin cause. While Matilda had been "elected" as Queen of England by the Church, Stephen was still imprisoned and very capable of making a swift return to politics. To make matters worse, Matilda did not gain the support she needed from the magnates of London and was driven out of the city right before her coronation.[14] Dejected, she tried to sack Henry, the papal legate, while in his episcopal castle at Winchester possibly due to his betrayal and defection to Stephen's side. However, this attempt failed and would eventually lead to her downfall. While attempting to return to Gloucester, her forces were ambushed and rerouted by William of Ypres – one of the Flemish mercenaries hired by Stephen – and many of the king's barons.[15] In the ensuing squabble, her brother Robert and leader of the Angevin faction was captured. He would eventually be used as a bargaining tool for the release of King Stephen.[16] After failing to propose agreeable terms of peace between the two parties, both Stephen and Robert were released in a sort of "prisoner exchange" on 1 November 1141.[17] It was not so much Empress Matilda's failures that got Stephen released, but more along the

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[13] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 175.
[14] Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 176. In fact, Barlow explains that her "arrogance" is what helped the Londoners make up their mind. She tried to buy her support of Geoffrey de Mandeville, by giving him control of the Tower of London, and she would not allow Eustace, Stephen's son, to rule the counties of Boulogne and Mortain in his father's absence. It seems as if she was "acting" like a queen, even when she had not received complete legitimacy or even a coronation yet. Stephen may have still been a prisoner, but he was alive, and this was to Matilda's disadvantage. Not to mention, Stephen's Queen, who was also named Matilda, led the force that ousted Matilda and her supporters from London.
[15] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 176-177.
[16] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 177.
[17] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 177.

lines of his queen pleading his case, and mustering up the courage to regain the support of some barons that had initially abandoned him. Being "awakened as one out of sleep," he and Queen Matilda were re-crowned at Canterbury on Christmas day, 1141.[18]

### 1142-1147

While the re-coronation of Stephen may have been considered a sign of hope, it did not change his fortunes. While one of the only positive outcomes throughout this period was the recapturing of Oxford castle in 1142 in a brilliant display of siege tactics, to his dismay, Empress Matilda miraculously escaped to the stronghold of Wallingford, eluding him once more in what seemed to be a medieval version of cat-and-mouse.[19] He narrowly escaped devastation and potential re-capture when he was besieged at Wilton by Robert of Gloucester in 1143, keeping the Angevin cause alive only by a thread.[20] Unfortunately, Stephen's continental dominions could not be saved, and the situation in Normandy had taken a turn for the worse. Stephen's ten-month imprisonment led to the destruction of the duchy by Geoffrey of Anjou, whose four-year campaign ended victoriously in 1144 when he was proclaimed Duke of Normandy by right of conquest.[21] By 1147, it seemed as if many of the barons had put aside their petty squabbles and looked for terms of peace amongst each other.[22] Either they were disillusioned, as Frank Barlow mentions, or they were increasingly tired of fighting and wanted to repent for their many sins by answering the call of the Second Crusade.[23] This was a fitting "end" to what seemed to be a period of intense civil strife. Thus, in 1147, Robert of Gloucester died, and with him died Empress Matilda's cause and claim for

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[18] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 177.
[19] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 179.
[20] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 179.
[21] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 178.
[22] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 180.
[23] Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 180. The Second Crusade was fought in the Holy Land from 1147-1150, and many Anglo-Norman barons looked for absolution, especially those "stained with the crime in the civil war," as Barlow explained.

political hegemony in England.[24] Had it not been for Robert's relentless fighting, Matilda's ascendancy – albeit for a time – would not have been anywhere close to what it was.

This long survey of the political developments during the reign of King Stephen helps outline the many issues that would plague England during the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket. The political instability caused by a succession crisis delineated the problems of law and order that the Kingdom faced between 1139-1154. Baronial law prevailed over royal law, and with the king not being able to control the majority of the realm and get outright support from his barons, it was up to them to disperse law in the ways they deemed fit. This was outright political exploitation, evident by both Stephen and Matilda not being able to garner unwavering loyalty from powerful barons who defected to the rival faction whenever it was to their convenience.[25] Thus, it may have been as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle famously states, a time "when Christ and His saints slept".[26] Henry II looked to change this with an organized agenda and drastic intent, and his main prerogative would be to develop a strict legal system that would slowly bring back the legitimacy of royal law and authority towards not only his secular subjects but his ecclesiastical ones as well. The era of baronial turn-coating had ended, or so it was thought.

### The Ascension of Henry fitzEmpress, 1150-62

While one Angevin cause seemed to have ended, another was just beginning. In 1150, Geoffrey of Anjou transferred control of the Duchy of Normandy to his young son Henry, and almost immediately, had issues with Louis VII of France who, it would seem, either came home disgruntled from the failures of the Second Crusade or was angry with Henry for past Angevin devastation of Normandy.[27] All squabbles ceased temporarily when Henry did homage to Louis for Normandy in 1151, but

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[24] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 180.
[25] Garnett, "Conquered England," 83.
[26] Garnett, "Conquered England," 85.
[27] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 186.

it seemed as if the animosity between the two would never end.[28] This was evident when Louis led a coalition of magnates against Henry at Barfleur in June of 1152, and was soundly defeated by the Angevin.[29]

Returning to the events in England, the final years of Stephen's reign did not necessarily go as planned. In May 1152, Queen Matilda, Stephen's brave and resilient wife, died; and in 1153 his heir Eustace followed suit.[30] Had they still lived, it may have given Stephen some incentive to continue fighting. Contrarily, his cause ended, and the inheritance of his only remaining son, William, was taken away when he agreed to the Treaty of Winchester in 1153, which formally introduced Henry fitzEmpress as his heir and future king of England.[31]

Stephen died at Dover in 1154, and the succession had been negotiated peacefully in the final years of Stephen's reign. As such, the only thing left to do was for Henry II of England to consolidate a kingdom that had been virtually lawless for almost twenty years, and to establish a system of legal justice that would usher in a new era of royal dominance. In his coronation charter, Henry promised to uphold the laws, liberties, and institutions that were present in England during the time of his grandfather, Henry I.[32] One of these was the residential court system which needed to be restored within each territorial unit, and overseen by the chief justiciar.[33] Henry needed the help of learned and loyal men, who would help in the re-establishment of firm, yet fair control. Thomas Becket was one of these men. Thomas was a man of simple birth but extremely ambitious and hard-working; he would prove to be a worthy choice for Chancellor, even though the fierce and personal quarrel that ensued with Henry rivalled even that of Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV

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[28] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 186.
[29] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 186-187.
[30] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 187.
[31] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 187.
[32] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 237.
[33] Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 238. Henry I of England ran the realm like a well-oiled machine, and if there was any chance at returning the kingdom to its former glory, before all the destruction and chaos of civil war, the restoration of this institution was of primary importance.

during the Investiture Conflict.[34] Also, even if most of the magnates who fought during his predecessor's time were all slowly dying out, the true symbols of the dissolution of royal authority were the castles that they built against Henry's mother, Empress Matilda. These fortresses represented a time of rebellion and conflict, and one of Henry's main prerogatives in the early part of his reign was to oversee their destruction.[35] As Henry travelled through his English dominions, most of the magnates surrendered except for Hugh of Mortimer, a powerful Welsh marcher lord whose fortress had to be taken by force in the summer of 1155.[36] Thus, it seemed as if the immediate issues of territorial consolidation were well underway. The larger issue, now, had been to enforce the newly re-discovered royal power and to investigate and correct the illegalities that were present in Stephen's reign.

## Part 2 – Thomas Becket's Investiture as Archbishop and Quarrel with King Henry II, 1163-1170

Henry looked to assert royal control over all facets of government within the realm, even ecclesiastical government. Thomas Becket, who had been serving admirably as royal chancellor since 1155, would be the guinea pig of the king's scheme, potentially exploiting a dangerous situation once Archbishop Theobald died in 1161, and the See of Canterbury became vacant.[37] Henry thought that by appointing a royal servant to the episcopal See, he would have no choice but to obey and confer to royal interests, especially regarding the primacy of secular courts over ecclesiastical ones, which had been, by early 1162, a severe problem

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[34] Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 238. Thomas Becket, at the time, archdeacon to Theobald of Canterbury, was given administrative powers by Henry II when he had him selected as royal chancellor.

[35] Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 237. One of the most prominent magnates, and a constant thorn in Stephen's side, Ranulf, earl of Chester, was ingloriously poisoned in 1153 at the height of his power which saw him control the entire north-west of England.

[36] Barlow, The Feudal Kingdom of England, 237-238.

[37] Thomas M. Jones, "Introduction," in *The Becket Controversy*, ed. Thomas M. Jones (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1970), 1-2.

that needed attention.[38] Henry went through with his plan and unwisely chose Becket to be the new archbishop in 1162, and after months of pondering and blackmail, Becket was consecrated on 23 May.[39] In essence, it was no secret that his investiture had been the king's will, and Henry, having virtually no respect for ecclesiastical precedents, openly defied Pope Adrian IV's edict of 1156 that prohibited the consecration of a bishop "who had not been freely elected and without previous nomination by the secular power".[40] However, when Becket resigned as royal chancellor to fully adopt the office of archbishop, it contradicted the plans that Henry had envisioned for the supplication of the church, and it was clear that he would not be the king's pawn.[41]

Furthermore, what followed in the years between 1163 and 1170 was a series of disputes between Becket and Henry that threatened to destabilize the ongoing recovery of the realm from the calamitous reign of the previous king. Becket was not silent when expressing his opinion in the matter, nor was he to be bought and sold like some of his baronial predecessors during the lawlessness of Stephen's reign. He was a new man, and according to William fitzStephen, one of his noted biographers, he threw "off the man of the world and put on Jesus Christ".[42]

### What to do with the "criminous clerks"? A Question of Clerical Immunity?

The opposing views of both Becket and Henry concerning the

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[38] Jones, "Introduction," 2.

[39] Warren, *Henry II*, 453, 454. Warren here, mentions another interesting piece of information. Apparently, the monks of Canterbury had not been too happy with Becket's sudden rise to the episcopal office. However, the king, determined to not have his authority undermined, sent his justiciar Richard de Lucy to "persuade" the monks to accept Thomas. Essentially, they were threatened that if they did not obey the king, they would be his enemies.

[40] Warren, *Henry II*, 453.

[41] Jones, "Introduction," 2.

[42] "An Annotated Translation of the Life of St. Thomas Becket by Willian Fitzstephen," trans. Leo T. Gourde, *Masters Theses*, (Chicago: Loyola University, 1943), 47.

legal procedures of a clerk who had committed a secular crime were the primary reasons behind their quarrel. This was a serious issue for both the secular and ecclesiastical spheres of government, and it boiled down to how the clerk was to be tried if found guilty of committing a felonious crime.

Where and how did these religious criminals appear? Firstly, as the Church was becoming highly bureaucratic and growing in power alongside the monarchy, it needed to hire several men in minor orders, offering them educational skills such as reading and writing, which led to potential job opportunities in the service of a lay master, who was most likely illiterate.[43] Only a small percentage of these clerks rose through the ecclesiastical ranks to become bishops, whereas the large majority of clerks in minor orders were parish priests, no different than the average layman.[44] Inspection of these clerks was not done regularly, and it was hard to keep track of them committing the occasional crime.[45] As canon law in the 12th century was still in its developmental phase, it was hard to enforce its standards on low-ranking clerks. In order to distinguish these clerks from ordinary laymen, ecclesiastical authorities deemed it fitting to adopt basic clerical attire, and if ever they were found guilty of committing a crime, they were subjected only to the judgments of an ecclesiastical tribunal.[46] For Henry II, this was a serious problem. It went against the kind of realm he had desired to build; if the criminous clerks could not be given proper punishment for their crimes, it meant that justice was not being equally administered. If lawless criminals disguised as clerks roamed free across the land without being reprimanded, how did *his* England differ from that of Stephen's? These were the questions that Henry no doubt asked himself, and he did not rest until the issue was resolved. His dissatisfaction with ecclesiastical justice was understandable; why should a layman "disguised" in the garb of a clerk, in

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[43] Warren, *Henry II*, 460.
[44] Warren, *Henry II*, 460. Warren even believes that some of these clerks were married, even though their wives and children would go unrecognized in the eyes of the church.
[45] Warren, *Henry II*, 460.
[46] Warren, *Henry II*, 460; Barlow, *Becket*, 90.

the service of a holy and sacred institution be given immunity? Henry believed that even though ecclesiastical government grew substantially by making new strides in enforcing the understanding of canon law to all those under clerical employment, it rarely initiated legal proceedings.[47] Did the Church not want to keep track of criminals, or was it too concerned with keeping the notion of clerical infallibility intact under secular pressures? For Becket, this was the primary concern: that clerical immunity be given to all those under ecclesiastical garb, no matter what or whom the incident concerned. Ecclesiastical justice should only be the prerogative of church government, and should not be subjected to secular pressures when it came to legal proceedings.[48]

The following example demonstrates the legal proceedings conducted in an ecclesiastical court tribunal. Certain cases, especially those involving murder, took longer to complete because of the pushback from the king and his representatives to have these cases tried in secular courts. In 1154, Osbert, a clerk in the service of Archbishop William of York, was accused of poisoning his master. When brought before the king's court, he denied the charge and demanded to be tried by an ecclesiastical tribunal.[49] Because the case involved murder, it should have been dealt with in the secular courts, but it was passed to judgment in the ecclesiastical sphere.[50] Henry argued that during the time of his great-grandfather, William the Conqueror, secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions had been rightfully separated, but nowhere was it explicitly recorded that the accused persons would be subject to those divisions.[51] The right of the "benefit of clergy" was an ecclesiastical concept that had been discussed throughout various church councils, designed to protect the church from the legislative scheming of lay lords who looked to impose

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[47] Barlow, *Becket*, 90.

[48] Warren, *Henry II*, 461.

[49] Warren, *Henry II*, 461.

[50] Barlow, *Becket*, 92; Warren, *Henry II*, 464.

[51] Warren, *Henry II*, 462. This is ordained in one of the royal charters of William I, which stated that "…no bishop or archdeacon shall henceforth hold pleas relating to the episcopal laws in the hundred court, nor shall they bring judgement of secular men any matter which pertains to the government of souls…".

secular punishment to those in the clerical class.[52] Even though the Conqueror's ordinance does not state that secular crimes committed by clergy were to be tried in secular courts, the concept of clerical privilege in England was not something that he created. In order to create peace and uniformity throughout his newly acquired territory, the Conqueror must have discussed these matters with learned ecclesiastical individuals, which culminated in the jurisdictional separations between clergy and laity in criminal cases. Even with these distinctions, cases varied based on the seriousness of the crime. It was only during the reign of Henry I where a clear separation between clergy and laity in legal matters can be attested to, evidence of which was found in the *Leges Henrici Primi*, an anonymously compiled document summarizing all the laws present in England while Henry I was king.[53] Even during King Stephen's reign, described by Henry II as a time of "unlaw", there existed jurisdictional divisions between clergy and laity in criminal cases, although the case of Osbert was an exception because he was accused of murder.[54] Stephen took special interest in the case, but ended up dying in late 1154 before a final decision had been made. Due to the constant pressure of Archbishop Theobald to secure a trial within the legal confines of the ecclesiastical courts, the case was successfully transferred from secular jurisdiction as a result of Osbert's clerical status.[55] Even though Osbert's case was overseen by an ecclesiastical tribunal, a lack of consensus between the judges to propose a sentence caused delays, and the truth behind Osbert's accusation of murder was never found. After almost two years since the start of his trial began, Osbert was finally sentenced and eventually degraded from holy orders, but this was not always the "traditional" verdict for members of the ecclesiastical class.[56] Criminal offenders who claimed clerical status

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[52] Warren, *Henry II*, 462.

[53] Warren, *Henry II*, 462. Warren is unsure if the document unmistakably states the separation of clergy and laity in legal matters, as can be attested in the tract LVII-9 of the *Leges* which stated, "…The bishops should have jurisdiction of all accusations, whether major or minor, made against those in holy orders…".

[54] Warren, *Henry II*, 463. An 1136 charter ascribed to King Stephen states that, "…jurisdiction and authority over ecclesiastical persons and over all clerks and their property…shall lie in the hands of the bishops…".

[55] Barlow, *Becket*, 92; Warren, *Henry II*, 464.

[56] Warren, *Henry II*, 464.

generally underwent lighter punishments such as: a penance to a pilgrimage site, or strict confinement to a monastery – as was the case with a similar example of a priest in the diocese of Salisbury, who was unable to purge himself of the crime of murder.[57] Therefore, harsher punishments were meant for more severe cases, but traditional legislative practices in ecclesiastical governance favoured the more penitential route.

On the eve of the Council of Westminster, which took place in the fall of 1163, it seemed as if Henry had sharpened his blades and was ready to do battle with his spiritual subjects. Much of the proceedings at Westminster would be reiterated at the Council of Clarendon in 1164. According to Herbert of Bosham, one of Becket's biographers, Henry demanded that clerks who had committed great crimes be stripped of their "benefit of clergy", degraded from holy orders, and then handed over to the secular justices to be tried as laymen.[58] Henry was looking to secure his secular courts as the only place where proper judgement would take place. He deemed it necessary to incur physical punishment to criminous clerks, because, without it, they would be prone to repeating offences.[59] Henry had evidence of past canonical texts which stated a *traditio curiae* was acceptable when passing judgement on criminous clerks, and they were to be "…handed over to the court".[60] To this example, Becket argued that the *traditio curiae* was referring to the degradation of holy orders, which was sufficient punishment; once a clerk was degraded, and he committed a felonious crime again, he would not be able to use the "benefit of clergy" and would thus be tried as a layman.[61] While the king contradicted this statement by using another example, this time from Emperor Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Becket pressed on too, claiming that "the clergy, by reason of their orders, have Christ alone as king…and since they are not under secular kings…but under the King of Heaven…and if they are transgressors, they should be punished by their

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[57] Warren, *Henry II*, 464, 465; Barlow, *Becket*, 92-93.
[58] Warren, *Henry II*, 466. Warren here is quoting a passage from the *vita* of Thomas Becket by Herbert of Bosham.
[59] Warren, *Henry II*, 466.
[60] Warren, *Henry II*, 466-467. i.e., the secular court.
[61] Warren, *Henry II*, 467.

own law...".[62]

The examples above indicated that nothing was settled at Westminster. Henry demanded that the bishops "promise" to respect the customs of his predecessors, but Becket was quick to point out that when newly consecrated bishops swore fealty to the king in "life and limb and earthly honour"; the term "earthly honour" meant automatically respecting the historical customs of the realm.[63] At the end of October, after the fiasco at Westminster had ended, Becket received letters from Pope Alexander III imploring him to keep his cool, and that the king would only need a verbal acceptance of the customs and not a written one.[64] This would drastically change within the coming months.

### The Constitutions of Clarendon and the Trial at Northampton, 1164

It is disappointing that Becket's biographers, especially William fitzStephen, do not thoroughly discuss the council of Clarendon in 1164. It is highly likely that, for them, Becket's real test would come at a later time, and that this was just another test on the path to sainthood. Warren believes something else: it was not so much their lack of information or even description of these events, it was the mere shock at their archbishop's comportment that left them unable to explain what happened at Clarendon.[65]

Both Becket's biographers and Barlow seem to agree that it was a rather intimidating council; most of the important temporal and ecclesiastical lords were present.[66] Henry began the proceedings with a

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[62] Warren, *Henry II*, 467. Again, taken from the words of Herbert of Bosham.
[63] Warren, *Henry II*, 469.
[64] Barlow, *Becket*, 98.
[65] Warren, *Henry II*, 473. It very possible that this interpretation may be the sentiment of most of his biographers. William fitzStephen's brevity in assessing the situation is notable; he acted out of fear and believes that Becket's fall was noble and necessary in order to turn his life around. See "The Life of St. Thomas," 63.
[66] Barlow, *Becket*, 98.

firm statement: he decreed that the current situation in the realm had occurred due to the inability of the royal and ecclesiastical justices to understand their various rights and dignities. The spiritual barons, being the bishops, were to confirm their understanding of the customs of the realm that had been present during the reign of his grandfather, Henry I, and that all should observe these customs expressly and unconditionally.[67] A formal document had been drafted, and the customs were to be understood, signed, and respected.

Of the many clauses that were recorded and set out in the presence of the bishops, clause 3, which dealt with the judgement of criminous clerks, was most notable. A clerk accused of a felony was to appear in the royal court to answer his charge. If he claimed that he was a clerk, then the court would decide if he was to be handed over to the ecclesiastical courts for justice. If the royal justices consent to have the clerk tried in legal ecclesiastical proceedings, then the royal justice attended the court to be present on behalf of the king. If the clerk was found guilty in the ecclesiastical court, he was to be degraded from holy orders, his right of the "benefit of clergy" would be revoked, he would be arrested a second time, and then taken away for judgement in the royal courts.[68] This was exactly what had been proposed at Westminster in 1163, but now, it had been formalized in writing, which made things even more complicated for Becket and his bishops. Essentially, this clause, along with other clauses of the Constitutions which dealt with the prohibition of appeals to Rome without royal consent (clause 8), were meant to undermine clerical immunity, the efficacity of ecclesiastical courts, and, ultimately, make Henry the master of the Church, which is something that Becket would not accept.[69] The prerogative of having these customs committed to writing was harsh but necessary, and, in turn, Henry had been doing something his grandfather Henry I did not do: he formalized the customs and made them

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[67] Barlow, *Becket*, 98.
[68] Barlow, *Becket*, 101. See also "The Constitutions of Clarendon" in *The Becket Controversy*, ed. Thomas M. Jones (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1970), 13.
[69] Barlow, *Becket*, 101, 105.

legally rigid, making it virtually impossible to bypass them.[70] Amid royal fury, pressure from the king and his bishops, and maybe even weakness, Becket conceded to the Constitutions and asked his subordinates to do the same. This was seen as the ultimate betrayal by his bishops, who vowed to support him in his initial denial of the Constitutions.[71] Amid the cries about the potential breaching of clerical immunity and the imposition of tyrannical rule over the Church, Becket had given way to Henry's demands, making it seem as if his "stiff-necked pride" had been the only reason why the bishops were reluctant to agree to the customs in the first place.[72]

Becket succumbed to an intense amount of pressure, and it was only normal that this decision to accept the Constitutions weighed heavily over his conscience. William fitzStephen claims that Becket proposed a strict penance on himself, withdrew from priestly services, and barely ate.[73] Fearing the worst, he fled England for Sens to ask for aid from the Pope; an action which breached several of the clauses of the Constitutions he had just sworn to observe.[74] Henry used this opportunity to formally try Becket at Northampton in October 1164, and to humiliate him, hoping that the outcome of the trial would lead to his resignation from episcopal office.[75] The "charge" – if one can even call it that – was a failure to appear in a court summons from 14 September, and not provide a valid excuse for

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[70] Barlow, *Becket*, 104; Warren, *Henry II*, 476, 482.

[71] Warren, *Henry II*, 474, 475. Indeed, Warren inserts a supposed quote from Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, who was present at Clarendon, which stated that "…it was the general of our army who deserted…he obliged us by force to bind ourselves by a similar pledge of obedience".

[72] Warren, *Henry II*, 475.

[73] "The Life of St. Thomas," 63. This also attested in Barlow, *Becket*, 105.

[74] "The Life of St. Thomas," 63; Barlow, *Becket*, 108; "Constitutions of Clarendon," 13, 14. Becket's attempt to flee was in direct violation of clause 4: "Archbishops, bishops, and parsons of the kingdom are not permitted to go out of the kingdom without the licence of the lord king," and clause 8: "With regard to appeals…they should proceed…from the bishop to the archbishop. And if the archbishop fails to provide justice, recourse should finally be had to the lord king…so that it should not proceed further without the assent of the lord king."

[75] Warren, *Henry II*, 485.

the absence. It pertained to an accusation on the part of a certain baron, John fitzGilbert, who brought about a suit to the archbishop's court on account of a parcel of land near the town of Pagham, part of the archbishop's demesne lands in Sussex.[76] Becket was charged with contempt of the king for not answering the royal court summons on 14 September, and was confiscated of all moveable possessions.[77] Eventually the case was dropped because of lack of evidence, and because John fitzGilbert had no claim to the land, but that did not stop Henry in his pursuit to embarrass Becket. Henry proceeded to charge Becket with embezzlement from when he had been royal chancellor, as well as contempt for the oath he had taken at Clarendon to observe the customs of the realm. No doubt that second charge may have been included when Becket attempted to flee England.[78] Henry demanded that Becket produce all records of custodies during his time as chancellor; Becket confessed that he was not aware that an audit would have taken place, and that he was only there answer for the charge against him by John fitzGilbert.[79] Moreover, he implored that all actions that were undertaken as chancellor, as well as all the profits spent, were done with the king's authority. Once he had been consecrated into holy office, his past deeds as a royal servant had been nullified.[80] After a five-day hiatus, a time which Becket used for prayer, contemplation, and the nursing of an illness, he returned to trial on 13 October. He reprimanded the bishops who were present for having twice passed judgement on him, and, being their feudal lord, he forbade them to do this a third time on pain of a criminal charge which had already been appealed to the Pope for ratification.[81] Having been told this by certain bishops loyal to Henry, the king sent his barons to see if this was true, and to the king's disbelief, it was; Becket had appealed to the Pope, which was another breach of the clauses of the Constitutions, and placed himself and the Church of Canterbury under the protection of God and the

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[76] Barlow, *Becket*, 108-109.
[77] Barlow, *Becket*, 109.
[78] Barlow, *Becket*, 110.
[79] Barlow, *Becket*, 110.
[80] Barlow, *Becket*, 110.
[81] Barlow, *Becket*, 112, 113.

Holy See.[82] In the minds of everyone present at the trial, especially those of the king and bishops, this was an outrageous statement. According to fitzStephen, as Becket tried to escape the commotion his statement had caused, someone, possibly one of the king's barons, cried out "traitor!".[83] That very night, Becket fled England for France as an exile.[84]

## Becket in Exile, 1164-1170

Becket's intentions for deliberately leaving England were not cowardly, but necessary. There had been too much bad blood built up between himself and Henry. However, this exile proved to be a life-changing experience for Becket. While confining himself to a Cistercian monastery at Pontigny, he spent most of his time reading scripture, celebrating Mass, and purifying his conscience.[85] FitzStephen also mentions how he occupied himself in the writing of books, and practicing penitential acts.[86]

Some time had now elapsed and any talk of peace between Becket and Henry ended in disappointment. By 1168, Henry's main prerogative had been to officially crown his young son Henry as his successor, and as the coronation of kings was the right of the archbishop of Canterbury, peace negotiations needed to be stepped up a notch as Becket's presence was vital.[87] In 1169, Becket and Henry met at Montmirail. What started as a warm and potentially successful meeting, it ended in failure when Becket knelt in front of both Henry and Louis VII of France and asked Henry to mercifully accept his fealty, "…saving the honour of my God".[88] Henry denounced Becket's apology, calling him proud and ungrateful, and

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[82] Barlow, *Becket*, 113; Warren, *Henry II*, 487.
[83] "The Life of St. Thomas," 91.
[84] Warren, *Henry II*, 488.
[85] "The Life of St. Thomas," 102.
[86] "The Life of St. Thomas," 102.
[87] Warren, *Henry II*, 496. The crowning of a successor and heir to the throne while the present king still lived was a tradition of the Capetian Kings of France.
[88] Warren, *Henry II*, 497. The words of the archbishop were quoted from the work of Herbert of Bosham.

claiming that anything which went against what Becket approved, "…he will say it is contrary to God's honour and so he will always have the advantage".[89] The meeting at Montmirail indicates that both Henry and Becket were no longer able to accept one another's views, let alone each other's presence. When an unstoppable force meets an immovable object, an outcome such as this is likely to happen. To make matters worse, as peace negotiations were going nowhere with Becket, and Henry needed to have his heir crowned swiftly, he proposed that Roger, archbishop of York, and Becket's sworn enemy, perform the ceremony.[90] As this would infringe the coronation rights of Canterbury, Henry had not thought this through, or had he? Warren claims that Henry possessed a letter from Pope Alexander III from 1161, permitting him to have his son crowned by the archbishop of his choosing.[91] Warren also believes that the Pope conceded this right to Henry sometime in 1161, after the king had recognized him as the true Pope.[92] Amid vigorous protests and many painstaking letters asking for the Pope to reconsider the offer he had once proposed to Roger of York, the coronation went through as planned on 14 June at Westminster Abbey.[93] The anger and betrayal that Becket felt must have been difficult to comprehend. Not only did this signify Henry's open defiance of his rights as archbishop, it also showcased Henry's disregard for the rights held by the See of Canterbury; historically, archbishops of Canterbury held important socio-political positions: they were advisers to

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[89] Warren, *Henry II*, 497-498. Henry's words were also taken from the work of Herbert of Bosham.

[90] Warren, *Henry II*, 500.

[91] Warren, *Henry II*, 501. The evidence is taken from a letter that Pope Alexander wrote to Roger of York, extoling that "…whenever the king our son shall request it you shall place the crown upon the head of his son on the authority of the apostolic see…".

[92] Warren, *Henry II*, 501. Pope Alexander III, whose lawful election as Pope in 1159 had been contested with Victor IV, the antipope chosen by a handful of rebellious cardinals. In 1165, it is believed that Alexander was seeking refuge at Sens and met with Becket, who needed the pope's council of how to deal with the feud with Henry. The pope remained impartial in the feud between the two, remembering that Henry II had chosen him over Victor IV as the true pope back in 1161.

[93] Warren, *Henry II*, 502.

kings, princes, and possessed the divine right and authority to crown monarchs.[94] It was the Mother Church of the British Isles, and the wounds of this betrayal would cut deep.[95] Henry's rash and arrogant actions forced the Pope to make concessions to Becket in the form of ecclesiastical censures, in which he authorized Becket to suspend the bishops who were involved in the coronation, and to propose the threat of an interdict on England.[96] Word of these potential complications got to Henry, but now the Angevin king was ready to make peace. Becket met Henry at Fréteval in July 1170, and the reconciliation had only been successful because Henry said that he would think about potentially allowing Becket to re-crown the king's heir, the Young Henry.[97] Whatever the case may be, it seemed as if Becket was ready to return home. However, it was the way he returned that raised some eyebrows, and it may have been a precursor of the events to come.

### Return from Exile, 1170

Before crossing the Channel, Becket – exercising his apostolic authority –excommunicated the archbishop of York, as well as the bishops of London and Salisbury. All three had been involved in the dubious coronation of the Young Henry, and Becket had received special dispensation from the Pope to go through with the sentence.[98] No sooner had Becket returned, the rumours about him began to spread like wildfire until they reached the ears of the king. Had he really been parading around the country at the head of an armed force, or was that a distasteful rumour that was spread to anger the king even more?[99] Even if it was true, the situation had reached a point of no return between Becket and Henry. Henry always perceived Becket as ungrateful and self-centered, and this situation – with Becket potentially at the head of a powerful army in his

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[94] Warren, *Henry II*, 502, 505.
[95] Warren, *Henry II*, 504.
[96] Warren, *Henry II*, 505.
[97] Warren, *Henry II*, 506.
[98] Warren, *Henry II*, 507. This apostolic authority had been given to Becket in 1166, as he was granted legatine status by Pope Alexander III.
[99] Warren, *Henry II*, 508.

kingdom – was the last straw. At the village of Bures, Henry may have uttered some threatening words in a drunken rage, but the four knights who overheard the king took his words seriously.[100] What those exact words were is relatively unclear. The most popular quote attributed to Henry was that he angrily cried out, "Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest", spurring the assailants towards performing their gruesome deed.[101] Recent historical revision suggests that Henry did not say anything close to that. Most historians, Barlow included, accept the quote attributed to Henry by Edward Grimm – one of Becket's contemporary biographers – claiming that he uttered the statement, "What miserable drones and traitors have I nourished and promoted in my household, who let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born clerk".[102] With the mythology surrounding Henry and Becket's relationship, as well as the subsequent feud that dictated much of Henry's courtly politics and proposed legislature during this time, a case can be made for the king outlining his intentions with these words, which are quite different from the "traditional" quote attributed to him. However, it is safe to assume that Henry was frustrated by Becket's behaviour, and permanently eliminating him may have crossed the king's mind. After all, Becket was his "man"; a person who, although he came from modest beginnings, had risen to the role of chancellor and then to archbishop due to Henry's favouritism. However, Becket must have shown exceptional capabilities during his time as Theobald's clerk in order to be considered for the role of chancellor. Barlow has demonstrated some examples where Becket aided in the arbitration of a fellow clerk who was involved in a scandal.[103] Barlow also explains that on many occasions, Becket was sent to Rome to have discussions with the papal curia about developing political and religious events both in England, and on the continent.[104] Becket's unwavering display during both the Constitutions of Clarendon and the "trial" at Northampton would have probably given cause to his opponents

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[100] Warren, *Henry II*, 508.
[101] Warren, *Henry II*, 508.
[102] Barlow, *Becket*, 235. Some translations denote "cleric" rather than "clerk", but both words have the same meaning.
[103] Barlow, *Becket*, 33-34.
[104] Barlow, *Becket*, 35-36.

to misjudge his behaviour, or to label him as an ungrateful upstart. However, it has been established that Becket's intellectual acumen in the ecclesiastical sphere was present well before his selection as royal chancellor, so the pejorative labels directed at him by those who opposed his stance, are somewhat misguided and unwarranted. Whatever the case may be, Becket embraced his new role with such conviction that it frustrated Henry, causing his agents to assume that he wanted Becket eliminated after a public outcry.

### Martyrdom, 1170

What follows is an account of Becket's murder at Canterbury Cathedral, chronicled by two eyewitnesses, William fitzStephen, and Edward Grim.

The four knights who were called into action after Henry's outburst are known by name, position, and background thanks to William fitzStephen. They were: Reginald fitzUrse, William de Tarcy, Hugh de Morville, and Richard le Breton, who all held respectable offices in the service of the king.[105] Warren argues that their intent was not clear from the onset, and there were no signs of a plan or even a clear purpose of whether to arrest Becket, murder him, or force him into exile once again.[106] Both fitzStephen and Grim, in their accounts, described the long dialogue between the archbishop and Reginald fitzUrse, and how he came to ask

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[105] "An Annotated Translation of the Life of St. Thomas Becket by William Fitzstephen, Part Two," trans. Mary Aelred Sinclair, *Masters Theses*, (Chicago: Loyola University, 1944), 70.

[106] Warren, *Henry II*, 509; see also "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 70, 76; and "Martyrdom by Edward Grim," in *The Becket Controversy*, ed. Thomas M. Jones (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1970), 48. William fitzStephen thinks that their attack was premeditated, but only when the king showed "great indignation, bitterness and wrath…seeking to please him, four knights of his household, having taken an oath to effect the death of the Archbishop…". Edward Grim, who had come to Canterbury only a few days before, mentions how the guests were offered food and a place at the archbishop's table, but were thirsty "rather for blood than for food".

Becket to absolve the bishops who were excommunicated.[107] Back and forth they went; threats were being thrown around by fitzUrse, and Becket retaliated by claiming that the king had restored him to his "peace and favour".[108] It seems that did not matter to fitzUrse; with arrogance, he yelled, "From whom do you hold your archbishopric?" as if he had expected Becket to only say "the king", whereupon he was angered when Becket replied, "Its spiritualities from God and my lord the Pope; its temporalities and possessions from the king".[109] What seemed to anger them even more was when Becket mentioned the homage he had received from fitzUrse, de Tracy, and de Morville while he was chancellor, as if that was from a distant past. Now these men threatened to harm the archbishop while on sacred ground.[110] fitzStephen even explains, all while being present in the room when these events were unfolding, that some of the clerks thought that the men were simply drunk, and would not have said such things had they not been.[111] The astonishing part about this whole event, was that Becket had the opportunity to flee multiple times (something that was attested by both Grim and fitzStephen).[112] Many of the clerks, who had been near the altar with Becket once the intruders left to deliberate their plans momentarily, had now fled, and it was only Grim, fitzStephen, and a canon named Robert who stayed behind to face them.[113] Grim confirms that Becket had long yearned for martyrdom, so when the four knights came back into the cathedral, swords drawn, he was not going to hide somewhere in the church in hopes that they would simply leave. When one of the knights wholeheartedly cried out that they had returned to kill Becket, all of Becket's hard work in the defence of the Church had now come down to this very moment; all the hassle, toil, and grief he had experienced at the hands of the king would all be rewarded with the one

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[107] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 70. These were the archbishop of York, and the bishops of London and Salisbury.
[108] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 79.
[109] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 79-80.
[110] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 80-81.
[111] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 83.
[112] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two" 88; see also "Martyrdom," 51.
[113] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 87-88.

swing of the intruders' swords.[114] As previously stated, it would be wrong to assume that the knights had planned to kill Becket on scared ground. They probably had a plan to seize Becket and bring him before the king, who would then pronounce a death sentence. However, according to Grim, as Reginald fitzUrse came to grab Becket and escort him out of Canterbury, the archbishop yelled, "Touch me not Reginald; you owe me fealty and obedience…", which caused a bit of a fracas between the two men.[115] It was because of this resistance, and because he was scared that the clerks might grab Becket and escape, that fitzUrse was forced to lay the first blow on the archbishop. As Becket's head lay bowed, fitzUrse's swing cut off the top of his crown, nearly severing the arm of Grim who had raised it to defend Becket.[116] The first strike did not kill Becket, it only gave him enough time to utter the words, "Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," after which he received three more blows, and had his entire crown severed, according to fitzStephen.[117] On 29 December 1170, Becket received the martyr's crown at the altar of Christ Church, Canterbury.

### Cause and Christological Interpretations

Before analyzing the immense popular outreach that Becket's saintly cult would yield in the latter half of the 12th century and well into the 13th century, scrutinizing Becket's cause is an essential component to understanding why he became such a popular saint almost immediately after his death. John of Salisbury, who was archdeacon to Becket while in episcopal office, in his *Letters*, described it in simple, but powerful terms:

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[114] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 89. According to fitzStephen, one of the knights said, "It is impossible for you to live any longer".

[115] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 90; "Martyrdom," 53. fitzStephen's account is a little different than Grim's. According to him, Becket said, "Do with me here what you wish to do, and what has been commanded to you". He also mentions that Becket resisted fitzUrse forcefully.

[116] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 90; "Martyrdom," 54.

[117] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 91; "Martyrdom," 54. Edward Grim's account also mentions that Becket received four blows before submitting his soul to God.

"the cause makes the martyr".[118] What exactly was Becket's cause? John describes that Becket, "fought unto death to defend the law of God and wipe out the abuses of ancient tyrants".[119] When Becket was first appointed archbishop, Henry believed that he would be able to make a puppet out of him, bending church laws in favour of royal interests. However, things did not go as Henry planned. At the beginning of Becket's episcopal tenure, there were signs of Becket's defiance when he refused to let the church pay more in taxes that would simply fill royal coffers.[120] Henry believed that this was all part of Becket's game, in order to establish firm authority at Canterbury at the king's expense.[121] But the defiance continued, and Becket would not be swayed by the machinations and abuses of the king. He believed in the infallibility of the church, even if his actions were somewhat exaggerated and his reality "detached".[122] His "unyielding stubbornness" is what defined the quarrel so vividly, not to mention his mental fortitude in being able to handle the abuse thrown at him by Henry and his agents for many years.[123] Thus, it could be argued that his time as chancellor is what created his rigid and unwavering character, qualities which he took with him to the episcopal office, but with a drastically changed mentality. Becket's spiritual "fall" was when he reluctantly accepted to uphold the customs of the Constitutions of Clarendon, a sentiment shared by a majority of his biographer especially fitzStephen. The immediate feeling of betrayal and contempt which plagued Becket's mind was necessary in order to acknowledge his weakness, forcing him to see the error of his ways.[124] He was severely

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[118] "An Annotated Translation of the Letters of John of Salisbury," trans. John Francis O'Connor, *Masters Theses* (Chicago: Loyola University, 1947), 89.

[119] "The Letters of John of Salisbury," 90.

[120] Barlow, *Becket*, 88, 89. At the meeting at Woodstock, in Oxfordshire, Henry proposed to revive a tax that had last been collected in 1161, which required all landowners, either temporal or ecclesiastical, to pay an annual amount of 2 shillings to the sheriff's office. Becket was wholeheartedly against this tax, seeing it as an encroachment on church lands by the crown.

[121] Barlow, *Becket*, 89.

[122] Warren, *Henry II*, 400. Warren also believes that Becket brought about his own death because he had read the situation horribly wrong.

[123] Jones, "Introduction," 2.

[124] "The Life of St. Thomas," 63.

distraught, barely ate, and performed strict penitential acts before returning to his priestly duties.[125] The trial at Northampton was the beginning of Becket's first steps toward martyrdom. fitzStephen describes it as a "martyrdom in spirit", whereupon the archbishop endured a multitude of insults, talks of imprisonment, and even death.[126] However, it must be understood that Becket's habit did change once he was consecrated archbishop, but it was not immediate, as some of his biographers believe. A secular man throughout much of his life, his change of character that now encompassed a stark defence of the Church must have been due to the powers from above, and as previously mentioned, in his transformation he "put on Jesus Christ".[127] This cannot be overstated. Although his transformation was gradual, it would seem that God permitted these things to happen, utilizing Becket as a vessel of the Holy Spirit in order to expose the abuses of royal power over the church, attempting to make it a subordinate institution of the crown.[128] He understood the position and responsibility he had been tasked with; he became the spiritual father of the whole realm, and it was now his duty to lead by example.

It can be understood that Becket's martyrdom proposed a life of sanctity. He clung to the idea that his purpose in life was to uphold the sacred values and liberties of the English Church, and it transformed his earthly life into one of piety and strict devotion.[129] In essence, giving up your earthly worries in defending the sanctity of the Church, you were, in a way, imitating Christ. Christian intellectuals who studied and debated on various aspects of doctrine throughout the centuries, generally agreed that the Church was the metaphysical representation of Christ's divine body. If Becket died to defend the Church, he was also defending Christ. In addition, Becket secured his sanctity because he gave up a life of riches to defend the house of God, and once he understood that, he was able to fully serve God in any way possible, and to die for him if needed.[130] fitzStephen

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[125] "The Life of St. Thomas," 63.

[126] "The Life of St. Thomas," 75-76.

[127] "The Life of St. Thomas," 47.

[128] "The Letters of John of Salisbury," 92.

[129] Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 11.

[130] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 11.

even gives a shocking example; immediately after Becket's murder, "violent rains poured down, and thunder crashed in heaven", describing events that were strangely similar to what happened after Christ's crucifixion.[131] This is the way that Becket's biographers try to portray him in their works, a literary style that Heffernan calls a "sacred biography", where the writer tries to identify the essence of the holy person they were writing on.[132] For Becket, his biographers looked at events of his life that tied into this idea of Christ-like imitation, as well as evidence of sanctity from earlier stages of his life. Becket only achieved this "holy essence" twice: the first time when he took up the mitre and became archbishop, and the second time when he martyred for Christ and the Church. As such, if Becket lived a secular life as chancellor, his call to sanctification would have still not been overlooked. God surely does not discriminate when it comes to social status or ethnicity.[133]

There is another example that Heffernan uses which ties into Becket's story quite well. He speaks of this "otherness", which can be interpreted as a constant relationship with God; living on the earth physically, but spiritually, your mental capabilities are devoted entirely to God.[134] Becket's constant defiance against Henry's earthly authority, especially during his episcopal tenure, meant that he was resolute in his plans, as well as how he wanted his life to progress while in his new role. As royal chancellor, his prerogative was to ensure the kingdom's positive political development, but this was no longer the case as archbishop; the life that he was leaning toward was a life of spiritual advancement, obedience to God, and the protection of his church against the schemes of a tyrant.

## Part 3 – The Cult of St. Thomas Becket in Plantagenet and Early Modern Europe

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[131] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 92.
[132] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 11.
[133] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 14.
[134] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 30.

## The Miracles of St. Thomas Becket at Christ Church, Canterbury, 1171-1173

Immediately after Becket's gruesome murder, the witnesses believed that there were possible signs of holiness. William fitzStephen mentions a brother Robert, one of the canons who got to know Becket very closely over a couple of years, identified the hair shirt and monk habit that the archbishop had been wearing under his priestly clothes, usually worn by penitents.[135] Immediately, they "turned their sorrow into spiritual joy, their lamenting into words of rejoicing. Now they recognized clearly his two-fold martyrdom, the voluntary one of his life and the violent one of his death".[136] Historians have commented on these two "types" of martyrdom that Becket experienced, especially Jennifer O'Reilly, and her work centers around the theological concepts of "red and white martyrdom".[137] Red martyrdom implies that Becket suffered a violent death which was comparable to Christ's death on the cross, reminiscent of the period of Christian persecution when many early martyrs died for the faith.[138] White martyrdom denotes the martyrdom "in spirit" that Becket went through by wearing the flesh-eating hair shirt under his monastic habit, a penitential act Becket imposed upon himself after conceding to uphold the Constitutions of Clarendon in 1164. In this regard, fitzStephen described Becket as a "…champion, confessor and martyr…", who conducted himself in "…faithful governance of his archiepiscopal

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[135] "The Life of St. Thomas, Part Two," 99. This is also attested in the *Letters* of John of Salisbury, 95.

[136] "The Life of St. Thomas Becket, Part Two," 100. This change in clothing must have been after the council at Clarendon when Becket accepted the customs. As one of his penitential acts, he wore a hair shirt and breeches that dug into his skin.

[137] Jennifer O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?" in *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, eds. Máirín MacCarron and Diarmuid Scully (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 332.

[138] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 337.

see…".[139]

   Continuing this idea, it must be understood that there were no *clear* signs of Becket's holiness before his death. Only after the hair shirt was discovered by the witnesses, did all the events that occurred in Becket's life after his installment as archbishop begin to make sense. Analyzing the council at which the Constitutions of Clarendon were proposed, the trial at Northampton where Becket suffered an intense amount of abuse, combined with all the heated exchanges with Henry on several occasions, if examined through a hagiographical lens, Becket *was* ready to die for the Church and for Christ. In addition, O'Reilly points to a specific date that Becket's mindset changed, whereupon he had concluded that martyrdom was truly a possibility: 13 October 1164. Prior to this date, Becket had been virtually paraded in front of many prominent nobles, both secular and ecclesiastical, as someone who cared more about his clerical benefit rather than the peace and stability of the realm. According to his biographers, when he vowed to uphold the customs of the realm at Clarendon, he immediately regretted his decision and understood that he lapsed morally, succumbing the Church to potential subordination by the Crown.[140] He atoned for this "betrayal", whereupon he fasted, performed a strict penance, secluded himself from the public, and adopted the flesh corrupting hair shirt which was discovered only after his death. Many months passed between both councils, Clarendon and Northampton, and it seemed that Becket lost the confidence of his ecclesiastical subordinates, which was showcased when he tried to defend himself at the latter. In the opening days of Northampton, the bishops – who had initially vowed to support Becket at Clarendon even though they knew he made an error – aligned themselves with the ideas of the king and attempted to portray Becket's motivations as selfish and arbitrary, claiming that he acted to make decisions rashly and without proper counsel.[141] O'Reilly has

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[139] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 340.

[140] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 352.

[141] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 347

deduced that Becket had no choice but to go on the offensive after his bishops turned on him, including biblical evidence from Matthew 10: 16-22 in which Christ warned that his followers "…will be betrayed by false brethren, scourged in synagogues, delivered up in councils and brought before kings and governors".[142] Also, the characteristics of Becket's "white martyrdom" that O'Reilly alludes to are prevalent in the trial, because not only was Becket's dignity questioned by the king – who gave him liberties when he was chancellor, and then tried him for them – but from Becket's subordinates as well. The "martyrdom in spirit", the daily trials and tribulations that typified what Christ's champions had to go through to achieve sanctity, were all beginning to showcase themselves at this council, not to mention the "betrayal" at the hands of Becket's bishops which was a possible turning point for him in the path towards sanctity. Becket seems to have understood what his role now consisted of, and a similar type of suffering is what most saints before him had to endure in defence of the faith. Henry was throwing every possible curveball at it him, and it still did not dampen his spirits, nor did the outcome of the first days of the trial deter him from defending his ecclesiastical liberty. If he was to embrace martyrdom, it seemed as though he needed to do it in style. On 13 October 1164, Becket arrived late to the trial because he was supposedly celebrating a votive mass for St. Stephen the Protomartyr. The importance of this incident cannot be overstated. St. Stephen lived in the first century A.D. and is considered the first known Christian martyr, who was accused of blasphemy by the secular and religious authorities of Jerusalem when he professed his faith in Christ, and was subsequently stoned to death. Becket's biographers, assuming that most of them were learned in Christian history, understood how symbolic the gesture was when Becket decided to present himself to the council on that day carrying his processional cross, barefoot, and dressed in red vestments (presumably the colour red was dedicated to the martyrs).[143] It is possible that Becket attempted to present himself as a neo-Stephen, with whom he had much in common: both were denounced by prominent governmental officials for

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[142] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 350-351.

[143] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 370.

their stance on the religious developments of their respective realms, and both suffered martyrdom for it. Additionally, St. Stephen and Becket's Christological relationship concerning their respective incidents is interesting: Christ was also sent to trial before Pontius Pilate, who made the common people choose between him and the murderer Barabas. In all three cases, Christ, St. Stephen, and Becket, the governmental authority combined with popular pressure from the masses, condemned the person on trial to either death or some kind of fiscal or physical penalty. Christ was persecuted because he claimed to be the Son of God and the Messiah of the Old Testament law, St. Stephen because he professed his faith in Christ in synagogues, and Becket was defending the Church (e.g. the metaphysical body of Christ) from tyranny and oppression.[144] It is likely that Becket's view of the trial was that he was guilty not because of the false accusations of embezzlement from his time as chancellor, but because he was a representative of the Church, and by returning to the trial in the manner which he did, he was displaying a readiness to die for the Church if need be.[145] This was Becket's "red and white martyrdom": *red* because he invoked his martyrological predecessor St. Stephen who died for a cause similar to his own, and because he would end up being murdered for his defence of the Church; *white* because he displayed a valid example of the *imitatio Christi* when being abused not only while on trial, but also during his exile from England, when he lived in poverty and seclusion at the Cistercian abbey of Pontigny. It is also important to keep it mind that, while Becket displayed true holiness for his act of martyrdom at the hands of Henry's agents in 1170, his biographers are responsible for his hagiographical construction. By piecing together evidence from his historical life, they were able to portray Becket as a person who endured all that he endured because he was destined for martyrdom.

The miracles that Becket would bestow upon the common populace after his murder continued at a frightening rate. In another example mentioned by William fitzStephen, immediately after the

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[144] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 371.
[145] O'Reilly, "The double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: hagiography or history?", 367.

archbishop's burial service, one of the citizens of Canterbury dipped his shirt in the blood of St. Thomas, brought it home to his paralyzed wife, mixed it with water, and once she drank it was instantly cured.[146] From this moment, the healing power of the cult associated with "St. Thomas's water" was born, and pilgrims that came to visit the tomb of the blessed martyr would be given vials, or *ampullae* (Fig. 1), filled with the mixture to bring home.[147] These *ampullae* were associated with was becoming an enormously popular pilgrimage site for many sick, dying, and devout adherents to Becket's cult, and one that would be extremely profitable for the See of Canterbury.[148]

The popularity of the cult and the devotion to Becket grew exponentially between 1171-73, two monks by the names of William of Canterbury, and Benedict of Peterborough were assigned to stand near Becket's tomb and record the various miracles that were appearing.[149] One reason for appointing these men could be the epistolary tenacity of John of Salisbury in proposing a formal inquiry about the efficacy of these miracles, hoping that somehow they would not go unnoticed by the Holy See.[150] Although the example of miracles he uses are quite vague – he explains that "the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak…" – it does indicate that they were appearing at an alarming rate, and they needed to be investigated further.[151]

Another plausible interpretation of this massive growth could be because of the connections Becket had made throughout his life and career,

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[146] "The Life of St. Thomas Becket, Part Two," 102-103.

[147] "The Life of St. Thomas Becket Part Two," 103; See also, Paul Webster, "Introduction. The Cult of St. Thomas Becket: An Historiographical Pilgrimage," in *The Cult of St. Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, eds. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 6.

[148] Webster, "Introduction," 6.

[149] Webster, "Introduction," 1.

[150] "The Letters of John of Salisbury," 96, 97.

[151] "The Letters of John of Salisbury," 96. This specific letter from the entire corpus of the *Letters*, comes from one that John sent to Bishop John Balmeis of Poitiers, written possibly in January 1170, shortly after Becket's murder. This speaks volumes about the validity of his work.

both as chancellor and as archbishop.[152] An astonishing example of Becket's wide array of connections during his lifetime comes from one of the miracles the saint was associated with in 1173, the sick daughter of a man named Jordan of Plumstead, in Norwich.[153] According to the account, Cecilia – the daughter – had been stricken with some kind of cancer and did not eat for many days. When her father came to her room and found her motionless, believing she was dead, he called out, "O St. Thomas, martyr of God, return me now my service which in the past I zealously paid you…Now I really need you…Remember blessed martyr, how you were sick long ago in Kent in Turstan the clerk's house, and what good service I gave you there…".[154] After repeating this many times, to his astonishment, his daughter was instantly revived. Two women, most probably midwives, examined the girl, and they confirmed that the cancer had miraculously left her body.[155] William, bishop of Norwich, after having witnessed this, and after having received confirmation from the two women, wrote to one of the monks at Canterbury that the girl had her health restored, "by the merits of the most blessed martyr".[156] This may have been one of the first recorded instances where a man who had known Becket throughout his lifetime, prayed to the saint for his intercessory powers, and whose prayers were answered. This indicates that saints were able to give their divine favour to adherents, with regular prayers and constant visitation to their holy pilgrimage site. Additionally, it could also mean that certain individuals, especially the nobility, were able to adopt patron saints, an element of saintly cults that Henry II would use to his advantage.

To elaborate more on this idea of prominent individuals adopting saints as their "own", they might thus be labelled as "political saints".[157] In 1173-74, a great rebellion plagued King Henry II's dominions; involved

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[152] Webster, "Introduction," 10.
[153] *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000-1500: A Reader*, ed. John Shinners (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1997), 170. It is unclear if this miracle was recorded by Benedict or William.
[154] Medieval Popular Religion, 171.
[155] Medieval Popular Religion, 171.
[156] Medieval Popular Religion, 172.
[157] Webster, "Introduction," 17.

were none other than his eldest sons, Henry the Young King, Richard, Geoffrey, his wife Queen Eleanor, King Louis VII of France, as well as William the Lion, the King of Scots.[158] As Henry crossed the Channel to deal with his rebellious family and the noble belligerents, he stopped at Canterbury on 8 July 1174 – by then Becket had already been canonized as a saint in 1173 by Pope Alexander III on sufficient miraculous evidence – to perform an act of penance at Becket's tomb.[159] It was unequivocally believed that Henry was at fault for Becket's murder, and his presence at the tomb undoubtedly confirmed this. William of Canterbury – one of the monks in charge of recording miracles and notable events near the tomb – witnessed the king walking barefoot to the crypt, acknowledging his guilt, submitting himself to penitential discipline – probably flogging – and vowed to pay £40 a year to the site in perpetuity.[160] After spending the night of 12 July in prayer before the tomb, Henry completed his penance and made his way to London on 13 July. A couple of days after Henry visited Becket's tomb, he received a message that William King of Scots, one of the belligerents of the rebellion, was captured on the day he left Canterbury (13 July), and that his eldest son's fleet had been dispersed near the Norman coastal city of Gravelines.[161] This event could be considered another one of Becket's many miracles. Additionally, it might also point towards the idea that Becket's intercessory powers had worked for Henry, meaning that his penance and prayers were possibly genuine. A contemporary historian by the name of Jordan Fantosme, in his *Chronique*, which was written on the great rebellion of 1171-73, inserted an interesting passage: kneeling before Becket's tomb, Henry uttered, "St. Thomas…guard my realm for me. To you I declare myself guilty of that which others have the blame".[162] The great rebellion was over, and if that was in part, or in whole, due to Henry's penance at Canterbury, it is understandable as to why the king would adopt Becket as his patron saint.

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[158] Anne J. Duggan, "Becket is Dead! Long Live St. Thomas," in *The Cult of St. Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, eds. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 36.
[159] Duggan, "Becket Is Dead," 36.
[160] Duggan, "Becket Is Dead," 37.
[161] Duggan, "Becket Is Dead," 37, 38.
[162] Duggan, "Becket Is Dead," 39.

To conclude, it would seem that Becket's dispute with Henry about the clauses of the Constitutions – especially the one about criminous clerks – was finally settled. In 1175-76, Henry made an agreement with Cardinal Hugh Pierleone about the right to appeal to the papacy, and about granting clerical immunity.[163] Becket, in all his guile and stiff-necked pride about the rights and privileges of ecclesiastics, came out on top.

### The Cult of St. Thomas Becket in Norman Leper Houses

The healing miracles that Thomas Becket was associated with made visitation to his cult site vastly desirable. Knowledge of his miracles and cult popularity spread not only throughout the kingdom of England, but also in Normandy. This was no surprise; as Becket was of Norman heritage, it is normal that there would be some institutions devoted to care and healing in that part of the continent; the fact that these were leper houses and hospitals was an interesting part of the narrative.[164] Seeing as though lepers were considered outcasts of society in medieval Europe, it is only fitting that they receive their own care facilities, something put forward by an official degree of the Third Lateran Council in 1189.[165] Two leper houses in Normandy, Mont-aux-Malades, and St. Thomas Aizier, will be the focus of this section.

The healing powers associated with Becket's cult at Canterbury were surely known to patients admitted in the leper houses in Normandy. Lepers were chosen to suffer by God, in order for them to receive the gift of salvation in the afterlife, and St. Thomas's role in healing lepers was made possible by rich benefactors throughout the late 12th and mid-13th centuries.[166] These leper houses varied in size, and ranged from either chapels in cathedrals and castles, to even entire parish churches.[167] It is

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[163] Duggan, "Becket Is Dead," 40.
[164] Elma Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," in *The Cult of St. Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, eds. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 81.
[165] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 81.
[166] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 82, 83.
[167] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 83.

interesting to note that many of Becket's opponents during his episcopal tenure were now benefactors to many of these Norman leper houses, most notable in this respect was the bishop of London, Gilbert Foliot.[168] If we recall the hatred and jealousy demonstrated by Gilbert Foliot toward Becket, it is hard to believe that these dedications were genuine. Perhaps Foliot was just following suit to King Henry's re-dedication of the leper house of Mont-aux-Malades in 1174, and did not want to fall out of the king's favour, especially since after that year Henry adopted Becket as his patron saint and royal protector. It would seem as if the trend of dedicating houses, or parts of houses to Becket's cult in Normandy, was not only a royal prerogative, but one for commoners as well. Remaining within the topic of leper houses, information is given about a man named William of Calix, a leper who donated a house to a certain Holy Trinity nunnery in return for prayers to St. Thomas.[169] The primacy of Mont-aux-Malades as a dedicative and charitable leper house has some historical precedent: its first prior, Nicholas, met Becket when he was gravely ill in St-Gervais in 1161. Nicholas also offered support to Becket while he was exiled in France, and the priory dedicated prayers for the archbishop's well-being while in exile.[170] Brenner connects Henry's re-dedication of the leper house of Mont-aux-Malades was a result of the quashing of the rebellion that his family had instigated back in 1173, whereupon Henry had been in Rouen in August 1174 to solidify his progress, eventually suppressing the rebel forces.[171] Thus, this confirms the idea that Becket had now become a "political saint", and one whose intercessory powers could be "manipulated" for political and military reasons, so to speak. Of course, Henry believed this to be true, and if his penance at Becket's tomb was genuine, it might have been an element useful for future endeavours. Additionally, Mont-aux-Malades may have received massive support for other, more important reasons as well. It was said that it housed Becket's relics, objects that the archbishop would have carried around with him during his life, which, were now considered objects of sanctity. As relics

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[168] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 84-85. Foliot granted the church of Vange to Mont-aux-Malades for the care of lepers.
[169] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 85-86.
[170] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 86, 87.
[171] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 88.

attracted visitors who usually brought with them gifts and donations, it made the site desirable, becoming one of St. Thomas's more popular cult areas in Normandy.[172]

There is much more obscurity regarding the leper house of St. Thomas Aizier. There was some doubt as to whether this small chapel housed any lepers, but this suspicion was confirmed by an archaeological dig conducted in the area between 1998 and 2010.[173] Excavations of burials at the site demonstrated that several individuals suffered from leprosy, indicated by the changes in bone structure around the jaw and nose areas.[174] Other, more mysterious aspects can connect the chapel of St. Thomas Aizier to the devotion of leper care. Located to the South-east of the chapel is a pond which may have been known to cure fevers.[175] Brenner states that bathing was an important therapeutic benefit for lepers, as it would lessen the pain of their lesions and keep them clean.[176] As much as there was some degree of speculation around the chapel of St. Thomas Aizier, the evidence seems plausible. The care of lepers may have been directly associated with the healing capabilities provided by the saint's shrine at Canterbury.

### Becket's Cult in the Later Middle Ages and Early Modern Period: Henry VIII and the Suppression of Becket's Cult in the English Reformation

It is well documented that the Protestant Reformation, and by extension the English Reformation, oversaw the systematic destruction of most Catholic institutions in the first half of the 16th century, especially the cult and veneration of saints and their relics. Henry VIII and his royal agents led a violent suppression and defamation campaign against Thomas Becket, which certainly stemmed from a historical and religious precedent.

But why this hate for Becket specifically? The religious dissent of

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[172] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 89.
[173] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 91.
[174] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 91.
[175] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 91.
[176] Brenner. "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 91, 92.

John Wycliffe and the Lollards in England may well provide the answer. Their evangelical teachings in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, already contentious to begin with, denounced the visitation to Becket's shrine, questioning the very nature of his sanctity.[177] Moreover, and in more general terms, the appropriation of miracle-working to saints, or images of saints, were deemed false: adherents who performed sacred pilgrimages to shrines of saints and willingly venerated their relics were considered idolatrous.[178] Although the visitation of Becket's shrine at Canterbury had drastically stagnated after the 14th century, he was still a popular saint and an important symbol of endurance to those whose cause resonated with defying the abuses of royal power. Evidence of this hatred comes from a specific example. There existed a so-called Margery Backster, who was a member of the Norfolk Lollards, and when she was questioned about the beliefs of the sect she declared that, "Thomas of Canterbury whom the people called St. Thomas, was a false traitor and dampened in hell, because he injuriously endowed the churches with possessions, and raised up many heresies in the church…".[179] The ideas conveyed by the Lollards are often considered precursory elements of Protestantism in England, and many Lollard sermons also played a pivotal role in Becket's denunciation because he defended the church, while the Lollards attacked the institution and what it stood for. In addition, while some of the sermons of preachers continued to praise Becket as an exemplar of piety and devotion, the Lollards taught that he died in defending the "prodigious wealth of the church" and "ecclesiastical avarice rather than ecclesiastical liberty".[180]

The sacral nature of relics was something that many devotees valued and respected throughout the Middle Ages. Relics were the objects left behind by the holy person once they departed from the physical world, and these distinct objects were the subject of intense religious devotion and piety, especially in the High Middle Ages (c. 950-1250). The

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[177] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 144.
[178] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 144.
[179] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 144. Slocum believes that this hatred of Becket among Lollards was because of his popularity, and because of the wealth the church received from regular pilgrimages to his shrine.
[180] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 145.

importance of relics stems from almost every corner of Christendom, and as Julia M. H. Smith has explained, they may have been used in a variety of ways but served a common purpose: whether they were taken out on procession during a battle, or projected to the sick for healing during a epidemic or famine, they acted as mediating objects between the sacred and the mundane.[181] However, this was not the view of Desiderius Erasmus, the famous 16th-century humanist, who viewed relics simply as objects that "the holy man used to wipe the perspiration from his face or his neck, the runnings from his nose, or other such superfluities…".[182] Clearly Erasmus had reservations about the validity of relics, and he not only condemned them as useless but also commented on the cult of relics and how they contributed to the wealth and greed of churches, claiming that they did not need golden statues when so many Christians died of hunger.[183]

Much like Erasmus, William Tyndale's works also influenced the negative attitude toward the cult of Becket and other saints. His *Practise of papistical Prelates* (1532) denotes Becket as a warrior not for the king or the realm, but for the Pope. Tyndale explained that Becket "…put off his helmet, and put on his mitre…laid down his spear and took his cross…against his prince for the pope…".[184] There is no doubt that anti-papal propaganda such as this would have been known to Henry VIII, and would have probably influenced his decision to suppress Becket's cult.

Even as such hatred was being released against Becket, the denunciations from sectarian groups and Christian intellectuals were sporadic at best, never doing much more than stirring up conversations about Becket's life and legacy. This would change in the early 1530s. Following the penitential acts of his predecessor and namesake Henry II, and imitating the actions of most English kings since the 12th century, Henry VIII visited Becket's tomb at Canterbury in 1520, the year which marked the 300th anniversary of the translation of his relics from his tomb,

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[181] Julia M. H. Smith, "Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c.700-1200)," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 181 (2012), 145, 158.
[182] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 146.
[183] Slocum. "Henry VIII and Becket," 147.
[184] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 147.

to an elaborately decorated shrine.[185] However, in the next decade or so, the king's mentality would change, most notably with the help of royal ministers who were trying very hard to approve the king's divorce of Catherine of Aragon.[186] The disapproval of Henry's attempt at divorce was publicly denounced by Archbishop Warham, who claimed that the church's laws and authority should not be encroached upon by a monarch.[187] In the blink of an eye, history was repeating itself and the events of the 1160s were unfolding once again. An archbishop of Canterbury who openly defied royal demands was not something Henry II accepted, and it would seem that Henry VIII would not accept it either. With the help of his devious chancellor Thomas Cromwell, Henry arrested Warham with the charge of breaching the Statute of Praemunire in 1532, which declared that any appeals to the Pope by an ecclesiastical member needed to be approved first by the king. Curiously enough, before Warham's trial and hearing were scheduled to take place, he died.[188] What followed were vicious acts that would denounce Becket's sanctity and promote Henry VIII as the true master of the English Church. While the Act of Supremacy of 1534 would officially promote Henry VIII to the height of ecclesiastical dominance, the First Suppression Act of 1534 is what kickstarted Becket's demise. Henry dissolved all the charters of the English monasteries in 1536, taking the opportunity to seize their wealth and lands, which is, in essence, what Becket had been fighting against in the 1160s.[189] By 1538, the saint's downfall would be complete. Becket's

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[185] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 149; see also Webster, "Introduction," 4, 5.

[186] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 149.

[187] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 149.

[188] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 149, 151. The Stature of Praemunire was enacted in 1392, and it forbade appeals to the Pope without the king's consent. This was certainly based on the clauses proposed by Henry II in the Constitutions of Clarendon back in 1164, but they had now been officially recognized laws. Warham had been arrested on a dubious charge that he had consecrated a bishop before he even swore fealty to the king.

[189] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 152. That is, Becket had been against the occupation of church lands by the laity. It was all part of the wider element of limiting the laity (the crown, agents of the crown, and barons were included in this) access to possibly possessing ecclesiastical lands.

resistance to Henry II's proposition of the Constitutions of Clarendon was an act of open rebellion against royal authority, and the reforming clergy under Henry VIII may have believed that he had become a rallying point to dejected and disgruntled Catholics who opposed and resisted these new reforms.[190] In an official proclamation in 1538 by Cromwell, it asserted that Becket's death was "…untruly called martyrdom…", and declared the knights who murdered Becket as "gentlemen" who acted to "avoid the commotion of the people…".[191] Furthermore, his name was to be deleted from all liturgical books, his images removed from churches, and his feast day expunged.[192] Upon reading this, these declarations resembled an ancient Roman practice called *damnatio memoriae*, which called for the act of removing images, iconography, and sometimes literary mentions of disgraced individuals, purging them permanently from memory and history. Henry VIII's resentment for the disapproval of his divorce forced his hand. His injunctions against Becket were vital in order to remove all remnants of allegiance to the Roman See and to "de-papalize" the English Church.[193] Becket was a symbol of the Church's triumph over the monarchy, and Henry VIII willfully attempted to erase his memory. The prohibition of his feast day also entailed the prohibition of the veneration of his relics, which led to the destruction of his shrine at Canterbury. Thomas Cranmer, the Anglican archbishop who succeeded Warham at Canterbury, suspected that the blood contained inside the "Canterbury Water" was nothing but, "…some sort of red ochre or of such like matter", expressing his views that the miracles associated with Becket were all fabricated.[194] Even during the brief respite of the Counter-Reformation, Reginald Pole commented on the violent desolation of Becket's relics as "barbarity".[195] There was even talk of Henry VIII mixing his relics with earth and firing them from a canon; these were clear signs of the disapproval of Henry's actions in defaming Becket, which resonated with Catholics who, during a brief period of normalcy in the English Counter-

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[190] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 153.
[191] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 153.
[192] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 154.
[193] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 154.
[194] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 155.
[195] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 156.

Reformation, viewed the events of the recent past with extreme distaste.[196] Slocum states that Henry VIII's actions departed from historical and religious precedent, and the king was motivated not by religious zealotry, but by clear political and ideological machinations.[197]

To the adherents and pilgrims of Becket's cult in the late 12th and early 13th century, the future actions of Henry VIII would have probably made them turn in their graves. Here was a martyr for Christ and the Church, and someone who was determined to stand his ground against royal abuses. The translation in 1220 of Becket's *corona*, the relic venerated at Canterbury into an elaborately decorated shrine, meant that the miracles and intercessory powers of the saint were real enough to those who believed in them and witnessed them, and this was enough to deem his relics worthy of a permanent place of reverence and spiritual devotion.[198] Becket's legacy and popularity endured, and this was important to the religious communities in Normandy who devoted their care to lepers in the name of St. Thomas. The spiritual and physical healing of these leper houses not only meant a great deal to the sick who received care in these places but also to the benefactors, often laymen, who asked for prayers on the saint's behalf.[199] The politicization of Becket's powers were also important, to none other than Henry II, who adopted the saint as his protector, and who "aided" Henry defeat the rebellious factions that rose against him in 1173-74. Becket served a wide array of purposes and was a seminal figure in medieval Church-State relations. The widespread devotion of his cult clearly outlines that his actions resonated with ecclesiastics and laymen alike.

## Conclusion

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[196] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 157.

[197] Slocum, "Henry VIII and Becket," 157.

[198] Webster, "Introduction," 4. The translation of Becket's relics was made possible by Archbishop Stephen Langton.

[199] Brenner, "Thomas Becket and Leprosy in Normandy," 88. Brenner, here, mentions the quite remarkable story of a converted Jew by the name of Ralph, a burgess of Rouen, who made a gift in honour of "St. Thomas the martyr" at Mont-aux-Malades.

To conclude, the long narration of the historical developments during Stephen's reign were crucial in helping understand the type of realm Henry II wanted to build. The lawlessness during the civil war, and the displacement of law and order forced Henry to enact some strict legislation concerning the Church, its rights, and its propensity to be lenient while enforcing the judgment of criminous clerks. Unfortunately for Henry, he met stern opposition from Thomas Becket who was wholeheartedly opposed to these laws, and paid for them with his life, upon which he received the gift of martyrdom. The miracles recorded were a sign of Becket's sanctity, and pilgrims from all over Europe flocked to his tomb at Canterbury to be healed or to ask for prayers from the blessed martyr. The selling of *ampullae* indicated the degree of popularity of Becket's tomb, especially since the healing of miracles happened so closely and so rapidly after his death on sacred ground. The Norman leper houses aided the sick, and provided care in Becket's name. However, many of the dedications of these leper houses could have been fashionable, especially after Henry II took notice of them. Still, they were important centers of prayer, care, and healing, which were aspects that linked them very closely to Becket's cult at Canterbury. While Henry VIII's destruction of Becket's shrine was nothing short of evil and vindictive, it indicated the power the saint had in the potential destabilization of the reforms enacted in the 1530s. Becket served his purpose: to uphold the laws of the church, and to put God before king. In the end, he was rewarded with eternal life for his constant perseverance of what he believed was the truth.

# Opinions of the historical information about the conquest of Joshua

*Gabriel Casola*

*THE HISTORICAL TRUTH OF JOSHUA'S CONQUEST* in the Bible is a problematic topic because the answers about it are different. There is evidence to support both views regarding the historicity of Joshua.

Six important figures have expressed opinions about the historical truth of the conquest of Joshua. Daniel Hawk believes that the evaluation of the historical accuracy of the Book of Joshua needs to understand that the interpretation of its content does not match its description that the highlands that became Israel were formed by people who were originally outside of those highlands.[1] Hawk also mentions that at least one challenge of the Book of Joshua presented to historical critics is its miraculous events.[2] Joel

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[1] Daniel L. Hawk, "Christianizing Joshua: Making Sense of the Bible's Book of Conquest," Journal of Theological Interpretation 5, no. 1 (2011): 127, https://web-p-ebscohost-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=9b9e376b-d20e-48aa-99bb-7e7b261c803f%40redis.

[2] Daniel L. Hawk, "The Truth about Conquest: Joshua as History, Narrative, and Scripture," Interpretation 66, no. 2 (2012): 132, https://www-doi-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/10.1177/0020964311434872.

Drinkard thinks that some archaeological evidence seems to be able to support the conquest model of Joshua, but when more excavations were done, a conflict developed about the evidence that was found.[3] David Merling thinks that some people are dissatisfied with the Conquest Theory of Joshua (Joshua and the Israelites invaded the land of Canaan to establish the land of Israel) and the Book of Joshua's explanation about how the Israelites arrived in Canaan to occupy it.[4] Michael Grisanti thinks that there has been a consensus among scholars since the 1960s that Jericho was not related to the Israelite conquest of Canaan. He mentions an essay about Ai.[5] Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman think that there is a discrepancy that has been discovered by archaeology that is between the Bible and Canaan's situation at the date when the conquest was suggested from 1230 BCE to 1220 BCE.[6]

Hawk's article about Christianizing Joshua refers to three people who explain their opinions about the conquest of Joshua.[7] James McConville refers to the history of faith that is inseparable from the biblical tradition.[8] McConville believes that God gave Israel the land as Israel's gift. This does not have to mean that the Book of Joshua needs to be factual

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[3] Joel F. Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua and the Conquest/Settlement Period," Review & Expositor 95, no. 2 (1998): 177, https://web-p-ebscohost-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=9b9e376b-d20e-48aa-99bb-7e7b261c803f%40redis.

[4] David Merling, "The Book of Joshua, Part 1: Its Evaluation by Nonevidence," Andrews University Seminary Studies 39, no. 1 (2001): 61, https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=2672&context=auss.

[5] Michael A. Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scripture," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 56, no. 3 (2013): 480–481, https://web-s-ebscohost-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=903e2fc2-cee9-4300-95d8-0c35bda9c583%40redis.

[6] Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts, 1st ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 76.

[7] Hawk, "Christianizing Joshua," 127.

[8] James G. McConville and Stephen N. Williams, Joshua, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 257.

according to how modern history is required to be.[9] For example, McConville refers to the story about the fall of Jericho which is theologized and ritualized signalling that this story does not convey a factual account. McConville argues that the account of Jericho has been written for an audience in particular. Furthermore, McConville continues to explain that the account has encoded conventions in particular that may not conform to modern standards of historiography. However, the event of Jericho is rendered for every generation of listeners to experience a fresh history of Jericho.[10]

Stephen Williams notices an essential connection between the veracity in the theology and history of Joshua. Williams proposes that if the Book of Joshua is merely history that is constructed and that does not have an objective foundation in events from history, then Williams considers the Book of Joshua "a religious monstrosity mounted on a historical fake."[11] Williams scolds scholars of the Bible because they treat realities that are purported as ideas that sidestep the fundamental import of events that are testified in biblical texts. Williams compares Jesus Christ's resurrection to the Book of Joshua because it seems to have an indirect claim about Israel entering its land and partially occupying it with military force. Furthermore, Williams notes that Christ's resurrection cannot be dispassionately examined, particularly by people persuaded to believe that the event is possibly true. Williams believes that the same is true about Israel's claim of entering and occupying some land using military force. Williams thinks that to proceed from faith to affirm a judgement on historicity would be indefensible intellectually and interpreting archaeological data can be a subject to question.[12]

Douglas Earl believes that to focus on the history and objectify the text of the Book of Joshua causes its significance that is existential to be obscured.[13] Earl notes that to objectify is a way for myths to tire and die,

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[9] McConville and Williams, Joshua, 257.

[10] Ibid.

[11] McConville and Williams, Joshua, 257.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Douglas S. Earl, *Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture*, Journal for Theological Interpretation Supplement Series 2 (Winona Lake, IN:

and he detaches the question about historicity from the theological meaning of the Book of Joshua. Furthermore, Earl notes that the Book of Joshua might be able to convey a trajectory that is historical from a history of Israel's salvation despite the possibility that the events reported from the Book of Joshua did not occur. Earl continues to explain that a conquest might not have happened.[14] McConville and Earl refer to the concept of cultural memory, which is a way for the historical significance of Joshua's history to be conceived. They continue to explain that cultural memory considers the fluidity and complexity of memory. It has a role to shape and reflect tradition and constitute communities and it has an orientation to understanding the self and encouragement in the present. McConville and Earl believe that the cultural memory concept can address issues of historicity and composition such as the concept can remind interpreters that Israel remembered events differently from readers in modern times and these differences about remembering are embedded culturally.[15][16]

Hawk's article about the truth about the Conquest explains that a significant challenge in the Book of Joshua for historical critics is the miraculous events. Hawk explains that those events indicated from the conquest account of Joshua are a rendering that is mythological and obscures the real events to readers who consider the miraculous events scientifically. Hawk believes that the Book of Joshua has some events that are the most spectacular in the Hebrew Bible such as when the waters at the Jordan River are stopped, and Joshua encounters a commander of a heavenly army.[17] Also, Hawk thinks the narrative from the Book of Joshua shows an incoherence that complicates the task of reconstructing the events and the compositional history of the Book of Joshua.[18] Hawk uses the example of the entry of Israel into the land by a military conquest where the nation takes possession of the land entirely to remove or annihilate all of the people that were there before the Israelites without effective opposition. Hawk continues to explain that when the reader follows the claims of the Israelites'

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Eisenbrauns, 2010), 277.

[14] Earl, Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture, 277.

[15] Earl, Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture, 277.

[16] McConville and Williams, Joshua, 257.

[17] Hawk, "The Truth about Conquest," 132.

[18] Ibid.

total victory of the land, the Book of Joshua then reports to readers that there is a land of great swaths that has not yet been possessed by the Israelites. Hawk further explains that subsequent materials portray an occupation of Israel that takes place over a long time and is punctuated by the failures of the Israelites. Furthermore, Hawk identifies that there is confusing reporting in the Book of Joshua that characterizes episodes in that book individually such as the account about the crossing of the Jordan River. Hawk refers to the Jordan River crossing because it "doubles back on itself,"[19] and it repeats elements. Also, there are two explanations offered about the erection of the shrine at Gilgal. Hawk also addresses the depiction of a rapid and massive conquest from the Book of Joshua that creates a conflict on the account of the origins of Israel that emerged from analyzing archaeology. Hawk thinks that when the Book of Joshua is set aside, the remains of archaeological material suggest the idea that Israel emerged from Indigenous groups within Canaan rather than Israelites entering the land of Canaan using an invasion of force.[20]

Drinkard refers to evidence that may support the Conquest model of Joshua. Then, Drinkard refers to the Book of Joshua that describes sites that were captured and destroyed such as Lachish, Debir, and Hazor at least.[21] Drinkard continues to explain that there is an idea that excavations at Lachish done in the 1930s showed evidence that seemed to support the destruction in the general time frame of 1250 BCE to 1200 BCE.[22] Furthermore, Drinkard refers to William Albright who excavated at Tell Beit Mirsim, which Albright identified as the biblical city of Debir, and Albright found a layer of major destruction during the time period of 1250 BCE to 1200 BCE.[23] Drinkard also refers to evidence from a case study in Hazor that was excavated by Yigael Yadin first during the 1950s and then it was excavated again in work that was ongoing by Amnon Ben-Tor. Drinkard thinks that Ben-Tor found evidence at the site at Hazor that clearly showed that it was caused by massive destruction and burning that was

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[19] Hawk, "The Truth about Conquest," 132.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua," 177.

[22] David Ussishkin, "Lachish," ABD 4, K–N, 119–120.

[23] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua," 177.

subsequent towards the end of the 13th century BCE, which is at the time suggested by Albright's model of the destruction layer that he found. Drinkard believes that the evidence from Hazor agrees with the biblical description from the tenth chapter of the Book of Joshua about the destruction in general.[24] Drinkard refers to Ben-Tor's discoverer of evidence that there was no Philistine presence at Hazor and no destruction of figurines that were Egyptian and Canaanite to justify that the Israelites only could have been the ones to destroy Hazor.[25]

However, Drinkard explains that when more excavations were undertaken in general, more problems emerged from evidence that was found. Drinkard refers to sites that were destroyed such as Jericho and Ai, but the sites did not give evidence that they were destroyed at the same point in time. Drinkard believes the layers of destruction could be separated by a half of a century at least or more than that, which is not evidence of what Drinkard refers to as a blitzkrieg assault that may be interpreted from the Book of Joshua. Moreover, Drinkard thinks it is disturbing that there were sites that produced no evidence of destruction from the 13th century BCE. Drinkard refers to Judith Marquet-Krause's excavation located at the site of et-Tell, which is biblical Ai.[26] Drinkard explains that Marquet-Krause failed to discover evidence pertaining to destruction of Ai from the 13th century BCE, and Marquet-Krause found that was abandoned approximately between 2400 BCE to 1200 BCE.[27]

Also, Drinkard refers to Kathleen Kenyon who had re-excavated Jericho during the 1950s by using a meticulous methodology that was stratigraphic.[28] Drinkard explains that Kenyon found that the destruction layer that John Garstang found when he excavated in Jericho was destroyed during the Middle Bronze Age period of 1560 BCE, which was believed to be too early for the time of the Book of Joshua.[29] Drinkard continues to

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[24] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua," 177.

[25] . "Biblical Archaeology: From the Ground Down." Biblical Archaeological Society, 1996. Biblical Archaeological Society.

[26] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua," 177–178.

[27] Joseph A. Callaway, "Ai," ABD 1, A–C, 125–130.

[28] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua," 178.

[29] Kathleen M. Kenyon, Archaeology in the Holy Land, 5th ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 208.

explain that Kenyon also discovered that Jericho was abandoned during most of the Late Bronze Age.[30] Drinkard continues to explain that Kenyon discovered that Jericho only had a settlement that small that existed from approximately 1400 BCE to 1300 BCE based on some burials that provided evidence of permanent settlement at that time.[31] Drinkard also explains that excavators after Kenyon tried to justify that she misinterpreted the evidence from the Late Bronze Age, but those excavators did not find any more evidence than Kenyon.[32]

Merling refers to William Dever who thinks there are proponents of Joshua's Conquest Theory that are at the forefront of accumulating information. That includes the intention to support the theory about the idea of the Israelites taking Canaan from their military conquest of the land of Canaan.[33] Merling explains a problem with Joshua's Conquest Theory and the explanation about the Israelites occupying Canaan from the Book of Joshua.[34] Merling continues to explain that the problem is that no evidence has been found by archaeologists that can be correlated to the Book of Joshua.[35] Merling refers to Thomas Thompson to explain that some people conclude that Joshua's Conquest Theory and the Book of Joshua are disproved by archaeological evidence.[36] Merling refers to at least one excavation site in Gibeon or el-Jib that did not provide substantial evidence for the accounts from the Book of Joshua. Merling believes that a consensus is developing that is about the history of the Book of Joshua that is believed to be unreliable.[37] Merling refers to J.M. Miller who explains that the Israelite conquest and et-Tell are not based according to evidence that was found at et-Tell, but because there was a lack of evidence found. Merling

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[30] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua," 178.

[31] Kathleen M. Kenyon, Digging Up Jericho, (London: Ernest Benn, 1957).

[32] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua," 178.

[33] William G. Dever, "Is There Any Archaeological Evidence for the Exodus?," in Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence, ed. Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 76–77.

[34] David Merling, The Book of Joshua, 59–62.

[35] Merling, "The Book of Joshua, Part 1," 62.

[36] Thomas L. Thompson, Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources (New York: Brill, 1994), 158.

[37] Merling, "The Book of Joshua, Part 1," 63.

continues to refer to J.M. Miller who further explains that from the previous point in other words archaeologists did not discover anything that could substantiate information from the Book of Joshua.[38]

Grisanti believes that archaeologists that are skilled and important scholars of the Bible are embracing the conclusion that Jericho is unrelated to any of the conquests of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. Grisanti explains that some people believe that Kathleen Kenyon's decision about the dating for Jericho's destruction requests that the Jericho's destruction could have been caused by the army of the Israelites which is part of the conquest about the promised land remains a possible idea that could explain the destruction of Jericho.[39]

Also, Grisanti refers to an essay by Bryant Wood that lists the archaeological and topographical features people should expect from the site that is Ai compared to the Book of Joshua in chapters seven and eight.[40] Grisanti continues to explain that Wood concludes that the biblical parameters for the site of Ai do not match et-Tell.[41]

Instead, Grisanti refers to Wood's argument that Khirbet El Maqatir has features that are archaeological and topographical that relate to Ai in the Bible.[42] Grisanti gives reasons for Wood's argument and one reason is that Khirbet El Maqatir had been occupied during the time of the Late Bronze Age at approximately 1406 BCE. Another reason Grisanti refers to Wood is that Khirbet El Maqatir contained an abundance of pottery from the 15th century BCE.[43] Furthermore, Grisanti refers to the idea that Ai in the Bible was fortified during Joshua's conquest, Wood explains that Khirbet el-Maqatir had a small fortress from the late period of the Bronze Age, and the

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[38] J. Maxwell Miller, "Archaeology and the Israelite Conquest of Canaan: Some Methodological Observations," Palestine Exploration Quarterly 109 (1977): 88.
[39] Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries," 481.
[40] Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries," 481.
[41] Bryant G. Wood, "The Search for Joshua's Ai," in Critical Issues in Early Israelite History (ed. Richard S. Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Paul J. Ray Jr.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008) 210–12.
[42] Wood, "The Search for Joshua's Ai," 230–31.
[43] Ibid. 231–36.

walls of Khirbet el-Maqatir's fortress were four meters of thickness.[44] Grisanti refers to Wood's idea that Khirbet el-Maqatir had a gate on the north side and Ai also had a gate on the north side. Grisanti mentions one last reason from Wood that there is evidence of a destruction from a fire that occurred in Khirbet el-Maqatir because of ash, pottery that was refired, building stones that were burnt and bedrock that was calcined.[45] Grisanti refers to Ai which was destroyed by a fire in Joshua's conquest from the Bible. Grisanti mentions that Khirbet el-Maqatir has not been confirmed to be the site of Ai from the Bible, but the reasons from Wood and the location of Khirbet el-Maqatir appear to match the area of Israel's conquest of Ai in the Bible. Grisanti explains that the evidence from Khirbet el-Maqatir makes it clear to suggest that scholars who made sweeping generalized statements that et-Tell has clear evidence that the narrative from the seventh and eighth chapters of the Book of Joshua are not historical is an idea that should be rejected.[46]

Finkelstein and Silberman refer to evidence from Egypt about the Amarna letters that explain that Canaan was a province of Egypt that was controlled closely by the administration of Egypt. However, Finkelstein and Silberman explain that in the Bible no Egyptians are reported to be outside of the borders of the nation of Egypt, and no Egyptians are mentioned in any of the battles in Canaan from the Book of Joshua. Finkelstein and Silberman continue to explain that texts that are contemporary and archaeological discoveries in Canaan indicated that the Egyptians carefully managed and watched the Canaanite affairs. Finkelstein and Silberman refer to Canaanite princes of cities that are described in the Book of Joshua as enemies that were powerful, but they were actually pathetically weak in reality.[47]

Also, Finkelstein and Silberman mention that typical Canaanite cities had no city walls, so there were no fortifications to protect those cities.

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[44] Bryant Wood, "Outstanding Finds Made at Khirbet el-Maqatir: May 28–June 8, 2012," http://www.biblearchaeology.org/ post/2012/07/17/Outstanding-Finds-Made-at-Khirbet-el-Maqatir-May-28e28093June-8-2012.aspx (accessed March 24, 2022).

[45] Wood, "Outstanding Finds Made at Khirbet el-Maqatir."

[46] Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries," 481.

[47] Finkelstein and Silberman, The Bible Unearthed, 76–77.

Finkelstein and Silberman refer to the idea that this is not like the Canaanite cities in Joshua's conquest narrative because some of those are at least protected by fortifications. Another reference to the Amarna letters from Finkelstein and Silberman is the situation of the 14th century BCE, which is about 100 years before the date when it is supposed that there was a conquest from the Israelites. Furthermore, Finkelstein and Silbermann mention that no source that has detailed information about Canaanite affairs in the 13th century BCE.[48] Moreover, Finkelstein and Silberman explain that the ruler throughout most of the 13th century BCE in Egypt was the Pharaoh Ramesses II who was unlikely to slacken the oversight of his military for Canaan.[49] Finkelstein and Silberman continue to explain that Pharaoh Ramesses II was strong as a king who was really interested in affairs that were foreign. Finkelstein and Silberman refer to other literary and archaeological indications that appear to show that Egypt's control of Canaan was in the 13th century BCE stronger than it ever was before. Furthermore, Finkelstein and Silberman explain that when there were reports of unrest, the army of Egypt would cross the Sinai desert and the army could defeat forces of rebels easily then the army could impose on the local population in that area its will.[50]

Finkelstein and Silberman refer to evidence found in Megiddo, an ancient Canaanite city that contained Egyptian influence that was from as late as the time of Ramesses VI, who was the ruler near the end of the 12th century BCE. Finkelstein and Silberman explain that the evidence from Megiddo was after the supposed Israelite conquest of Canaan. Furthermore, Finkelstein and Silberman think that it is not very likely that garrisons from Egypt in Canaan would not have gotten involved if there were refugees that were a group that came from Egypt and then wreaked havoc in Canaan. Moreover, Finkelstein and Silberman believe that it would be inconceivable if the destruction of many cities that were vassals by Israelite invaders would have not been mentioned at all in the records of the Egyptian empire that were extensive. Finkelstein and Silberman refer to a mention of the name Israel from Merneptah's victory stele that announces that the people from

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[48] Finkelstein and Silberman, The Bible Unearthed, 77–78.
[49] Finkelstein and Silberman, The Bible Unearthed, 78.
[50] Ibid.

Israel who were obscure and lived in Canaan suffered a crushing defeat from the Egyptians.[51]

Although, Finkelstein and Silberman mention a counterargument to Egyptian evidence.[52] One example is the imposing mound that is Tell ed-Duweir in the Shephelah, where there is a site that was identified with the biblical city of Lachish in the Book of Joshua. Finkelstein and Silberman continue to explain that it was an expedition from the British in the 1930s that discovered the remains of a Late Bronze Age city that was destroyed by a conflagration.[53]

Daniel Hawk, Joel Drinkard, David Merling, Michael Grisanti, Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman explain their opinions that pertain to the historical truth of the conquest of Joshua. Hawk considers the historical accuracy evaluation of the Book of Joshua must comprehend that interpreting its content is not the same as it is described. The description is that the highlands that became Israel are formed by individuals that did not come from the highlands.[54] Hawk comprehends that critics of history are challenged by the events of miracles that are in the Book of Joshua.[55] Despite that Drinkard mentions evidence from archeology that could favour the occurrence of events of Joshua for the model of conquest, but that evidence was flawed.[56] Merling's opinion is that there are individuals who are not satisfied with the theory of conquest about Joshua and the explanation of Israelites occupying Canaan in the Book of Joshua.[57] Grisanti understands that since the 1960s, scholars established a consensus that Jericho was unrelated to the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites.[58] Although there is a counterargument, Finkelstein and Silberman consider a discrepancy that was found by archeology between the situation of Canaan and the Bible when the conquest was thought to have happened between

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[51] Finkelstein and Silberman, The Bible Unearthed, 79.
[52] Finkelstein and Silberman, The Bible Unearthed, 79.
[53] Finkelstein and Silberman, The Bible Unearthed, 80.
[54] Hawk, "Christianizing Joshua," 127.
[55] Hawk, "The Truth about Conquest," 132.
[56] Drinkard, "The History and Archaeology," 177.
[57] Merling, "The Book of Joshua Part 1," 61.
[58] Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries," 480¬¬–481.

1230 BCE to 1220 BCE.[59] All of those authors are examples of opinions about the historical truth about the conquest of Joshua.

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[59] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 76.

# The origin and purpose of the Johannine prologue:

## An introductory case study of biblical methodologies

*Grayson Thompson*

*THE PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN* is one of the most well-known and deeply studied texts for members of the church and biblical scholars alike. Its monumental claim that the Word was with God in the beginning has been instrumental in the development of central Christological doctrines throughout history, including the incarnation, Christ's divine nature and the Trinity. As theologically rich and significant as this text has been interpreted to be, there are multiple problems that arise when looking at it closely, including its authorship, issues of potential redactions and its purpose within the Fourth Gospel. The aim of this research paper is to identify the potential origins of the prologue, and to determine its theological function within the greater gospel account by examining these problems. This process will involve an inductive study of the text that provides an introductory survey of many predominant exegetical methods utilized by biblical scholars.

The text is marked by its appeal to both Jewish and Greek readers, which can be seen in the very first verse: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." For Jewish readers in antiquity who were intimately familiar with the very first line of the Hebrew Bible, this introduction recalled the account in which their God created the

heavens and the earth and placed the new story of the gospel at the beginning of this ancient narrative of Israel. The element that this passage adds to the Creation account is the Word, a translation of the Greek *logos*, a very loaded term for which there is no adequate English equivalent. *Logos* was a popular Greek philosophical idea which referred to the divine principle of reason that brings order to all things in the universe, which in this passage is associated with the person of Christ. Identifying Jesus as the pre-existent *logos* elevates him to a divine position that would intrigue and may have offended both the Jewish and Greek audiences, since such a high Christology had not been presented in the three earlier synoptic gospels.[1]

This depiction of Christ as the pre-existent *logos* demonstrates the radical nature of the prologue and the Christological implications such claims could have on the church's understanding of the person of Jesus. Because the author of the Fourth Gospel asserts the pre-existence of Christ in the prologue more explicitly than any other New Testament writer, the text has proved to be a theological backbone for the longstanding and orthodox view within the Christian church of Christ as divine. [2] This development in the doctrine of Christ's divine nature eventually led to the Council of Nicaea's usage of the term *homoousios,* which describes Christ as being of one substance with the Father.[3] *Homoousios* became fundamental to the doctrine of the Trinity, which for many Christians is a concept that is crucial in grasping the essence of God's nature.[4] With all this considered, it is no exaggeration to say that the Johannine Prologue is one of the most important texts in Christian theology. If it did not exist, Christianity might look vastly different, yet scholars have come across a considerable number of problems with the prologue, especially for a text that is so vital to mainstream Christology and so widely renowned by the church.

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[1] Ernst Haenchen, "A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6," *Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary of the Bible* (Fortress Press, 1980), 109.

[2] Robert Dean Kysar, "Christology and Controversy: The Contributions of the Prologue of the Gospel of John to New Testament Christology and Their Historical Setting," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 5, no.6 (1978): 351.

[3] Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 12.

[4] Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 226.

## Part 1: Methodology

The central aim of this paper, as stated previously, will be to decipher the purpose of the prologue within the gospel by determining its origin. This will be accomplished by examining three main problems with the text. The first problem is that the prologue seems to be discordant with the rest of the gospel of John in both style and content. Critics have drawn attention to certain terminology and structuring that is exclusive to the prologue and is absent from the remainder of the account, leading to the consensus that it constitutes a literary unit that is independent of the original gospel.  Secondly, there are several portions of the prologue that seem to break its rhythm, especially those mentioning John the Baptist, that have led scholars to believe that certain parts of the text were inserted or changed later. There is significant contention among scholars surrounding which parts are foreign and which parts constitute the original, based on many internal factors.[5] The third problem follows the first two, which is that the prologue seems to have been redacted, probably numerous times, and was added to the original Gospel of John. Many scholars believe that the prologue expounds a theology that is not entirely consistent with the gospel as a whole, and this issue would adequately explain that inconsistency. To sufficiently understand the prologue, the traditions that potentially lie behind these differences would have to be explored. Once these factors are considered, a reasonable conclusion about the prologue's origin can be reached.

The first problem of the distinctive nature of the prologue to the rest of the gospel will be addressed through genre criticism and an exploration of its unique terminology and themes. The mainstream consensus proposed by Bultmann will be investigated, that the passage was a hymn of some kind that had been reworked. Alternative explanations that have been offered by critics who disagree with Bultmann's theory will also be presented.

The second issue involving potential additions to the prologue will primarily be approached with textual and redaction criticism. A few textual variants within the passage need to be analyzed, since some of the variants have theological significant implications and can potentially offer clues to theological agendas behind its manuscript history. Redaction criticism will be used to identify which parts of the original source text could have been modified or added by the author or a later redactor, based on how they may have wanted the reader to interpret the gospel account.

The third problem is determining the origins of this text, given its

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[5] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 122.

content, its terminology, and its redactions. Secondary sources will be consulted that present theories as to where this hymn came from and what the author's reasoning may have been for making it the prologue to his gospel account. This will involve an examination of the theologically unconventional parts of the text that may shed light on the nature of the community from which it emerged. Intertextuality will be employed to consider influences from Judaism and Hellenism, since the core ideas of the prologue seem to have their roots in Stoicism, the Hebrew Wisdom tradition and the work of Philo that blends these ideologies together.

### Part 2: Overview of the Gospel of John

Before delving into the prologue, the gospel of John as a whole should briefly be reviewed. The Fourth Gospel differs drastically from the synoptics in a few important ways. First, the Gospel of John presents a high Christology. Each gospel account portrays the person of Jesus with a different emphasis; Matthew presents him as King of the Jewish people, Mark as a suffering servant and Luke as a savior of the oppressed. The Gospel of John really emphasizes the divine nature of Christ as the Son of God. This is evident in the prologue of the gospel, which places him with God before Creation, whereas the synoptics begin either with his birth or with the beginning of his earthly ministry.[6] The authors of the synoptics focus on the life, ministry, and death of Jesus, whereas the author of John seems to convey that Christ has always been present and active, much like the personified Divine Wisdom of the Hebrew Tradition, which will be explored later.[7] The gospel of John synthesizes these two understandings of Jesus as both the divine, pre-existent Logos and the suffering Son of Man.[8]

The author of the gospel makes his intention clear at the end of chapter 20, saying "these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." (20:31) Though there is a textual variant for this passage that reads "continue to believe" rather than "come to believe" which would mean the gospel serves to uplift believers and not convert outsiders,

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[6] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 101.

[7] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 117.

[8] William O. Walker Jr., "John 1:43-51 and 'The Son of Man' in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 17, no.56 (1995): 40.

[9] R.E. Glaze Jr., "Introduction to the Gospel of John," *The Theological Educator* 38 (1988): 74.

[10] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 101.

both readings include the author's emphasis on belief in Jesus as the Son of God. This theme is made evident by the pre-eminence of Christ in the prologue as well as the miraculous signs that make up most of chapters 2-11,[9] which point the reader to the divinity of Christ.[10] These characteristics, along with long passages of explanatory dialogue unique to John's gospel, lead scholars like Glaze to conclude that the author probably picked certain stories and teachings from the synoptics and adapted them to his own account to address questions within his own community, particularly with regard to false teachings like Docetism. In the eyes of the author, this fourth gospel would clarify any doctrines that were not made plain in the previous three gospels, namely that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who really became incarnate and died on the cross.[11]

The issue of authorship is important when analyzing the gospel of John, and more specifically the prologue, since some sort of information about the author's background could help to define the ideology that lies behind the enigmatic elements of the text. Traditionally the account has been attributed to John the Apostle, but this theory has been largely abandoned because of how much later the text is dated after the life of John, and the sophisticated Greek language and theology is unlikely to have derived from a first-century fisherman. The mainstream view within modern scholarship is that most of the material was preserved within a Christian Johannine community and was finally written down sometime between 90-110 AD by the anonymous author, known as "The Evangelist." Chapter 21, the final chapter of the gospel, is believed to have been added later (potentially alongside 7:53-8:11 and 13:36-38 according to Macgregor and Morton),[12] since chapter 20 seems quite clearly to conclude the account. In short, the authorship of John's gospel is a complex subject without a clear answer because of its fragmentary nature, and the same applies to its prologue.


### Part 3: The Distinctive Nature of the Prologue

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[11] R.E Glaze Jr., Introduction to the Gospel of John, 73.

[12] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 79;
G.H.C MacGregor and A.Q. Morton, *The Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961).

The first issue that will be addressed regarding the Johannine prologue is that it differs greatly in style and in content from the rest of the gospel account. Scholars have struggled to classify the genre of the prologue because of its vague relationship to the story that it precedes. Rudolf Schnackenburg summarizes this problem succinctly in his commentary on the gospel of John, when he asks of the prologue "what is its point as the opening section?"[13] He goes on to list a multitude of possibilities as to the genre of the prologue in relation to the gospel, including an overture, a hymn of praise or a piece of writing that is meant to be studied apart from the gospel itself. This section will be dedicated to analyzing a few of those possibilities by looking at the work of various scholars.

Jerome Neyrey proposes that elements of classical rhetoric need to be considered when analyzing the prologue, since the Evangelist likely would have been trained in rhetoric and would have employed several common rhetorical methods in the structuring of his gospel account.[14] The purpose of an introduction or *bios* in this type of writing would be to construct an *ethos* for the main subject of the narrative, Christ in this case. Neyrey argues that the Evangelist could be accomplishing this purpose through a few rhetorical methods like *encomium, syncresis* or *narratio* but only a method called *exordium* will be explored here.

*Exordium* was initially defined by Aristotle, who saw it as a way of giving the reader an idea of what was to come in the remainder of the narrative. In a way, it was an introduction that was meant to prepare the audience to correctly receive the content to follow.  It would prime them to pay attention to specific thematic elements as the story unfolded, since "what remains undefined makes the attention wander."[15] To determine whether the Johannine prologue can be classified as an *exordium*, its main themes would need to be identified within the remaining narrative of the gospel.

To make these connections, Neyrey references the work of J.A.T. Robinson, who made 12 thematic connections between the prologue and the

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[13] Jerome H. Neyrey, "Rhetoric and the Prologue of John: An Invitation to a New Conversation," *Biblica* 101, no. 3 (2020): 373;
Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Crossroad, 1968), 221.

[14] Neyrey, "Rhetoric and the Prologue", 374.

[15] J.G. Van der Watt, "The Composition of the Prologue of John's Gospel: The Historical Jesus Introducing Divine Grace," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 57, no.2 (1995): 332.

gospel narrative,[16] a few of which will be listed here as examples. Christ being labeled as the pre-existent Logos in 1:1 connects to 17:5, where Jesus mentions in his prayer to the Father "the glory I had in your presence before the world existed." 1:5 states, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" which seems to foreshadow 3:19 which says, "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." The children of God being said to have been born of God rather than of flesh is presented in 1:13 and repeated in 3:6 when Jesus says to Nicodemus, "what is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit." Robinson's work here shows the clear relationship between some of the concepts within the prologue and those found in the main narrative. This correlation alone does not fully solve the problem of where exactly the prologue came from and what it is meant to accomplish, but invoking the possibility of the author's use of *exordium* sheds light on some of the thematic elements of the gospel that the prologue emphasizes for the reader.

The most renowned theory regarding the genre of the prologue is the proposal of Rudolf Bultmann, one of the most important and influential scholars in the study of Johannine works. Bultmann argues that the text is rooted in a hymn that had been theologically reworked to reflect the views of the Evangelist and possibly of the gospel's later redactors. Bultmann made this conclusion based on the style of the prologue, which he claims is made up of a series of couplets with brief interruptions caused by changes to the original hymn. [17] These interruptions could have been the result of either the Evangelist appropriating the hymn to the message of his gospel through minor alterations or of redactors seeking to clarify certain ideas. These alternative theories will be explored further in a later section.

In his study of Jewish didactic hymn traditions, Matthew Gordley explains some of the characteristics identified by Bultmann leading to the speculation of a hymn being behind the prologue, and demonstrates what the original form of the hymn may have been. This particular genre of writing, known as didactic hymnody, is "a kind of composition that instructs

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[16] J.A. Robinson, The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John, NTS 9 (1962-63): 120-29.

[17] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 101;
Rudolf Bultmann, "Untersuchungen zum Johannesevangelium," in *Exegetica: Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1967).

an audience even as it praises the divine."[18] These were somewhat common in the ancient world, specifically in Judaism as illustrated by the psalms, which are structured as songs but are also at times meant to teach something valuable about God, the world or themselves. Because the history of the Jewish people is so important to Judaism, these didactic hymns are often characterized by a review of certain historical events to remind believers of important elements of their faith. Gordley identifies seven different periods in this history that are covered by the prologue, where the hymn makes claims about the presence of the *logos* at these points in time: before creation (vv.1-2); the process of creation (vv.3-4); in the world after creation (vv.5-9); rejection by the Jewish people (vv. 10-11); acceptance by some of the Jews (vv.12-13); the *logos* made flesh (v.14); grace and truth brought about by Christ (vv.16-17).[19]

Using this basis of seven points in the history of Israel, Gordley provides a sketch of what the original hymn may have looked like. He breaks the prologue down into seven strophes that mirror one another in structure and bring clarity to the original form of the text.[20] The first strophe, made up of verses 1 and 2, is as follows:

> In the beginning was the Word,
>
> and the Word was with God,
>
> and the Word was God.
>
> He was in the beginning with God.

The remaining strophes would follow a similar structure. The third strophe, for example, which is verses 5 and 9 since verses 6-8 are believed to have been a later insertion, is as follows:

> The light shines in the darkness,

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and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light,

which enlightens every person,

was coming into the world.


Each of the seven strophes are defined by the same pattern and are meant to reflect a different historical epoch. Though this structure and intention may not be perfectly accurate as to the original state of the hymn, this example presented by Gordley helps to understand the genre of the prologue better and gives weight to Bultmann's theory.

The concept of *exordium* and the didactic hymn structure help to identify the elements of the prologue that distinguish it from the rest of the gospel account. Final conclusions about the specific origin and purpose of the prologue will not be drawn at this point but given the information that has been explored thus far, it seems logical to assume that the text is rooted in a hymn of some kind that was reworked by the Evangelist to serve as an introduction to the themes that run through the Gospel of John.


### Part 4: The Fragmentary Nature of the Prologue

As mentioned previously, the Evangelist likely reworked the hymn in certain ways to suit his theological agenda, and it may have additionally been changed by redactors. The complex redactional history makes study of the prologue very confusing for scholars since there is virtually no consensus over which verses are part of the original.[21] Some parts, like vv. 6-8 are more or less unanimously understood as being foreign, but this leaves the question of who added them and for what purpose. Other problems have arisen like textual variants that are difficult to decipher and for which there is no shared consensus in scholarship. These issues will be addressed in this section, to determine if and how the theological essence of the hymn and prologue were altered or misunderstood in some way.

The most obvious addition will be detailed first: vv.6-8. It reads as follows:


There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

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[21] Haenchen, *Hermeneia,* 122.

He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

He himself was not the light,

But he came to testify to the light.


The first problem with this section is that it interrupts verses 5 and 9, which follow the rhythm of the rest of the hymn. Secondly, the inclusion of John the Baptist in the narrative at this point is abrupt and nonsensical. It disrupts the flow of the prologue both in style and in content. This pericope was certainly not a part of the original hymn, and Ernst Haenchen gives a few reasons for why it may have been added. According to Haenchen's view, vv.6-8 were inserted by a redactor who believed that v.5 was an early reference to the incarnation of the *logos*. In the eyes of this redactor, "an account of John the Baptist had to be given prior to the appearance of Jesus."[22] This addition solved that problem while dealing with another potential issue that the redactor had with the text, that being the risk of John the Baptist being labeled as "the light" described in this passage. Vv. 6-8 make it clear that John the Baptist is subordinate to Jesus Christ.[23]

Though there is some variance among scholars as to whether vv.6-8 were the work of the Evangelist himself or a redactor, there is general agreement that this section was not a part of the original hymn. There are theories that have emerged however, that contradict this idea that have gained some traction over time. For example, the claim of J.A.T. Robinson that vv.6-8 along with v.15, which also focuses on John the Baptist, constituted the original introduction to the gospel narrative.[24] This hypothesis makes sense on its face, since the beginning of the narrative after the prologue is about the ministry of John the Baptist, so it seems to be a logical connection. Robinson argues that the rest of the prologue was added as a response to the heresy of Docetism, which had arisen as a threat to the early church.[25] The added content of the prologue that claimed that Jesus had "become flesh and lived among us" (v.14) was meant to combat the Docetic idea that Jesus' incarnation and suffering were only illusory.

[22] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 116.

[23] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 116

[24] Warren Carter. "The Prologue and John's Gospel: Function, Symbol and the Definitive Word." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 12, no. 39 (1990): 36;

Robinson. The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John, 120-29.

[25] Carter, Function, Symbol and the Definitive Word, 36.

Though this is a compelling and interesting argument, Carter points out that it relies too much on one part of the prologue, that being v.14, and that Robinson's "anti-docetic emphasis does not adequately embrace the content of the prologue."[26]

This assertion of the priority of vv.6-8 is further supported by Boismard and Brown who call attention to 1 Samuel 1:1a, which reads as follows: "There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah." According to this claim, verse 6 of the prologue was meant to mirror this introduction to 1 Samuel, which would have made vv.6-8 "the primary text, the assimilated hymn the secondary one."[27] This theory does not completely do away with the possibility of a hymnal structure proposed by Bultmann, but simply calls into question which material constituted the prologue in the first version of the gospel. The priority of vv.6-8 is an engaging theory because of how naturally it fits with the narrative that immediately follows the prologue, while the hymnal material is more elaborate in its theological claims, making it seem like a later remedy for doctrinal misunderstandings.

The prologue also contains two textual variants that should be discussed. The first variant is in vv.3-4 and Reading A is, "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people." In contrast, Reading B is, "All things came into being through him. And without him not one thing came into being that has come into being. In him was life and the life was the light of all people." Though seemingly insignificant, the variants of this text have been used to support Gnosticism and Arianism as well as in defense of orthodox Christian doctrine,[28] so the difference matters. The issue is simply one of a difference in punctuation in certain manuscripts. Dan Nasselqvist makes a solid case for reading A being the original because of linguistic analysis, the quotations of church fathers and it being the *lectio difficilior* or the more difficult reading of the two.[29]The *lectio difficilior* mentioned here is based speculatively in the early church fathers' concern of the verse being interpreted as a Gnostic reference to Ogdoad or as an Arian affirmation of Christ not being of equal standing

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[26] Carter, Function, Symbol and the Definitive Word, 36.

[27] Martinus C. De Boer, "The Original Prologue to the Gospel of John," *New Testament Studies* 61, no. 4 (October 2015): 461.

[28] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 113.

[29] Dan Nässelqvist. "The Question of Punctuation in John 1:3-4: Arguments from Ancient Colometry," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137 no.1 (2018): 175.

with the Father.[30] In addition to this, the manuscript evidence seems to support reading A according to scholars.

The second variant is found in verse 18 and has three potential readings. Reading A is, "It is God the only Son" and Reading B is, "it is an only Son, God" and Reading C is, "It is the only Son." According to Haenchen, "the only God" is a reading that emerged in Gnostic circles and this misinterpretation was the root of the many efforts at clarifying or changing the text in later manuscripts specifically to avoid any association with the Aeon.[31] Haenchen refers to Schnakenburg's conclusion of Reading C being the most reliable[32] based on $P^{66}$ and $P^{75}$.[33] Köstenberger additionally argues that Reading C's focus on the Father's relationship to the Son is more in line with the thinking of the Johannine community, giving it more credibility.[34]

What can be learned about the fragmentary nature of the prologue? The most striking element is that the text is likely not representative of a singular theological worldview, but is a smattering of different understandings of Jesus, John the Baptist and how the gospel should be interpreted. It can be concluded at this time that the prologue consists of a reworked hymn and an introduction to John the Baptist, though which of these pericopes was the original introduction is unclear, and that at least a few modifications were made to the text for theological reasons.

### Part 5: The Origin of the Hymn

As stated in the introduction, the Johannine prologue contains references to a variety of influences, specifically Judaism and Hellenism. These features of the hymn are part of what make the text so unique and difficult to understand. This section will explore some of the philosophical and traditional ideologies that lie behind the concepts presented in the prologue and will investigate some of the proposals made by scholars as to the origin of the hymn based on these characteristics.

The main subject of the prologue, the *logos*, was a Greek

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[30] Nässelqvist, "The Question of Punctuation in John 1:3-4," 178.

[31] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 121.

[32] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 121.

[33] Panayotis Coutsoumpos. "The Difficulty of Μονογενης Θεος in John 1:18: A Reassessment." *Biblica* 98 no.3 (2017): 439.

[34] Coutsoumpos, "John 1:18: A Reassessment," 440.

philosophical term that originated centuries prior to the writing of John's gospel. The first philosopher known to have spoken of the *logos* was Heraclitus, who described it as "the unity of all things or the wisdom that directs all things."[35] The concept continued to develop in the following centuries through its usage by Plato and the Stoics and evolved to refer to "the rational, underlying intelligence of the universe."[36] It should be noted that the Stoics saw the *logos* as divine in some sense, but not God.

The first century Jewish philosopher Philo was largely responsible for popularizing the concept of *logos* in the time leading up to the composition of the gospel. Philo made it quite clear that the *logos* itself was not God but was an advocate on behalf of humanity to God. Philo emphasized that the *logos* was divine in some sense, but he was not willing to abandon Jewish monotheism by elevating the status of the *logos* to that of the Father.[37] In addition to this detail, Haenchen argues that the passage is meant to emphasize the closeness and fellowship of the Son to the Father, rather than being an explicit claim about the status of the *logos*. Haenchen proposes what he believes to be a more accurate reading of v.1 considering this information:

In the beginning was the *Logos*,

And the *Logos* was with God,

And divine was the *Logos*.

The author of John most likely made use of the *logos* to connect the popular philosophical ideas of the surrounding culture to the gospel message and the person of Jesus.[38] The *logos* was a very well-known concept in the first-century Roman world and would have been an effective foot-in-the-door for the modifications the author would make to Philo's version. One of the differences between Philo's *logos* and that of the prologue is that Philo's is a created being, whereas John's is portrayed as being with God

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[35] Robert Peltier and Dan Lioy. "Is John's Λόγος Christology a Polemical Response to Philo of Alexandria's Logos Philosophy? Part 2," *Conspectus* 28 September (2019): 93.

[36] Peltier and Lioy, "John's Christology," 93.

[37] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 109.

[38] Haenchen, *Hermeneia,* 101; Charles Harold Dodd. "The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and Christian Worship," *Studies in the Fourth Gospel.* (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1957), 296.

prior to Creation.[39] In addition to this, the *logos* of John's gospel is creator of all things, seen in v.3: "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." Philo's *logos*, in contrast, was "created by God to perform particular tasks using a variety of contextual identities"[40] and was not instrumental in the process of bringing things into being.

The concept of the *logos* presented in the prologue is connected to themes from the Hebrew Bible, most evidently in the first verse's mirroring of Genesis 1:1, but also in its allusions to the Wisdom tradition. Just like the portrayal of the *logos* in John 1, the personified divine Wisdom is said to have been alongside God in the process of creation and played an important role as a kind of "supervising architect."[41] Wisdom was always present throughout the history of mankind and offered goodness to all people but was rejected and so she returned to heaven. (Prov. 8:22-36) The similarities between these themes and the *logos* of the prologue are striking as seen in Enoch 42:2 which says "Wisdom went out, in order to dwell among the sons of men, but did not find a dwelling; wisdom returned to her place, and took her seat in the midst of the Angels" and its relation to vv.10-11 of the prologue: "He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him."[42] Here the author of the prologue carefully blends the divine Wisdom of Judaism and the *logos* philosophy of Hellenism to send a new message that is rooted in ancient ideas.

A potential relationship between the prologue and the Odes of Solomon should also be mentioned. The Odes of Solomon are a collection of poems that scholars believe may have been written around the same time as the Gospel of John and could have had a significant influence or had simply been influenced by the same ideas. As stated previously, the newly proposed translation of v.1 is "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and divine was the *Logos*." This reading of the text led Bultmann to associate the prologue with the Odes of Solomon, since the structure it follows (*a-b; b-c; c-a*) matches the structure used for many of the poems in the Odes.[43] In addition to this, the Odes make use of the *logos* in ways very similar to the prologue; the *logos* was pre-existent with God ("and the Word of truth, who is self-originate" – 32:2) and was instrumental

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[39] Peltier and Lioy, *John's Christology*, 114.

[40] Peltier and Lioy, *John's Christology*, 114.

[41] Haenchen, *Hermeneia,*102.

[42] Haenchen, *Hermeneia,* 117.

[43] Haenchen, *Hermeneia,* 110.

in the process of creation. The only feature of the *logos* that is given in the prologue and not in the Odes is that it took on flesh.[44] Based on these factors, scholars like Bultmann and Sanders conclude that the Odes must have been composed prior to the Gospel of John and that they likely originated from within the same community.[45]

Most leading Johannine scholars agree that the hymn behind the prologue emerged from the same community that produced the Odes of Solomon, but there is debate regarding the nature of this community. Bultmann believes that the Evangelist was a disciple of John the Baptist who took the hymn from his sect and attributed it to Christ instead when he converted.[46] This theory could adequately explain the clarifications in vv.6-8 of the subordination of John to Jesus. Bultmann made bold claims that this sect, known as the Mandeans, originated as a result of the work of John the Baptist along the Jordan river and were influenced by Gnosticism.[47] More recent scholarship, however, has rejected this theory and speculates that it was indeed a Christian community that was responsible for the original composition of this hymn.[48] The hymn was simply one among many of the early church community (Col. 1:15-20, Phil. 2:6-11) that was meant to proclaim and celebrate the person of Christ, while also instructing adherents of the faith by connecting the gospel to Hellenistic philosophy, the Hebrew tradition and by denouncing false teachings that threatened the core doctrines of the community.[49]

### Part 6: Conclusion

The Johannine prologue is a complex text with many factors that

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[44] James H. Charlesworth and R. Alan Culpepper. "Odes of Solomon and the Gospel of John." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35 no.3 (1973), 310.

[45] Charlesworth and Culpepper, "Odes of Solomon," 310; Charlesworth, Harris, Grant, Massaux and others present a more nuanced theory involving an indirect relationship between the two texts – they exhibit similar characteristics because of their emergence from the same community.

[46] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 110.

[47] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 123; Bultmann, "Untersuchungen zum Johannesevangelium," 55-104.

[48] Haenchen, *Hermeneia* (Fortress Press, 1980), 125; Ernst Käsemann, "Aufbau und Anliegen des Johanneischen Prologs," *Libertas Christiana, Friedrich Delekat zum fünfundsechzigsten Geburstag* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957).

[49] Haenchen, *Hermeneia*, 130.

make deciphering its origin and purpose difficult. Its unique theological themes and terminology, somewhat convoluted structure and mysterious roots raise questions about its ideological goals and how it is meant to serve as an introduction to the Gospel of John. A few general conclusions can be made, however, about where the prologue may have come from and what it sought to accomplish.

As for the origin of the prologue, it seems impossible to attribute the content in its entirety to a singular source, because of its apparent redactions. Based on the research of its style, structure, and theology, it can be safely assumed that the bulk of the prologue is a hymn use by the Evangelist to adequately express the picture of Christ that the main gospel account was meant to portray. As for the content regarding John the Baptist that is foreign to the hymn, it is unclear whether it preceded the hymn as the original introduction to the gospel, but it was likely included as a clarification of the subordination of John to Christ. In terms of its overall development, the prologue is the result of centuries of growth in both the divine Wisdom tradition and *logos* philosophy being brought together.

The purpose of the prologue seems to be for the Evangelist to depict Christ as the ultimate culmination of these *logos* and Wisdom traditions. By doing this, the author communicates the gospel message to Jewish and Hellenistic readers in a culturally relatable way and brings the person of Christ into their pre-conceived worldviews, rather than presenting the message in an alienating way that they might not understand. In addition to this, the prologue prepares the readers of the gospel to receive the narrative with the emphasis that the Evangelist believes is appropriate through his usage of *exordium.*

# Aum Shinrikyo and the myth of religious violence:

## Analyzing the Aum Shinrikyo affair of 1995 through William Cavanaugh's theoretical lens

*Jason Piche*

*ON THE 20TH OF MARCH 1995*, the release of a toxic sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway would kill more than 10 Japanese citizens and injure thousands more. The indiscriminate use of violence marked the Japanese psyche, as Japan had previously understood itself to be one of the safest societies in the world.[1] Blame for the attack was quickly placed on Aum Shinrikyo, an esoteric Buddhist group that was no stranger to controversy and public scrutiny. Constant coverage regarding the attack by the Japanese media provoked discussion of Aum's confusing and imaginative religious beliefs, giving the impression that Aum's attack was the product of their theological propositions, regardless of how vague and incomprehensible they may have seemed. The narrative that Aum's undertaking of the March

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[1] Gregory E Wilkinson, "The Next Aum: Religious Violence and New Religious Movements in Twenty-First Century Japan." (University of Iowa Research Online, 2009), 1.

20th, 1995, subway attack was the product of its desire to initiate an apocalyptic conflict quickly became the overwhelming consensus opinion of the Japanese media. Academics analyzing Aum and the attack largely came to the same conclusion, like scholar of Japanese religions Ian Reader who said "Criminality and terror emerged out of its (Aum's) primary orientation as a religion". [2] As a result, the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway came to be regarded as a textbook case of religious violence.

As the temporal distance between the attack and the present has grown, many scholars have come to appreciate the multi-faceted nature of Aum's motivations for engaging in mass violence.[3] Nevertheless, scholars of religious violence such as Mark Juergensmeyer have continued to frame Aum's violence as being religious in nature [4], provoking larger questions regarding the relationship between religion and violence. William T. Cavanaugh, a professor of Theological studies at Notre Dame University, has attempted to demystify the relationship between religion and violence. In a thought-provoking work titled *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Cavanaugh argues that the link between religion and violence is an invented one, as the line between what can be considered religious or secular violence is insubstantial at best, and deceptive at worst.[5] Utilizing Kavanaugh's theoretical framework regarding the myth of religious violence, this article will analyze Aum Shinrikyo and its decision to undertake the March 20th, 1995, attack and ask, should Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway on the 20th of March 1995 be considered an incident of religious violence? It will be argued that the suppositions of the Japanese media and of scholars like Ian Reader are misguided, proposing that Aum Shinrikyo's violent acts were targeted incidents of violence that were the product of Aum's persecution complex and its interactions with the state and the wider public, and that therefore the Aum attack should not be considered an act of explicitly religious violence. Such a proposition is not intended to argue that

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[2] Ian Reader, "Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo."(2000), 25.

[3] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum," 25.

[4] Mark Juergensmeyer, "Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence." (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 135.

[5] William T Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence." (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

somehow Aum members were irreligious, or that religious beliefs did not play a role in the decision to carry out the sarin gas attack. Instead, it is intended to illustrate how the categorization of violence as being religious or otherwise is unproductive and ultimately inaccurate, particularly with regard to the Aum affair, as groups such as Aum cannot exist in isolation, but are forced to interact with the state, security, and social structures that influence its beliefs, motives, and acts of violence. This article will therefore analyze the Aum affair using Cavanaugh's theoretical framework to contribute to scholarship's ongoing debate regarding the links between religion and violence.

It will begin with a discussion of Cavanaugh's theoretical framework to provide the context for the subsequent discussion of Aum's history as a group. The discussion of Aum's history as a group will be divided into two parts by the year 1989, a year that saw Aum's first use of targeted violence resulting in the death of several individuals. Connections between Cavanaugh's theory and the Aum affair will be made in the final section of the article to prove the argument that viewing the Aum affair as an incident of religious violence is misguided and inaccurate.

## 1.0 - What is the Myth of Religious Violence? An Overview of William Cavanaugh's Theoretical Outlook

Mark Juergensmeyer and William Kavanaugh are prominent scholars on the topic of religion and violence with widely diverging views on the relationship between the two. Their ideas will be considered in section 1 to better understand the argument made by Cavanaugh regarding the myth of religious violence.

### 1.1 - Mark Juergensmeyer and the Transhistorical Nature of Religious Violence

Mark Juergensmeyer, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara is perhaps the most prominent scholar who argues in favor of the notion of religious violence. Not only does Juergensmeyer argue that the

notion of explicitly religious violence exists, but he argues that there is something innate to religions that justify the use of violence.[6]

Juergensmeyer distinguishes between secular and religious violence using 4 factors. First, he argues that religious violence is often symbolic and dramatic in nature. Second, he argues that religion polarizes notions of right and wrong. As a consequence, religions portray their struggles in cosmic terms that justify outlandish uses of violence. Lastly, Juergensmeyer argues that religious groups are characterized by boisterous confidence in their ultimate victory, and therefore view conflicts as being outside of normal temporal concerns.[7] Common to all these factors is the understanding of the nature of religion as being transhistorical, that is to say, as being predisposed toward certain characteristics regardless of the operational space it occupies. As will be illustrated by examining Cavanaugh's theory, this fails to appreciate that religious groups, as products of individuals who interact with society on a daily basis, cannot exist outside the social order and its configurations of power.

Juergensmeyer seemingly acknowledges this fact while discussing the Aum Affair in his book *Terror in the Mind of God*. On p. 145, he discusses scholar of Japanese religions Ian Reader's proposition that Aum's sense of being rejected by Japanese society made them more violent, saying Reader's analysis is "perceptive". And yet earlier in the chapter, he unequivocally states that the Aum Affair was the product of its desire to initiate an "imminent apocalyptic war" [8], and that therefore the Aum Affair reflects a clear-cut case of religious violence. If Juergensmeyer agrees with Reader that pressure from authorities and society at large led to Aum becoming more violent as a group, would it not be more accurate to say that the Aum Affair was the product of Aum's hostile interactions with society rather than its religious beliefs that only developed as said operational space contracted? As will be discussed in the following subsection, Cavanaugh believes that the line between the religious and the secular is not so clear as it is often portrayed as being. He argues that no religious body can exist in isolation and are thus forced to interact with society at large and its

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[6] Juergensmeyer, "Terror in the Mind of God," 5.
[7] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 31.
[8] Juergensmeyer, "Terror in the Mind of God," 134.

institutions. These interactions inevitably influence the actions of the religious body in question, ultimately putting into doubt the notion of religious violence.


### 1.2 - William T Cavanaugh and the Myth of Religious Violence

William T. Cavanaugh's theory of the myth of religious violence stands in direct contradiction to Juergensmeyer's belief that the transhistorical and cosmic nature of religious thought make religions predisposed to committing violence. Cavanaugh questions the conventional wisdom that sees religion as being a concrete and transhistorical concept.[9] If religion itself cannot be consistently and clearly identified as such, the concept of religious violence cannot be any less ambiguous. Cavanaugh's theory of religious violence, therefore, questions the utility and accuracy of viewing forms of violence as being religious in nature, as the concept of religion is hardly agreed upon, and therefore cannot be seen as existing as separate from other societal factors that influence the decision to undertake violence. If religion does not exist outside the ideological and political institutions that orient society, violence done by religious groups should not be viewed as being purely the product of the transhistorical nature of religion.

Cavanaugh argues that what constitutes a religion or the religious is unclear, as for most of history religion has not existed outside the structures of the body politic and other societal institutions.[10] He defines the myth of religious violence as the following: "The idea that religion is a transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life, essentially distinct from secular features such as politics and economics, which has a peculiarly dangerous inclination to promote violence".[11] As Cavanaugh implies the claim that religion has always existed as a distinct entity is inaccurate, as for most of human history the religious and the political were two faces of the same coin.[12] During antiquity, the state was intimately linked to religion, so

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[9] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 59.
[10] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 3.
[11] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 3.
[12] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 9.

much so that no concept existed to define religion as a distinct entity.[13] Roman emperors were considered the head priest of Roman paganism and were often understood to be deities in their own right.[14] Close links between religious bodies and state structures continued past antiquity and into the Middle Ages globally. The existence of separate ecclesiastical and political classes could be observed, but the lines between the two were often blurry, and both entities often derived legitimacy from one another. What constitutes religion and the religious is therefore difficult to determine and cannot be understood outside of the configurations of power that exist at any given point in history. Cavanaugh, therefore, argues that the understanding of religion as being a transhistorical and concrete entity that exists separately from the body politic and other aspects of society is a product of the Western liberal nation-state that began its ascension in the 17th century.[15] As belief came to be emphasized over practice following the Protestant Reformation [16], philosophers such as John Locke came to identify secular and religious aspects of the social order as being distinct [17], and the aristocracies of newly centralized nation-states sought to coalesce power by taking over the functions of religious bodies. Enlightenment discourse came to understand the religious as being irrational and purely the realm of superstition and belief.[18] Secular nation-states could therefore portray their violence as being more rational than any violence committed by or on behalf of religious groups, even if such a distinction had not existed throughout the whole of human history. Cavanaugh's supposition that what constitutes the religious is the product of configurations of power is therefore proven correct by his analysis of the role of religion throughout European history. Whereas Roman emperors found it to their advantage to be closely linked with religious bodies, modern-age political leaders have found the opposite.

The idea of religion itself is therefore intimately tied to configurations of power in any given time period. Juergensmeyer's

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[13] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 60.
[14] Bart D. Eherman, "A Brief Introduction to the New Testament." (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21.
[15] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 72.
[16] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 72.
[17] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 80.
[18] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 42.

argument that there is a transhistorical core to religion is null and void, as what constitutes religion necessarily changes as the currents of power ebb and flow. If the concept of religion is ambiguous, it necessarily follows that the notion of religious violence is equally ambiguous. Should a concept such as American manifest destiny, which articulated that it was the religious destiny of the colonial United States to push territorial expansion westwards be considered a form of violence that is religious because of allusions to fate and God's providence, or should it be viewed as a form of state violence motivated by purely economic and political matters? The lack of clear answers suggests that what constitutes the religious cannot be isolated from that which is considered secular. The trans historicity of religion is not an actuality, and therefore neither is the notion of religious violence. The Aum affair of 1995 will be discussed as a test case to show the multi-faceted nature of what is often labeled a textbook case of religious violence.

## 2.0 - Aum Shinrikyo: Beginnings (1984-1989)

In 1984, the year of Aum Shinriyko's creation by Shoko Asahara, it would have been difficult to predict the group's violent descent into religious extremism. After all, the group simply resembled one of the many new religious movements that were flowering everywhere in post-war Japan, focused on bringing individual fulfillment through traditional Eastern religious practices to a Japanese population that had experienced social dislocation following the end of the Second World War. Section 2 of this paper will analyze the early years of Aum before it became a group that saw violence as a means to an end, including the life of its eventual all-knowing guru Shoko Asahara, seeking to understand how the group grew into its eventually violent self.

### 2.1 - The Early Life of Shoko Asahara

Shoko Asahara, the leader of Aum Shinrikyo, has become the subject of much academic and psychological study. In seeking to understand how a new religious movement could undertake such a drastic terrorist attack, scholars have naturally focused part of their attention on Asahara as Aum's leader, a man who all testimony agrees demanded the absolute

loyalty of his followers.[19] The vice grip that Asahara held over Aum Shinrikyo's doctrine and followers extended to the tasks the group undertook, as testimony from within the group attests to the decision-making power Asahara held.[20]  Scholars seeking to understand Aum's motives, therefore, begin many of their inquiries by studying Asahara himself.

Asahara and his childhood have been the subject of much psychoanalytic intrigue. Born half-blind and to a family of modest means, Asahara attended a school for the blind. Though he was visually impaired, he was less so when compared to the rest of the student body, something that he used to cajole and bully fellow students into doing his bidding.[21] Testimonials by former classmates not only confirm that Asahara was violent and a bully, but also that he was extremely ambitious, expressing the desire to become Prime Minister of Japan and become extremely rich. [22] Some scholars have come to associate Asahara's grandiose ambition in his early life with the daring and attention-grabbing actions of Aum under Asahara's leadership.[23] That Asahara was extremely ambitious is evident and undeniable, and interestingly, a former high-ranking member of Aum told an interviewer that the reason for the Aum Affair of 1995 was motivated by Asahara's desire to "become a king".[24] Despite this, it would be a mistake to argue that Asahara's dominance over Aum was so thorough that the group was merely an extension of his personal ambitions. As will be demonstrated, Aum's actions were often the product of its interactions with the outside world, interactions that became more hostile as time went on.

Asahara sought to enter Tokyo University, but upon failing to do so, became disillusioned and sought spiritual direction. He joined a small Buddhist group named *Agonshū* in 1981 [25] and began building the spiritual

[19] Benjamin J, Lee and Kim Knott, "Ideological Transmission in Extremist Contexts: Towards a Framework of How Ideas Are Shared." (Politics, Religion, and Ideology, 2020), 17.
[20] Lee and Knott, "Ideological Transmission in Extremist Contexts", 17.
[21] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 43.
[22] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 43.
[23] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 39.
[24] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 58.
[25] Manabu Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," (Terrorism and

worldview that would come to define the early years of Aum's existence. Asahara particularly appreciated the *Agonshū's* emphasis on achieving enlightenment through yogic and meditative practices.[26] Though he eventually grew disillusioned with the group, their ideas nevertheless oriented Asahara's understanding of Buddhism, motivating him to start his own religious group.

## 2.2 - The Birth of Aum Shinrikyo: Beginnings and Doctrines

Asahara created Aum in February 1984 after leaving *Agonshū*, though the group only formally adopted the name Aum Shinrikyo, meaning supreme truth, in 1987.[27] Nominally Buddhist, the group was organized into small communities in which group members lived, engaging in yogic practice and hanging onto the words of their guru Asahara. Asahara himself sought to establish his credentials by making claims to different kinds of divinity. Despite claiming to be a Buddhist, he both claimed to be the brother of Jesus Christ and the reincarnation of the Hindu god Shiva.[28] Through literature pamphlets, TV appearances, and the sale of spiritual trinkets such as amulets and spells to ward off evil, Aum slowly grew its following. In particular, the Japanese media was impressed by Asahara's claims to be able to levitate.[29] Aum's presence in the media would go a long way to establishing a form of credibility for the group, as the Japanese media largely took an uncritical approach to Aum and its mission.[30] Asahara's meeting with the Dalai Lama in 1987 would further burnish Asahara's credibility as a religious guru.[31] Aside from establishing a considerable in the media landscape, Asahara and Aum focused on building a financial base

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Political Violence, 1998), 82.

[26]Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 52.

[27] Susumu Shimazano, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief." (Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, 1995), 384.

[28] Robert Jay Lifton, "Aum Shinrikyo: The Threshold Crossed," (Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma, 2004), 62.

[29] Lee and Knott, "Ideological Transmission in Extremist Contexts", 15.

[30] Lee and Knott, "Ideological Transmission in Extremist Contexts", 15.

[31] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 132.

for the group.

Aum, like nearly all religious movements, sought to attract new followers through evangelization. It did so largely through friendly media appearances, the publication of literature, and the selling of spiritual trinkets. Aum members were expected to be unequivocally dedicated [32], but exactly what these members were supposed to believe is less clear. Simply put, Aum's beliefs were eclectic and esoteric. Despite professing loyalty to a form of Tibetan Buddhism, Aum integrated elements from all the world's major religions.[33] Out of the amalgamation of doctrines that Aum held as a newly created religion, a few stand out as being consistent. The first of these is a focus on individual spiritual fulfillment that would allow for a believer's soul to move up a spiritual hierarchy and achieve enlightenment.[34] Through meditative practice and rituals conducted with Asahara, believers were convinced of their ability to achieve a form of spiritual purity that only those who received Asahara's teachings could come to reach. The emphasis on meditative practice was not uncommon among Buddhist groups in Japan, particularly newer sects, but Asahara's role as mediator between non-enlightenment and enlightenment was. Not only does Asahara's role as mediator highlight his power over Aum as a deified Guru, but it also illustrates how Aum's emphasis was on individual transcendence and not the enlightenment of the collective, as Asahara could pick and choose who was a more enlightened member and who was not.[35]

Early Aum's second important theological belief was Aum's goal of establishing the mythical Kingdom of Shambala in modern-day Japan.[36] The mythical Kingdom of Shambala is a Tibetan Buddhist concept that seeks to institute a reign of Buddhism similar to that supposedly found in Shambala, a mythical East Asian Buddhist kingdom.[37] Aum believed it could achieve this through evangelization and building up its communes,

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[32] Lee and Knott, "Ideological Transmission in Extremist Contexts", 21.
[33] Michale Pye, "Aum Shinrikyo: Can Religious Studies Cope?," (Religion, 1996), 268.
[34] Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum," 387.
[35] Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum," 387.
[36] Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum," 397.
[37] Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum," 398.

where dedicated believers were expected to live. This belief is important to highlight as not only was it a consistent part of Aum's early theology, but it illustrates how Aum was concerned with establishing an earthly kingdom, confident in its ability to bring the truth to Japanese society.[38] In other words, there is no evidence that Aum held any sort of apocalyptic beliefs in its early existence, as it was optimistic about its future. As will be demonstrated, once Aum began to grow pessimistic about its continued existence and evangelization efforts, it developed apocalyptic beliefs and began using violence to achieve its ends.

## 3.0 - Aum Shinrikyo from 1989 to 1995: Building to a Blowup

Having outlined the early life of both Shoko Asahara and Aum, it should be rather clear that the group did not begin as an apocalyptic sect seeking to initiate Armageddon through a sarin gas attack or any other form of indiscriminate violence. Instead, the group was an esoteric Buddhist sect that sought to establish the mythical Kingdom of *Shambala* in Japan by bringing its truth to the Japanese population. Aum was therefore a religious group that based itself concretely in the world, engaging in communal life and interacting with society at large in order to expand its membership. However, as time passed, the group grew to become more hostile to the outside world and became significantly more violent as a result. The 3rd section of this article hopes to outline how this transition from a group seeking to establish an earthly *Shambala* became a group that regularly used targeted acts of violence to defend itself from a world it perceived as being against it. Following the attack, authorities concluded that Aum had been responsible for the deaths of 31 people throughout its existence (none of this violence took place during Aum's formative years between 1984 and 1987) (Connah, 2021, 69).[39] The incidents covered in this section do not cover all incidents of Aum's violence, though the incidents covered will be the most significant in showing how a contraction of Aum's operational space led to

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[38] Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum," 397.
[39] Leoni Connah, "Violence and New Religious Movements: The Relationship Between Cognitive Dissonance and Perceived Pressure." (International Journal for the Study of New Religions, 2021), 69.

it becoming violent.

### 3.1 - The Murder of Sakamoto Tsutsumi

After Aum's formative period from 1984 to 1987, the picture became less rosy for Aum as a group. Recruitment slowed and media coverage became significantly more critical.[40] Previously viewed as being eclectic and amusing due to Asahara's miraculous claims and the ferocity of its membership, the media transitioned from being impressed by the dedication of Aum's membership to asking what activities Aum could be conducting behind the closed doors of its compounds. This progressive turning against Aum was compounded by the public claims being made by disaffected parents of Aum members. Aum's membership was disproportionately young and well-educated.[41] Perhaps unsurprisingly, many parents of newly minted Aum members were not pleased that their children had abandoned all their previous plans to live in Aum compounds, effectively cutting themselves off from the outside world and their previous life. Joining other Aum members in their compounds required new Aum members to give nearly all their possessions to the organization[42], in addition to further commitments made once living inside the compound. Disaffected parents organized themselves under the name the Aum Victims Society to take action against Aum and its compounds beginning in 1989. They hired a young and well-known lawyer named Sakamoto Tsutsumi to bring their case against Aum for fraud. They accused Aum of falsely claiming that a transfusion of Asahara's blood (something that Aum charged $10,000 for) would bring spiritual enlightenment and therefore said that the group was engaging in a form of fraud.[43] As Aum's behind-the-door practices came to light because of Tsutsumi's constant presence in the media, Aum's credibility diminished significantly, as did its ability to recruit new members.

The attention attracted by Tsutsumi represented a serious threat to

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[40] Connah, "Violence and New Religious Movements," 68.
[41] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 34.
[42] Lee and Knott, "Ideological Transmission in Extremist Contexts", 21.
[43] Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," 89.

Aum's continued ability to evangelize among the population, and the group was propelled to action. The murder of Tsutsumi and his family was ordered by Asahara and carried out by Aum members on the 4th of November 1989.[44] The Japanese police failed to make any connection between Aum and the murder [45], and therefore Aum continued its activities unabated. This incident served as a catalyst for Aum's future uses of targeted violence, as Aum dispatched a threat to its existence without a single consequence. However, despite Aum's efforts, its image issues and rejection by the general Japanese population continued. In 1990, Aum formed its own political party and ran at least 20 candidates in the general election taking place in the same year. The outcome was a catastrophic failure for Aum. Despite being confident that the group's candidates would be crucial to forming the next Japanese government, the group received less than 2,000 votes among all its candidates, far less than was required to win a single seat.[46] Furthermore, Asahara received fewer votes than one of his deputies [47], something that risked ruining his image as an implacable guru. Such a pitiful result compounded the feeling of rejection that began with the critical coverage of the Aum Victims Society lawsuit brought by Tsutsumi. Previously, Aum had been able to freely undertake evangelization efforts while feeling a certain receptivity from the population. The years of 1989-1990 marked a decisive shift in this dynamic, as Aum's operational space contracted and its sense of being persecuted increased significantly.

### 3.2 - The First Strike: The Sarin Gas Attack in Matsumoto

The years between 1990 and 1994 did not reverse the trend of Aum's increasing sense of rejection, as it continued to face critical press coverage, declining recruitment, internal tension, and numerous legal challenges. By all accounts, Aum had reached the apex of its recruitment efforts and was now experiencing a flight of some of its members.[48] This coincided with Aum's teachings becoming more apocalyptic. Between

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[44] Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum," 398.
[45] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 60.
[46] Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," 89
[47] Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," 89
[48] Connah, "Violence and New Religious Movements," 68.

1990-1994, Asahara published several treatises referring to Armageddon and an eventual apocalypse.[49] The chants and mantras of the Aum faithful made use of these concepts, with a prevalent chant referring to the purging of bad souls to prepare for the incoming apocalypse.[50] Such rhetoric seems to confirm Juergensmeyer's supposition that religions tend to view conflicts in cosmic and transhistorical terms. Yet one must appreciate that Aum's cosmicism was a product of its hostile interactions with the outside world as well as its own internal troubles. There is no evidence that Aum would have engaged in violent actions if it had continued to have a positive relationship with the structures of power. This suggests that the tendency towards cosmicism is not the product of anything innate to religion, but that the tendency to view conflicts as being dualistic is the product of a group feeling as though its existence is being undermined, whether religious or otherwise.

On June 27th, 1994, Aum members released sarin gas into an apartment complex that was housing 3 judges who were overseeing a lawsuit leveled against Aum by the prefecture of Matsumoto. The attack did not kill the intended targets, but 7 civilians died, and many were injured [51]. Matsumoto was one of many prefectures attempting to prevent Aum from building a compound in their town. In 1990, a town named Namino-San dedicated half of its annual budget to legal fees for a case against Aum.[52] Aum felt particularly threatened by the Matsumoto case, as not only was it garnering a great deal of attention, but it also seemed like an open and shut case against Aum. The Matsumoto incident is a rather clear example of the hostility that was building against Aum. Prefectures across Japan were unwilling to tolerate Aum's presence, regardless of how much they isolated themselves. Years of negative media coverage had turned the Japanese population decisively against Aum. Even though the police failed to link Aum's violent acts to Aum itself, the media speculated that Aum was often responsible.[53]

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[49] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 65.
[50] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 38.
[51] Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," 92.
[52] Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," 90.
[53] Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," 92.

Media coverage was not enough to dissuade Aum from engaging in violence. The release of sarin gas in Matsumoto indefinitely delayed the case against Aum, and thus they became more confident in the ability of violence to preserve their existence. In March 1995, after being tipped off about a massive raid to be undertaken by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (TMPD) on Aum compounds, Aum responded with what seemed logical given their success in the Tsutsumi and Matsumoto cases, the use of targeted violence.

### 3.3 - The Aum Affair: March 20th, 1995

Sections 3.1 and 3.2 traced the increasing sense of rejection Aum felt as a religious group between the years 1989 and 1995. Aum's interactions with the legal system, body politic, and the media landscape were characterized by hostility and failure. Parallel to this sense of rejection was the development of Aum's apocalyptic beliefs as the group felt the hostility of outside society to the pursuit of its activities. The tension between Aum and the structures of power culminated in the March 20th, 1995, Tokyo subway sarin gas attack.

In March 1995, Asahara was tipped off by an informant about a country-wide raid that was to take place on Aum's compounds. Specifically, the raid was to be conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department. That an arm of the state was taking action against Aum after years of leniency represented a dramatic threat to Aum's continued existence in a way that citizen action did not. Aum, emboldened by past success in using violence, planned an audacious operation to distract the TMPD from their investigations into Aum. The attack was planned in a secretive way amongst the Aum elite, with most members not knowing the attack was being planned.[54] The plan was to cause such a disturbance that the TMPD would be preoccupied with investigating the attack rather than Aum. On the 20th of March, a public holiday in Japan, Aum released sarin gas on the subway cars passing directly under the TMPD headquarters, specifically the Hibiya, Marunouchi, and Chiyoda lines.[55] Since it was a public holiday, the subway

[54] Lifton, "Aum Shinrikyo: The Threshold Crosses," 65.
[55] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 56.

cars would be filled disproportionately with TMPD officers going to work while other workers had the day off. The gas was released by poking holes into sacks filled with sarin gas, though the gas was not fully released.[56] Nevertheless, 12 people died and thousands more were injured. The attack did cause chaos as Aum had hoped, but the TMPD suspected Aum was behind the attack from the start, and so the plan was a massive failure. Asahara went into hiding following the attack but was arrested weeks later while hiding at one of Aum's compounds.[57] Instead of distracting the police through a drastic yet targeted attack, the attack propelled the police into action as discussion of the attack consumed nearly all the attention of the Japanese media for the weeks and months following the attack.

In short, there was little that was apocalyptically motivated in the decision to undertake the attack on the 20th of March 1995. The fact that it was done on the subway lines directly under the TMPD headquarters on a public holiday during which the TMPD members were working but ordinary Japanese commuters were not confirms the fact that it was an incident of targeted violence. The motive was simple, Aum was attempting to distract the TMPD and undermine the investigation into Aum, such as they had done in the case of the Tsutsumi lawsuit and the Matsumoto case. Numerous scholars have read Aum's apocalyptic beliefs into the attack due to its catastrophic nature, but the fact that Aum had previously used sarin gas in Matsumoto undermines this case. The use of sarin gas was not the product of Aum attempting to set off a nuclear apocalypse as is often speculated. Furthermore, the sarin used on the Tokyo subway was less potent than that used in Matsumoto, seemingly confirming that Aum was not trying to simply kill as many people as possible in order to cause apocalyptic panic. They were trying to panic the TMPD, not the population at large. The Aum affair of March 20th, 1995, should therefore not be understood as an incident of what is termed religious violence.

## 4.0 - Aum Shinrikyo, The Tokyo Subway Sarin Gas Attack of 1995 and the Myth of Religious Violence

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[56] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 80.
[57] Wilkinson, "The Next Aum", 85.

If one is to argue that the Aum Affair is an incident of religious violence as prominent scholars such as Ian Reader and Mark Juergensmeyer have done, one must contend with the evidence that not only were Aum's apocalyptic beliefs developed as its operational space diminished, but also explain why Aum responded to specific points of pressure with violence rather than simply organizing an unprovoked attack to initiate the apocalypse.

Aum's decision to undertake violence shows no evidence of being informed by any sort of transhistorical tendency innate to religions. In fact, the opposite is true, as Aum's apocalyptic beliefs developed in reaction to its increasing inability to successfully evangelize to Japanese society. The thrust of Cavanaugh's argument regarding the myth of religious violence is that religious groups cannot exist outside of the dynamics of power [58], and he proves that this is the case through a lengthy historical analysis. In the case of Aum and its context, his theory has proven to be applicable. As Aum began as a religious group, it was optimistic about the prospects of bringing its truth to society and was well-received in media circles.[59] As it recruited new members and became financially independent, it was entirely concerned with achieving Shambala, and its theology was concerned with purely earthly affairs. As time went on and disaffection with the building of Aum's communes grew among the Japanese population, its theology grew to be more apocalyptic in nature and used Buddhist concepts that could justify killing enemies of the group.[60] The cosmic and polarizing elements of Aum's theology only reared their head in response to rejection from the larger social body. That this is the case seriously undermines the arguments of scholars like Juergensmeyer who argue that the tendency of religions to be violent is because of a tendency to view conflicts in cosmic terms that are used to justify violence. Aum's tendency toward cosmic and apocalyptic rhetoric only became apparent as its relations to the dynamics of power shifted and its operational space diminished. When the walls seemed to be closing in on Aum due to the ongoing operations of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, Aum took drastic action to ensure the group's survival.

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[58] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 59.
[59] Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum," 397.
[60] Watanabe, "Religion and Violence in Japan Today," 85.

Even though the Aum faithful attempted to live relatively isolated lives in their communes and conduct their affairs regardless of what took place in the outside world, they could not ignore the points of pressure that threatened their existence and could not exist in isolation. Cavanaugh's proposition that religious groups should not be understood as existing in some transhistorical space outside of political and economic spaces and therefore forming violent beliefs strictly as a result of their existence as a religion is proven correct in the Aum Affair.

Not only were Aum's theological beliefs the product of its interactions with the social body, but its decision to undertake violence on numerous occasions shows no evidence of being the result of the transhistorical nature of religion. In fact, Aum's decision to engage in violence was the product of specific circumstances that were pertinent to its continued existence. Aum risked being seriously undermined by the court cases brought by Tsutsumi on behalf of disaffected parents of Aum members and by the citizens of Matsumoto. In order to diffuse the threats, Aum responded with targeted violence. Emboldened by the success of the sarin gas attack in Matsumoto, Aum sought to use the same strategy in responding to upcoming raids by the TMPD on many of its compounds. In each case, the evidence suggests that the decision by Aum to use violence was dictated by worldly circumstances, not a transhistorical and cosmic force that motivated its existence as a religion. Juergensmeyer is therefore proven incorrect in defining Aum as a textbook case of religious violence, and Cavanaugh's theory is strengthened by test cases such as Aum's that show that the decision to undertake violence is the product of circumstance and interactions with broader society and its institutions.

The purpose of Cavanaugh's theory and this essay is not to argue that violence undertaken by religious groups is somehow non-existent. Religious groups undertake violence all the time, Aum Shinrikyo being one of them. Instead, both Cavanaugh's theory and this essay's use of it seek to illustrate how the motivations behind violence conducted by any group are multifaceted and often primarily motivated by a group's interactions with social, political, and economic structures. Even groups such as Aum that seek to live isolated lives within compounds inevitably must interact with society at large, and these interactions, whether positive or negative,

influence their actions. The Aum Affair is but one test case, but it is one that proves Cavanaugh's theoretical outlook. An academic study of other similar test cases is likely to prove him correct as well.

### Concluding Remarks

This essay has attempted to contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding the relationship between violence and religion. Though the belief that religions have a tendency toward being more violent than other movements is widespread [61], this essay has argued that this is not the case by using the Aum Affair of 1995 as a case study, drawing on Willliam T. Cavanaugh's theory on the myth of religious violence as a theoretical framework. Often perceived as a textbook case of religious violence because of Aum's profession of apocalyptic beliefs, this essay has demonstrated that Aum's acts of violence, including the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack of March 20th, 1995, were targeted attacks intended to relieve the pressure that was building on the group from activists and state authorities.

Aum did indeed hold apocalyptic beliefs, but the development of these apocalyptic beliefs can be directly correlated to Aum's increasing sense of rejection from society. Early in its existence, Aum was concerned with establishing the mythical Kingdom of Shambala within Japan. As it became clear that Aum would be unable to do so because of the Japanese public's criticism of their lifestyle, Aum began to develop apocalyptic beliefs, became more isolated, and began using violence to respond to specific points of pressure. The murder of Sakamoto Tsutsumi in 1989, the sarin gas attack on a Matsumoto apartment block in 1994, and the Aum affair of the 20th of March 1995 have been given as examples of specific points of pressure that Aum responded to with targeted violence. The March 20th, 1995, sarin gas attack represented the apotheosis of this need to respond, as state authorities sought to act against Aum in a serious fashion. Aum, therefore, responded by targeting the Tokyo Metropolitan Police headquarters with their sarin gas to distract them and preserve the group's existence. The correlation between pressure against Aum and its development of apocalyptic beliefs leads one to believe that Aum's

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[61] Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence," 3.

interactions with society at large are what determined its theology and actions. For this reason, the Aum Affair should not be considered a textbook case of religious violence.

As Cavanaugh proposes with his theory regarding the myth of religious violence, to attempt to isolate a religion's reasons for undertaking violence to its theological outlook fails to consider that religions do not exist in isolation. Like other groups and movements, religions interact with social, political, and economic structures that inevitably shape their beliefs and actions. It is therefore mistaken to label violence done by religions as being the product of something innate to religious thought as Mark Juergensmeyer proposes. Instead, it is better to account for all the factors that may influence a group's decision to act violently, whether they be religious or otherwise. The Aum Affair as a case study properly exemplifies the myth of religious violence, as Aum's decisions to undertake violence were undoubtedly the product of its interactions with broader society, yet this was ignored as Aum's apocalyptic beliefs took up center stage in the aftermath of the attack. The attack was therefore labeled a textbook case of religious violence. This article has demonstrated that this should not be the case, as Aum's religious beliefs changed as its interactions with society changed, and its violent actions were in response to specific points of pressure that members felt threatened the group's existence.

# The radical nature of Jesus's motherhood in Julian of Norwich

*Lily Dauriac*

*JULIAN OF NORWICH, AN ANCHORESS* in 14th century England, begins her work *Revelations of Divine Love* by recounting a peculiar prayer she made in her youth; a supplication to experience the passion of Jesus, to enter fully into the divine love by way of her own suffering. Her prayer was finally answered at the age of thirty, resulting in her being bedridden and on the brink of death. It was during these trying moments that she received several revelations from God, she dedicated the remainder of her life to gain a greater understanding of their theological content. She discloses her discoveries in *Revelations of Divine Love,* which includes the puzzling attribute of a remarkable confidence in referring to Jesus as a mother.

In this paper, I will begin by offering a brief history of the concept of Jesus's motherhood. Then, I will extrapolate from Julian's work, her theological reasonings for referring to Jesus as mother and its implications, in order to argue its radical nature as it departs from the Cisterian tradition, deviates from the standard medieval path to spiritual assent, and contrasts with popular medieval heresies.

## Brief history of Jesus's motherhood as a concept

The concept of the motherhood of Jesus has biblical roots. In the book of Isaiah, God is referred to with maternal imagery, "can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these might forget, yet I will not forget you."[1] This maternal imagery is used in an affective tone in this verse, to portray God as a compassionate and nurturing figure. By mentioning the potential of an earthly mother's forgetfulness, it suggests that God is better at motherhood than any earthly mother. If motherhood can be conceived of as a platonic ideal, only God is fully well-equipped to fulfill all of its demands. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus uses the image of a hen to describe himself, proclaiming "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing."[2]

This image of Jesus as a mother hen was later employed by Benedictine monk Anselm of Canterbury in his devotional writings as he asks Jesus as a mother hen to "console your chicken, resuscitate your dead one, justify your sinner"[3]. According to Anselm, Jesus is "mother by affection; father by authority, mother by kindness; father by protection."[4] For Anselm, the idea of Jesus as mother is useful to the extent that it enables human understanding of Jesus' compassion and gentleness. This devotion to Jesus as mother continues in the Cisterian order, a derivation of the Benedictine order, as exemplified by Bernard of Clairvaux. However, Clairvaux focuses on Jesus as a breastfeeding mother. Essentially, Clairvaux regarded the spear wound of Jesus as his "breasts," and the soul weans on Jesus's blood or "the milk of consolation," to gain spiritual nourishment.[5] For context, medieval medical theory considered breast milk to be reprocessed blood.[6] Bernard of Clairvaux connects "the mothering of Jesus with renunciation of earthly mothers,"[7] amplifying an understanding of God's motherhood as a platonic ideal as insinuated in Isaiah 49:15. This

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[1] Isaiah 49:15 (NRSV).
[2] Matthew 23:37 (NRSV).
[3] Caroline Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (London: University of California Publishing, 1982), 114.
[4] Bynum, 114.
[5] Bynum, 118.
[6] Bynum, 150.
[7] Bynum, 145.

tradition of using maternal imagery for Jesus is continued by the Cisterian writings of William of St. Thierry, Guerric of Igny, and Adam of Perseigne. But all these sources are unified in conceiving Jesus's motherhood on purely affective grounds. Caroline Bynum offers an explanation for this affective piety, noting the sexual stereotypes that underlie it. Caroline Bynum writes, "throughout contemporary sermons and treatises, gentleness, compassion, tenderness, emotionality and love, nurturing and security are labeled 'female'; authority, judgment, command, strictness, and discipline are labeled 'male.'"[8] As this was the medieval precedent, the motherhood of Jesus was interpreted as purely sentimental. It is speculated that Julian of Norwich could have interacted with the idea of the motherhood of Jesus as many historians posit her to have connections with an English Benedictine monastic community.[9]

### Julian's reasoning in referring to Jesus as her mother

Julian of Norwich broke apart from this affective Benedictine and Cisterian tradition in her conception of Jesus's motherhood. For Julian, the motherhood of Jesus has certain theological groundings which transcend merely metaphorical elements. Jesus has the attribute of physical and spiritual motherhood. Julian inhibits a dual role as a mystic and theologian, and therefore uses her mystical experiences as raw material for her theological project. One such essential mystical revelation is called "the parable of the lord and his servant." For Julian, this parable is foundationally important, it is like the "beginning of an A B C," through which she can begin to grasp the theological content of her other revelations.[10] As she recounts it, she sees a lord who sits with dignity and there is a servant waiting to do his will. The lord "looks at his servant lovingly and kindly, and he gently sends him to a certain place to do his will."[11] The servant makes haste to do the lord's will but keeps stumbling and falling and is "very

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[8] Bynum, 148.

[9] Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 419.

[10] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of DIvine Love.* trans. Elizabeth Spearing (New York, Penguin Random House, 1998), 123.

[11] Norwich, 115.

badly hurt."[12] Furthermore, Julian "watched carefully to see… if the lord would blame him at all; and in truth there was no fault to be seen."[13] Upon further exploration, Julian deduces that "the lord is the Father, God; the servant is the Son, Jesus …for in this parable our good Lord showed his own son and Adam as but one man."[14]

Therefore, this explains why the lord can find no blame in him, because when he sees Adam or humanity falling, he only sees Jesus falling. By showing the servant falling and stumbling and thereby hurting himself, she demonstrates the effects of sin. It hurts Jesus as he bore human sin on the cross, and it hurts the individual sinner, as it is a rejection of his nature that was created for heaven, that is the union to God.  By showing humanity and Jesus in the same servant, Julian is equating the human as a being approximate to Jesus. For Julian, since Jesus is incarnational, both man and Divine, containing within him two natures and two wills. Each human equally possesses an image of these two natures and two wills. This is not to suggest that humans are both fully divine and fully man exactly like Jesus, but simply that they are made in the image of Jesus's incarnational nature. As Julian explains this dichotomy, "the strength and the goodness which we have come from Jesus, the weakness and the blindness which we have come from Adam [humanity], and these two were represented in [the human]."[15] For Julian, the Father looks upon humanity with so much love and mercy, that he sees their good will first and foremost. Though, this is not a license to sin, as the servant badly hurts his own self when he stumbles, but even then, the Father is still looking upon him with love.

According to Julian, due to the resurrection of Jesus, the tunic of the servant transforms from "Adam's old tunic, tight, bare and short" into "our Saviour's newly beautiful, white and bright and eternally pure."[16] This transformation of the tunic is analogous to Julian's discussion concerning how Jesus unites the sensory part of the soul and the essential part of the soul. Following the same logic that humans are incarnational beings made

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[12] Norwich, 115.
[13] Norwich, 116.
[14] Norwich, 121.
[15] Norwich, 121.
[16] Norwich, 124.

in the image of Jesus, Julian posits that "God makes us double, as essential and sensory beings."[17] The essential nature of the soul in which one can attribute to "the higher part, which we have in our Father."[18] This essential nature is an image of Jesus's divine nature. It is constantly united to God whether one is aware of it or not, it is where each human's godly will abides. The sensory nature of the soul is one's bodiliness, consciousness and the life of the senses and mind, it is an image of Jesus's human nature. It is where the animal will abides. Jesus's motherhood first appears when Julian explains that Jesus "is mother of our essential being" and "through the power of his Passion and his death and rising again, he unites us to our essential being."[19] From this, I derive that Julian calls Jesus her mother in the moments in which Jesus unites human sensuality to divine substantiality to open a way for all humans to knit together these two aspects of their identity. It is the unity of every human's double nature, their godly will and their animal will as well as their essential being and their sensory being. The crucial defining characteristic for Julian's concept of motherhood is the "wrapping of created beings by the divine presence in which they are grounded."[20]

Though Julian of Norwich's concept of motherhood is tied to certain strains of theological truths, she also borrows from the affective tradition in her physical descriptions of Jesus as humanity's mother. For Julian, Jesus is a platonic ideal of motherhood, which earthly mothers can only attempt to replicate. In this sense, the word 'mother' lends itself to an idea that is so "sweet and tender in itself that it cannot truly be said of any but him."[21] This harkens back to Isaiah 49:15 which implied the supreme capacity of God in surpassing all the roles an earthly mother can perform. Two roles performed by an earthly mother, giving birth and nurturing a baby at the breast, are performed by Jesus as a mother. In the passion, Jesus "was in labour" and his sufferings on the cross were birthing pangs until he died which is the moment "he had born us into bliss."[22] In Jesus's passion, death,

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[17] Norwich, 138.
[18] Norwich, 138.
[19] Norwich, 139.
[20] Allen, 415.
[21] Norwich, 142.
[22] Norwich, 141.

and resurrection, Jesus gives birth to a new humanity, one that has the opportunity for each human to be renewed through the union of their essential nature and sensory nature, thereby restoring them to their original creation as an image of Jesus. The second role of motherhood in Jesus is found in feeding the human with the Eucharist, to nourish this project of restoration within them. Julian explains that the "mother can lay the child tenderly to her breast, but our tender mother Jesus, he can familiarly lead us into his blessed breast through his sweet open side," which this blood from his open side is the Eucharist, "the holy sacrament which is the precious food of life itself."[23] One is always united to God in their essential nature, in addition, one becomes united to God in their sensory nature when their human body consumes Jesus's body hidden in the Eucharist, thereby knitting the essential and sensory nature. This further demonstrates that Jesus is only called a mother when he is uniting the essential and sensory being. By eating Jesus, one is becoming more like Jesus. Though the Cisterian tradition often used the image of a breastfeeding Jesus, this is not merely an evocative metaphor for Julian. Jesus is truly humanity's mother when he feeds the human with the Eucharist, as he is nourishing them to become their true creation as the image of Jesus. A mother nourishes her baby using her own body through breastfeeding, and a mother generates new life. Jesus employs both of these maternal roles in the Eucharist.

### The motherhood of Jesus in Julian vs. the motherhood of Jesus in the Cisterian tradition

As mentioned previously, in the affective tradition of the Cisterians, Jesus as a mother was understood to exemplify Jesus's gentleness with humanity, but for Julian, motherhood surpasses beyond this sentimentality. God's motherhood can be seen as a loving disciplinarian. During her revelations, Julian is puzzled why such a loving God would allow sin in the world. She gains a spiritual foothold when she comes to understand that a mother "allows [her child] to be beaten to break down vices so that the child may gain in virtue and grace."[24] Essentially, God allows a human to sin, to

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[23] Norwich, 141.
[24] Norwich, 142.

stumble like the servant in the parable, in order to see how empty one feels when they rely only on their sensory being. This prompts them to return to Jesus, their mother, so he can knit back their sensory and essential part of one's soul.

### How the theological implications found in the motherhood of Jesus deviate from the spiritual path to holiness taken by many other mystics.

Julian of Norwich's concept of Jesus's motherhood also departs from the spiritual tradition of crucifying one's flesh in order to gain proximity to God. By flesh, this signifies the impulses and temptations that come from the human body and will. Julian's texts are filled with affirmations of the human body. She describes the "excellence and tenderness of the blessed body,"[25] his "dear hair… his dear skin and the tender flesh."[26] She describes Jesus's lips as "fresh, red-tinted and lovely."[27] This emphasis on the body is distinctive in Julian's work, as Jantzen remarks that no other mystical writer, "not even St. Francis of Assisi, ever focused so lovingly on the physical body of Jesus on the cross."[28] Julian's affirmation of the body "deviates from a major current in medieval thought and literature, the tradition of contemptus mundi."[29] For example, her contemporary who wrote *The Cloud of the Unknowing* describes the self as a "foul stinking lump" which must "be hated and despised and forsaken, if he shall be God's perfect disciple."[30] This differs from Jesus's role as a mother who seeks not to discard the soul's sensory being but to unite it to their essential being. The body itself is not seen as something to be hated, but to be regarded as good and to be loved as the Father loves his Son, as the lord loves his servant, as the human body is made in the image of Jesus's

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[25] Norwich, 70.
[26] Norwich, 66.
[27] Norwich, 64
[28] Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 239.
[29] Sarah McNamer, "The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love," *Mystics Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1989): 23.
[30] McNamer, 23.

body. Grace Jantzen puts it plainly as she says "Julian does not speak of spiritual growth as mastery of the flesh, or even as transcending the flesh. Rather, she speaks in terms of the unification of substance and sensuality."[31]

The same way Julian affirmed the goodness of the human body, she affirms the goodness abiding in the human will. As mentioned above, Julian affirms duality in the human will, each human has an animal will, belonging to the sensory nature, and a godly will, belonging to the essential nature. As Paula Barker explains, "the unity of Jesus and humanity leads Julian to affirm that there is in each human a godly will which is good in God's sight because of the good will that was in Jesus."[32] This understanding that people intrinsically possess a human will which is partially constituted by the good, stands in contrast to the Augustinian tradition of original sin which conceives of the human will as having an inherent inclination to evil. Julian is not disregarding this notion but adding that the human has a godly will which remains in their essential being. Behind every evil or disordered desire of the human will is a good and holy desire from the godly will. For example, one might desire wealth because they are under the illusion that it will procure them happiness. This good and holy desire for happiness arises from the godly will, as it is more fundamentally a longing for an eternal happiness dwelling in Divine Love. Due to this godly will that lives within the human, which is an image of Jesus's divine will, this demonstrates that there is no need to discard the human will, as Jesus's motherhood unites the animal will to the godly will.

### How Jesus as a mother contrasts with the heresies of Julian's time.

Besides the radical nature of Julian's concept in the Catholic tradition, it also stands in contrast to the heresies of her time, such as the Cathar's dualism. According to the traditional reconstruction of Cathar belief, the body "had been created by Lucifer; and the path to spirituality

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[31] Jantzen, 240.

[32] Paula Barker, "The Motherhood of God in Julian of Norwich's Theology." *Downside Review* 100 (1982): 290.

was to distance oneself as much as possible from the demands of the body by stringent asceticism."[33] This contrasts directly with Julian and her affirmations of the beauty of the body as she had assigned them to Jesus. The body and creation are good, and they are created in the image of Jesus, as Julian affirms that God "does not despise what he has made."[34] For the same reason Julian does not promote stringent ascetical practices to crucify the flesh, she does not affirm any derision of the body. Jesus as a mother unites the sensory being, which involves the human body, to each human's essential being. Julian's spirituality does not entail leaving part of the self behind, "but bringing the whole of the self, sensuality included, into the unity of the love of God."[35]

Julian also contrasts against another heresy of her time which is the antinomianism found in the brethren of the Free Spirit. This heresy dismissed the need for a sacramental life involving the Church. The practitioners would contend that their personal relationship with Jesus suffices for their salvation. Julian's discussion of Jesus as a mother feeding his children through his side wound the Eucharist, acts in contrast to the heretics' disregard of the sacrament. For Julian, the Church is necessary in order to cultivate her personal relationship with Jesus. Julian recounts Jesus informing her that "all the health and life of the sacraments… all the goodness which is ordained in Holy Church for you, It is I."[36] The sacrament of the Eucharist nourishes each human's sensory being and unites it to the human's essential being. She derides those who "take one thing according to [their] taste and fancy and leave another, for that is what heretics do."[37] To accept the fullness of Jesus, is to accept the teachings of the Holy Church, and in receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, each human can experience the unitiveness and fullness of being, as Jesus as humanity's mother is knitting each human's dual beings and thereby restoring the individual to their authentic image in Jesus.

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[33] Jantzen, 248.
[34] Norwich, 49.
[35] Jantzen, 149.
[36] Norwich, 141.
[37] Norwich, 180.

**Conclusion**

Julian of Norwich's exploration of Jesus as mother in "Revelations of Divine Love" challenges conventional views prevalent in her time. Departing from sentimentality, she sees Jesus's motherhood as intrinsic to his nature, as he unites human existence with divine essence. Unlike contemporary spiritual paths emphasizing asceticism, Julian affirms the goodness of the body and will, further contrasting with prevalent heresies. Her vision underscores the sacramental life and the Church's role in spiritual nourishment. Ultimately, Julian considers Jesus's transformative motherhood as bridging humanity's dual nature and restoring individuals to their true image in Jesus.

# Spiritual warfare and the apostasy of postmodern Christianity:

## Evangelical in-fighting and its political dimension in John MacArthur's *The Truth War*

*Zackari Bourgeois*

*IN A VIDEO POSTED ON MARCH 23$^{RD}$, 2023*, the popular Youtuber AwakenWithJP (real name, JP Sears) describes his own awakening to God, specifically Christianity. During the COVID pandemic, Sears states that he became "more Christian,"[1] noticing a similar change in those around him.[2] At one point in his testimony, the comedian reflects upon a pivotal question: "Why are people getting more Christian without even trying?"[3] For Sears, the presence of evil within contemporary society has pushed those like him to the faith of Christ.[4] This evil is evident through the explicit attempt to control the minds of the masses at the behest of corporate and government interests.[5] Further along in Sears' video, the concept of spiritual warfare, in particular, is brought into the equation.[6] According to Sears, the forces of Satan and God are in a metaphysical battle, and human souls are at stake.[7] However, while the correlation of demonic powers with the rise of certain

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[1] AwakenWithJP, "I Changed My Mind About God – Here's Why," YouTube Video, March 23$^{rd}$, 2023, 2:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6etpmQUc2M&ab_channel=AwakenWithJP

[2] Ibid, 3:15.

[3] Ibid, 3:25.

[4] Ibid, 3:30.

[5] Ibid, 3:35.

[6] Ibid, 13:25.

[7] Ibid, 13:50.

cultural happenings in the wake of the COVID-19 virus may be new to Sears,[8] the same cannot be said for a bevy of Christians since March 2020.

For example, in "Battling the Plague: Spiritual Warfare, COVID-19 and the Demonization of Political Adversaries," André Gagné notes several notable American evangelical leaders - such as Shawn Bolz, Cindy Jacobs, and Kenneth Copeland, among others – partook in various forms of spiritual warfare discourse and rhetoric in the early days of the pandemic.[9] Briefly, spiritual warfare refers to the belief that Christian believers are entangled in a supernatural battle between good and evil.[10] How the previously mentioned leaders used spiritual warfare varied, but they centered mainly upon similar premises. That premise was that the power of God could combat the virus through "prophetic words" and prayer. Admittedly, the association between physical and spiritual sickness and the desire to will such things away through acts such as prayer may seem harmless. Perhaps the reader is asking themselves: *What is wrong about praying for COVID-19 to go away?* As Gagné notes, the discourse and rhetoric of spiritual warfare often comes with a political agenda.[11] Cultural enemies may begin to be seen as spiritual enemies. In drawing a connection back to the video of AwakenWithJP, spiritual warfare discourse often "unveils" the evil present in the actions of groups and individual people who oppose the Christian worldview.

## 1.0. John MacArthur's *The Truth War*: Christian In-Fighting and The Political Dimension

As a form of enemy-creating discourse, spiritual warfare has even been levied against other Christians. One notable example is John F. MacArthur's 2007 book *The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception*. MacArthur is the self-described "pastor-teacher" of the Grace Community Church and its digitally-mediated offshoot, *Grace to You*.[12] A

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[8] It should be noted the COVID-19 pandemic, which Sears refers to as the "plandemic," are not the only signs of satanic powers in American society.

[9] André Gagné, "Battling the Plague: Spiritual Warfare, Covid-19 and the Demonization of Political Adversaries," In Religion and Violence in Western Traditions: Selected Studies, ed. Jennifer Guyver, Gerbern S. Oegema, and Gagné André (New York, NY: Routledge, 2022), 158-160.

[10] See note one of Battling the Plague on page 166.

[11] Ibid, 165.

[12] "Biographical Sketch of John MacArthur," Grace to You, https://www.gty.org/about/john.

prominent figure in the conservative-evangelical sphere of American Christianity, he has never been one to shy away from controversy. He has been an avid critic of the evangelical movement's turn to modern practices, such as the growing role of women in church ministry and the promotion of a scripturally-backed push for social justice.[13] One of his fiercest condemnations of changes in the evangelical church comes in the form of *The Truth War*.[14]

Deemed a must-have for those in church office by Erik Raymond of *The Gospel Coalition*[15] and an essential "antidote" to fight the obfuscation of biblical truth by *Christian Today,*[16] MacArthur's book depicts a particular sect of the evangelical church as apostates. These modern-day apostates and "false teachers" are evangelicals who have embraced the postmodern relativization of truth. Among the most prominent of these supposed apostates and false teachers are Brian McLaren and Rob Bell, key figures of the Emerging Church Movement (ECM). True Christians, as MacArthur deems himself and others, are in a spiritual war, akin to the Apostle Paul's fight with "false apostles [and] deceitful workers" in 2 Corinthians, against the EMC and any evangelicals who follow their lead.[17][18]

The precise nature of the threat these apostates and false teachers pose to the true Christian community is through the perversion of Biblical truth. MacArthur brings into the conversation the Book of Genesis and, again, the Apostle Paul's letter, 2 Corinthians, stating that true Christians

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[13] Morgan Lee, "John MacArthur Is No Stranger To Controversy," Christianity Today, last modified October 23rd, 2019, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/podcasts/quick-to-listen/john-macarthur-beth-moore-controversy.html.

[14] "Book Review: The Truth War – By John MacArthur," Presbyformed.com, https://presbyformed.com/2016/09/22/book-review-the-truth-war-by-john-macarthur/

[15] Erik Raymond, "Book Review – The Truth War," The Gospel Coalition, last modified February 26th, 2008, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/book-review-the-truth-war/

[16] "A review of The Truth War. By John MacArthur." Christian Today, https://christiantoday.com.au/news/a-review-of-ithe-truth-wari-by-john-macarthur.html

[17] 2 Corinthians 11:13.

* NOTE: All Bible verses taken from MacArthur's book.

[18] John MacArthur, *The Truth War* (Nashvile, TN: Thomas Nelson), 22, Kindle.

know Satan has attempted to distort truth since the Garden of Eden with the temptation of Eve. Furthermore, Satan's tools of deception are well-known to true believers.[19] Among the most effective tools of satanic deception are "people who are in some way actually associated with the truth, or (even worse) who merely pretend to be agents of the truth." EMC-style Christianity epitomizes Satan's most powerful tool in the cosmological narrative that fuels MacArthur's SWD. As such, these postmodern Christians represent the gravest of all sins.

Before moving on, we should note that MacArthur's form of spiritual warfare differs in performance from the previously listed examples dealing with COVID-19. Rather than dealing in "warfare prayer," MacArthur's concept of spiritual warfare is a strictly discursive depiction of Christians engaging in a metaphysical battle of good versus evil, with a particular threat coming from other Christians. It is also essential to understand MacArthur's view on using force, as MacArthur stresses that the "truth war" is not dealt with through physical violence.[20] He states that "absolute pacifism" is not Biblical; Christians have a God-given right to defend themselves and their families from criminal violence or institutional powers.[21] However, the cosmic battle MacArthur presents to his readers, between true Christians, apostates, and false teachers, is one that the Bible states is fought through spiritual means for spiritual objectives.[22]

## 2.0. Thesis Statement, Theory, Method, and Methodology

As the following analysis of John MacArthur's spiritual warfare discourse (SWD) will discuss, much like recent cases of said discourse, there is a political dimension to MacArthur's SWD worth exploring. While MacArthur has largely considered himself apolitical throughout his time in ministry,[23] *The Truth War* explicitly mentions politics numerous times without making it a central focus of his book. It is this study's thesis that

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[19] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 39.
See Genesis 3:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 2:11.
[20] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 28.
[21] Ibid, 29.
[22] Ibid, 30
MacArthur makes direct reference to Ephesians 6:12, a common Biblical verse used in spiritual warfare discourse.
[23] "Why does John avoid political issues and politics?", Grace to You, https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA207/why-does-john-avoid-political-issues-and-politics.

MacArthur does this to demonstrate postmodern Christianity as the infiltration of liberal politics within the evangelical Church. Using the method of Critical Discourse Analysis, the following paper embarks on a didactic criticism of *The Truth War,* understanding the instructional qualities of MacArthur's book.[24] Additionally, this analysis was conducted with methodological ludism and interpretive sociology in mind.

By methodological ludism, this research takes an etic and emic stance,[25] attempting to first understand *The Truth War* from the perspective of the intended audience, i.e., the "true Christian" described by MacArthur. This "true Christian" can be summarized as a believer in the inerrant Word of God and traditionalist Christian teachings, such as those opposing same-sex marriage. However, providing an etic perspective was equally important. This is where the "critical" component of CDA becomes most important. From this critical, etic perspective, the researcher attempts to uncover power dynamics within the discourse under review. As demonstrated in the following section, CDA is more an overarching theory of discourse that employs multiple interdisciplinary methods.

The method of interpretive sociology may be more precisely labeled as the analogical method. By this, we mean to take the approach of French sociologist Michel Maffesoli in stating that theoretical frameworks must be constructed as "conditions of possibility."[26] According to Maffesoli, everyday life is impossible to deduce to a single theory or hypothesis. By analogy, the researcher invokes "a way of interpreting unstable phenomena by comparing them to similar situations and experiences." Therefore, complex relationships may be better vulgarized through a familiar turn of phrase, metaphor, or analogy. However, we cannot state that what we are referring to is wholly understood through the metaphor; instead, the metaphor/analogy highlights those pertinent aspects of the research being conducted.

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[24] Daniel Stout, Media and Religion (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 71.

[25] Knibbe and Droogers state that approaching studies in religion from the perspective of ludism entails "understanding religion from within," but, equally, the researcher must be able to "switch back" into a critical perspective when necessary.
André Droogers and Kim Knibble, "Methodological Ludism and the Academic Study of Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011): 286 and 294.

[26] Michel Maffesoli, *Ordinary Knowledge: An Introduction to Interpretive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996) 88.

2.1. Precision on Discourse Analysis

As Norman Fairclough states, the precise form of CDA depends on the question one is trying to answer.[27] The main goal of this research is to understand how politics, best understood as the realized potential to direct discourse for individuals and groups in society,[28] are both presented and used by MacArthur. This means that *The Truth War* frames the political realm in a specific light for discursive reasons. However, MacArthur's book exhibits its form of politics. This study's CDA involved text analysis, ideological criticism, and sociocognitive context in capturing this duality. Concerning text analysis, Fairclough states that text analysis is a specific form of CDA focusing on linguistic particularities in a text; these particularities relate to the social life within which they are utilized.[29] It strongly resembles Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in that both SFL and text analysis view language, and therefore texts, as having a deep-rooted relationship with social life. They differ in that text analysis, rather than SFL, has a decidedly critical approach to language. This means dynamics of power – governance, hegemony, and ideology, for example.[30] Therefore, texts are "elements of social events" and "have causal effects."[31] Text analysis also shares methodological tools of corpus linguistics, as both corpus and text analysis focus on linguistic events such as keywords, repetition, and collocation. However, with corpus analysis, text analysis employs qualitative rather than strictly quantitative research.

Therefore, this analysis deployed text analysis by focusing on the morpheme/politic/, using the search tool within the Kindle App to produce twenty instances of this morpheme.[32] Once these twenty different usages were isolated, the syntactic placement of the semantic unit was noted, along

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[27] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Second Edition. London and New York: Longman, 2010), 4.
[28] Luis Mauro sa Martino, *The Mediatization of Religion: When Faith Rocks* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 2.
[29] Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2.
[30] Ibid, 7
[31] Ibid, 8
[32] In linguistics, morphemes are the smallest units of speech of a word. For example, /politic/ and its plural suffix /-s/ are both morphemes.

with its place in various levels of discourse.[33] Such an analysis aimed to understand (1) how the morpheme /politic/ is being used within the sentence, (2) how it relates to sub-sections of MacArthur's discourse, and (3) how it relates to the larger discourse of MacArthur's book.[34] In doing so, critical moments of discursive intertextuality were noted, and specific words and concepts were found to be repeated in association with the morpheme /politic/. Those were "political correctness," Arianism, and "nods" to MacArthur's earlier work *Why Government Can't Save You*. The results of the text analysis then underwent an ideological criticism to understand the rhetorical tools utilized by MacArthur in creating an in-group/out-group dynamic between "true Christians," postmodern Christians, and "weak" Evangelicals susceptible to PMC's apostasy.[35] This helped determine whether particular themes were paired with a semantic unit of "politics," which framed the enemy in a particular light.

This study considers formulating rhetorical tools and disseminating discourse from a sociocognitive view of context. As Tuen A Van Djik notes, context is a "subjective participant" construction built through the unique "mental models" of those participating in its construction.[36] However, context is limited by the "shared social cognitions of a discourse community."[37] Therefore, the cognitive parameters of individuals and communities influence how discourses are conceived and how they are to be understood.[38] In the case of *The Truth War*, this text was produced within the context of a specific discursive community, conservative American evangelicalism. Equally, this is the context within which the book was most

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[33] By semantic unit, we mean the "final version" of the word, i.e., the morpheme with its added morphemes, such as /politic/-/s/.

[34] This study owes a debt of gratitude as well to Tuen A. van Djik's work on Semantic Discourse Analysis (SDA). While it would be redundant to include SDA in this section on theory, method and methodology, it is a valuable building block in how the CDA was conceived and conducted

[35] Ideological criticism is a method which assumes ideologies may be unearthed in close readings of texts by focusing on specifics of discourse structure. Tuen A. van Djik, "Ideological Discourse Analysis." Edited by Anna Solin and Eija Ventola. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Discourse Analysis 4 (1995): 135.

[36] Tuen A. van Djik, *Discourse and Context: A Sociocognitive Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 16.

[37] Ibid, 17.

[38] Ibid, 22.

likely meant to be read.[39] However, we must acknowledge that *The Truth War* was analyzed within a different context from which it was written. This was important to remember when determining an emic perspective. This researcher can not fully comprehend MacArthur's mental model or the Evangelical community he was writing to. However, we may still place this text within its "proper" context. Thus, the intertextual elements or recurring themes surrounding the various usages of the morpheme /politic/ will be discussed with an American Evangelical/Conservative perspective in mind. This allows us to hypothesize how the book *The Truth War* may have been intended to be read and understood by the intended audience. After this specific context is understood, to the best of our capabilities, the researcher's context, an etic-perspective, may be formed. From this etic perspective, we ask: *What is The Truth War doing from a critical perspective*?

### 3.0. Results of Analysis

*The Truth War* demonstrated twenty different uses of the morpheme /politic/. These included politic-al (12), politic-al-ly (5), politic-s (2), and politic-ian (1). The syntactic context of each semantic unit and a brief description of each sentence's context within MacArthur's book have been provided for the reader's insight. Note that each semantic unit has been paired with a number for future reference. For example, the first semantic unit will be discussed as SU.1. later in the analysis. Also, semantic units have been paired together by chapter. This is because the context of these semantic units depends largely on the section and chapters in which they are located, and grouping them as such keeps us from unnecessary repetition.

3.1. Results of the Textual Analysis

Chapter 2:

SU.1.) *"In other instances [of the church engendering violence], confusion about the relationship between church and state has empowered a few overzealous **political** leaders or misguided military commanders who thought they could wage holy war in the name of Christ."*[40]

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[39] A brief review of MacArthur's literary output, the author of he MacArthur Study Bible, will no doubt give you the same impression. John A. MacArthur's work revolves heavily upon educating evangelicals about the faith.
[40] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 29.

Chapter Two details MacArthur's conception of spiritual warfare. Important to MacArthur's argument is that spiritual warfare is not meant to be a physical battle, *per se*. SU.1. demonstrates that, according to MacArthur, political wars fought in the name of Christianity were unbiblical. MacArthur makes a specific case with the English Revolution and Lieutenant-General Oliver Cromwell's military action against the forces of King Charles the 1st.[41] Note the adjectives in use; these Christians are "overzealous," "misguided," and confused. They are in the wrong, but not profoundly evil, such as the apostates discussed within the book. However, this arises from an improper knowledge of how the Christian must relate to the state, and we should emphasize that MacArthur does state there is a "relationship" to be adequately understood between church and state.

### Chapter 4:

SU.2.) *"Even though it is clear from the context [of Titus 2:1] that Paul is not advocating the use of any kind of brute violence, his statement about stopping the mouths of false teachers has both a tone of authority and a settled certainty to it that makes it sound less-than-**politically**-correct to postmodern ears."[42]*

Chapter four emphasizes the role of false teachers in bringing about apostasy. SU.2. arrives to the reader in the section titled "A Caution For the Present Time." The caution MacArthur is referencing occurs in the Letter of Jude. *The Truth War* relies heavily on this particular letter in framing PMC as apostasy. For example, PMC represents the unnoticed false teachers who have crept in amongst true Christians.[43] Postmodern Christians "feast with you without fear, serving only themselves."[44] Later in the chapter, when MacArthur brings Paul's Letter to Titus into the conversation, MacArthur states that Paul wished for Titus to speak out against heretics.[45] In SU.2., MacArthur uses Paul's call to Titus to educate the reader on how to meet the current crisis of postmodern Christianity and its false teachers – with a tone that directly challenges the political correctness of postmodern culture.

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[41] For more on Cromwell and the English Civil War, see https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oliver-Cromwell.

[42] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 94.

[43] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 79. Bible verse: Jude verse 4.

[44] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 80. Bible Verse: Jude verse 12.

[45] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 94. Bible verse: See Titus 1:13.

<u>Chapter 5:</u>

SU.3.) *"That is because the **politics** of the dispute [concerning Arianism in Constantine's empire] were on Arius' side."*[46]

SU.4.) *"He [Arius] succeeded in turning the **politics** of the dispute in his favor."*[47]

SU.5.) *"He [Constantine] declared amnesty for the Arian leaders and employed his enormous **political** clout against faithful bishops to try to enforce the amnesty."*[48]

SU.6.) *"He [Athanasius] steadfastly refused, against intense **political** and ecclesiastical pressure, to settle the dispute by compromise."*[49]

SU.7.) *"Because of the emperor's [Constantine's] **political** clout, however, most bishops automatically deferred to his wishes as a matter of policy."*[50]

Chapter five, titled "Heresy's Subtlety," has the second-most references to politics in *The Truth War*. This chapter focuses on a historical moment in the early Christian community: Arianism. As evidenced by the five semantic units isolated from this chapter, Arianism is closely tied to politics in MacArthur's discourse. While MacArthur's Arian analogy will be elaborated upon in the following section, a few key takeaways may be listed here. Those are that politics, the temporal dynamics of power within Constantine's empire, were squarely against biblical truth, or at least highly susceptible to being swayed in favor of allowing Arianism to survive the post-Nicaean council.

<u>Chapter 7:</u>

SU.8.) *"Apparently, some evangelicals are prepared to let the dogmas of **political** correctness trump any article of faith."*[51]

SU.9.) *"Evangelicals are also preoccupied with matters such as their image before the general public and before the academic world, their clout in the*

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[46] Ibid, 107.

[47] Ibid, 111.

[48] Ibid, 111.

[49] Ibid, 112.

[50] Ibid, 114.

[51] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 144.

***political*** *arena, their portrayal by the media, and similar shallow, self-centered matters.*"[52]

SU.10.) *"In fact, it is hard to think of a more direct or more deliberate way to attack the rightful lordship of Christ over His church. Accommodations to **political** correctness.*"[53] *Note, for context, the previous sentence was added to SU.10.

SU.11.) *"Evangelicals willing to bend biblical truth to make Christianity seem more **politically** correct are in effect denying Christ as the true Head of the church.*"[54]

SU.12.) *"It [feminism] is an opinion that was universally rejected by mainstream Christianity until the current generation, when it was proposed mainly as a **politically** correct way to respond to secular feminists' charge that Christianity is too male dominated and therefore outmoded.*"[55]

SU.13.) *"No king, no pope, and no **politician** has any right to usurp the title [Head of church] or pretend to occupy the office.*"[56]

Chapter seven houses the most references to politics, with seven. This chapter, titled "The Assault on Divine Authority: Christ's Lordship Denied," takes evangelicals to task for subverting Christ as Head. These Evangelicals have given into postmodern values of open-mindedness at the cost of biblical discernment and loyalty to Christ.[57] As can be seen from the seven semantic units of this chapter, MacArthur broadly frames Evangelicals as more worried about their image (SU.9.), their place within culture (SU.8.), and the feelings of non-Christians than with Biblical truth (SU.12.). Ultimately, for MacArthur, this is a direct affront to Christ, the Head as proclaimed in Colossians 1:18.[58]

Chapter 8:

SU.14.) *"I see a close analogy [of fighting a good warfare] in the **political***

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[52] Ibid, 146.

[53] Ibid, 153.

[54] Ibid, 153.

[55] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 154.

[56] Ibid, 163.

[57] Ibid, 144.

[58] Ibid, 162.

*situation that dominates the secular Western world today."⁵⁹*

SU.15.) *"Postmodern values and **political** correctness rule out profiling, monitoring the conversations of suspicious people, targeting illegal residents, and other means that would help identify who the terrorists are."⁶⁰*

      Chapter Eight educates the reader on "how to survive in an age of apostasy." MacArthur states that "good" Christians must follow Paul's words in Acts of the Apostles 20:27: "to declare… the whole counsel of God."⁶¹ Again, MacArthur states that the answer to surviving PMC comes from Biblical precedence. Paul's 1ˢᵗ Corinthians is an example of how one spreads the Gospel without bending it to the whims of the culture one is evangelizing. This is opposed to evangelicals who have lost faith in Scripture and contextualize it to appease a new generation of potential converts.⁶² Thus, the missionary style of Paul – which MacArthur states is full of "showmanship" for Biblical truth – is the proper answer to the Western world's postmodern values of "openness, tolerance, freedom, and acceptance."⁶³ Interesting to note are the threats to U.S. domestic safety (SU.15.). Much like the terrorists that postmodern values let slip between the cracks of the intelligence agency, evangelicals sympathetic to postmodern thinking allow "spiritual terrorists" to infiltrate the church community.

    Appendix:

SU.16.) *"Zeal for truth has become **politically** incorrect."⁶⁴*

SU.17.) *"Obviously, in the realm of social and **political** discourse, certain kinds of compromise can be helpful, even constructive."⁶⁵*

SU.18.) *"Compromise lubricates the **political** machinery of secular government."⁶⁶*

SU.19.) *"Many churches have deliberately downplayed the biblical*

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⁵⁹ Ibid, 172.
⁶⁰ Ibid, 173.
⁶¹ MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 165-166.
⁶² Ibid, 167.
⁶³ Ibid, 172.
⁶⁴ Ibid, 189.
⁶⁵ Ibid, 192.
⁶⁶ Ibid, 192.

*message of God's hatred of sin, and in some cases they have carefully refrained from identifying certain **politically** volatile sins – such as abortion and homosexuality – as evil."[67]*

      *The Truth War's* appendix, titled "Why Discernment Is Out Of Fashion," laments postmodern thinking's emphasis on tolerance, which MacArthur labels "extreme tolerance." The final fundamental teaching MacArthur wishes to impart to his reader is that Biblical discernment is impossible in a society that states all worldviews are equal.[68] This is because the Biblical worldview teaches that there is one truth. The consequence of such extreme tolerance is that it shuns the Biblical worldview from the public square; thus, compromise between political opponents becomes obsolete. Likewise, public policy turns for the worst, allowing "sins" to become legally acceptable. When churches wish to become more politically correct, they accept these politically acceptable sins under the guise of tolerance.

Notes:

SU.20.) *"Far from being a true defender of the faith, Henry [the 8th] was a **political** opportunist and an ungodly man."[69]*

      Only one note refers to politics, and it is the first note in chapter five, "Heresy's Subtlety." In the chapter itself, note one appears at the end of a paragraph detailing how England's monarchs have regularly failed to uphold the title of "defender of the faith."[70] Specifically, MacArthur briefly mentions Henry the VIII as a royal who led a less-than-righteous lifestyle. The footnote explains that Henry initially received the title from Pope Leo X in 1521 after rebuking Martin Luther's ninety-five theses. Later, Henry would break from Rome, a move MacArthur states demonstrates Henry as everything but a faithful Christian politically. Again, much like with Constantine, the issue of political power, especially when wielded by one who is corruptible, and true Biblical Christianity clash.

### 3.2. Results of the Ideological Criticism and Ideological Context

Under the scope of Tuen A. Van Dijk's conception of ideological

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[67] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 206.
[68] Ibid, 188.
[69] Ibid, 218.
[70] Ibid, 98.

criticism, this study noticed three distinct rhetorical tools that shape the image of the out-group/in-group. These three rhetorical tools are (1) the violations of norms and values, (2) warnings, and (3) goal descriptions. First, out-groups are discussed as *violators of norms and values* when it is explicitly emphasized that they disregard or outright wish to destroy what the in-group holds dear.[71] Secondly, the author creates rhetoric of warning when detailing the possibility of harm caused by the out-group to the in-group. This is often discussed as something being unveiled to the reader. Therefore, the writer informs the harm the out-group can cause, i.e., demonizing said out-group. Lastly, goal descriptions have less to do explicitly with the out-group and more with what the in-group should do or believe.[72] As will be demonstrated, each of these three categories takes a unique turn when deployed in *The Truth War*.

### 3.2.1. Politics Infiltrating the Church: Political Correctness and the Violation of Norms and Values

The violation of norms and values occurs primarily in chapter seven. MacArthur states that postmodern Christians are turning their back on Christ, as are the fickle evangelicals with no interest in fighting for the faith. "Some evangelicals," the out-group, accommodate political correctness too significantly.[73] It is worth noting that "political correctness" appears four times within this chapter (SU.8,10,11&12), as well as once in the appendix (SU.16.). As Baird *et al*. note in "Understanding The Rise of Anti-Political Correctness Sentiment," cultural conservatives have long lamented political correctness as a disingenuous ploy by leftists to control discourse.[74] The belief that political correctness will push conservative voices out of the mainstream is at the heart of anti-PC sentiments. Often, conservative values of free speech are referred to as liberating. At the same time, political correctness is likened to linguistic authoritarianism at worst and "play-along" at best.[75] MacArthur's anti-PC discourse continues in the same vein. For example, PC culture has "dogmas," while MacArthur's side has "articles of faith." Likewise, MacArthur repeatedly refers to

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[71] Van Djik, "Ideological Discourse Analysis," 156.

[72] Ibid, 148.

[73] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 144.

[74] Andrew F. Baird, J. Scott Carter and J. Micah Roos, "Understanding the Rise of Anti-Political Correctness Sentiment: The Curious Role of Education," *Humanity & Society* 47, no. 1 (2023): 96

[75] Ibid, 97.

contemporary evangelicals as not truly PC but simply PC-accommodating, stating modern evangelicals are "shallow" and usurping Christ by trying to modernize Christianity in an attempt to catch up to contemporary culture.

Conservative anti-PC discourse has historically taken a free speech absolutist approach to "hateful, sexist [and] racist speech," stating that this is the only way to ensure freedom of speech and thought.[76] Curbing openly racist, sexist, or hateful speech is depicted as a "slippery slope," which may eventually end free speech altogether. For example, MacArthur creates his own "slippery slope" when he states that the extreme tolerance of postmodern society labels the Biblical worldview as intolerant and, therefore, politically incorrect. The "slippery slope" cultural conservatives often emphasize in their anti-PC discourse takes a slightly different route in *The Truth War*. Rather than having an Orwellian impact on the general population's capacity to dialogue freely, MacArthur is more concerned with the spiritual well-being of his community. The "slippery slope" becomes one where fickle Christians, the immediate out-group, lose their salvation while trying to be more welcoming of the world's sinful nature, the ultimate out-group.

### 3.2.2. Only God Can Save You: A Compromising Government and Uncompromising Christians as Goal Descriptions

MacArthur states in *The Truth War* that the political arena is not meant to be dominated by true Christians, MacArthur's in-group. Additionally, as evidenced by his goal descriptions, he states that the political arena should be a place of compromise when possible (SU.17-18.). However, for MacArthur, Biblical truth is clear and not subject to change. Thus, while the political arena has grounds for compromise, the church does not. In MacArthur's *Why Government Can't Save You*, published in 2000, many of the same goals are depicted. In *Government*, MacArthur states that the West has lost its Biblical foundation, allowing same-sex marriages, divorce, and adultery to be argued as civil rights.[77] Nonetheless, Christians are only responsible to the heavenly kingdom, not the earthly government.[78] While Christians may vote and support particular agendas in a lively manner, Christians must make sure not to try to make the United States a Christian nation, for being too politically invested means attention is being

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[76] Ibid, 98.

[77] John F. MacArthur, *Why Government Can't Save You* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2000), 3.

[78] MacArthur, *Why Government Can't Save You*, 7&12.

taken away from evangelizing.[79]

For MacArthur, the political realm is a place of compromise, which may be detrimental to Christian values.[80] For example, Christians may have to make political allies with non-Christians in advocating for certain legislation. This may have a long-term effect on valid Christian values, which he wishes to avoid. In this sense, the in-group may look and act more and more like the out-group(s) they wage spiritual war with. Evangelicals may divert from the showmanship of the Apostle Paul as a means to be more compliant with the PC demands of false teachers, i.e., postmodern Christians (SU.2.). Additionally, politics are too fleeting and thus prone to oscillation. Even if Christians manage to make policy changes, they are subject to change under another administration.

### 3.2.3. The Corruptibility of External and Internal Politics: Arianism as Analogical Warning

In *The Truth War*, politics are prone to sway and manipulation. Chapter eight sees MacArthur using the historical precedence of Arianism as a warning to biblical Christians precisely on this matter. Arianism, named after its major proponent Arius, was an early 4th century worldview stating, at the most broad level, that "the Son of God [was] a creature."[81] Marilynn Dunn notes that Arianism is often reduced to a soundbite; Arius is labeled as a heretic who denied Christ, and his proposed Christianity was "subordinationist."[82] By subordinationist, Dunn means that Arianism was, and continues to be, seen as making "the Son a lesser God than the Father." However, much like the label "Gnostic,"[83] which MacArthur also uses in *The Truth War* to a lesser degree, "Arianism" is problematic.

For example, in Ariel Bybee Laughton's analysis of Ambrose of Milan's charges against Arianism, Laughton notes that Ambrose used the term loosely, making the label fit whomever Ambrose needed to deem

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[79] Ibid, 8,13 and 14.

[80] "Why does John avoid political issues and politics?", Grace to You, https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA207/why-does-john-avoid-political-issues-and-politics.

[81] Joseph T. Lienhard, "The 'Arian' Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 415.

[82] Marilyn Dunn, *Arianism* (York, UK: ARC Humanities Press, 2021), 2.

[83] See Karen L. King's *What is Gnosticism*.

"heretic" at the moment.[84] David M. Gwynn asserts that even up to the seventh ecumenical council, the term "Arian" was used by Iconophiles against Iconoclasts.[85] Both Laughton and Gwynn come to the same conclusion on the "Arian controversy." Essentially, Arianism is often used as a stock label for heretics. The controversy surrounding its rise and promotion in the 4th century is often re-interpreted to create links to those labeled as "Arian-like" in the contemporary context.[86] Arianism not only labels what is deemed unorthodox as heretical but that which follows a lineage of deceiving the Christian community.

### 3.2.3.1. MacArthur's Arian Analogy

In MacArthur's Arian analogy, there is a clear emphasis on the "politics" of the Arian controversy. The politics of the controversy are depicted as biased against Biblical truth (SU.3-4) and forcing themselves on ardent defenders of said truth such as Athanasius (SU.6.). Most evidently, the false teachers of PMC – namely the Emerging Church – have become the Arians of the modern-day, poised to disrupt the church and proclaim an alien truth. They use the nebulous politics of the evangelical church to spread their message and seek relevance. Thus, the politics of the church, under the guise of tolerance and relativism, mirror the politics of society.

The characterization of Constantine further reinforces this. The influential leader is painted as using the enormity of his political power to force compromise as a policy position (SU.5-7.). As discussed before, MacArthur does not believe compromise to be wholeheartedly evil. In a functioning society, or at least within the political arena Christians are stuck within the U.S., and compromise is necessary. But only to a degree for Christians. In *The Truth War*, the evangelical church becomes Constantine-like; they are fickle and have no absolute allegiance to the truth. Rather than defending what is true, the evangelical church would rather appease those debasing Biblical truth. Furthermore, Constantine symbolizes how political leaders use their power to do ungodly things, trying to break the spirit of

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[84] Ariel Bybee Laughton, "Apostasy's Ancestors: Anti-Arian and Anti-Mormon Discourse in the Struggle for Christianity," in *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy*, ed. by Miranda Wilcox and John D. Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7-8.

[85] David M. Gwynn, "From Iconoclasm to Arianism: The Construction of Christian Tradition in the Iconoclast Controversy," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 47 (2007): 226.

[86] Ibid, 249-251.

Godly men such as Athanasius of Alexandria. In MacArthur's discourse, the evangelical church becomes the political leader *claiming* to be doing God's work, making compromise and relativism the church's position. However, what they are *genuinely doing* is the work of Satan.

Athanasius symbolizes the "true" Christian refusing to compromise and suffering exile for staying true to his faith.[87] Much like the term "Arian," we may note that the role of Athanasius in MacArthur's discourse is problematic. Gwynn and G. Christopher Stead note that Athanasius' depiction of Arius and the Arians is reductionist.[88] Stead further argues that Athanasius' "stock charges" against the Arians are conflicting and poorly thought-out.[89] However, MacArthur's discourse implicitly rejects the notion that Athanasius is anything other than a steadfast believer, a symbol of the faithful Christian standing up against the world.[90]

Athanasius represents God's capacity to use humans as "faithful warriors."[91] In this sense, MacArthur calls upon his readers to take the mantle of Athanasius, standing up to the moral relativism and extreme tolerance within the Evangelical church. This fight is Biblically mandated, is nearing its final hours, and requires true, Athanasius-like Christians to step up. Thus, more than a history lesson in how heresy spreads through deception in a community lulled into a false sense of security, the Arian controversy exemplifies how true Christians save the truth. However, the truth cannot be saved when political correctness attempts to curb righteous speech. As exemplified by Athanasius, defending the truth in a culture of compromise only leads to judgment. Therefore, the church must be less like the political arena and more like what God intended – unflinching and ready for (spiritual) war. Otherwise, the evangelical church will only be weakening itself before spiritual warfare.

### 4.0. Conclusion

MacArthur states that God long ago judged the false teachers of postmodern Christianity and that God's divine plan "will be fulfilled to

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[87] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 111.

[88] Gwynn, 229 and G. Christopher Stead, "Rhetorical Method in Athanasius," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30, no. 2 (June 1976): 133.

[89] Stead, 132&134.

[90] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 112.

[91] Ibid, 115.

absolute perfection."[92] He argues that understanding God as sovereign over everything – apostates and false teachers included – raises serious questions.[93,94] True Christians should not be bogged down by "doctrinal and philosophical dilemmas." What is most prescient is that Christians understand that "God will overthrow every wicked deed and every malicious intention of every evildoer." In the meantime, Christians are responsible for remembering, remaining, and reaching out. Therefore, spiritual warfare necessitates Christians (1) remember the Word of God and that He has not lost control, (2) remain unwaveringly faithful to the truth, and (3) reach out to both deceivers and those who have been deceived.[95,96] In essence, spiritual warfare does not look much different than regular, faithful Christianity, other than the heightened sense of urgency MacArthur ascribes to commitment and Biblical discernment.

In conclusion, we may make three educated observations on MacArthur's SWD in *The Truth War*. First, a Christian community without the urgency of spiritual warfare only loses the battle. What we mean by this is that MacArthur believes his readership needs to be awakened to the evils of postmodern Christianity. He has purposefully chosen spiritual warfare discourse and rhetoric to awaken them. Secondly, this war must be fought till the end, meaning true Christians must never settle for a truce. MacArthur makes it explicit that true Christians cannot allow false teachers to spread their Word nor allow apostates to continue multiplying, even if God has planned this out. Third, the opposing side and those Christians unwilling to fight cannot determine the rules of war. In the case of postmodern Christianity, their rules are centered upon political correctness, reflecting contemporary culture and its politics. The truth MacArthur advocates for just cannot be proclaimed in a manner that will suit the moral relativism of postmodern society. Christians unwilling to fight are those Constantinian Christians too greatly influenced by the secular notion of compromise. They may believe, to some degree, biblical truth. However, they would instead alter this truth to be more inviting, properly corrupting the tools they must use to fight against opposing forces of evil.

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[92] Ibid, 122.

[93] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 126.

[94] If the Bible has declared spiritual warfare to be inevitable, along with the Great Apostasy, why stop it? Why must the faithful Christian actively defend their faith when apostasy is necessary for the second coming? Wouldn't defending the faith be, in some form, putting a roadblock on this apostasy?

[95] Ibid, 175.

[96] Ibid, 176.

From the emic standpoint, MacArthur's *The Truth War* is the prime example of an Athanasius-like determination to uphold God's inerrant Word. At the risk of sounding intolerant in the then-contemporary Evangelical community of the United States, MacArthur declares a popular sect of Christians to be false teachers, calling upon the laypeople to take power into their own hands and become spiritual warriors for Christ. With the salvation of his community on the line, MacArthur dares to speak the truth. However, from the etic perspective, what is MacArthur's *The Truth War* and its SWD doing? As stated in the section on method, this study takes a decidedly critical standpoint, seeking to uncover dynamics of power hidden in discourse. From this perspective, MacArthur's SWD is based on hyperbolic rhetoric, teaching its readers that they are being drafted into a cosmological war and that the enemy may have already infiltrated their local church community.

More so, MacArthur is teaching the reader to defend a brand of faith within which he is firmly recognized as a leader. Therefore, it should not be surprising that MacArthur is adamant about attacking the Emerging Church and its most well-known leaders. MacArthur is inherently in a battle for control; more than battling for truth, we could state that this spiritual war is over *who* determines what truth is. On one side, the postmodern side, McLaren and the Emerging Church state they do not know the truth.[97] They consider themselves leaders in a certain sense. However, they do not believe themselves to have the final say in what is and is not biblical.[98] On the other end, MacArthur is highly confident of what is and what is not, and the fact that the Emerging Church questions its own authority jeopardizes MacArthur's authority. Thus, the SWD of *The Truth War* may be interpreted as not only a call to battle postmodern thinking – its spiritual and political ramifications – but as cementing MacArthur as the faithful warrior and final judge in the political affairs of his "empire" or community. In this sense, MacArthur positions himself as both Athanasius and, simultaneously, what Constantine should have always been.

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[97] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 18.
[98] Ibid, 17.

# Contributors

**Ernest Okyere-Twum** is in his final semester in the project based master's program in the Department of Theological Studies. Prior to this program, he obtained a BA (Admin), MA (Pastoral Studies) and MTh (African Christianity) all from Ghana. Ernest is currently working as the English Pastor at Montreal City West Baptist Church here in Montreal. Moreso, he desires to be trained as a spiritual care practitioner and eventually pursue his PhD with a focus on Theological ethics.

**Efstathios Fokas** completed his MA-thesis in Theological Studies at Concordia University in 2023, focusing his research on crusade and heresy in southern France during the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Efstathios also completed a BA in History and Classics, and hopes to one day obtain a Ph.D in history. The history of Thomas Becket and the events surrounding his death and martyrdom have always fascinated Efstathios, and he is grateful that his paper had been chosen for this year's journal.

**Gabriel Casola** is a second-year student in the process of completing the Masters of Arts Degree of Education in the Theological Studies program. He is in the Non-Thesis Applied Project Option. Gabriel's project is about his theological experience of photography done at Saint Joseph's Oratory, he has volunteered a lot for the Department of Theological Studies, and he has presented at conferences.

**Grayson A. Thompson** is a graduate of the MA program from the Department of Theological Studies at Concordia University and was supervised by Dr. André Gagné. He specializes in Johannine literature, Christian anti-Semitism and the ethical issues that arise in modern exegetical practice. His aim is to encourage evangelicals to critically examine the New Testament and engage with its contentious and problematic doctrines. His master's thesis explored the controversial subject of the portrayal of the Jews in the Gospel According to John and utilized a synergistic methodology that blended historical-critical and narrative-critical hermeneutics. He is continuing his research on Christian anti-Semitism and Johannine literature in the Religious Studies Doctoral Program at the University of Ottawa under the supervision of Dr. Adele Reinhartz.

**Jason Piche** is a second-year student in the master's program in the Department of Theological Studies. Jason has received a BA in political science and a BA in theology. His main research interests include biblical studies and modern religious violence.

**Lily Dauriac** is a second-year student at Concordia University. She is majoring in Philosophy and minoring in Theological studies.

**Zackari Bourgeois is** a doctoral student in Concordia's Individualized Program, where Dr. André Gagné serves as his main supervisor. His research focuses upon critiquing Christian Nationalism, as well as the way academics and reporters have discussed this phenomenon in recent years, through the lens of the doctrine of participation. Previously, Zackari completed his MA in the Department of Theological Studies, researching online Christian communities as alternative sites of Christian praxis. During his time in the MA, Zackari has received the Split Merit Award scholarship, presented in several academic conferences, and has been a Teacher's Assistant every semester. He is currently the Department of Theological Studies' Graduate Student Representative and has recently been awarded a doctoral scholarship on behalf of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC).