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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Salvete, Χαίρετε, Good Fortune to All,

I have been allowed the greatest of honors in serving as the second Editor-in-chief of *Noetica*. As a founding member, I am very grateful to be able to guide the journal's growth while keeping it in line with our foundational values: excellent scholarship, passionate innovation, and engagement with meaningful ideas. Indeed, our second edition is poised to further develop our journal in all these regards.

From the destruction caused by Byzantine Iconoclasm and the Black Death to the impact of priestly philosophy in Early Modern Rome and Revolutionary France, this year's academic works will enlighten the reader with insights across a diversity of contexts and periods. Our interdisciplinary spread presents novel inquiries into such concepts as the role of art and collecting in systems of beliefs as well as into the dynamism of developing ideologies that facilitated disparate, often opposing interpretations of freedom, authority, and rights amongst contemporaries. These studies remind us of the complexities of history and help us to understand those of our own age. The relevant topics of appropriation of the past, opposition to the cultural status quo, the struggles of working-class life, and the plight of expression under censorship are common themes throughout this edition.

Furthermore, it is with great pleasure that I direct the reader's attention to this year's much-expanded pool of creative works. We at *Noetica* hosted a Creative Competition upon the theme of Divinity that received more than twenty submissions from student artists. The best six of these have been published in this very edition. Our top submissions include the illustration *Jesus in Gethsemane*, by Ian Wilson, and the poem *Will to Power*, by Gabriel Dakake. *Jesus in Gethsemane* takes a pluralistic approach to Christian imagery in illuminated manuscripts with the dedication and skill of a medieval scribe, whereas *Will to Power* poignantly tackles the nature of the universe and the place of love and power within it. These and four other profound visual and written works are interwoven throughout our journal to remind us all of the importance of creativity that is so intrinsic to the human condition.

To end off, I would like to thank all those who have supported *Noetica* and our endeavors. Particularly worthy of praise is our own Board of Editors, whose members have spent many tireless hours to make this second edition possible. *Noetica* exists and thrives on their dedication and hard work. We are also thankful for the supportive faculty of the William & Mary Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program and for the generosity of the Charles Center, the Office of Student Leadership Development, and our donors. Dr. Elizabeth Harbron and her staff at the Charles Center have supported and encouraged the *Noetica* team with their experience, professionalism, and invigorating enthusiasm. We are also grateful to members of the Board of Visitors at William & Mary and Roy Terry and his family. Finally, special thanks are due to our Faculty Advisor, Dr. Alexander Angelov, whose genuine passion and care for our mission and members is an inspiration to all, as well as to Dr. Philip Daileader, who kindly assisted us with our Peer Review Training.

As you embark upon the journey of *Noetica*'s second edition, I leave you, dear reader, with my genuine confidence that you will discover on every page of our publication the wisdom of our enduring motto:

Eruditio flumen vivendi.
"Knowledge is the flow of living."

With deepest sincerity,

Blake McCullough
Editor-in-chief

JESUS IN GETHSEMANE



Watercolor & Ink, May 2023

Jesus in Gethsemane is best understood as an idealized sacred landscape representing the most important elements of Jesus' story simultaneously as they may have been experienced by a Medieval pilgrim. The upper register centers around the nativity, with the Magi attending mother and child. The central circle depicts Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, represented by the textile-like vegetation surrounding him. Behind Jesus is the city of Jerusalem, most recognizable due to the Temple. Behind Jerusalem is the river Jordan, in which Jesus was baptized. The animals filling the left and right register reference Medieval manuscripts and maps, suggesting the hopes and fears of a Medieval traveler. The lower register depicts Jesus exiting his tomb, with saints venerating his visage. Overall, the composition takes a cruciform shape, signaling Christian interpretations of Medieval Palestine.

Ian S. Wilson is a senior majoring in Classical Studies within the St Andrews William & Mary Joint Degree Programme. He primarily researches the religions of the ancient Mediterranean. Following graduation, he will pursue a graduate degree in archaeology with the objective of becoming an educator in Classics.



THE PROBLEM WITH ANIMAL ART

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL DEPICTIONS IN CHRISTIAN ART

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ABSTRACT

The history of Christian artwork presents a narrative marked by frequent debates and destruction, especially during the Byzantine period of Iconoclasm. The early Christian world inherited a complex tradition of image-making that was laden with anxieties surrounding accuracy, representation, and the potential idolatry of images. These concerns, already deeply rooted in ancient discourse, were significantly magnified by the onset of Christian art. Christian artists had to meticulously navigate a world of prohibitions and permissions set forth by Church councils and fiery theological debates, and these concerns and anxieties seem to have only intensified when it came to non-human animals. This paper delves into the complex and evolving relationship between animals and Christian iconography during the Byzantine period and asks the question whether animals, considered devoid of the reason and spiritual presence attributed to saints and the divine, could be depicted in sacred spaces without the risk of committing idolatry. Through a combination of philosophical sources and the artistic record, this study uncovers a nuanced understanding of animals as special mediators with the divine that developed within the Christian world. Despite theological strictures that might have precluded their representation, animals persisted in Christian art, underscoring a broader Christian recognition of their integral role within the spiritual realm.

Joseph Wilbur graduated summa cum laude in December 2023 from the University of Pennsylvania, where he double majored in Classical Studies and Religious Studies and minored in Medieval Studies. His research focuses on the relationship between Thomas Aquinas and animals, a topic which he has presented at numerous national and international conferences in fields as diverse as medieval studies, English, philosophy, and political science. Joseph's recent scholarship analyzes how the philosophy of Aquinas intersected with animals, pagan myths, and folklore, and he has also written a Thomistic ethics inquiry into the viability of using Garrigou-Lagrange's philosophy in contemporary animal rights discourse. His work primarily examines the symbiosis between religion, culture, and the natural world across time to challenge contemporary understandings of medieval theology and ethics.

The history of Christian artwork is riddled with controversies and debates, from the vehement denunciations of images by certain Protestant Reformers¹ to the early strictures of the Council of Elvira in 305.² However, no period of time seems to have had a greater impact nor sparked greater controversy than the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm, which indisputably resulted in the creation of specific, effective legislation against images.³ However, the historical record of this period and its aftermath is complex and multifaceted. Despite concerted efforts to eliminate religious imagery, total destruction was never fully achieved. Moreover, while theologians developed intricate doctrines dictating the permissible bounds of religious representation, these theories were not always fully realized in practice. A notable point of discrepancy lies in the portrayal of animals in post-iconoclastic religious icons. Contrary to the strict theological stances that would seemingly preclude their depiction, material evidence points to a more nuanced reality. This evidence suggests a divergence between theoretical doctrines and actual practices, revealing a layered understanding of animals as unique conduits to the divine. This essay seeks to unravel these complexities, examining the intricate interplay between theological dogma and artistic expression in the wake of Iconoclasm.

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN ARTWORK

Long before the emergence of Christian art, ancient Greeks and Romans grappled with philosophical and theological concerns regarding the portrayal of the divine. These apprehensions made up the foundation upon which later Christians would build. A notable instance of such debate is highlighted in the writings of Philostratus, wherein the Egyptian philosopher Thespision sharply criticizes the Greek tradition of representing their deities in human form in artwork. This was in part because, as Andrew Paterson explains, “a divine prototype and its mimetic representation (characteristic of Hellenistic naturalism) is

inevitably undermined by the status of such a representation as a product of subjective human artistry.”⁴ In fact, Thespision believed that in order to justify such an action, one would have to make casts of the bodies of the gods, which is naturally an absurd possibility. While counterarguments were presented by figures like Apollonius of Tyana, as documented by Philostratus, these early philosophical dilemmas laid the groundwork for similar debates in the Christian era. Thus, when controversies over religious imagery arose in Christian circles, they were not venturing into uncharted territory but rather revisiting and reinterpreting longstanding philosophical and theological quandaries about representation and the sacred image.

The intricate theology surrounding Christian imagery evolved to address a myriad of objections, both those inherited from ancient philosophical traditions and those arising uniquely within Christian discourse. This theological landscape is richly documented, with extensive writings spanning centuries that articulate the reasons for and against the depiction of various subjects in Christian art. Church councils have historically played a pivotal role in this dialogue, issuing a myriad of edicts that oscillate between prohibitions and permissions regarding religious representations. Within this context, a closer examination of these theological debates offers insights into the specific arguments surrounding the depiction of animals in Christian iconography. One of the most vocal proponents of religious imagery was Theodore the Studite, a Byzantine Greek monk renowned for his staunch defense of icons. In his *Letter 301*, Theodore passionately counters the iconoclastic viewpoint, providing a critical perspective on the legitimacy of religious images:

And listen to the great Basil: ‘Let Christ, the judge of the contests, be engraved in the image.’ For he did not say ‘let the image of Christ, the judge of the contests, be engraved’, but ‘let Christ’. And listen to Gregory of Nyssa, ‘Isaac is at hand’, calling the image of Isaac ‘Isaac’. Listen

¹ Steven Felix-Jager, *Pentecostal Aesthetics: Theological Reflections in a Pentecostal Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 22.

² Robin M. Jensen, “Aniconism in the First Centuries of Christianity,” *Religion* 47, no. 3 (July 2017): 418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2017.1316357>.

³ Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 130–148.

⁴ Andrew Paterson, “The Visualization of the Prototype,” in *Late Antique Portraits and Early Christian Icons: The Power of the Painted Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 59–60.

to Chrysostom: 'I saw the angel in the icon', for he did not see an image of the angel, but he saw the angel.⁵

Understanding this argument explains the theological underpinnings that have shaped Christian attitudes towards the representation of the sacred. According to Theodore's framework, every image has a specific relationship to the prototype (or 'original'). To use an example borrowed from Theodore in *Antirrheticus* 2 (which Theodore himself borrows from Basil of Caesarea's *Homily* 24), the process of the artist involves taking matter, examining whatever the prototype is, having the type received into their intellect, and then putting that type into matter. In order to say, however, that the painting fully conveys the emperor's appearance, it is necessary that the painting is accurate; one cannot say that they saw the angel if they did not see an accurate representation of it. When one sees an *accurate* icon of Christ, one is seeing the appearance of Christ, and thus one can say that they 'see' Christ. This pursuit of accuracy in depicting sacred figures has been a longstanding concern in Christian art and is particularly evident in the representation of 'historical saints,' those holy people who had died and were therefore not physically present for an artist to depict them.⁶ In such cases, reliance on pre-existing prototypes that are believed to closely resemble the original subjects becomes necessary. Epiphanius of Salamis, writing in the fourth century C.E., was so bold as to complain to the emperor himself that artists "who dared to make portraits of Christ and the apostles on the walls or curtains of churches were effectively liars, in that they represented these figures 'according to their whim ... intruding into things which they have not seen.'" ⁷ Many scholars argue that the unique phenomena of *acheiropoietai*, images 'not made by hand' and thus miraculously created, are a result of this anxiety surrounding accuracy.⁸ If God Himself makes the image, it must certainly be accurate. Even still, if the image was created by an eyewitness such as St. Luke, it hearkens back to the original in a way no other image can. This belief system underscores a unique aspect of Christian art, where the quest for

authenticity in religious imagery leads to a distinct blend of faith and artistic representation.

This discussion leads us to a philosophical conundrum: the representation of entities that no longer exist, such as individual animals, which have turned to dust. In such cases, the typical argument of depicting a subject based on its enduring prototype becomes untenable. One cannot say that one sees the dog when that particular dog is nowhere to be found, as will be discussed later in philosophical views concerning animals. However, since the prototype of a rational being still exists and the image can be said to be the prototype, there were some peculiar implications regarding icons in the day-to-day living of early Christians. For example, in another letter of Theodore, someone is praised for using an icon of a martyred saint as a godfather rather than a living person:

We have heard that your lordship had done a divine deed and we have marveled at your truly great faith, O man of God. For my informer tells me that in performing the baptism of your God-granted child, you had recourse to a holy image of the great martyr Demetrios instead of a godfather. How great is your confidence! "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!"—this, I believe Christ to have said not only at that time to the centurion, but even now to you who are of equal faith. The centurion found what he sought; you, too, have won what you trusted in. In the Gospel the divine command took the place of bodily presence, while here the bodily image took the place of its model; there the great Logos was present in His word and invisibly wrought his incredible miracle through His divinity, *while here the great martyr was spiritually present in his own image and so received the infant*. These things, being incredible, are unacceptable to profane ears and unbelieving souls, and especially to the iconoclasts; but to your piety clear signs and token have been revealed.⁹

The key justification for this praise is that the martyr is spiritually present in the image. This belief, however, raises a significant issue in the context of depicting animals, which are not considered to have such spiritual presence. Therefore, their representation in religious art becomes problematic. In other words, if animals were to be venerated in the same manner as icons of saints, it could lead to

⁵ Torstein Tollefsen, *St. Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons: Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 120–22.

⁶ Tollefsen, *Defence of the Icons*, 114–120.

⁷ Paterson, "The Visualization of the Prototype," 64–65.

⁸ Andrew Paterson, *Late Antique Portraits and Early Christian Icons: The Power of the Painted Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 60–70.

⁹ My italics. Quoted in Cyril A. Mango, trans., *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 174–175.

accusations of idolatry, a major concern already deeply rooted in Christian theology.

To be clear, people who kissed and bowed before images of animals would most certainly be considered idolaters according to common belief. There would be no refuting this objection in the same fashion as refuting objections against idolatry of 'human' icons.¹⁰ The importance of noting the spiritual presence resulted in the continuation of the ancient 'portrait style.' Whatever mode the idealization was to have been put into (whether mosaic or painting), "their likeness needed to convey a sense of their exalted spiritual status and continuing virtual presence, and this was achieved by various, more or less subtle transformations of the subject's literal appearance."¹¹ In certain examples, even the backgrounds and slight alterations of the image are constructed so as to depict spiritual presence; usage of architecture in an idealized format to point to heaven, or youthful faces that are mostly distinguishable by inscriptions and hairstyles. These stylistic choices reflect a deeper theological and philosophical understanding of the role of religious images in Christian practice, where the physical portrayal is intertwined with spiritual reality.

Within the literary tradition, this interpretation of images and spiritual presence is heavily emphasized (beyond the quotation above).¹² Even when saints are alive, it is important to note their beginning transformation into a spiritual reality in hagiographical descriptions, such as in this quotation by Athanasius of Alexandria of the monk known as 'St Anthony:'

His face had a great and marvelous grace ... His soul being free of confusion, he held his outer senses also undisturbed, *so that from the soul's joy his face was cheerful as well*, and from the movements of the body it was possible to sense and *perceive the stable condition of the soul*. He was never troubled, his soul being calm, and he never looked gloomy, his mind being joyous.¹³

This type of concern with the gaze of the saint, especially from the new position of the saint or Christ himself has led scholars to argue that the early

Christian tradition of artwork continued Graeco-Roman portraiture beliefs with Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife to provide "spiritual power [to] the returning gaze of the transfigured deceased."¹⁴

On the side of the iconoclasts, many of their central arguments centered on the prohibitions against images from the Christian Old Testament. For example, in the Council of Hieria in 754, the following was said:

Satan misguided men, so that they worshipped the creature instead of the Creator. The Mosaic law and the prophets cooperated to undo this ruin; but in order to save mankind thoroughly, God sent his own Son, who turned us away *from error and the worshipping of idols, and taught us the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth...* Moreover, we can prove our view by Holy Scripture and the Fathers. In the former it is said: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" and: "*Thou shall not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath;*" on which account God spoke to the Israelites on the Mount, from the midst of the fire, but showed them no image. Further: "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man [...] and served the creature more than the Creator. If anyone shall endeavor to *represent the forms of the Saints in lifeless pictures with material colors* which are of no value (for this notion is vain and introduced by the devil), and does not rather represent their virtues as living images in himself, etc."¹⁵

In this quotation, one can clearly see why there might be anxieties about depicting animals in artwork, particularly icons and church interiors which revolve around devotional practices. Not only can Christ not be depicted, but not even human saints. Even if certain images are given divine permission in the Old Testament (such as the serpent on the staff in the Moses narrative), one cannot hope to argue that depicting some saint with an animal in an icon is given explicit divine command.

From the legislative side of the iconophiles, one can see the caution in what is granted permission, especially considering the fact that they anathemize those who do not venerate images:

¹⁰ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 6–10.

¹¹ Paterson, *Late Antique Portraits and Early Christian Icons*, 69.

¹² Katherine Leigh Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout, BE: Brepols, 2013), 49–53.

¹³ Athanasius, "Life of St. Anthony," New Advent, accessed December 16, 2022, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2811.htm>.

¹⁴ Paterson, *Late Antique Portraits and Early Christian Icons*, 99.

¹⁵ "Internet History Sourcebooks Project," accessed December 7, 2022, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/iconocncl754.asp>.

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certitude and accuracy ...the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and *by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honorable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people.* For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honorable reverence...We salute the venerable images. We place under anathema those who do not do this. Anathema to them who presume to apply to the venerable images the things said in Holy Scripture about idols. *Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images.*¹⁶

Notice particularly what is granted permission by the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea: Jesus Christ, Mary, angels, and saints, and nothing more. Further, within the debates over images, it is significant to note a primary text from the Christian New Testament which may reveal the motivation behind distinction. When the iconoclasts held a council in 754, they quoted St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans 1:23–25 which reads “and they exchanged the glory of God, who is incorruptible, with the likeness of an image of man who is corruptible, or of birds, quadrupeds, or reptiles, and they paid respect to and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.” However, they did not quote the entire verse, and left out any mention of animals, which is pointed out by the subsequent council of the iconophiles in 787:

One must expressly say that they [i.e., the iconoclasts] are the ones who, like the gentiles, exchanged the glory of God and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, because they have exchanged and distorted what the apostle meant according to their own desires. For it is quite clear to everyone that, when the apostle says, “they exchanged the glory of God who is incorruptible with the likeness of the image of man who is corruptible,” he is, obviously, ridiculing the pagans; for he continues: “or of birds, quadrupeds, or reptiles.” Even though they [the

iconoclasts] cut o a whole phrase deceitfully in order to lure the simpler ones [to believe] that the apostle addresses himself to the issue of iconographic representations of the Church [that is, to icons of Christ and the saints], what follows makes the clarification manifest. For he also makes reference to birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles as well as to the fact that “they worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.” Thus, those who are most experienced in historical books know that in olden times the Egyptians used to honor bulls and other mammals, various kinds of birds, insects, wasps, and even less worthy creatures. The Persians also worshipped the sun, while the Greeks, in addition to these, worshipped the entire creation.¹⁷

In this quotation, it is important to note that a primary element in this discourse is affirming that Christians are *not* worshipping animals. Iconoclasts may try and twist texts to extend prohibitions against images from being not merely about the natural world to saints, but the iconophile argument does not even try and justify animals in artwork but focuses instead on justifying saints and holy *people*.

Behind these theological and philosophical debates over artwork lies the topic of what exactly people during this period believed about animals. One central ancient ‘pagan’ philosopher is Aristotle, who “reserves that higher faculty that he terms phronesis, “deliberative capacity,” for humankind alone.”¹⁸ Socrates and Plato seem to hold to a similar position, especially based on writings concerning them by their student Xenophon. While there are quite the range of opinions and degrees of reception of these authors among Christians, it is possible to nevertheless reveal why there might be anxieties about depicting animals in artwork, particularly religious iconography.

One central figure in this area is the Christian author Origen of Alexandria, and particularly his work *De Principiis*. His primary concern in this work is demonstrating that “every rational human being is endowed with the capacity to determine the good.”¹⁹ Within this discussion, he shows that some Christian authors, even early on, are receptive of notions of the hierarchy of creation from antiquity; Origen himself sets up a hierarchy between “things that ‘possesses

¹⁶ “Internet History Sourcebooks Project,” accessed December 7, 2022, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/nicea2-dec.asp>.

¹⁷ Henry Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion: Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 39–40.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199766604.003.0001>.

¹⁸ Stephen Newmyer, “Animals in Ancient Philosophy: Conceptions and Misconceptions,” in *A Cultural History of*

Animals in Antiquity, ed. Linda Kalof (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 151–74.

¹⁹ Demetrios Harper, “Understanding Self-Determination and Moral Selfhood in the Sources of Late-Antique and Byzantine Christian Thought,” in *The Reception of Greek Ethics in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Sophia Xenophonos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 122–23. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108986359.008>.

their cause of movement within themselves' (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔχει τὴν τῆς κινήσεως αἰτίαν) and things that are 'moved only from without' (ἔξωθεν μὲν οὖν μόνον κινεῖται).²⁰ In the first category are indeed animals (following the Aristotelian tradition), but there is nevertheless a further step separating animals from humans; one requires the faculty of reason known as λόγος.

Controversially, Origen does not fully create a firm division between animals and humans though (allowing animals to have some sort of reason), which a later Christian author (who translates Origen) named Rufinus "saw fit to alter," according to scholars.²¹ Beyond this though, for some Christian authors, this notion of rationality becomes central to visions of heaven; in the words of Evagrius Ponticus, "do not wonder at my saying that in the unification of the rational beings with God the Father, they will be one nature."²² To emphasize, it is the "rational beings" which will be united to God, not the irrational beings. This all harkens back to the separation between humans and animals based on their reason. In the words of one scholar encapsulating these philosophical views, "animals do not use words, and it was assumed that they lack logos in other ways and have a soul . . . only in that they are alive and sentient; they do not have a rational or spiritual soul as human do. They were often referred to as *aloga zōa*, "living creatures without logos" or, in the common translation, "irrational animals."²³

To summarize the problems based on the theology and philosophy so far discussed, it is accepted that, even among the ancients, images were controversial. Depicting deities is a particular challenge, and concerns over accuracy of representation abound. Christians receive these debates and continue them throughout the period of iconoclasm, resulting in periods of prohibition and permission and return to prohibition, all reflecting anxieties about what can and cannot be represented. Even when images seem to be permitted, animals are

noticeably absent from the permissions, and with the reception of ancient notions of spiritual presence and animal nature one can potentially see why.

CHRISTIAN ART AND ICONOCLASM

The evolution of Christian views on imagery is not just a theoretical matter but has had concrete historical consequences, especially in terms of the physical destruction and alteration of religious images. This dynamic interplay between theology and art is clearly visible in the historical record, where shifts in power and corresponding changes in religious legislation led to actual modifications of religious artwork. To put it simply, these legislations and philosophical debates were not merely symbolic. Consider the example of the church of the Dormition in Nicaea.²⁴ In this church, located in Turkey (albeit destroyed today), one is able to see multiple developments in the artwork in the apse (see figure 1). The first level of mosaics which date from between the late seventh century to the early eighth century (before the period of intense Iconoclasm) show the Virgin and Child. After this, through the period of Iconoclasm (although when exactly remains unclear) there was actual destruction of this image, and the subsequent creation of a simple cross, notably likely without even Christ. The final stage (created after 843 C.E.) yet another image was created. This image restores the original subjects of the Virgin and Child. Through these stages of development, one can see the practical dimension of how the subjects of depiction reflect theological understanding of images. For some, their theology allows not only human subjects to be depicted (the Virgin Mary), but even divine subjects (Jesus as a child). For others, their theology restricts artwork to mere symbols (such as the cross). Another example from Hagia Sophia in Istanbul shows further destruction.²⁵ In this case (see figures 2-3), one can even know *who* did the destroying, namely the Patriarch Nicetas in 768 C.E. These examples of

²⁰ Harper, "Self-Determination and Moral Selfhood," 123.

²¹ Harper, "Self-Determination and Moral Selfhood," 124.

²² Benjamin Blosser, "The Reception of Greek Ethics in Christian Monastic Writings," in *The Reception of Greek Ethics in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Sophia Xenophonos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 111 – 12, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108986359.007>.

²³ Patricia Cox Miller, *In the Eye of the Animal: Zoological Imagination in Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 82.

²⁴ Paul A. Underwood, "The Evidence of Restorations in the Sanctuary Mosaics of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959): 235–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1291136>.

²⁵ Robin Cormack and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, "The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the Southwest Vestibule and Ramp," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977): 175–251. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1291407>.

destruction pose the question of the entirely separate world of animal artwork, particularly in icon: if early Christians had anxieties about even depicting human figures, beyond physical shapes such as the cross, were there similar anxieties about animals?

Indeed, the material evidence does suggest that there were varying levels of engagement with the material world and what can and cannot be depicted, and that iconoclasm did not leave the animal world unscared. In the parallelly developing Muslim world, there seems to be a firm line that is not to be crossed, as seen in the Great Mosque of Damascus.²⁶ In the details of the mosaics on the western courtyard wall, one can see geometrical designs. One can see plant life. One can even see the *dwelling*s of humans. But what is not seen are animals, let alone humans. On the other hand, in the mosaic floor of the Christian Church of St. Stephen (see figure 4), from Jordan, no early than 718, one can see indeed anxieties about the hierarchy of life emerge.²⁷ The original floor contained examples of *everything*. There were humans, there were animals, there were plants, and there were geometrical shapes. This was certainly not a Muslim mosque. But when iconoclasm reached this church, the subsequent artwork is revealing. Leaves are added. Flowers and fruit are added. And even fish are added. One area of particular note comes from the steps of the presbytery (see figure 5),²⁸ which shows a dedicatory inscription. If one looks below the inscription, one can see evidence of what originally would have been the benefactors themselves. These are carefully destroyed, but the head of a lamb is mostly left intact (see figure 6). For the iconoclasts who touched this church, animals are acceptable, while humans are not. In a separate church though, the Cathedral of Ma'in, also from Jordan, there is indeed attacks by the iconoclasts on animals. In the mosaic of the "Peaceful Kingdom" (see figure 7) research indicates that originally there was a bull in the image. One can even still see the hooves and tail (a reminder from the iconoclasts that they had indeed left their mark on this piece of artwork). But what replaces it is not an animal, but a tree, reflecting again a notion of the difference

between plant life and animal life, and a broader notion that for some iconoclasts, animals were not to be represented in artwork. Even if earlier scholarship emphasized the Muslim context of these iconoclastic actions, "most specialists now believe that the interventions were executed by the Christians themselves rather than by their Muslim rulers."²⁹

On a broader scale, it is possible to have foreseen these concerns already several centuries before the standard period of iconoclasm. While there was an initial time of nature being represented in early Christianity, as tensions between paganism and Christianity are thought to have increased, "general reluctance to admit plants, animals, and personifications"³⁰ in Christian artwork in the fourth and early fifth centuries has led to this time period being labeled as "aniconic." Of course, leading up to iconoclasm these motifs did gradually return (otherwise there would not have been any iconoclasm), but not without attacks by church writers. Athanasius of Alexandria in his *Speech against the Pagans* tells us that when Athanasius visited Aquileia in 345, and saw merely the mosaic pavements, he vehemently attacked these nature depictions, pointing out how Christians are almost emulating the Egyptians who venerate the Apis bull and the Libyans who venerate the god Ammon in the ram.³¹

BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY AND THE ICON

The traditional image of a Byzantine icon typically does not include animals. True, one may argue more modern icons are certainly resplendent with images of animals, particularly when the subject is a saint identifiable with animal (see figures 19 & 29). Even by the 16th century, there is no dispute that icons with animals are common, such as St. Gerasimus with his lion (see figure 17). Yet this traditional expectation aligns with the fact that most examples of earlier Byzantine icons are quite simple, focused entirely on the *human* figures (see figures 25 & 27 & 28). There is barely even background to these

²⁶ "Great Mosque of Damascus," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed December 7, 2022,

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2012/byzantium-and-islam/blog/where-in-the-world/posts/damascus>.

²⁷ Sean V. Leatherbury, "Iconoclasm and/as Repair," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 75/76 (March 2021): 154–67. <https://doi.org/10.1086/716674>.

²⁸ "Church of St. Stephen, Umm Er-Rasas. Art Destination Jordan," accessed December 7, 2022,

<https://universes.art/en/art-destinations/jordan/umm-er-rasas/st-stephen-complex/photo-tour/st-stephen-church-06>.

²⁹ Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*, 36.

³⁰ Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*, 10–11.

³¹ Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*, 23.

images. The setting within which these human figures exist is even supposed to be heavenly, as pointed out earlier. From the theological perspective, these icons can be said to mostly perfectly represent the end result of the arguments for images outlined earlier. If there is to be any image at all, the image is to look something like the Hodegetria by Berlinghiero of Lucca from the 1200s.³²

Nevertheless, it is indeed possible to find examples of icons including animals, even if the difficulty in doing so demonstrates the concerns regarding animals discussed earlier. During the Byzantine time-period, it is quite typical to see St. Gerasimos “standing up and holding a scroll”³³ particularly in wall paintings. There is a notable exception (see figure 9) though, found in the Jerusalem icon (1300 C.E., Palestine), which even shows him caring for a lion with a thorn in its paw, which much later iconography will pick up as a common trope. This example is especially notable because of scholarship concerning the origin of this icon, which believes it copied the image likely from a fresco of the saint’s life. Many other examples of saints who are typically associated with an animal in hagiography but are not in images exist, particularly Menas and his camel which can be compared in figures 21 and 28.

This seems to point to one area where a door is opened to the inclusion of animals in iconography, namely in icons that include the very scenes of a saint’s life (although of course the saint must have *some* connection to the animals in question). One area where this shift away from these simple, merely portrait icons can be seen is in the so-called *vita* icons. Vita icons are so called from the Latin words, ‘*vita*,’ which means life, and are notable for representing not merely the typical portrait of a particular saint but including the actual scenes from their life.³⁴ These scenes are frequently images from what particularly made the saint a saint (for example, miracles, martyrdom, prayers, preaching). This in itself is beyond what most theologians seem to have been imagining in their speculations and is reflected

in the later date most historians give to the origin of the *vita* icon.

Further, not all *vita* icons can be considered “orthodox” or in line with actual church legislation with regards to the scenes they depict. For example, in the church during this time, the Church strictly prohibited women from preaching, and even men who were not priests (which makes the example of St. Francis preaching noteworthy as well, as will be discussed later). However, in *vita* icons of saints such as Mary Magdalene, Catherine, and Marina, these women are depicted not only preaching privately to women, but in public.³⁵ With the church actually banning this action in canons at the council of Trullo in 691, one is left to wonder why at the same time the church would be holding up as “examples for imitation *vita* icons depicting holy women publicly preaching the Gospel.”³⁶

As mentioned earlier, these scenes from the life of the saint are normally the particular stories that made that saint a ‘saint.’ Most of these scenes can be quite minimal, as evidenced merely by looking at the other scenes around St. Catherine in one icon (see figures 8 & 9). There can be a handful of human subjects, perhaps an angel, and then simplistic buildings. The general style still seems to harken back to notions of the portrait image which is what was officially approved and supposed to be venerated, and potentially reflect a hesitancy in moving beyond the simple face.

When it comes to St. Francis and his *vita* icons, scholarship recognizes several categories of images; there are posthumous miracle stories, the two famous St. Francis scenes (namely, the stigmata and the preaching to birds), icons that combine both the posthumous miracles and the two noteworthy scenes, and lastly scenes exclusively from the actual life of St. Francis of Assisi. It is noteworthy even within this categorization, that the two famous stories of St. Francis are not in every *vita* icon, particularly the preaching to birds. In fact, the earliest St. Francis *vita* icons left out these crucial scenes entirely, *only* focusing on posthumous miracles. That being said,

³² “Berlinghiero, “Madonna and Child,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed December 7, 2022, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435658>.

³³ Panagiotis Vocotopoulos, “ΔΥΟ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΕΙΕΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΕΣ ΣΤΑ ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΑ,” *ΔΧΑΕ*, January 1, 1998, 308. <https://www.academia.edu>

³⁴ Paroma Chatterjee, *The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy: The Vita Image, Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 13–14.

³⁵ Papadimitriou Paraskevi, “Depictions of Holy Women as Preachers in Vita Icons,” *Zograf* 2021, no. 45 (January 2021): 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.2298/ZOG2145065P>.

³⁶ Paraskevi, “Depictions of Holy Women,” 66.

these scenes of him preaching to animals do occur quite pose an interesting problem. Similarly, to the background controversy surrounding vita icons of preaching women, St. Francis was never ordained to the presbyterate. Just as women could not preach, neither could Francis. Yet, here is someone held up as an example of sanctity *preaching* even though they are not supposed to, and not merely preaching but preaching to birds, something that goes against all the philosophy of animals the Christian tradition had received.

Lest one argue at this point that all of these examples of vita icons are Western, it is noteworthy to see the eastern influence within the very artistic style of Franciscan vita icons.³⁷ Before the 1960s and the ‘scholarship explosion’ on Saint Catherine’s monastery, scholars thought the vita icon was a western Franciscan invention. However, it is now known that the Byzantines already had ‘vita icons’ at the end of the twelfth century. Considering the presence of the Friars Minor in the Holy Land in the 1200s, as well as effects of the sack of Constantinople in drawing Byzantine artists to the West,³⁸ it seems reasonable to see in these icons much of the particularly Eastern controversy surrounding images. And the exchange between the two regions is seen in the usage of these Franciscan vita icons in a “fresco cycle in the East in a chapel at Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul produced sometime in the mid-thirteenth century.”³⁹

In interpreting these icons, one can see a much different view of animals that can perhaps explain why these icons were allowed to develop despite the controversies detailed earlier. “In Francis the ‘peaceable kingdom’ prophesied by Isaiah in the messianic age is also breaking into the world in a new and radical way (with Francis, animals appear to have reason) in a new apocalyptic age of the world.”⁴⁰ These birds are not natural birds, and thus perhaps not subject to the same laws against animals. After all, the birds do not fly away, but are obedient to Francis, and even listen to ‘rational’ preaching.

ANIMALS AS MORE THAN ANIMALS

How is one to understand these examples of inclusion of animals? Quite simply, they can reflect a broader cultural understanding of animals as mediators between God and man, as part of the new creation, or examples of the divine not only taking human flesh in Christ but taking form through animals. One can see beginning notions of this in the textual tradition of hagiography, which has received a large amount of scholarly research.

In general, much of this likely stems from a view of artwork that emphasized metaphor and symbolism. A serpent is not merely a serpent (see figure 13), but for St. Jerome, “a symbol of God protecting his children from the devil, just as the eagle shields its young in the nest from the serpent.”⁴¹ In some Christian artwork, animals are even carrying Eucharistic imagery like a chalice, which clearly connotes a symbolic reading of the animals.⁴² This symbolism seemingly even leads to the imparting of special powers to animals based on their symbolism, which leads to a much more complex view of animals as actual agents even through artwork, just as Christian icons can impart power. This is related in a chronicle by the Byzantine historian Niketas Choniates, who describes one statue in the following way:

There was set up in the Hippodrome a bronze eagle, the novel device of Apollonius of Tyana, a brilliant instrument of his magic. Once, while visiting among the Byzantines, he was entreated to bring them relief from the snake bites that plagued them. Resorting to those lewd rituals whose celebrants are the demons and all those who pay special honor to their sacred rites, he set up on a column an eagle, the sight of which gave pleasure to onlookers and persuaded any who delighted in its aspect to stay on like those held spellbound by the sound of the Sirens’ song. His wings were aflap as though attempting flight, while a coiled snake clutched in his claws prevented its being carried aloft by striking out at the winged extremities of his body. But the venomous creature accomplished nothing, for, transfixed by the sharp claws, its attack was smothered, and it appeared to be drowsy rather than ready to give battle to the bird by clinging to his wings. It was

³⁷ Stephen M. King, “Prisms of Perfection: The Vita Icon Images of Saint Francis of Assisi as Revelatory and Transformative of Franciscan Spirituality” (Ph.D., United States -- California, Graduate Theological Union), 120–40, accessed December 1, 2022. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2248626996/abstract/8D61DFC798624A8DPQ/1>.

³⁸ Rosalind Brooke Ross and Christopher Nugent Lawrence Brooke, *Popular Religion in the Middle Ages: Western Europe 1000-1300* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 176.

³⁹ King, “Prisms of Perfection,” 131.

⁴⁰ King, “Prisms of Perfection,” 94.

⁴¹ Henry Maguire, “Profane Icons: The Significance of Animal Violence in Byzantine Art,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 38 (2000): 20.

⁴² Maguire, “Profane Icons,” 23.

said that the very sight of the snake uncoiled and incapable of delivering a deadly bite frightened away, by its example, the remaining serpents in Byzantium, convincing them to curl up and fill their holes.⁴³

This special power seen in the textual tradition imparted to images has led scholars to believe that “the apotropaic role of the image may account for its relatively frequent appearance in the sculpture of medieval Byzantine churches at openings such as doors and windows, or on barriers such as chancel screens.”⁴⁴ However, one is left to further wonder if these views can be further extrapolated so as to apply to the power of animals in icons, which are indisputably viewed already as having certain powers and abilities (such as healings and imparting military success).⁴⁵

One example of a saint who is especially associated with an animal is St. Eustace, who was a Roman soldier who had a unique vision of a stag.⁴⁶ In between the antlers of the stag was a shining cross with Christ (or a cross without Christ, depending on the piece of art). To begin with a brief summary of the scholarship concerning the *textual* tradition of St. Eustace, it is argued that animals in much of the textual tradition are seen as special mediators between God and humanity, made most manifest in scenes where angels or God appears in the appearance of an animal (lamb in the Christian Book of Revelation, dove at the Baptism of Christ).⁴⁷ When it comes to St. Eustace in particular, his hagiography reveals that the stag from the vision is a “a dynamic, miraculous figuration of the different ways Christians were taught to encounter God in the word and the world” and “embodies the creator speaking through his creation.”⁴⁸

Due to the sheer quantity of examples of artwork involving this saint, whenever a noteworthy addition or subtraction occurs, particular observations can be drawn. For example, in some

iconography, an eagle is included, which “potentially represents Christ, the Resurrection, immortality, the faithful at Communion, the Cross and victory, and it also stands for the Evangelist John.”⁴⁹ Cappadocian images are particularly fascinating for their removal of Christ from the cross between the antlers of the stag, leaving the cross totally unadorned, which can potentially show concerns over *Christ* in artwork that are not as present with saints and animals. At Davullu kilise in Yaprakhisar, scholars have interpreted one scene with a lion and a stag with the same cross between the horns as particularly iconoclastic, perhaps reflecting the separate worldview earlier that allows for *animals* but not saints in artwork.⁵⁰

When it comes to the Byzantine world in particular, the earliest depictions of the Vision only date from the ninth century (likely due to iconoclasm) in Psalters, and churches in the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁵¹ This same pattern of challenging what can and cannot be included is seen in iconography showing St. Eustace on a horse, or not. In the West, the horse is always included, while an example from Mt. Athos has St. Eustace standing and the horse absent.⁵² Perhaps this very absence points to a view that animals related to the divine (as a mediator between God and man) are acceptable in iconography, but ‘irrational’ animals still attached to this earth must be absent. This is similarly seen in the preponderance of ‘hunting dogs’ included in Western images of the Vision, which were “omitted in most Byzantine depictions.”⁵³ Even auxiliary figures that were likely present, such as huntsmen, are removed from Byzantine depictions, perhaps showing anxieties about detailed scenes in general present in the simplicity of *vita* icons discussed earlier.

In interpreting the ‘Vision’ in general, it is important to note that St. Eustace is perhaps unique in allowing for animals to be included in his

⁴³ Nicetas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 359–60.

⁴⁴ Maguire, “Profane Icons,” 28.

⁴⁵ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 261 – 95.

⁴⁶ Pisanello, “The Vision of Saint Eustace,” accessed December 16, 2022. <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-vision-of-saint-eustace-116062>.

⁴⁷ Elke Koch, “A Staggering Vision: The Mediating Animal in the Textual Tradition of Saint Eustachius,” *Interfaces: A Journal of Medieval European Literatures*, no. 5 (December 2018): 32. <https://doi.org/10.13130/interfaces-05-04>.

⁴⁸ Koch, “A Staggering Vision,” 38.

⁴⁹ Dorothy Irma Doherty, “The Development of the Iconography of the Vision of St. Eustace,” MA Thesis (Greater Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1993), 59.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/304077956/abstract/2CDB477AD01F4669PQ/1>.

⁵⁰ Doherty, “Iconography of the Vision of St. Eustace,” 63.

⁵¹ Doherty, “Iconography of the Vision of St. Eustace,” 2.

⁵² Doherty, “Iconography of the Vision of St. Eustace,” 143.

⁵³ Thomas J. Heffernan, “An Analysis of the Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace,” *Medievalia et Humanistica: An American Journal for the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, no. 6 (January 1975): 118.

iconography due to his biography. St. Eustace is not merely depicted in his 'Vision' but also in his 'Martyrdom,' which is specifically due to rejection of pagan idols and idolatrous image worship. This image is emphasized repeatedly in tenth century Eastern artwork,⁵⁴ and since the image in itself, and the saint more broadly is a figure of rejection of idolatry, laity who would be exposed to this image would be specifically reminded of not worshipping animals. This is supported by the location of Vision scenes in illustrated texts, which predominantly appear in passages from the Psalms either stressing the consequence of idolatry or outright condemning idol-worship.⁵⁵ The very symbolism of the elements in the Vision further condemn paganism when analyzed; in Roman age bronze sculpture, including an eagle between the antlers of a stag was a known symbol of light. The Byzantines seem to have particularly (in contrast to the West) made sure to include a crucifix with Christ (as opposed to the unadorned crucifix mentioned earlier) between the antlers, perhaps, in the view of some scholars, "replacing the pagan symbol between the antlers as a statement of supremacy over the previous god."⁵⁶

This connection between St. Eustace and iconoclasm has been noted by multiple scholars,⁵⁷ particularly when one notes first of all that St. Eustace appears earliest in the textual tradition *during* iconoclasm. The very figure who is the earliest mention of St. Eustace is none other than John of Damascus, who is the leading opponent against the iconoclasts. This leads scholars to conclude that "it was in images that God made the invisible readily visible and considered visual representation a valuable pedagogical tool. It seems likely that the Eustace legend with its use of miraculous images, especially that of the stag, would be favored by this anti-iconoclasm faction of the clerical hierarchy fresh from their triumph at the Second Council of Nicaea."⁵⁸

In fact, the very Vision story is a perfect illustration of John's theory of a handful of the six types of images.⁵⁹ In summary, "Christ as the natural

image of God speaks to Eustachius in a dialogue prefigured by the episodes of Balaam and Paul; Eustachius heeds him as man made in the image of God and able to imitate Christ. The stag is an element of the visible world that in a flash becomes perceptible as revealing God. In combination with the cross and the epiphanic (but silent) image, the configuration of the stag demonstrates "the way in which the visible world finds its reality in the spiritual world and images it forth."⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

The Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, and especially the early and medieval Christians thought deeply about the artwork they were producing, most especially when this artwork was being venerated and depicting sacred and divine things. The phenomenon of *archeipoietai* shows concern with accuracy and divine sanction, and in view of divinely inspired textual prohibitions against images, this divine sanction was much needed. This is reflected materially in the disappearance and reemergence of Christian nature artwork through the centuries, beyond the period of iconoclasm attacking images of Christ and the saints. After all, if animals lack reason, and do not have a spiritual presence the same way saints or Christ does, why would one put these objects in a holy space and risk being called an idolater? There are two paths. One can challenge the effective power of theology and philosophy, which does not seem to be reasonable based on the physical effects of iconoclasm or one can challenge the actual theology and philosophy. While most scholars will focus on the reception of Aristotelian philosophy and notions of reason and the soul, there is another world of animals as part of the spiritual dimension. This Aristotelian philosophy certainly influenced the culture. The dearth of examples of icons with animals after iconoclasm reveals the hesitancy to include them, and it is only with the passage of time that the fears of idolatry totally fade. But through this time one can see animals as more than animals. One can see animals as reasonable agents able to listen to

⁵⁴ Doherty, "Iconography of the Vision of St. Eustace," 24.

⁵⁵ Doherty, "Iconography of the Vision of St. Eustace," 58.

⁵⁶ Heffernan, "Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace," 152.

⁵⁷ Heffernan, "Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace," 67.

⁵⁸ Heffernan, "Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace," 67.

⁵⁹ John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (Yonkers: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 215–16.

⁶⁰ Heffernan, "Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace," 41.

preaching and model the ideal response to the presence of a saint, as in the life of St. Francis. One can see animals as the very agents of conversion, showing St. Eustace the error of his ways. Animals may be problematic, but only to those who see them as irrational.



FIGURE 1

1912 photograph, apse mosaic at the church of Dormition, Nicaea (Iznik, Turkey) (photo: N.K. Kluge).

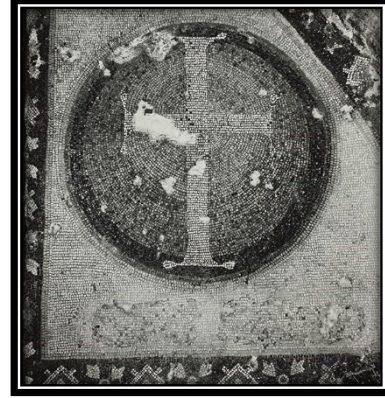


FIGURE 2

Mosaics in the small sekreton, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: © Dumbarton Oaks).



FIGURE 3

Mosaics in the small sekreton, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: © Dumbarton Oaks).



FIGURE 4

Mosaic floor, Church of St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas (Kastron Mefaa), Jordan, 718 and later.



FIGURE 5

Mosaic floor, Church of St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas (Kastron Mefaa), Jordan, 718 and later.



FIGURE 6

Mosaic floor, Church of St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas (Kastron Mefaa), Jordan, 718 and later.



FIGURE 7

Detail of the “Peaceful Kingdom” mosaic from the Cathedral of Ma’in, Jordan, with a bull replaced by a tree. Byzantine, seventh–eighth century, with later modifications. Stone tesserae. Madaba Archaeological Park, Jordan. Photo: Judith McKenzie / Manar al-Athar, <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk>; see Main—Acropolis Church.



FIGURE 8

Vita icon of St. Catherine, Sinai (after: Βοκοτόπουλος, *Ελληνική Τέχνη. Βυζαντινές Εικόνες*, T. 61).



FIGURE 9

Close up of panel of vita icon of St. Catherine, Sinai (after: Βοκοτόπουλος, *Ελληνική Τέχνη. Βυζαντινές Εικόνες*, T. 61).



FIGURE 10

Bonaventure Berlinghieri. “Vita-Icon of Saint Francis.” Church of San Francesco, Pescia, Italy, 1235.



FIGURE 11

Bonaventure Berlinghieri. "Vita-Icon of Saint Francis," close up of panel depicting Francis preaching to birds, Church of San Francesco, Pescia.



FIGURE 12

St. Gerasimos and the lion, 1300 C.E., Palestine Vocotopoulos, Panagiotis. "ΔΥΟ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΕΙΕΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΕΣ ΣΤΑ ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΑ." ΔΧΑΕ, January 1, 1998.



FIGURE 13

Early Byzantine, circa 6th. century CE. Place: Constantinople, (Modern Istanbul, Turkey). Great Palace Mosaic Museum, Istanbul, Turkey. Original image by Hagia Sophia Research Team. Italy, 1235.



FIGURE 14

Wall, south, fresco, Scene no. 2 possibly showing Margaret of Antioch: Scene, emerging from Dragon, detail. The Svetlana Tomeković Database of Byzantine Art, Greece, Crete, Iráklion, Voutás, Hagia Paraskevi, unknown date/Italy, 1235.



FIGURE 15

Fresco, refectory, naming of the animals, The Svetlana Tomeković Database of Byzantine Art, Azerbaijan, Ağstafa, David Gareja, Bertubani Monastery, unknown date.



FIGURE 16

Elijah Fed by Raven. The Svetlana Tomeković Database of Byzantine Art Montenegro, Kolašin, Morača Monastery, Church of the Dormition. 1250–1299.



FIGURE 17

50 x 80 cm, Wood, tempera Venerable Gerasim of Jordan, 17th c. Russia, Moscow State United Art Historical, Architectural and Natural Landscape Museum-Reserve "Kolomenskoye".



FIGURE 18

St Jerome is depicted extracting the thorn from the lion's paw, 1400-1450, Crete, cypress wood, 2019 15 May-9 Sept, Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 'A History of the World in 100 Objects'.



FIGURE 19

Ottaviano Nelli (fl. 1385–1446), Saint Jérôme guérissant le lion, tempera and gold on poplar wood.



FIGURE 20

St. Menas Ampulla 5th-7th century Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.



FIGURE 21

Ivories of the So-Called Grado Chair: Saint Menas with Flanking Camels 7th–8th century, Made in Eastern Mediterranean or Egypt.



FIGURE 22

Vita icon of Saint George and scenes from his life, first half of the 13th century, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai (Egypt) / K. Weitzmann: "Die Ikone".

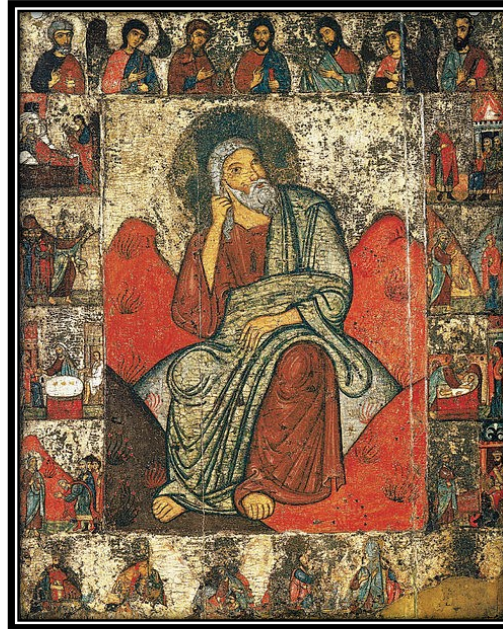


FIGURE 23

Elijah in the desert, 13th/14th cent., Tretyakov Gallery, No. 14907.

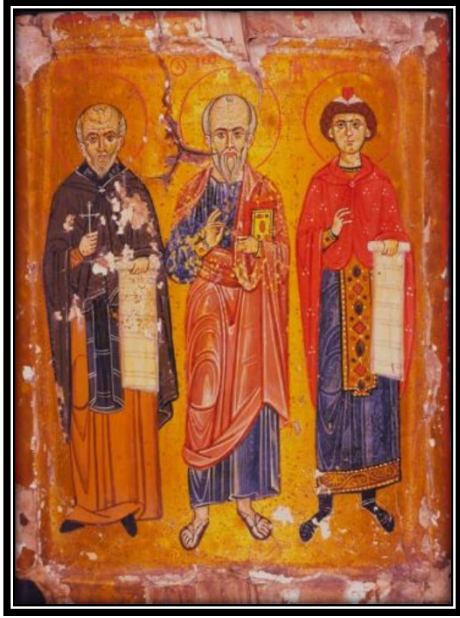


FIGURE 24

Saints Ephraim, John the Evangelist, and Daniel (notice lack of lions), 12-13th century, Courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.



FIGURE 25

Prophet Elijah Fed by a Raven, 11th c, Courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai. Tempera and gold on panel.



FIGURE 26

Elijah in the Wilderness, 13th century, Courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.

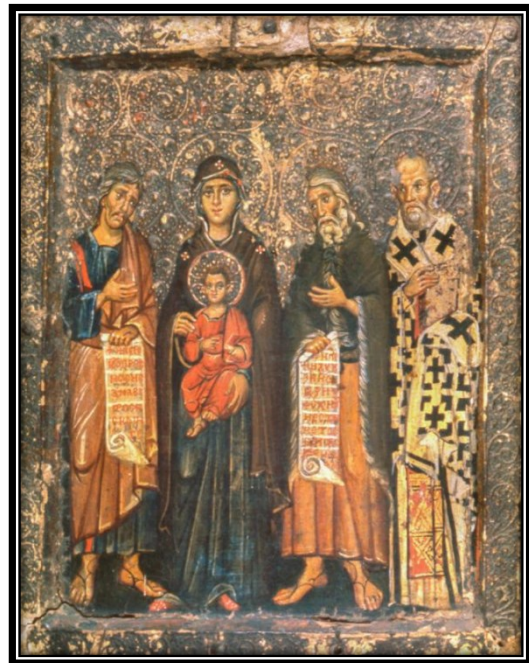


FIGURE 27

Virgin Kyriotissa with Moses, Elijah, and Gregory of Nazianzus, 13th c, Sinai Archive.



FIGURE 28

Saint Menas, 14-16th century, notice lack of camels, Courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.



FIGURE 29

Gerasimus with lions, 16th century, Courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.

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WILL TO POWER

BY GABRIEL DAKAKE

My friend, how you forget
is beautiful,
the way you leap
from high towers
honors them beyond compare

All life is an act of cruelty, you say.
Man is an awkward animal,
bewitched by his own design;

but, my friend, have you forgotten
that *love* was Nature's first principle?
That life long-hidden yearned to be known,
and that here, all the cosmos conspired
to make itself anew,
learned *first* to love itself
in that ancient, primordial stew

To love is
to die in living,
the way out,
the way in,
the Western wind,
the Golden sin.

For among Heaven's silent spheres
In cosmic counsels high afar,
Power is a paltry thing
A voice too feeble for immortal ears
In the synod of the angels
The gathering of the gods
Love alone strikes fast
The Olympian door

The titans tremble
and taste
however brief
an inkling of mortal fear.
It is love alone
whose knock is answered,
Whose name is
I am here!

You say the world was born of power—

I say it was born beneath two trees
In her eyes that glimmered like starlight,
On her lips whose taste was eternity

The world was born on piano keys
When song erupted amid glowing grins,
When young men
To each other pledged,
And across the room
She first dared look
Dared to tempt desire.

It was born on that summer eve
when the wind stroked back his hair,
the moonlight danced on her skin,
when the universe plighted a troth
to itself, knelt
And drew forth a ring

The world was born
when lovers first met
between twisted sheet
and trembling lips
the swords of
all the warriors of history
clattered to the earth
when he kissed her
slow as the moonrise
—angels laughed
and Heaven sighed

You say all was born by accident—

But the world was born
in a maternity ward
When first you opened your eyes.
When father first heard his son cry,
And your mother beckoned: *closer, child*
—*I am yours and you are mine*

Gabriel Dakake is a senior majoring in Philosophy. His areas of interest include metaphysics, the history of philosophy, and Islamic philosophy. *Will to Power* was composed in February of 2023.



THE JESUIT PRIEST AS HERMES TRISMEGISTUS

ATHANASIUS KIRCHER IN ROME 1650-1660

by Sarah Bahm
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ABSTRACT

In 1633, the German Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher was appointed to a new position as the Professor of Mathematics and Oriental languages at Roman College. Kircher spent the next forty-five years of his life researching and writing over forty manuscripts containing his intertwined proto-scientific discoveries and theological exegeses. As illustrated texts, Kircher's writings are of particular interest to the art historian. In this paper I explore the significance of the frontispiece engravings from three of Kircher's works: The Pamphili Obelisk (1650), The Egyptian Oedipus (1652), and The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey (1656, 1660). In these texts Kircher intentionally identified himself, both textually and visually, with the Greco-Egyptian deity Hermes Trismegistus. I argue that Kircher continually defined himself in relation to Hermes Trismegistus to provide credibility for his linguistic and scientific "discoveries" as well as deepening the connection between the ancient world and Catholic doctrine in order to reinforce the Church's legitimacy against dissenting Protestant sects. Using visual analysis and a historical-critical context, I trace this relationship which began with the discovery and transmission of knowledge from Hermes to Kircher as shown in The Pamphili Obelisk, continuing then with the exhibition and practice of this knowledge in The Egyptian Oedipus, and finally by engaging with the political landscape of Counter-Reformation politics in The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey. The relationship between Kircher and Hermes demonstrates the complex systems of transmission and translation of ancient knowledge in the Early Modern period.

Sarah Bahm is a senior Art History major and English minor at Kenyon College, where she is currently completing an honors thesis. Focused on sixteenth-century Venice, her thesis examines the construction of political and religious identity through analysis of three portraits by Titian of Saint Catherine of Alexandria. She presented a portion of her thesis at the UVA Wise Medieval-Renaissance Conference in September 2023. She achieved notable distinction on her Art History capstone entitled *Queen Caterina Cornaro as Saint Catherine of Alexandria: Performing Sovereignty in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Her research interests encompass the Early Modern period, including global trade networks, the history of science, and devotional artwork. This paper was presented at the 112th Annual College Art Association Conference in February. Beyond academia, she contributes to the Kenyon College Visual Resource Center blog and the Erie Reader. Sarah's forthcoming article in the *Northwestern Art Review* explores Yerberas of the Chiquitos and Moxos Reduccionces. She plans to pursue further studies in Italian Renaissance Art at the Syracuse-Florence M.A. program post-graduation.

In November of 1633, the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher was appointed to his new position at the Roman College as professor of mathematics and Oriental languages.¹ Kircher spent the next forty-five years of his life in Rome, writing over forty manuscripts detailing his intertwined scientific and theological discoveries.² Kircher relied upon ancient philosophy to support his Catholic beliefs, in keeping with the popular Neoplatonism that preceded him. To Kircher, the most important of ancient traditions was Hermeticism, which has its roots in Hellenized Egypt (323-32 BCE). During this period, a cross-cultural deity was crafted by Hellenized Egyptians/Greeks living in Egypt from a combination of the Greek deity Hermes and the Egyptian deity Thoth.³ This new god, Hermes Trismegistus or Hermes Thrice Great, was destined to be at the center of historical and magical imaginations for the next two millennia. Throughout his career, Athanasius Kircher rediscovered and redefined himself in relation to Hermes Trismegistus, who was representative of the ancient knowledge at the center of Catholic faith.

A considerable amount of research has already been completed connecting Athanasius Kircher to the Hermetic tradition; some scholars argue that his interest was philosophical in nature and deeply rooted in Counter-Reformation culture, while others propose that Kircher's Hermeticism was antiquarian in nature.⁴ The literature surrounding Kircher, Hermeticism, and Kircher in relation to Hermeticism is quite broad, as it brings together the Renaissance and antiquity on discussions of science and religion.⁵

I intend to focus on one particular aspect of Kircher in relation to Hermeticism, which is the tendency of Kircher to identify himself with Hermes Trismegistus throughout his illustrated texts. Engravings from three of Kircher's works provide the basis for my line of questioning: *The Pamphili Obelisk* (1650), *The Egyptian Oedipus* (1652), and *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey* (1656/1660), with supporting evidence from Giorgio de Sepibus' *The Celebrated Museum of the Roman College of the Society of Jesus* (1678).⁶ I aim to answer the following questions: Why did Kircher choose to identify himself with Hermes Trismegistus? How did Kircher transform the original deity of Hermes Trismegistus so that he could feasibly draw comparisons between himself, a Jesuit priest, and Hermes, the pagan god? How does Kircher's self-identification with Hermes Trismegistus fit into Counter-Reformation culture in Rome? Ultimately, I propose that Kircher chose to identify himself with Hermes Trismegistus because the magical and religious power of Hermes Trismegistus validated his linguistic projects, solidified the ancient roots of Catholicism, and enforced the Counter-Reformation efforts of the Church to push back against Protestantism.

Kircher conceived of Hermeticism in much of the way that modern scholars do today, as an ancient form of paganism which relied upon the theory of sympathy between the macrocosm (celestial sphere) and the microcosm (terrestrial sphere).⁷ In terms of place, Hermeticism can be traced back to Egypt during the Hellenistic period or perhaps slightly

¹ Paula Findlen, "Athanasius Kircher," in *New Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons/Thomson Gale, 2008), 131.

² Kircher desperately longed to go abroad to China, like his predecessor Matteo Ricci. His petitions to travel to China were twice rejected, so he settled for the publication of *China Illustrata* in 1667. This text, which synthesized the knowledge recorded in Ricci's journals and other Jesuit travel accounts, shaped the European perception of Asian countries and rulers throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The only time Kircher left Rome for an extended amount of time was in 1637, when he accompanied the German scholar Lucas Holstenius on a trip to Sicily and Malta. This trip resulted in Kircher's lifelong fascination with volcanoes and the subterranean world at large. He even climbed into Mount Etna as it erupted, in a characteristic display of egotistical scholarly passion.

³ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality and the Historical Imagination: Altered States of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 5.

⁴ Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 48-51. Stolzenberg's book presents the antiquarian view mentioned last, while he cites Frances Yates, author of *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), as the original source presenting Kircher as

a "reactionary Hermetist." Scholars tend to fall somewhere on this spectrum between reactionary Hermetist and esoteric antiquarian, while a few even consider him to be a fraud or charlatan.

⁵ Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality*, 6. Throughout my research, I rely on Wouter J. Hanegraaff's understanding of Hermeticism as a spirituality, instead of ascribing to the common separation of "technical" and "philosophical" Hermeticism. As explained by Hanegraaff, using the term Hermetic spirituality centers the "experiences and practices" of the tradition, while the separation of the Greek philosophical Hermeticism and the Egyptian technical Hermeticism enforces racialized stereotypes and a "philhellenic bias."

⁶ These texts were all originally published in Latin as *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, *Obeliscus Pamphilius*, *Iter Exstaticum coeleste*, and *Museum Celeberrimum Collegii Romani Societatis Jesu*, respectively.

⁷ Sympathetic magic can be understood as the basis for astrology and alchemy, among other forms of ancient magic. The idea of "sympathy" simply suggests that whatever happens in the celestial sphere affects every aspect of terrestrial life. For example, astrological signs correspond to parts of the body, which could indicate in turn what medical treatments a person might need. It is essential to realize that sympathetic magic was deeply intertwined with ancient, medieval, and early modern medical practices.

earlier. At this point, the deity known as Hermes Trismegistus emerged as a combination of the Greek Hermes and the Egyptian Thoth.⁸ Hermes Trismegistus was generally considered to have been god and prophet, but also a historical figure who was a scribe to one of the pharaohs (most frequently the first divine pharaoh, Amun or even the god Osiris).⁹ Hermes-Thoth truly became “Hermes Thrice Great” during the second century CE, when the epithet “Trismegistus” became permanently associated with his name.¹⁰ Chief among Hermes Trismegistus’ attributions was creator of language, the alphabet, and writing more broadly. All attributes of Hermes or Thoth – psychopomp, traveler, astrologer, seer, mathematician, etc. – compounded in characterizing the great Hermes Trismegistus. With this deity at the forefront, Hermetic spirituality with both a form of experience and practice existed by the first century CE in Egypt. The spirituality focused on the ideas of rebirth and transformation. While it is difficult to describe with accuracy the ritual activity of ancient Hermeticists, the scholar Wouter J. Hanegraaff speculates:

men and women would meet secretly in their homes, in temple sanctuaries, or in solitary places...pupils would listen to venerable teachers speaking about the nature of the cosmos...they were taught that human beings could open the eyes of the heart, leave delusion behind, and perceive reality as it really is.¹¹

This vision of ancient Hermeticism is an esoteric one, resulting in iconography that is difficult for modern scholars to decipher and a loss of knowledge about the practices of ancient Hermeticists.

More important than the reality of ancient Hermetic practices to this paper is how Hermeticism was remembered in the historical imagination, especially during the Renaissance. What pieces of Hermeticism were left behind, physically and textually, during late antiquity through the early modern period, until we reach the moment of

Kircher’s appointment as professor of mathematics and Oriental studies in 1635? The text most significant to my argument is the *Corpus Hermeticum* (*CH*), which consists of a series of fragmentary writings that were or are still attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.¹² In 1460, the *CH* was rediscovered in Macedonia by the monk Leonardo da Pistoia, who brought the texts to the Platonic Academy in Florence.¹³ In 1471, the philosopher Marsilio Ficino translated the *CH* into Latin, the language of the academic elite in Europe.¹⁴ Ficino’s translations include a foreword written by Ficino himself; this addition to the *CH* shaped how Renaissance humanists would interpret the texts for the next few centuries. In this introduction, Ficino imagines a genealogy which connects pagan religion and Christianity, a concept that would become reality for Kircher.¹⁵ He writes:

At the time of Moses’ birth, there lived Atlas, the astrologer, who was the brother of the physicist Prometheus and, on the mother’s side, the grandfather of the elder Mercury, whose grandson was *Mercury Trismegistus* [...] he made the form of the characters in the shape of plants and living beings. [...] He is called Trismegistus, that is, thrice great, because he was the greatest philosopher, the greatest priest, and the greatest king. [...] He was...the teacher of our divine Plato. There thus arose a single, internally consistent, primal theology [*prisca theologia*], from six theologians in wonderful order, which had its beginning in Mercury and its fulfillment in Plato. Mercury wrote a great number of books about knowledge of the divine, in which (by immortal God!) secret mysteries and astonishing oracles were revealed. He spoke not just as a philosopher, but as a prophet. He foresaw the fall of the ancient religions, the coming of Christ, the Judgement to come, the Resurrection, the glory of the blessed, and the punishment of the sinners.¹⁶

This genealogy conforms to the expectations of Italian humanists who believed in the *prisca theologia*, the idea that the Holy Spirit continually revealed itself throughout history to various ancient

⁸ Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality*, 5 and Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 143.

⁹ Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality*, 5.

¹⁰ Ebeling, *The Secret History*, 6. Up until this moment in the second century, Hermes and Thoth were used interchangeably. For the sake of clarity in this paper, I have used Hermes Trismegistus consistently to be clear I am discussing the Greco-Egyptian deity.

¹¹ Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality*, 11.

¹² Today, it is generally understood that the *Corpus Hermeticum* is the result of many authors writing in the name of Hermes Trismegistus.

¹³ Antoine Faivre, “Renaissance Hermetism,” *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism*, ed. Glenn Alexander

Magee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 134. Leonardo da Pistoia is a pseudonym; the given name of this monk is Leonardo Alberti de Candia. He is not to be confused with the mannerist painter Leonardo da Pistoia.

¹⁴ Hermeticism does not fall out of favor between the fifth and fifteenth centuries everywhere, but due to the languages that most of the texts in the *CH* are written in (Greek, Coptic, Aramaic, Syriac, etc.), European knowledge of the tradition dwindled until there was a resurgence of interest during the rise of Neoplatonism.

¹⁵ Ebeling, *The Secret History*, 61.

¹⁶ Ebeling, *The Secret History*, 61-62. This selection from Ficino’s introduction is quoted in its entirety in this chapter. Emphasis my own.

theologians and philosophers.¹⁷ For Kircher, one hundred and fifty years later, the idea of a *prisca theologia* was even more pertinent during the Counter Reformation, when the preeminence of Christianity as the one true religion was threatened by dissenting Protestant sects.

Additionally, this introduction includes two significant aspects of the deity Hermes Trismegistus with whom Kircher self-identified. Firstly, Ficino wrote that Hermes Trismegistus “made the form of the characters in the shape of plants and living beings.” For Kircher, who had been employed by the church to translate the Egyptian obelisks in Rome, it was all too easy to interpret these characters as hieroglyphs. This interpretation explained that Hermes Trismegistus must have been one of the ancient theologians bestowed with knowledge of the Holy Spirit, because he had created hieroglyphs as the original language. Following this logic, Kircher believed the hieroglyphs simply must have contained some essential information about the *prisca theologia*, which would resonate during Counter Reformation, convert all souls to the true religion of Catholic Christianity, and unite the knowledge of ancient and Renaissance thinkers alike. Secondly, Ficino notes Hermes Trismegistus was not only a philosopher, but also a prophet.¹⁸ In the *Pamphili Obelisk* and *Egyptian Oedipus*, Kircher would use this same language in describing Hermes Trismegistus, instead of drawing attention to Hermes Trismegistus as a pagan deity. Kircher attempted to specify his admiration for Hermes Trismegistus because of his status, put forth by Ficino, as linguist, philosopher, and prophet, while avoiding censorship claims from the church for paganism and blasphemy, though he was not always successful.¹⁹

In 1650, Kircher published his book entitled *Pamphili Obelisk*, just before the restoration of the obelisk atop a brand-new sculpture by Gianlorenzo Bernini was completed in 1651.²⁰ Named for the Pope who spearheaded the project, Pope Innocent X Pamphili (Figure 1), Kircher’s expected contribution

to the Piazza Navona project was to translate the hieroglyphs on the obelisk.²¹ Interestingly, the translation only took up the last fifth of the book. The rest of the book consists of lengthy dedications to his sponsors, an elaborate history of the obelisk, and an “introduction to what ancient Egyptian culture had meant in the early Greek, Roman, and Hebrew world, to its influence on early Islam and rabbinical tradition, and finally to its significance on contemporary society.”²² Within this introduction to ancient Egyptian culture, Kircher includes a description of Hermes Trismegistus. According to *Pamphili Obelisk*, Hermes Trismegistus was

a man of the sharpest wit, of marvelous cleverness, and a tireless examiner of Nature, who, well-informed about the state, customs, institutions, and disciplines of the medieval world, conceived this single goal, that he should foster the disciplines handed down from the primeval patriarchs, and when he had learned them thoroughly consign them in turn to posterity.²³

As scholar Ingrid Rowland has observed, Kircher may as well be describing himself in this passage.²⁴ This singular goal of Hermes Trismegistus to foster ancient knowledge is continued through Kircher, especially in context of the publication of *Pamphili Obelisk*.

Kircher’s admiration of Hermes Trismegistus is made visual in the frontispiece of *Pamphili Obelisk* (Figure 2). Working clockwise from the top, the figures are Father Time holding his scythe, Hermes with winged cap and shoes, the Egyptian god Harpocrates atop a crocodile, an unnamed Muse holding a book with Kircher’s name written in it, and the female personification of Fame, manacled and holding a trumpet.²⁵ My interpretation of this image is drawn primarily from Stolzenberg’s analysis, with one exception. Stolzenberg identifies the winged figure in the bottom left as Kircher himself, “pen in hand, recording his interpretation of the obelisk.” However, I read this figure as female, based upon the swelling of the breast and style of the hair. It seems too dangerous for Kircher to identify himself in this

¹⁷ Ebeling, *The Secret History*, 64.

¹⁸ Here, Ficino uses the name “Mercury” in reference to Hermes Trismegistus.

¹⁹ Ingrid Rowland, *The Ecstatic Journey: Athanasius Kircher in Baroque Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2000), 99. Kircher was restricted by both the restraints of the Society of Jesus, but also by the Inquisition in general. Many of the Jesuits at the Collegio Romano acted as censors for the Roman Inquisition, adding books to the even-lengthening *Index of Prohibited Books* with reckless abandon. Censorship in Catholic countries was so prevalent that “even Catholic scholars in Italy, like Kircher himself, eventually entrusted much of

their work to Dutch and German printers” due to their more-lenient Protestant printing presses.

²⁰ Ingrid Rowland, “‘Th’ United Sense of th’ Universe’: Athanasius Kircher in Piazza Navona,” in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 162.

²¹ Rowland, “‘Th’ United Sense of th’ Universe,’” 153, 156.

²² Rowland, “‘Th’ United Sense of th’ Universe,’” 157.

²³ Kircher, *Pamphili Obelisk*, 93, in Rowland, “‘Th’ United Sense of th’ Universe,’” 161.

²⁴ Rowland, “‘Th’ United Sense of th’ Universe,’” 162.

²⁵ Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 147.

blatantly pagan image in *Pamphili Obelisk*, as he was all too aware of the fact that he was publishing this text in hopes to gain patronage for his next work and arguably his masterpiece, *Egyptian Oedipus*. By including a Muse instead of himself, Kircher avoids the threat of censorship by the Church and critique that could lead to a lack of patronage. On a separate, but also curious note, it is unclear whether Harpocrates sits upon is an alligator or a crocodile. It could certainly be a crocodile, as I have inferred, connecting the young god to the place Egypt and specifically the Nile River, but it could also be an imported alligator from the New World, such as the specimens Kircher kept in his museum.

Kircher's depiction of Hermes presents him as an honorable bearer of ancient knowledge. While Kircher is not represented figurally in the composition, he received this knowledge through the book which the Muse holds. In the background, the Pamphili obelisk lies broken and forgotten to time, chained to Fame. Stolzenberg interprets this scene as the "oblivion into which the hieroglyphic doctrine has fallen."²⁶ The triangle of figures in the foreground – Hermes, Harpocrates, and the Muse – thus come to represent the preservation and dissemination of this nearly-lost knowledge. The scroll which Hermes presents to the muse is remarkably like engravings from *Pamphili Obelisk* that depict each side of the monument in addition to Kircher's translations, further emphasizing the transition of knowledge from Hermes to Kircher (Figure 3).

The Muse looks up at Hermes, pen in hand while she faithfully records the information within a book with *Athanasii Kircheri* written in it. Perhaps this book is the very *Pamphili Obelisk* in which the engraving is printed, in an act of self-referential acknowledgement. The child god Harpocrates hides underneath Hermes' scroll, his fingers to his lips to indicate quiet. This inclusion points towards Kircher's belief that true knowledge is always communicated through riddles and symbols, in the tradition of Pythagoras.²⁷ Through this engraving, Kircher constructs a very specific narrative in which ancient, esoteric knowledge was nearly "silenced"

forever, but has been preserved and made available by the goodness of the God, through the Jesuit order's academic prowess. In this narrative, Kircher is the savior of Hermetic knowledge, but he also has the power and privilege as translator to reveal the pieces of the Hermetic tradition which support his message and conceal those that do not.

Following the publication of *Pamphili Obelisk*, Kircher had thoroughly impressed his audience of sponsors and managed to obtain patronage for the publication of the massive tome *Egyptian Oedipus*, which had been in the works for some twenty years.²⁸ Kircher found patronage in the form of Ferdinand III, the Holy Roman Emperor and former Archduke of Austria (Figure 4). Kircher's foundational and comprehensive text on Egypt is dedicated to the emperor and was so long that it was published in sections from 1652-1655.²⁹ This work not only contained Kircher's extensive research on Egyptian hieroglyphs, but it also drew upon the *CH* as the "essential connection between pagan Egypt and early Christianity."³⁰ In fact, Kircher's citation of the *CH* was far too sympathetic for the Jesuit censors and it was heavily criticized for being "too admiring of its pagan sources," which brings me to my discussion of the frontispiece of *Egyptian Oedipus* (Figure 5.1). This engraving depicts the Roman Oedipus addressing the Egyptian sphinx or, according to Kircher scholar Paula Findlen, "Kircher's image of himself as Roman Oedipus."³¹

As the opening image of the over-two-thousand-page text, this image of Oedipus challenging the sphinx draws a clear parallel to Kircher's life, in which Kircher figures himself as the riddle-solving hero come to reveal the secrets of Egypt and share the knowledge with the world.³² In the image, the toga-clad Oedipus/Kircher addresses the sphinx, with his arm extended and mouth open. Presumably, this is the moment in which Oedipus/Kircher solves the great riddle of the sphinx and demonstrates his authority over the great symbol of Egypt. Kircher achieved this authority in part due to his incredible gift with language, which is referenced in the upper right corner of the frontispiece of *Egyptian Oedipus*. Two angels,

²⁶ Stolzenburg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 147.

²⁷ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Journey*, 15.

²⁸ Rowland, "'Th' United Sense of th' Universe,'" 156.

²⁹ Findlen, "Athanasius Kircher," 133 and Rowland, "'Th' United Sense of th' Universe,'" 156. In its full form, the text was over four folios, all generously illustrated!

³⁰ Findlen, "Athanasius Kircher," 133.

³¹ Findlen, "Athanasius Kircher," 133; Paula Findlen, ed., *The Last Man That Knew Everything* (New York: Routledge), 32.

³² Rowland, "'Th' United Sense of th' Universe,'" 156.

identified as “Sense and Experience” and “Reason,” float above Oedipus/Kircher, holding a book listing the languages of Kircher’s expertise, and underneath, ten seals containing the academic areas in which the Jesuit specialized (Figure 5.2).³³ In addition to the Roman Oedipus, though, the Baroque academic reader would have suspected another possible identity for the figure as the Greek god Hermes, with his toga, cap, and sandals (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). While subtle, the sartorial similarities convey if not a dual identity as Oedipus and Hermes, certainly an Oedipus inspired by the deity. Through the frontispiece of *Egyptian Oedipus*, Kircher clarified the implication he had only hinted at in *Pamphili Obelisk*; he was casting himself in the role of a knowledge-bearer like Hermes Trismegistus, making clear the mysteries of language and divinity for his audience.³⁴

For Kircher to fulfill the role of Hermes Trismegistus in this way, it was necessary for the Jesuit to engage with and “rediscover” the ancient visual language. For example, Kircher drew upon representations of the Greek Hermes from amulets and gems. Kircher was well-known for his expertise in deciphering magical amulets, as one anecdote in the *Egyptian Oedipus* reveals:

One day in 1654 a noble stranger arrived at the door of the Collegio Romano bearing a mysterious gem, which he asked to be delivered to Athanasius Kircher. The stone had been found during the construction of a church in Assisi and was carved with Greek letters and secret symbols. Although the stranger had been to every city in Italy showing it to scholars of Greek, no one could make sense of its inscription. Kircher gave the stone one glance and deciphered its meaning. It was a Gnostic amulet, he pronounced, representing the solar genie.³⁵

With his expertise in amulets and gems, Kircher would have surely been familiar with gems that could have been considered Hermetic in nature, such as the one depicted in Figure 6. This hematite gem, housed at the British Museum, is badly damaged but clearly depicts, on one side, the figures of Hermes and Thoth.³⁶ This gem fits neatly into the geographical and chronological moment of the Hermetic cult in Egypt during the first few centuries CE. Found in Egypt, the inclusion of both Hermes and Thoth indicates the relationship between the two deities and could be interpreted as a reference to Hermes Trismegistus. Kircher, with his extensive knowledge on gems and amulets, would have had much of this information at his disposal.³⁷ Perhaps the frontispiece in *Egyptian Oedipus* depicting Kircher in guise reminiscent of Hermes was, consciously or unconsciously, a product of seeing a gem such as this one.

It is well-known that Kircher, in addition to just studying and translating them, had an extensive collection of magical amulets, gems, and coins, many of which could be considered Hermetic in nature. Kircher’s collection was housed in the Roman College of the Society of Jesus, near where the Pamphili obelisk had been erected as part of the Bernini *Four Rivers* sculpture. The objects within Kircher’s museum were monumentalized in a book produced by Kircher’s assistant, Giorgio de Sepibus.³⁸ While images of the exact amulets and gems were not recorded in Giorgio de Sepibus’ book, they can be matched with images from Kircher’s texts such as *Pamphili Obelisk* and *Egyptian Oedipus*.³⁹ For the sake of portraying the museum as a space reflective of the luxury and faith of the Jesuits, de Sepibus begins by listing a particular series of coins. These include three Samaritan

³³ Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 149. The seals are identified as Egyptian wisdom, Phoenician theology, Chaldean astrology, Hebrew Kabbalah, Persian magic, Pythagorean mathematics, Greek theosophy, mythology, Arabic alchemy, and Latin philology. An impressive list! And certainly, one the Jesuit censors did not like!

³⁴ Rowland, “Th’ United Sense of th’ Universe,” 162.

³⁵ Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 51. This anecdote was recorded in *Egyptian Oedipus* by Kircher’s assistant Kaspar Schott, but as Stolzenberg points out, it was clearly supervised by Kircher in order to construct a particular image of the author. The anecdote has been paraphrased from the original Latin, which was translated by Stolzenberg.

³⁶ The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database, “Magical Gem: Hermes and Thoth,” <http://cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/437/?sid=3139>.

³⁷ Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 54. As his fame spread, Kircher’s status as a translator of magical objects grew, with one senator from Dijon even writing in a letter to Kircher, “You, then, seemed to me to be the one who could untie the knots and riddles of the Sphinx, you

who have undertaken the science of recondite antiquity with hard-sought knowledge of Oriental languages.”

³⁸ We are lucky enough to have a facsimile and English translation of *The Celebrated Museum of the Roman College of the Society of Jesus*

³⁹ Georgius De Sepibus, Athanasius Kircher, and Johannes Janssonius van Waesberge, *The Celebrated Museum of the Roman College of the Society of Jesus: a Facsimile of the 1678 Amsterdam Edition of Giorgio De Sepi’s Description of Athanasius Kircher’s = Museum Musūm Celeberrimum Collegii Romani Societatis Jesu*, edited by Peter Davidson, translated by Anastasi Callinicos and Daniel Höhr, annotated by Janes Stevenson (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2015), 157. De Sepibus writes on this topic, “There are several coins whose significance and age the *Author* explains in Volume II of the *Egyptian Oedipus*. There are numbers, among the coins of the ancients, those struck by Roman Emperors, or by decree of the Senate, marked with symbols, emblems, legends, devices and triumphs; these are preserved between reversible screens of a wheel which has been constructed with remarkable skill, and contains coins of 12 Emperors.”

shekels, which de Sepibus records were minted at the time of Joshua, Samuel, and Solomon, as well as coins depicting various popes and tessera of the imperial families of Austria, France, and Bavaria.⁴⁰ Most interestingly though, is the last observation of the section: “Apart from these,” de Sepibus adds as an afterthought, “there are an abundance of amulets and cabalistic seals, magical and superstitious coins, whose naiveté and laughable fallacy is partly in the *Oedipus*, but especially in the *Arithmologia*, described, explained, and refuted. On display here is also a jumbled mass of different Coins of antiquity.”⁴¹ These amulets, coins, and seals reflect the philosophical interests of Kircher and go beyond the intrigue of an antiquarian or a luxury collector.

As de Sepibus tells us, Kircher’s collection is overflowing with these objects; one only needs to look to the frontispiece of the de Sepibus catalog to grasp the sheer amount of objects in the space (Figure 7).⁴² While Stolzenberg argues that Kircher’s interest in these objects is antiquarian in nature, he ignores the fact that these objects were not only displayed and studied, but they were also the conduit for the transfer of authority from Hermes Trismegistus to Kircher. Looking back to how these amulets and gems were used during antiquity and the Byzantine era, they were an intermediary between the celestial and terrestrial spheres. An amulet might assist the user in performing a spell or prayer, amplifying the power of the magic through their auspicious colors, iconography, or inscriptions. Because the original context of Hermetic gems, amulets, or coins was lost to the masses yet still considered the ultimate source of knowledge, Kircher recognized that in deciphering them, the magical power and authority of these objects could be transferred from past to present. Simply through the power of their ancientness and illegibility to everyone, Kircher could reinvent himself as the new Hermes Trismegistus, versed in linguistics, able to

translate any text, and construct reality around him. Regardless of whether he was correct in his interpretation of the ancient world – and he was frequently wrong – the discovery was his alone to manipulate as religious and political power.

Let us look at a few of the amulets that are included in Kircher’s *Egyptian Oedipus*, which are mentioned in de Sepibus’ catalog as part of the “abundance” that he mentions as an afterthought (Figure 8). As Giorgio de Sepibus phrased it in *The Celebrated Museum*, Kircher “described, explained, and refuted” these magical amulets within this work. Kircher certainly begins the section with a refute against magic, writing of the “erroneous dogmas” of the Egyptians.⁴³ He then describes the amulets as a “new art...in which they made various bindings, which were carved with various stones, circumscribed by the reason and property of the Deity whom they invoked.”⁴⁴ Kircher identifies each object, usually including who the deity being worshiped is and translating any text. The two central coins in Figure 8 are identified as worshiping the sun god “Heloy” and referred to as “numerical abacuses.”⁴⁵ Interestingly, he then notes that this numus is “not really ancient,” establishing himself as the central authority on antiquity. Kircher, through his linguistic prowess, has the unique privilege of determining the authenticity of a magical amulet such as the numerical abacus. While it is likely true that Kircher had some familiarity dating these objects, the niche nature of this knowledge meant that if Kircher discovered an object that refuted his Catholic worldview, he could simply ignore it or in this case, declare it a forgery.

In addition to his knowledge of linguistics and interpretation of ancient visual language, Kircher was legitimized as a new Hermes Trismegistus permanently through the cosmic imagery added to his work *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey* (1656, 1660, 1671).⁴⁶ This work, published during one of

⁴⁰ De Sepibus, *The Celebrated Museum*, 157-58.

⁴¹ De Sepibus, *The Celebrated Museum*, 158.

⁴² Mark A. Waddell, “A Theatre of the Unseen: Athanasius Kircher’s Museum in Rome,” in *Worldbuilding and the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Allison B. Kavey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 67-90, 76.

⁴³ Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus: hoc est, Universalis hieroglyphicæ veterum doctrinæ temporum iniuria abolite instauratio (Egyptian Oedipus)*, 459.

⁴⁴ Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 459.

⁴⁵ Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 466.

⁴⁶ There are three different versions of *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey / Ecstatic Journey*. The first was published in 1656, was dedicated to

Queen Christina of Sweden, and contained only part of the astronomical information. The second was published in 1657 with an expanded section about the subterranean world. The third, published by Kircher’s student Gaspar Schott, included the engravings under discussion in this paper as well as a repudiation to the original Roman censors that explicitly cited Bruno. See Agustín Udías, “Athanasius Kircher’s vision of the universe: *The Ecstatic heavenly journey*,” Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Salamanca, 2021) and Ingrid Rowland, “Athanasius Kircher, Giordano Bruno, and the Panspermia of the Infinite Universe,” in Findlen, *The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, 191-205, 198-99.

the most difficult periods of Kircher's life, is representative of Kircher's grasp for authority after a series of hardships.⁴⁷ The idea for the manuscript reportedly came to Kircher in a dream, in which Kircher journeyed through the cosmos.⁴⁸ Cosmology was a fraught subject in Rome during the seventeenth century. In 1600, the Italian philosopher and proto-scientist Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in Rome for his controversial theory that there were multiple cosmoses.⁴⁹ Even more pressing for Kircher, Galileo Galilei had been placed on house arrest in the 1630s by the Catholic Church for his endorsement of the Copernican belief of a heliocentric universe.⁵⁰ With tensions high in Rome, Kircher was required to be very careful in his publication on *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*. Within the text, Kircher technically adhered to the generally-accepted view of the cosmos by the Church, that of the Danish aristocrat Tycho Brahe.⁵¹ Brahe's cosmological theory served as a compromise between the heliocentric universe of Copernicus and the traditional geocentric model; to Brahe, the fixed sun and its sphere revolved around the earth, but the planets revolved around the sun.⁵² Regardless of whether or not Kircher believed in the Tychonic system in private, it was essential that he publicly support this system. The frontispiece from *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey* depicts a cosmos that is visually Tychonic (although not Aristotelian), which cushions the more criticized, censorable ideas within the book.

The last frontispiece to examine, that of *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, invited explicit comparison to Hermes Trismegistus, as it placed

Kircher firmly in the pagan tradition of dream revelation (Figure 9.1).⁵³ The Jesuit acknowledged this fact outright, but framed the work as a form of science fiction, writing,

The point and single intent of the work, once I began it, was to follow a method in this little book to which Hermes Trismegistus, Plato, and Lucian (among ancient authors) as well as many Poets and Orators in succeeding centuries have subscribed by laudable custom...Here, I would not actually want to undergo any mystic initiation, any rapture, any revelation of Divinity, no angelic epiphany, no inspiration by the Delphic Oracle—rather...I would like for you to be persuaded that they are exhibited under the wraps of an ingenious fiction, in the guise of a fictitious rapture.⁵⁴

But what was this dream of Father Kircher? Kircher tells his student Gaspar Schott that during a concert, the music induced a trance in which he experienced a prophetic dream.⁵⁵ In this trancelike state, an angel named Cosmiel appeared to Kircher's alter ego, Theodidactus, and took him on a tour of the heavens, which can be seen in the frontispiece.⁵⁶ The pair travel through the celestial spheres together and at one point, the angel escorts Kircher to the location that we see in this engraving: "a gigantic, pocketed orb of fixed stars that revolve around the sun."⁵⁷ This is the Tychonic universe: the earth, hanging "like a necklace around a sun that is obviously the center of the whole system."⁵⁸ However, this clear visual representation of the Tychonic universe is also the key divergence from Kircher's original text that bordered on heresy for the church and resulted in an immediate revision by Schott.⁵⁹ As Cosmiel explains,

⁴⁷ Findlen, *The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, 36. During the years following the publication of *Egyptian Oedipus* in 1652, Rome was struck by a plague infestation, while on a personal level Kircher received considerable criticism on a few of his manuscripts. His student, Gaspar Schott, was reportedly invited to the Roman College in order to discuss a few instances of error and plagiarism in Kircher's earlier manuscripts. In addition, Kircher was in the process of trying to publish *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, which was faced with perhaps the most intense criticism from the Jesuit censors.

⁴⁸ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 75.

⁴⁹ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 72. Giordano Bruno on his theory of infinite universes: "However many suns it is possible to believe in./ We find a number of planets circling around every one./ Not because one number wants to exceed another./ For the suns are numberless suns, the planets numberless planets./ So numberless that units equal numberless pairs and triads;/ No one dares to say that the cubits in measureless space/ Outstrip the number or paces, or of parasangs./ Ask not for an infinite number, or for finite numbers./ Here where there is no place for numbers or limits/ Number cannot be assigned."

⁵⁰ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 67, 72. For Kircher on Copernicanism in *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*: "This system is called Copernican after Nicolaus Copernicus the Pole, who finally completed what had been partly devised by Philolaus the Pythagorean, and Aristarchus the Samian, and then resuscitated by Nicolaus Cusanus, and he supported it with many arguments and ingenious hypotheses; afterward, almost all the non-Catholic mathematicians have followed him and some among the Catholics, for whom, not surprisingly, their talents and their pens itch to report something new."

⁵¹ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 69.

⁵² Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 69.

⁵³ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 75.

⁵⁴ Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 16, in Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 75.

⁵⁵ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 20.

⁵⁶ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 20-21, 75. Theodidactus literally means, "taught by God," in another display of Kircher's pious (and egotistical) tendencies.

⁵⁷ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 21.

⁵⁸ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 22.

⁵⁹ Rowland, *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, 75.

Because the supreme Archetypal mind is so full of ideas for possible things, he wanted to establish this universe, to the extent that the capacity of its passive potential permits, with a *numberless variety of spheres*, differing in all their powers, properties, brightness, shape, color, light, heat, influences, and content of latent seminal principles according to the ineffable plan of the archetype.⁶⁰

The heresy was the “numberless variety of spheres,” which slyly implied that the universe might be infinite. Looking out from the engraving, Kircher reveals the knowledge of a cosmos that was barely within Church doctrine, built upon the dream-state method which he sources back to Hermes Trismegistus.

Hermes Thrice Great was also referenced with the inclusion of the Tetragrammaton in the upper left-hand corner of the composition (Figure 9.2). The Hebrew Tetragrammaton (YHWH), which is the “most sacred and ineffable four-letter name of God,” was thought by Kircher to have been transmitted by the Hebrew patriarchs to the ancient pagan men, such as Hermes Trismegistus.⁶¹ Since the translation of the *CH* by Ficino, it was generally understood by Renaissance scholars that Moses and Hermes Trismegistus were contemporaries, as demonstrated in a floor mosaic from the Siena Cathedral (Figure 10). The Tetragrammaton became a symbol of the *prisca theologia*, passed from Moses to Hermes Trismegistus and finally to Kircher himself. Kircher utilized the Tetragrammaton as a universalizing symbol of God which linked the ancient to the contemporary.⁶² In the context of Kircher’s dream of the cosmos, the Tetragrammaton as a symbol of *prisca theologia* is verified by the presence of the angel Cosmiel and Kircher’s devout alter ego, Theodidactus.

By invoking the legacy of Hermes Trismegistus, Kircher presented himself as the rightful heir to Hermes’ position as the bearer of knowledge. It was especially important for Kircher to use his status as the new Hermes Trismegistus to enforce Catholicism as the one true faith. During the seventeenth century, the status of the Catholic church

was continually being threatened by Protestant sects. In order to attribute more authority to the Church, Kircher adopted symbols, objects, and ideas linked to Hermeticism. Simply due to their age, these ideas and objects had considerable influence during the Renaissance and Baroque, as scholars were still trying to recover the “lost” golden age of the ancients.⁶³ Kircher competed fiercely with his contemporaries, including the French philologist Isaac Casaubon. Just a few decades earlier, Casaubon published his text *On Sacred and Ecclesiastical Matters*, which presented a serious roadblock to Kircher’s endorsement of Hermeticism.⁶⁴

A French Protestant working in Geneva, Casaubon was one of the most renowned philologists of the seventeenth century.⁶⁵ While only a few chapters in *On Sacred and Ecclesiastical Matters* focused on the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the ones that did shattered contemporary perception of the ancient text. Through analysis of the language and concepts, Casaubon proved that the *CH* should be dated sometime between the first and third centuries CE; the fragments were not the work of an ancient divinity named Hermes Trismegistus, but by someone(s) writing in his name at a much later date.⁶⁶ In one damning moment, Casaubon refers to the *CH* as a forgery of the early Christian era, referring to the author(s), “That imposter liked to steal not only the sacred doctrines but words of the Sacred Scripture as well.”⁶⁷ After the publication of Casaubon’s *On Sacred and Ecclesiastical Matters*, the reputation of Hermes Trismegistus in relation to ancient Egypt had been tarnished for many scholars of the seventeenth century.

Kircher places himself in direct competition with Casaubon, not only challenging the French philologist on the grounds of ancient knowledge, but also on the all-too prevalent subject of reformation politics. Using the reputation he built as the new Hermes Trismegistus, Kircher embodies two forms of authority – firstly, the power of being the only one who understands an esoteric subject, and secondly,

⁶⁰ Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1660), 361, cited in Ingrid Rowland, “Athanasius Kircher, Giordano Bruno, and the Panspermia of the Infinite Universe,” in Findlen, *The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, 191-205, 195.

⁶¹ Findlen, *The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, 149-169, 158.

⁶² Findlen, *The Last Man*, 159.

⁶³ At this point in time, ancient people (specifically ancient Greeks) represented a “golden age” of humanity, which Renaissance scholars were continually striving to reach. It was not until the “Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns” debate grew in popularity in the late

seventeenth century that philosophers such as Fontanelle would propose that perhaps modernity had finally surpassed antiquity.

⁶⁴ Anthony Grafton, “Protestant versus Prophet: Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 46, no. 1 (1983): 78.

⁶⁵ Faivre, “Renaissance Hermetism,” 141.

⁶⁶ Ebeling, *The Secret History*, 92.

⁶⁷ Ebeling, *The Secret History*, 92; see also, Faivre, “Renaissance Hermetism,” 141. Casaubon is quoted in Ebeling’s book.

the power to wield that knowledge to promote the deeper politico-religious message of Catholicism as the one true faith. Modern scholars have been quick to judge Kircher based on his blatant treatment of Hermeticism as not only ancient but also compatible with Catholicism, but this ignores the complex Counter-Reformation culture of Kircher's day. While he was surely aware of Casaubon's *On Sacred and Ecclesiastical Matters*, it was not because of ignorance that Kircher ignored the redating of the *CH* but rather a purposeful expression of Catholic superiority. The frontispiece depicting Kircher and Cosmiel establishes Catholicism's long history as a powerful institution, reaching deep into antiquity and the cosmos to show that the religion could not be dominated by the new, weak Protestant movement. Kircher exploits Casaubon's discomfort with the transmission of Christian knowledge through pagan sources, claiming that dissemination of *prisca theologia* through sources such as Hermes Trismegistus was exactly the reason that Catholic Christianity was powerful and true. After all, how could a new form of Christianity with no roots in the ancient golden age claim any authority?

Throughout three of his most famous works, *Pamphili Obelisk*, *Egyptian Oedipus*, and *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*, published over the span of six years, Kircher placed himself in relation to Hermes Trismegistus deliberately and boldly. Across the frontispiece engravings, Kircher's relationship to Hermes develops from the discovery and transmission of knowledge from Hermes to Kircher as shown in *Pamphili Obelisk*, to the exhibition and practice of this knowledge in *Egyptian Oedipus*, and finally by engaging with the political landscape of Counter-Reformation politics in *The Ecstatic Heavenly Journey*. Kircher's engagement with the Hermetic tradition is part of the continued rediscovery of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in early modern Europe, but he reframed the content as a means of powerful self-identification and knowledge transmission through widely-circulated illustrated texts. Through focusing on the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, I have explored the ways in which ancient magic, particularly the Greco-Egyptian Hermeticism of the first-third centuries CE, still retained considerable influence in the seventeenth century. Despite the ever-changing political and religious landscape in Europe during the Counter-Reformation, antiquity represented a

"golden age" of philosophy and science for Baroque academics and even Catholic leaders. We are left to wonder if, besides a linguist, theologian, and protoscientist, we should consider Athanasius Kircher to be a magician in his own right.



FIGURE 1

Athanasius Kircher, Pope Innocent X, from *Obeliscus Pamphilius* (1650). Engraving. Division of Rand Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, RMC2007_1233.



FIGURE 2

Athanasius Kircher, Frontispiece, from *Obeliscus Pamphilius* (1650). Engraving. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.



FIGURE 3

Athanasius Kircher and Ludouici Grignani (type), Illustration of Obelisks with Hieroglyphs, from *Obeliscus Pamphilius* (1650). Engraving. Jesuit Collection, Loyola Marymount University.

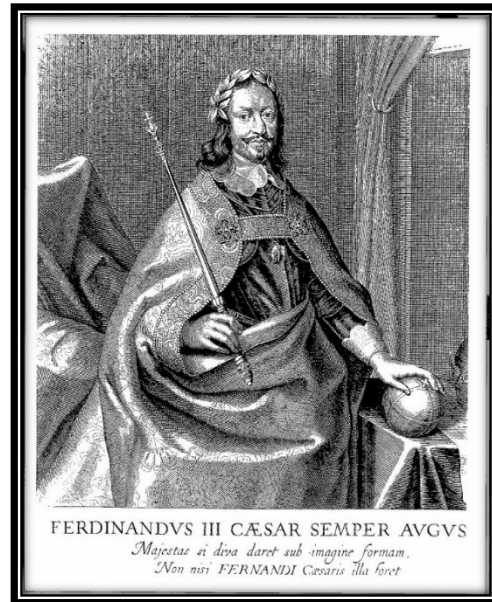


FIGURE 4

Athanasius Kircher, *Ferdinand III*, from *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, tom. I (1652). Engraving. Athanasius Kircher at Stanford, Special Collections and University Archives of Stanford University Libraries. https://web.stanford.edu/group/kircher/cgi-bin/site/?page_id=517.



FIGURE 5.1

Athanasius Kircher, Ferdinand III, from *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, tom.1 (1652). Engraving. Athanasius Kircher at Stanford, Special Collections and University Archives of Stanford University Libraries. https://web.stanford.edu/group/kircher/cgi-bin/site/?page_id=517.



FIGURE 5.2

Detail of Figure 5.1



FIGURE 5.4

Detail of Figure 5.1



FIGURE 5.3

Detail of Figure 5.1



FIGURE 6

Magical gem: *Hermes and Thoth* (3rd c. AD). Black haemetite, 21.5 x 9 x 2 mm. The British Museum, The British Museum Collection database on Campbell-Bonner Database of Magical Gems, G 131 (EA 56131).



FIGURE 7

Athanasius Kircher, *Kircher's Museum at the Collegio Romano/Frontispiece*, from *Romani Collegii Musaeum Celebrerrimum* (1678). Engraving. Athanasius Kircher at Stanford, Special Collections and University Archives at Stanford University Libraries. https://web.stanford.edu/group/kircher/cgi-bin/site/?page_id=517.

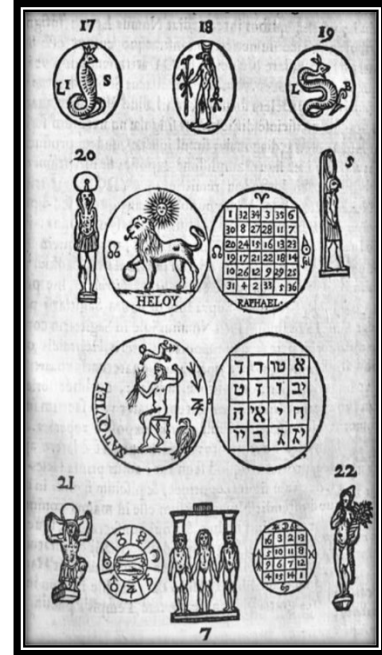


FIGURE 8

Athanasius Kircher, "Gnostic" amulets, from *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1652-54). Engraving. Stanford University Libraries, originally from Stolzenberg's book *The Egyptian Oedipus*.



FIGURE 9.1

Athanasius Kircher, *Frontispiece*, from *Iter exstaticum* (1666). Engraving. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University, RMC2007_1092.



FIGURE 9.2
Detail of Figure 9.1



FIGURE 10

Giovanni di Stefano, *Hermes Trismegistus*, 1488, floor mosaic, Siena Cathedral.

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μῆνις (*Wrath*)

BY J.R. HERMAN

μῆνις (Wrath) is a digital photograph of Seward Johnson's sculpture of King Lear that I transformed from its original cupronickel sculpture into a monochrome depiction emphasizing chaos and imperfection. The title refers to the ancient Greek concept of divine wrath, as in Homer's *Iliad*, and serves to link the piece to Achilles's wrath. This reimagining of King Lear through Achilles reflects on the timeless nature of divine wrath and the reinterpretation of classical themes.



JR Herman '24 is a Monroe Scholar at the College of William & Mary double-majoring in Classical Studies and Ancient Near East & Africa Studies. Much of her research is focused on religion and identity in the ancient world, especially Greece, Rome, Egypt, Israel, and Nubia. However, she is also keenly interested in how the ancient past has been invoked in the modern world, especially in the role of antiquity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American politics. Some of her recent research has examined the powers and limitations of speech in the Egyptian Book of the Heavenly Cow, the Ancient Near Eastern annihilation or salvation genre, the goddess Isis' Nubian identity and Nubian Isiac identity, the role of sacred history in anti-monarchical politics in Revolutionary America, and Egyptology's role in American slavery discourse. Following graduation, JR will be attending law school in the hopes of pursuing a career in cultural heritage law.



GOLGOTHA & THE GUILLOTINE

PHILOSOPHERS, JANSENISTS, AND THE SOCIETY OF JESUS IN THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION

by Ethan Good
William & Mary

ABSTRACT

Before the secularization accompanying the French Revolution, a sizable group of French Catholics initiated efforts to deliberately weaken the influence of their own religion within the state. Following the teachings of Cornelius Jansen, these people took up key positions in the pre-revolutionary government and aided in the creation and ratification of anti-Catholic laws. Going so far as to directly expel and end the Jesuit order in France, Jansenists thought the best way to protect, preserve, and promote their interpretation of Catholic doctrine was to embolden the state against organized religion and later depose King Louis XVI. The actions taken by notable Jansenists like Robert de Saint-Vincent and Henri Grégoire gave all of the political weapons needed by Revolutionaries to embark on a secularizing campaign against all Christian expression in France. Ultimately it was the political conditions that Jansenists created that would allow the Revolutionary government to censor, suppress, murder, and eradicate Jansenism. One of the most peculiar historical tragedies, the Jansenist movement exposes the evolution of the delicate relationship between Church and State.

Ethan Good is a Government and History double major, eagerly finishing out his Senior year at William and Mary. Striving to integrate his studies and personal academic interests, he has sought to research the intersection and mutual influence between Church and State throughout history. Focusing primarily on the Christian Church, he has written on topics such as denominational influence on polarization within the U.S. Congress, effects of ecumenical dialogues on Anglo-Greek diplomatic relations during the interwar period, and denominational conflict within federal Indian boarding school policy. After graduation he is considering attending Seminary in order to serve the Church's mission through integrated work with public and governmental sectors.

During the French Revolution and its accompanying social upheaval, the piety of the French nation remained a powerful factor in the minds of the people. Although much of the French population throughout the revolution practiced some form of Christianity, philosophers leading the movement systematically attempted to dechristianize the nation. Despite the potential for strong Christian opposition, the revolutionaries made significant secular gains supported by their own religious systems. What made this possible was not the popular message of the revolutionaries or even their campaign of terror and subversion, but instead it was the inroads made by a preceding Catholic movement: Jansenism. Arising from the theological understanding of Dutch Bishop Cornelius Jansen, this movement entrenched itself in French society and persisted as a dominant political and religious force until the end of the Revolution. Responding to, or challenging Catholic and French authorities since its inception, the movement established long standing traditions for future oppositional groups. When the revolutionary factions overtook and dominated French society, it was the legacy of the Jansenist movement that allowed the rapid progress of the revolution. Without Jansenism's erosion of traditional French authority, the Revolution would have failed to topple the Ancien Régime.

FROM AUGUSTINE TO CLEMENT IX

Despite Jansenism only solidifying as a distinct movement in the mid-seventeenth century, its followers claimed their ideology stemmed from the rich traditions of the Council of Trent and the theology of the Church Father St. Augustine of Hippo. Surrounding the question of the efficacy of good works and the necessity of faith for salvation, Jansenist theologians held that Catholicism overshot true orthodoxy and strayed towards heresy in its attempt to rebuke Lutheran and Calvinist teachings on the necessity of good works and predestination. Martin Luther and John Calvin proposed the Catholic Church misled followers by insisting on the necessity of participating in the seven Catholic sacraments and practicing good works in order to

secure salvation. While ultimately disagreeing with Luther and Calvin's positions and remaining committed to a majority of the Catholic canon, Jansenists argued that the theologians gathered at the Council of Trent between 1545 and 1563 committed heresy in condemning total depravity and altering Catholicism's stance on free will to appeal to adherents and potential converts.¹ Cornelius Jansen, the movement's namesake, specifically criticized the extreme emphasis on free will to attract converts as he believed that it was harmful and misleading to assume anyone could receive grace and salvation from God simply by practicing good works alone.²

Following the Council of Trent, Catholicism reaffirmed the ultimate supremacy of the Pope over political leaders while issuing a complete rebuttal of predestination and the priority of proper faith over good works.³ Additionally, the Catholic Church was able to retain much of its authority while expanding papal influence into secular and political affairs. Catholics such as Jansen and Michel de Baye accused the Church of incorrectly interpreting foundational theology and therefore misleading the Church into heresy. As a representative to the Council of Trent on behalf of the University of Louvain, Michel de Baye dove into St. Augustine's theology in an attempt to protect the true Catholic interpretation of grace and good works. Baye found that Augustine, in his crusade against the Pelagian heresy, denounced the ability of humans to do good works without the prior efficacious grace from God.⁴ Pelagianism conversely argued that good works in and of themselves were sufficient for salvation. Baye's interpretation of Augustinian theology essentially affirmed Luther's accusations that the Catholic Church was incorrectly asserting that humans, through good works, control their own salvation. Responding to the growing influence of theologians from the University of Louvain and the backlash led by the Society of Jesus, Pope Paul V attempted to silence the debate by banning the publication of new works regarding grace altogether. Although the debate on grace was forbidden, the presence of French Gallicanism that allowed the King the authority to appoint French clergy as well as outright resistance in the Netherlands rendered the Pope's orders inconsequential. Thus, the legacy of

¹ William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to the Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 7.

² Doyle, *Jansenism*, 6.

³ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 7–8.

⁴ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 11.

the Council of Trent was not the moment of triumph that the Church or the pontificate had hoped for.

Jansenism's formal genesis occurred only after Cornelius Jansen and Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, abbot of Saint-Cyran, reconciled the movement's theology with normative political aims. Hauranne advocated against the actions of Cardinal Richelieu and the nation's broader foreign policy, arguing that it "sacrificed the interests of the Catholic reconquest of Europe to those of the Bourbon dynasty."⁵ On the other hand, Jansen focused his efforts on further propagating and deciphering Augustinian theology. Published posthumously, Jansen's *Augustinus*, a three-volume treatise on St. Augustine's theology, outlined a list of propositions that provided the movement a formal definition distinct from the Catholic Church's teaching.⁶

However rebellious *Augustinus* was, Jansen and his followers viewed their struggle as firmly within the Catholic Church. Contrasting with earlier Protestant reformers, Jansenism envisioned a moment of renewal and correction to abused elements of Catholic doctrine without separation from Rome or the Pope. Through his formal repudiation of Catholic development, Jansen sought to combat "heretical" organizations like the Society of Jesus before they further corrupted official Catholic doctrine. Although gaining formal footing with the publishing of *Augustinus*, the Jansenist movement was immediately faced with a crisis in leadership. Although Cornelius Jansen had composed impressive volumes defending his positions, his death in 1638 compromised the ability of the movement to overcome Jesuit, Papal, and secular French pressure. Despite Hauranne surviving Jansen, he was jailed in 1638, which thereby further intensified the power vacuum within the movement. Adding to the Jansenist crisis, Pope Innocent X capitalized on French political turmoil by issuing the papal bull *Cum Occasione* in 1653.⁷ By unconditionally labeling Jansenist propositions as heresy, the official position of the Catholic Church was firmly against the Jansenist movement's understanding of true Catholicism. However, during the instability of the Fronde, Jansenists were able to

revive their movement in French society while also managing to grow under outright Papal condemnation. The movement secured its greatest foothold when the Jansenist sympathizer Antoine de Noailles was appointed the Archbishop of Paris despite the French monarchy's all-out assault on educational hubs of Jansenism such as the Abbey of Port-Royal.

In order to finally eliminate Jansenism, King Louis XIV petitioned Pope Clement XI to issue a final, conclusive bull that was free from the loopholes of *Cum Occasione*. Issued in 1713, the bull *Unigenitus* decreed Jansenism as "false," "blasphemous," and "heretical," while also unequivocally condemning the entirety of the movement.⁸ Honoring Louis XIV's request, Pope Clement XI made the most threatening move against the Gallican tradition of the French Church, reinserting the Pope into the appointment of French clergy. Although requested by the King, many Frenchmen saw the bull and its language as an encroachment of Catholic power over the traditional Gallican authority of the King.⁹ Led by Archbishop Noailles, Jansenism grew as a natural counter to the assertion of Catholic authority in French civil and religious life. The movement grew from its theological origins to become a catch-all political faction, uniting people in their resistance to French and Catholic authority altogether. It was the papal and monarchical condemnation of Jansenism that provided the revolutionary grounds for Jansenism to oppose traditional authorities altogether.

JESUIT DEFEAT AND JANSENIST DEPRAVITY

The Society of Jesus was the longstanding archenemy of the Jansenist movement. From their inception and influence at the Council of Trent to Louis XIV's confessor Michel Le Tellier, the Jesuits focused on expanding papal authority while ferociously upholding Catholic orthodoxy. Regardless of how institutionalized the Jesuits appeared, there were global developments that afforded Jansenists the opportunity to dismantle the

⁵ Dale Van Kley, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France 1757–1765* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 11.

⁶ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 21.

⁷ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 26.

⁸ Clement XI, "Unigenitus: Condemnation of the Errors of Paschasius" (Rome, 1713), <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/clem11/c11unige.htm>.

⁹ Adam Hunt, "Suppressing the Arbitrary: Political Jansenism in the French Revolution and the Abolition of *Lettres de Cachet*, 1780–1790," *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 45 (2017): 15–6, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.0642292.0045.002>.

organization within France. Beginning in the 1750s, Jesuits faced scrutiny by the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies. Jesuit missionaries in Spain and Portugal's colonies were accused of creating independent "protectorates" of Native Indians intended to resist colonial expansion and secular subjugation. Responding to the Jesuits' subversive activities, the King of Portugal expelled the Society from all Portuguese land. Utilizing the precedent set by Spain and Portugal, French Jansenists capitalized on the failures of the Jesuit mission to the island of Martinique by launching a similar assault on the Society. The Jesuit mission to Martinique was intended to be a standard endeavor by the Society to establish Christianity among the native population and promote Christian education. In Martinique, however, the Jesuits were discovered to be commercially benefiting from the mission. Further contributing to the Jesuits' precarious position, Superior Antoine de la Valetta's accounts fell into bankruptcy upon the subversive activity's discovery.¹⁰ Although seemingly a minor disturbance in comparison to the Jesuits' long-standing reputation and history, Jansenist attorneys and politicians including Robert de Saint-Vincent, Louis-Adrien Le Paige, and Lalourcé inflamed the issue by questioning the entire purpose of the Society.¹¹

In desperation, the Society of Jesus petitioned the Parlement of Paris to hear the case, hoping to receive friendly treatment from long-standing Jesuit influence on the body. Unbeknownst to the Jesuits, the institution was firmly under the guidance of Jansenist thought due to the efforts of politicians including Henri Philippe de Chauvelin.¹² Jansenists serving in the Parliament quickly pounced on the long history of Jesuit abuses of theology and influence over the political authority of the King. During the investigation into the original constitution that granted the right of the Society of Jesus to operate within France, Chauvelin discovered that the Society of Jesus "never had any legal existence in France."¹³ Reluctantly bowing to the

increasing authority of the Parlement of Paris, King Louis XV signed an edict formally expelling the Jesuits. In a reversal of historical precedence, it was now the Jansenist Parlement that decreed Jesuit thought be "torn and burnt in the palace-yard [...] as seditious, destructive of every principle of Christian morality, teaching a murderous and abominable doctrine."¹⁴

The Jansenist movement had achieved its lifelong goal: complete dominance in France as the leading religious authority. Combined with the newspaper *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, the movement maintained its fervor by openly criticizing broader Catholic abuses.¹⁵ While it appeared the Jansenists were finally in control of their destiny, the Enlightenment and French philosophers were determined to usurp the Jansenist successes for their own revolutionary means.

The Jansenist movement and the enlightened revolutionaries found common ground in the quest to dismantle French political authority. On all other tenets, however, the two movements were deeply opposed. The Jansenists ultimately concerned themselves with the preservation of Christianity, while the enlightened crusaded for reason and justice above irrational faith. Influential thinkers began to attack the Jansenist victory over Jesuits. Jean le Rond d'Alembert, for instance, an editor of the *Encyclopédie*, went so far as to claim the Jesuits' banishment as a triumph of Enlightenment rather than of Jansenism. In d'Alembert's *An Account of the Destruction of the Jesuits in France*, he writes from the perspective of an "average" Frenchman "who wishes that men would live in peace, and that so much hatred, excited by whims, so many profound acts of knavery, occasioned by senseless disputes, so many evils, in short, brought about by so many follies, should teach them at last to be wise."¹⁶ d'Alembert even went so far as to usurp total responsibility for the achievement, stating that "it was properly Philosophy which by the mouths of the magistrates issued the decree against the Jesuits."¹⁷

¹⁰ Van Kley, *The Jansenists*, 92.

¹¹ Van Kley, *The Jansenists*, 92-3; J.M Rogister, "Louis-Adrien Lepaige and the Attack on De l'esprit and the Encyclopédie in 1759," *The English Historical Review* 92, no. 364 (July 1977): 524-37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/566073>.

¹² Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Chauvelin Family" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chauvelin-family>.

¹³ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 72.

¹⁴ *The Authentic Proceedings of the French King and His Parliament Against the Jesuits of France* (London, 1761)

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/U0101136541/MOME?u=viva_wm&sid=bookmark-MOME&xid=1d69fa49&pg=1.

¹⁵ Monique Cottret, "1789-1791: Triomphe ou échec de la minorité janséniste?" *Rives nord-méditerranéennes* 14 (2003): 51, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rives.409>.

¹⁶ Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *An Account of the Destruction of the Jesuits in France* (London, 1766),

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/59729/59729-h/59729-h.htm>.

¹⁷ Van Kley, *The Jansenists*, 215.

Once again finding themselves on the receiving end of persecution, Jansenists resorted to using their remaining political influence through actors like Robert de Saint-Vincent to defend Jansenism through any means necessary.¹⁸ Ultimately, the Jansenists' ill-advised adoption of revolutionary ideals led to its demise. Revolutionaries gladly endorsed the innovations propagated by Jansenists, utilizing their gains to propel the revolution forward.

ENLIGHTENMENT AND DECHRISTIANIZATION

Enlightenment scholars during the Jesuit expulsion in the 1760s would balk at the prospect of a Christian movement furthering the deconstruction of traditional authority within the Ancien Régime. From the 1760s to the early 1790s, however, Enlightenment thought and Jansenist aims were perceived to be in lockstep. Remembering previously how they were forced to submit to Catholic authority through the papally-approved 1665 Formulary, the Jansenists allied themselves with thinkers like Diderot, who stated that "submission to the general will is the basis of all societies...the laws should be made for everyone, and not for one person."¹⁹ As hostile political authority encroached on the Jansenist movement, universal religious tolerance naturally became the preferred solution to protect the open practice of Jansenism in France. The realization that Jansenism shared important theological distinctions with Protestants led Robert de Saint-Vincent and Henri Grégoire to advocate for the implementation of universal religious toleration towards Protestants and the emancipation of French Jews.²⁰ However, the parlements provided only a fleeting refuge for the Jansenists. Due to the efforts of Archbishop Christophe de Beaumont and René Nicolas de Maupeou, the parlements were being increasingly transformed into rubber stamp courts for the sake of the Enlightenment, and as such they began to suppress religion in favor of reason, justice, and revolution. Jansenism's loss of control over the

parlements resulted in the movement losing its biggest defenders. As the formal branches of French government became hostile to each other, most notably between the King and the parlements, Jansenists turned towards a broader republicanism, justifying their position's legitimacy in ecumenical tradition.

The Jansenists unwittingly made a fatal mistake in 1790 by endorsing and voting in favor of the passage of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. During this period of time, the parlements had fallen into obscurity and were replaced by the increasingly revolutionary National Assembly. With the intention of diminishing clerical abuses and demolishing remaining Catholic authority, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy submitted French clergymen to new control under the French state. Point twenty-one of the constitution states, "Before the ceremony of consecration begins, the bishop-elect shall take a solemn oath ... to be faithful to the nation, to the law, and to the King, and to maintain with all his power the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King."²¹ The Jansenists hoped this language would permanently solidify their protection by employing the weight of the French monarchy and state against the Catholic Pope. What they failed to account for was the end of the French monarchy in just a year's time.

By the time the Jansenists secured outright institutional protection from the French state, all of the previous mechanisms for stability, including parlements, had fallen into obscurity as the fervor of the revolution led to the establishment of new legislatures. Decades of influence, which the Jansenists greatly relied on, and the remaining Gallican traditions were lost when the monarchy was formally abolished. What evolved from the Revolution was a systematic effort to dechristianize French society and therefore remove all Jansenism with it. As historians Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin state, "There is however no doubt about the success of the dechristianizers' attack upon the constitutional church: the state had created it, and the state could destroy it."²²

¹⁸ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 79.

¹⁹ Denis Diderot, "Natural Law," in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford, 1996), 35.

²⁰ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 80.

²¹ "The Civil Constitution of the Clergy," in *Readings in Western Civilization: The Old Regime and the Revolution*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 239.

²² Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin, eds. *Religion, Society and Politics in France since 1789* (London: Hambledon Press, 2009), 10, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cwm/reader.action?docID=743195>.

Skeptical of the authority of Christianity, Voltaire too fought against “the sacred mysteries upon which monarchs and the Old Regime aristocratic society based their authority.”²³ To this extent, the masses of revolutionaries began to actively dismantle the religion that the state swore to protect in 1790. Masses of “dechristianizers” began to attack churches:

“[T]o halt the administration of the sacraments by depriving the church of its consecrated vessels, the dechristianizers throughout France confiscated large quantities of metal plate, chalices... as well as stripp[ed] churches of their altar rails, statues, books... and seiz[ed] church bells, crosses, crucifixes, and ‘external signs of worship.’”²⁴

In the Revolution’s crusade for universal justice, dechristianizers attempted to erase mysticism and broader Christian miracles, as they did at Besançon in the Spring of 1794 “when members of the local *société* not only seized the ‘Holy Shroud’ (a local relic which had been exhibited annually to the faithful) but also proved conclusively that it was fraudulent.”²⁵

Regardless of the official position of French thinkers and revolutionaries like Voltaire, many realized the utility of religion in exerting control over the masses. Since the state obtained ultimate religious authority through the Civil Constitution of 1790, revolutionaries began calling for the establishment of a new religion in service of extreme values and the new French Republic, independent of traditional Christian and Catholic authority. Maximilien Robespierre, one of the revolution’s most influential characters, believed that regardless of the Church’s legacy, the power of religion to influence its followers was too great of a tool to ignore. Robespierre sought to create a new religion to uphold Enlightenment ideals as piously as Jansenists sought to affirm St. Augustine’s teachings. Voicing his resolve, Robespierre defended his new worship of the Supreme Being by saying that “the defenders of liberty can give themselves up to Thee, and rest with confidence upon Thy paternal bosom. Being of Being, we need not offer to Thee unjust

prayers. Thou knowest Thy creatures, proceeding from Thy hands... Hatred of bad faith and tyranny burns in our hearts, with love of justice and the fatherland. Our blood flows for the cause of humanity. Behold our prayer. Behold our sacrifices. Behold the worship we offer to Thee.”²⁶ To this extent, the revolution and the National Assembly sought to completely eradicate the state’s Christianity in favor of the Cult of the Supreme Being. French religious tradition had evolved from Catholicism, which Jansenists helped to erode, into the deistic Cult of the Supreme Being. Central to being a proper Frenchman was the respectful observance of the new god outlined by the National Convention in 1794 and the observance of the important duties which included the “detestation of bad faith and tyranny, punishment of tyrants and traitors, succoring of unfortunates, respect of weak persons, defence of the oppressed” as well as “doing to others all the good that one can, and being just towards everyone.”²⁷

Propelled by the Reign of Terror, the State’s responsibility to protect Jansenism and Christianity radically shifted towards systematic persecution. Citizens accused of practicing Christianity or resisting the adoption of the Supreme Being were frequently condemned by the revolution. The Jansenist movement, which was credited with overthrowing Catholic authority and securing religious toleration, was now responsible for its own death.

THE END OF JANSENISM

Jansenism as a religious movement had been extinguished by the beginning of the Revolution. The efficiency of the Formulary and the Submission of Cardinal Noailles to the Pope led Jansenist theologians to recant many of their “heretical” propositions and thus reunify with Tridentine Catholic teaching. Jansenists who resisted did so quietly and eventually succumbed to larger clerical controversies that included lay participation. The movement that remained and caused the expulsion of the Jesuits was a form of political Jansenism more

²³ J.B. Shank, “Voltaire,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 1997–, article published August 31, 2009; last modified May 29, 2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/voltaire/>.

²⁴ Tallett and Atkin, *Religion, Society and Politics*, 6.

²⁵ Tallett and Atkin, *Religion, Society, and Politics*, 7.

²⁶ Maximilian Robespierre, “The Festival of the Supreme Being,” in *Readings in Western Civilization: The Old Regime and the Revolution*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 384.

²⁷ Decree Establishing the Worship of the Supreme Being,” in *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution*, ed. John Hall Stewart (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 526–8.

concerned with fighting against improper authority than establishing a proper church. Even so, they continued to differ from the revolutionaries in that they retained their Christian motivations rather than adopted those of the secular revolution.

Restricted by political influences, the end of Jansenism occurred after a series of failed legal maneuvers designed to defend the movement. Capitalizing on papal instability, legal Jansenists sought to create an independent church to rival the influence of Catholicism on Christianity. Pope Pius VI responded by issuing the bull *Auctorem Fidei*, wherein he condemned the attempt to develop a new church.²⁸ Jansenists failed to predict the impact of the Pope's influence on French Christians and the efficacy of the bull's message of unity, since they had seen so many years of organized persecution from the revolutionary state. All but a distant memory, Jansenism's formal defeat occurred when Napoleon Bonaparte negotiated the return of the Catholic Church as the official state religion and Pope Pius VII reestablished the Society of Jesus in 1814.²⁹

Currently, historical scholarship into the end of the Jansenist movement offers contrasting timelines. Scholars such as James Collins argue that the whole movement was concluded after the Enlightenment's rise in the 1760s.³⁰ Others, including Dale Van Kley, argue that Jansenism reframed itself as an enlightened political phenomenon where figures such as Henri Grégoire represented a faction within the movement rather than a distinct entity. This position not only alters the date of Jansenism's downfall but also fails to account for the legacy of Jansenist thought on Enlightenment thought and the revolutionary movement. To this effect, most scholarly interpretations agree with historians like Adam Hunt, who believes that Jansenism's disappearance in the 1760s can be explained by its transformation into a purely political movement.³¹

JANSENISM'S LEGACY ON THE REVOLUTION

Jansenism's failure was ultimately caused by one of the movement's inherent values: hostility to traditional authority. By consistently resisting the powers of the government and society, the Jansenists unknowingly participated in laying the groundwork

for their dissolution. Once overtaken by the Enlightenment and the Revolution, Jansenism's political accomplishments were repurposed from a religious movement into a revolutionary tool for the dissolution of the Ancien Régime.

The history of Jansenism is complex, as we have seen. Attempting to correct perceived theological injustices, the founding Jansenists openly challenged Catholic doctrine. Responding to outright condemnation from the Church through bulls such as *Unigenitus*, the Jesuits found refuge within the legislatures of France. When the monarchy began to attack the movement, Jansenists adapted by seeking change through republican means. They then legally maneuvered to banish the longstanding Society of Jesus and increase the French state's control of the Church, wherein they secured a formidable foothold within French society. When Louis XVI became a threat, Jansenism began to adopt revolutionary aims that ultimately deposed the monarchy, supported republican assemblies, and completely separated the French church from Rome. As a result, when the revolutionaries turned against the movement there were no longer any organized groups willing to protect Jansenism. Though they became hostile to Jansenism, the revolutionaries capitalized on the legacy of the Jansenists' campaign against the institutionalization of the Church in order to dechristianize the whole of French society. To this effect, the Jansenist movement is unjustly overlooked in considering the specific origins of the French Revolution.

²⁸ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 86.

²⁹ Doyle, *Jansenism*, 86.

³⁰ James Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 216-56.

³¹ Hunt, "Suppressing the Arbitrary," 12-4.

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ESCHATOS

BY ETHAN SAH

The sacrilege, the altar falls
The heresy, the priests appalled
This stygian sepulcher doth call
To errant men and true alike
Awakening a lust for night
Nocturnal sin, in darkness hid
And banishing that holy light
Embracing all that it forbids

Witness now the fall of man
The failure of his best-laid plans
Destruction, wrought by idle hands
That hope's redoubt no more might stand

Divine appeals, no longer heard
Nor penance paid, though ancient words
Had long foretold the end of days
While we refused to lift our gaze

Tomorrow comes, all dark and grim
Death-cantors drone demonic hymns
Of every blessing founts run dry
Tomorrow is mankind's demise

Ethan is a sophomore at William & Mary studying International Relations. His primary interests are postcolonial development, soft power projection, and the legacies of empire. He is especially concerned with the influence of historical memory on national consciousness and foreign policy. After graduating he intends to pursue a career in diplomacy.



HOPE FROM THE ASHES

HOW THE BLACK DEATH BENEFITED SERFS AND THE WORKING CLASS IN BRITAIN

by Adam Farris
William & Mary

ABSTRACT

The Black Death exterminated between thirty and fifty percent of Europe's population following its inception in 1348, and Britain was by no means immune to its devastating effects on the population and the fabric of society. By using simple economic analysis of supply and demand in fourteenth-century Britain and classical economic theory, the decrease in quantity of workers explains the increase in the price for labor that resulted in higher wages for paid workers and increased demand for unpaid workers. While the British political and upper class experienced immense shortage of luxury and surplus due to the shock in labor force size, the serfs and working class of Britain gained bargaining power and newfound mobility as they advocated for positive change. The epidemic also elicited shifts in gender and family dynamics, fostering entrepreneurship among young workers and enabling the entry of women into the labor force. This period became what Christopher Dyer describes as a time of "liberation" for the working class as they gained unprecedented economic and social leverage against the British political and upper class. This essay explores both the struggle of power between the lawmakers and the working class, focusing specifically on laws passed with the intention to subdue the workers and maintain the exclusivity of the wealthy, as well as the changing social and family dynamics that removed financial security for younger workers. The convergence of these factors led to political action and even revolt, forever changing the interaction between the government and the governed in Britain.

Adam Farris is a graduating senior at William & Mary with a major in economics and minor in finance. His research interests include broad trends in labor economics and how we can understand today's economies and societies by studying economic models and policies of the past. Currently, he is conducting research on the effects of the Russian oil export shock on Germany's economy in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and how this shock contributes to conversations and data surrounding relative energy independence and protectionism. Apart from economics, Adam enjoys studying Christian church history and reading Christian literature, particularly Lewis and Bonhoeffer. Following graduation, Adam will work as a business consultant in the Washington D.C. area.

The conclusion of the Black Death in Britain triggered a breakdown and rebuilding of British society. With much of the impoverished labor force dead, the remaining workers carried the burden of propping up the economy. The wealthy class faced an increased cost of living accompanied by a lower income, a circumstance that severely weakened their power over the serf class. Family structures shifted significantly, with women entering the labor force in greater numbers and occupying positions previously reserved for men. Heirs lost the reliability of their inheritance and sought out different income opportunities than their fathers. The Black Death forced societal change through economic diversification as women and sons took on new roles. Christopher Dyer writes that the Black Death “was a time of liberation, when old restraints were removed and new freedom of choice opened,” then describes how it seems as if serfdom in Scotland faded away and workers gained greater bargaining power and more agency when deciding where to work.¹ In the time immediately following, the Black Death removed the restraints of the working-class people in Britain in terms of their economic status, mobility, and social standing.

Members of the working class, regardless of status within the class, generally benefitted during the time following the Black Death. The working class was divided into two groups – the serfs and the wage earners – and each benefited in different ways. Serfs obtained greater mobility, slightly higher wages, and freedom to choose where they wanted to work with relatively little resistance from employers. Although there is little information regarding wage differences for serfs between employers, they exercised more freedom of choice in who they wanted to work for.² The men who were wage earners *did* obtain higher wages, more freedom of choice in occupation, and likely an improvement in working conditions. They also exercised more bargaining power with their employers by negotiating contracts that would keep them bound to their employer for less time and simultaneously increased their pay.³ Both of these groups benefitted

in a post-Black Death Britain for three primary reasons: increased freedom of mobility, more occupational options, and higher overall wages.

In addition to men, the post-Black Death era in Britain also facilitated improvements for women in the working class. More specifically, the increase in bargaining power and slight wage increase generated the improvements for men, and the breakdown of the pre-epidemic social order allowed women to enter the labor force and replace working men who had perished in the Black Death. Women were able to earn wages and move independently from men which introduced freedom that women had not yet experienced in medieval British society. While men and women experienced their newfound increase in financial and societal freedom in different ways, the similarities of increased mobility and value to employers sowed the seeds of improvement for the working class as a whole.

Members of Parliament, worried about losing their authority over the lower classes, passed legislation aimed at stifling the increasing freedoms experienced by the members of the working class to maintain their power. Specifically, they decided to implement a wage cap on workers’ pay, decreased their ability to move around in search of higher-paying positions, and enforced labor contracts that favored the employer rather than the laborer.⁴ Parliament also ratified two major pieces of legislation with the goal of restoring and preserving pre-plague economic conditions. The Ordinance of Labourers of 1349, passed by King Edward III of England, required that “[t]he old wages, and no more, shall be given to servants,” and that “if any artificer or workman take more wages than were wont to be paid, he shall be committed to the *gaol*.”⁵ Both the working class and the government understood that this new economic environment was a shock to British society, and that workers could exploit the unstable conditions to advocate for higher wages and more privileges for themselves. In addition to the Ordinance of 1349, Parliament passed the Statute of Cambridge of 1388, which deported migrant workers back to their home villages.⁶ The government and employers used this new power to

¹ Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850–1520* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 278.

² Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages*, 278.

³ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages*, 278–279.

⁴ Chris Given-Wilson, “The Problem of Labour in the Context of English Government, c. 1350–1450,” in *The Problem of Labour in*

Fourteenth-Century England, eds. James Bothwell, P.J.P. Goldberg, and W.M. Ormrod (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), 85–86.

⁵ *Gaol* here is a medieval variation of the word “jail.” Parliament of England, *The Ordinance of Labourers of 1349* (London, 1349).

⁶ Given-Wilson, “The Problem of Labour,” 88–90.

restrict the freedoms of the working-class and further subdue them, further increasing tensions and inequality between the classes. Members of the upper class believed their actions were justified because, to them, the workers had become “selfish and greedy... demanding extremely high wages and extra-vagrant fringe benefits.”⁷

In Wales, there are no records indicating that land prices stagnated or decreased, despite the widespread death. With a decrease in the number of landowners, evidence may indicate that land prices would fall, allowing working-class members to become landowners. Some working-class people were able to obtain land, but it was more common that Welsh manor owners were buying unused land at increased prices, further expanding their portfolios.⁸ Therefore, it seems that the time immediately following the Black Death led to devastating effects on the working-class through legislation that stifled their pay, placed foreign workers at risk of deportation, and limited freedoms of workers. However, despite the new legislation and maintenance of high prices for land, the working class began to experience different kinds of freedom.

Even though Parliament enacted laws intended to further subdue the working class, the working class still gained mobility in a number of ways. “Mobility” here does not simply refer to the improved ability for workers to freely move around the country in search of work, although that is part of the definition; “mobility” also accounts for working-class people who gained the ability to make decisions for themselves without the restrictions of the binding and limiting employer contracts of pre-plague society.⁹ The importance of this new mobility must not be understated as it is direct evidence of the advent of a capitalist society in Britain. In a capitalist society, private entities control the economy and industries, and the will of the economy dictates the power of the government. The Black Death forced British society to transition to a more capitalist model by shifting power from the government to the

working class. The economic upheaval of the plague was so great that the government’s laws were relatively ineffective in the long run and workers protested more frequently, culminating in a landmark revolt nearly forty years after the beginning of the Black Death.

The total breakdown of the British economy and the proceeding chaos among members of all socioeconomic status provided members of the working class newfound bargaining power. In the thirty years prior to the Black Death, the British landowners exhibited higher demand for workers compared to the period before the Great Famine of 1315-1317.¹⁰ Upon the onset of the Black Death in England in 1348, landowners across the country were unable to harvest their crops in the autumn because a large share of the workers were dead, and the landowners made less profit due to the fall in revenue from unharvested crops. The decrease in output resulted in increasing prices for farm yields due to basic economic theory of supply and demand, where the price of a good rises as the supply falls and demand for the good remains unchanged. Decrease in the supply of workers caused an increase in the perceived value of each worker to the landowners and the market. The increase in perceived value of each worker led to a short-term increase in the wages per worker before the return to normal, pre-plague levels in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

This economic phenomenon in which population decline generated new economic conditions echoes the work of the English economist and cleric Thomas Robert Malthus FRS, who wrote multiple editions of his 1798 essay entitled “The Principle of Population.” His method, “Malthusianism,” argues that when the demand for a good is high and the supply is low, the price for the good is high and the real wages for landowners and workers in the economy are low.¹¹ The real wages fall in this case because, despite any nominal increase in wages, the increased price of the good means that workers will have to spend more of their wages to purchase the

⁷ John Hatcher, “England in the Aftermath of the Black Death,” *Past and Present* 144 (August 1994): 14.

⁸ William Rees, “The Black Death in Wales,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 3 (1920): 129.

⁹ Jim Bolton, “‘The World Upside Down’: Plague as an Agent of Economic and Social Change,” in *The Black Death in England*, eds. W.M. Ormrod and P.G. Lindley (Stamford: Watkins, 1996), 50–53.

¹⁰ John H. Munro, “Before and After the Black Death: Money, Prices and Wages in Fourteenth-century England,” in *New Approaches to the History of Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Troels

Dahlerup and Per Ingesman (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy, 2009), 335–7.

¹¹ Malthus’s method is helpful for understanding of a Black Death-era economy because both Malthus and the Black Death existed in pre-industrial economies. Many economic models today weigh the rate of technology change heavily compared to increases in population or other variables, which is helpful for understanding today’s industrialized economy but does not provide sufficient support for the economic phenomena in the pre-industrial, post-Black Death economy of Britain.

good.¹² Malthus argues that when the demand for goods relative to the supply in an economy is high, the economy will grow, employment will rise, and the wealth in the economy is more widely dispersed among workers and landowners.¹³ Malthus developed his model in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so the model does not fully account for each factor in the post-Black Death economy in Britain, but it provides a framework for understanding the correlation between population level, prices, and working-class welfare. In the wake of the Black Death, the population decline in the working class and the subsequent increase in value-per-worker (assuming the amount of work to be constant) therefore raised the “price,” or wage and relative value to the landowner and economy of each worker. The workers realized their increased value and leveraged this to bargain for higher wages and better working conditions.

The shifted function of the family unit in fourteenth-century British society serves as more evidence of the societal and economic changes to the working class.¹⁴ In the pre-plague British society, the wealth of a family, even if it was relatively low, was the financial launchpad for the heir to sustain himself. Typically, the son waited until his father died then received his inheritance, without which the son would be unable to sustain himself. The plague severely limited the ability for fathers to save enough money to generate a sufficient inheritance which forced heirs to search outside the family for means of survival. This shift caused children to move out of their parents’ homes earlier than before in order to search for wealth. These heirs, however, were also able to purchase land with greater ease since the supply of land was higher, which drove down the price. As children began to learn how to survive without the assistance of their family, the newest generation ushered in an era of creativity and enterprise. This generation of working-class people developed new strategies to generate profit and maintain self-sufficiency. The system in place to protect the next generation founded on the launchpad of inheritance was failing. The function of the family fundamentally changed after the Black Death, ultimately transforming Britain into a society that

rewarded individualism.¹⁵ Although Parliament tried to cap the wages of working-class people in Britain and legislative restrictions inhibited full freedom, the Black Death broke the chains of systematic poverty for the working class and the long-term economic freedoms they experienced allowed them to transform their economic system into one that provided unprecedented mobility.

For upper class landowners, the epidemic spelled danger to both their health and status. In post-epidemic British society, landowners faced both a decrease in workers, reducing their output, while wages for the remaining laborers were increasing. The negative sentiment from landowners that followed manifested in legislation such as the 1351 Statute of Labourers and Sumptuary Law of 1363.¹⁶ Many of these landowners attempted to exert more control over their serfs by increasing petty fines such as those for the licensed departure of serfs.¹⁷ Some landowners refused to allow departures of serfs outright or, if they did allow departures, levied extreme tolls. If a serf wanted to leave, he might be required to return once a year. Alternatively, female serfs might be prevented from marrying by withholding a license. Many tenants would transfer land frequently, especially during the 1370s, and often illegally, earning the ire of landowners who wanted land transfers to occur through the manor court so they could levy new fines and contracts on the new tenants.¹⁸ The post-epidemic years produced a bolder working class that understood their importance. Although they had less money and assets, they knew that workers like them were in short supply yet were ultimately necessary to maintain the wealth of the class above them. With the newfound realization of their importance, they revolted.

A variety of individual factors led to this revolt, such as the newly implemented poll tax, but the rebels shared the uniting sentiment of growing frustration with landowners. Workers of all socioeconomic status were frustrated with the government for passing restrictive legislation and with landowners for outwardly subverting the workers to whom they owed their financial success. This revolt in 1381 is most commonly known as the

¹² Thomas Malthus, “An Essay on the Principle of Population” (London: 1798).

¹³ Malthus, “Principle of Population.”

¹⁴ Bolton, “The World Upside Down,” 50–53.

¹⁵ Bolton, “The World Upside Down,” 51.

¹⁶ Christopher Dyer, “The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381,” in *The English Rising of 1381*, eds. R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 23.

¹⁷ Dyer, “Rural Revolt of 1381,” 24.

¹⁸ Dyer, “Rural Revolt of 1381,” 23–27.

“Peasants’ Revolt.” Historians have adjusted their understanding of this revolt throughout the centuries following the initial incident. Early recorders of the incident, primarily upper-class British and French historians, exhibited bias towards the government and criticized the peasants. The Augustinian canon, Henry Knighton, wrote about the revolt in his *Chronicles* and portrayed Wat Tyler, a leader among the rebels, as a “vile thing” who acted like a child. Specifically, Knighton wrote about the confrontation in London between Tyler and King Richard II, explaining that when Tyler made “demands” and the king paused to consider them, Tyler spoke “threateningly” to the king while members of the upper class worried that Tyler would kill him.¹⁹ In *Historia Anglicana*, English monk and author, Thomas Walsingham, writes that after Tyler died and the “commons” asked the king to grant them mercy for their crimes, the king “granted them charters of freedom and of pardon for their crimes and their consequences, and allowed them to depart.”²⁰ Historian Paul Strohm remarked that there are no surviving records from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries that are supportive of the cause of Wat Tyler and the rebels.²¹ Today’s historians, including Strohm, disagree with the name of the revolt containing peasants, as many of the people in the revolt were wage-earners and even upper class landowners who understood the plight of the working class.²² For nearly seven hundred years, historians have debated the cause, meaning, and implications of the revolt in 1381.

The results of the revolt can be characterized as a long-term success, although there were not many immediate, improving changes despite the elimination of the poll tax. The government relaxed restrictive laws on the working class, and landowners refrained from questioning the mobility of their workers. The more important implication, however, was that the working class proved to the nobility that they could effectively and cohesively organize themselves. Their stand warned the nobles of the great collective power of the workers for generations to come.

The improvements in the lives of working-class men, who gained the ability to lease land and negotiate their own contracts, were monumental. Working-class women also gained freedom, but these were distinct from the freedoms of men. The plague provided women with more opportunities in society even if they were still considered second-class to men. Due to the decrease in the male population after the conclusion of the plague, women had fewer opportunities to marry and bear children as there were fewer male prospects.²³ This hindrance to women’s ability to get married pushed single women into the workforce at unprecedented numbers.²⁴ While single women joined the workforce, the decrease in supply of labor caused industries to sacrifice the requirement for employees who were specialists. So, women could enter professions that may have otherwise been reserved for specialized men before the epidemic. The common debate surrounding whether women actually benefitted from the post-plague society (often called “The Golden Age of Women Debate”²⁵) is helpful to understand what freedoms women gained and whether these freedoms and benefits were tied to one another or can be thought of independent of each other. Based on the evidence regarding women’s social class in a post-plague world, evidence that women gained more direct financial benefits from direct employment than from marriage is minimal. However, based on evidence regarding mobility and wages, women experienced an increase in freedom as they attained a greater ability to choose their source of income and to move to towns and cities that suited their needs.²⁶

The aftermath of the Black Death left many people struggling with how to respond to the devastating population decline. Panicked landowners and government officials attempted to place restraints on the workers to maintain the social divide. However, workers understood their unique position and took advantage. They demanded higher wages, increased mobility, and improved contracts. The working class experienced economic and social freedom in a way that their predecessors never had

¹⁹ Henry Knighton, *Knighton’s Chronicle, 1337–1396*, ed. and trans. by G.H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 218–221.

²⁰ Thomas Walsingham, *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham, 1376–1422*, trans. David Preest (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2005), 150.

²¹ Paul Strohm, “A ‘Peasants’ Revolt’?” in *Misconceptions About the Middle Ages*, eds. Stephen J. Harris and Bryon Lee Grigsby (New York: Routledge, 2008), 197–203.

²² Strohm, “A ‘Peasants’ Revolt’?” 197–203.

²³ Katherine L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 7–10.

²⁴ S. H. Rigby, “Gendering the Black Death: Women in Later Medieval England,” *Gender and History* 12, 3 (2000): 746–747.

²⁵ French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, 9.

²⁶ French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, 7–10.

before, and this forever changed the landscape of British society.

British workers today continue to draw inspiration from their fourteenth-century ancestors, advocating for better working conditions and improved wages through strikes and collective action. For centuries, workers across industries and geographic areas have engaged in strikes and have reached unprecedented numbers over the past two years. The similarity between the workforce in post-Black Death Britain and today's Britain emphasizes the socioeconomic legacy of the Black Death on British workers and illustrates the continuity of a centuries-long fight for fair wages and economic security.

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A FEMALE BUST

BY JULIA FINKEN



This bust is a product of my time enrolled in Sculpture: Figure and the Body with Professor Jason Lowery during my sophomore spring semester at William & Mary. This was one of my first major endeavors in capturing the human form, and to reach the final product I spent more than twelve hours on this project, including both class and personal work periods. This piece started as an assignment to understand facial anatomy and structure, but it grew as we students were allowed to choose our works' final configuration. I decided to keep my skeletal study bare on one side and continue with musculature and expression on the other. I found it immensely jarring to walk around my piece and see such stark anatomical differences. Originally dubbing the bust 'George' after Professor Lowery pointed out a likeness to the forty-third President George W. Bush, I spent the latter part of the semester altering her face until she was decidedly not George. The end product was a woman with her hair pulled into a sharp bun, one who presented a calm if not indifferent expression.

Julia Finken is a senior majoring in Biological Sciences with a minor in Studio Art at William & Mary. Her main artistic works center around utilitarian vessels such as cups, bowls, and plates, but she has worked with ceramic sculpture in past projects. She is currently pursuing a higher level of education in microbiology but plans to continue her artistic endeavors as a potter.

RAPTURE

BY ERICK VILLEFRANCHE

I don't know when I realized Heaven was a pipe dream. It must have been early; I can't remember ever picturing what it looked like. Even now it's just a scribble, a child's antidote to grief learned from an adult, one part imagination, two parts Crayola. I do know I never expected to see it. As a child I studied the whorls of the pews, and misinterpreted the stained glass and listened to the preacher, thinking that if I did my best I might be able to see Purgatory. Still, I sat a little too close to the radiator as it clanked and pinged, just to get used to hellfire.

It did not seem fair to me, to be born in sin and for that to be so unnoticeable that one can live a happy life and not even know. I always winced when the story of Adam and Eve was preached, because really, was it their fault to be human? It seemed unfair to expect to know the answer to a question that has never been spoken out loud. I often imagined that moment of dawning awareness, of their nudity, of their mistake. I tried to envision the horror the preacher described, of realizing they will soon have to leave the Garden for a life of sin. But all I could imagine was relief. Relief at the test being over, at the sword above their necks finally slicing their necks. Whenever I felt that relief, I also felt how uncomfortable my own church clothes felt on my skin. I pushed the thought away and sat up straight. That relief always ended up snaking its way back into my head though.

It's not like I never attempted to reach Heaven. I was under the impression that if you researched something enough, you became an expert. So, I researched, scoured the pages of Merriam and Webster, trying to squeeze any hints out of the semantics and semiotics. I discovered that Heaven has a fair number of different uses, the mundane and the divine. Heaven was a place on Earth, Heaven was the home of god, looking up at the Heavens and something being your personal Heaven. Everything felt so strangely split, like I was meant to choose whether to find salvation inward or outward. I flipped a coin. I started outward.

HEAVEN, N. 1.

A place or condition of utmost happiness.

It's easier than you think to put a little piece of heaven into a person. You spend enough time with anyone and the world shrinks, just a little. More time, and it shrinks even more. Even more and it becomes just the two of you, with the sky close enough to touch at each of your backs. Eventually they will grow distracted, and that is when you know the moment is ripe. After that you raise your hand, and reach past their head, slowly. Touch your fingers to the sky, lovingly, and then dig your finger into the sky, greedily. Break off a chunk of the sky, and when they next open their mouth, you have to feed it to them. Do not do this. Never do this. It changes them in your mind instantly, irrecoverably. It is a terrible thing to do to someone, to make them both holy and human, shifting between either with a shift of the light. Sometimes the relationship recovers, sometimes it doesn't. They are bled of their divinity like a lamb for dinner and your eyes are drawn to the ugly again, only to the ugly again.

HEAVEN, N. 2.

A state of thought in which sin is absent.

Looking outward did not work. Back inward. I tried to see if I could cleanse my own soul at home. I took whatever scraps I got from Sunday and tried to cobble together a personal god in myself that could judge my every action. He'd float behind me and would whisper every time I dropped further from salvation. Every time I fought with my grandparents was an inch, every selfish thought a foot. Then the whispers became more personal, less about sin and more about disappointment. Suddenly a failed test or a detail forgotten was also a failing of the soul. Deeper and deeper the despair went. Every mistake was a signal that I was unfit to dirty the stairway to heaven with my stained feet. His voice was like a preacher, explaining with perfect theological reason the ways in which I had failed. I could only look up from a deep pit at the god I had made, shaking his head in disappointment.

HEAVEN, N. 3.

*The expanse of sky that seems to be
over the earth like a dome.*

I have spent a lot of time looking up at the sky. The idea that god was just out of reach above the blue was something I could not shake for a long time. With verses of Judgement Day circling around my head, I'd leave the service with eyes trained upward. It always cracked open like an egg in my imagination, the azure shards of the sky jagged like teeth. A huge eye would stare through the crack, as blue as the sky it splintered, its gaze roving over the Earth it is tasked to judge. The unworthy caught under the weight of stare are smashed flat. The worthy are lifted up, through the crack into the pupil of the eye. Eventually it lands on me. I never can decide what will happen. Crushed or compensated? It was as if I knew the answer but was too afraid to fully admit it, to fully resign myself to above or below.

HEAVEN, N. 4.

*A spiritual sense of everlasting
communion with god.*

The day I moved back into my dorm, for junior year, I took a walk around the campus. The whole time, I stared straight up at the sky. It started out as a clear blue, a perfect color for ending the world. Despite that, I felt at peace, my own personal god quiet. As it darkened to the navy shades of evening,

I realized something. I did not really care about the answer to the question. It was the wrong question in the first place. Why look outside of myself for a sense of salvation in the first place? Why try to make others into a form of paradise I can take solace in whenever I want? Was I not divine too, made in his image? I had been so focused on the destination that the journey to get there had been made miserable. It was relieving, to finally stop worrying about where I was destined to go. I have eyes just like he does, that can judge the world around me. As the sun fully set, I took my glasses off and looked at myself in the reflection of the lenses. Above me was the heavy black of the night, sprinkled with stars. I reached through the glass and grabbed a piece of sky, gently, and placed it in my mouth. Why not make Heaven as close as possible? Whenever I look in the mirror, I'll be able to see a fraction of it in me.



Erick Villefranche is a junior majoring in Psychology at William & Mary. He wrote Rapture for a creative writing class in September 2023. After a transformative summer, returning to campus inspired within him a nostalgic reflection on childhood and Catholicism that culminated in the creation of this piece. This experience marked his return to intuitive writing and helped him to realize his tremendous personal growth as well as accept his newfound comfort with ambiguity.

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