
RECOUNTING THE PAST

A Student Journal of Historical Studies at Illinois State University

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THE SACRED CHARACTER OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Jason Anderson

Introduction

At first glance, to study the sacred in reference to the French Revolution seems an odd proposition. The sacred, a term frequently identified with religion, is most often used to describe a belief, object, or rite associated with a God or gods revered by a religious community. What could the sacred have to do with one of the most radical attempts in history to secularize the government and de-christianize the people of an entire nation? By 1791, the French revolutionaries annexed the Catholic Church's lands to the State, eliminated the Church's source of wealth—the tithe—and forced clergy to submit to the State by an oath in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Thus, the search for the sacred in the French Revolution would seem to be misplaced—or, is it the perfect opportunity to study the sacred in a context attempting to destroy all connections with traditional religion? This study, based on recent scholarship on the French Revolution and sociological theory on the concept of the sacred, demonstrates that the sacred is not exclusively related to religious societies, but is a characteristic of all societies, secular or otherwise. The French Revolution is pivotal in this regard because it represents the transition between the waning Catholicism of old regime France and the growing secularism of the new French Republic.

While their studies have not directly sought out the sacred in the French Revolution, Jeffrey Merrick, Lynn Hunt, and Mona Ozouf have shown how the idea of the sacred can be utilized in studying

revolutionary France. Merrick's *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* demonstrates how conflicts between the church and the state in the *ancien régime* eroded the king's authority, permanently tarnishing the image of the Most Christian King sanctified by God.¹ Hunt's experimental *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* draws on Merrick's desacralization thesis and relates it to her study of the king's execution in 1793 and the family politics of the Revolution in general. In the French Revolution's emphasis on fraternity between brothers in contrast with the patriarchal structure of monarchy, Hunt sees the ability of "the French to imagine a complete rupture with their past and to construct a different model of the location of the sacred."² Finally, Ozouf's scholarship concerns the revolutionary festivals celebrated in the years immediately after 1789. Ozouf argues that a "transfer of sacrality" occurred through these festivals insofar as they successfully sacralized revolutionary political and social values at the expense of traditional religious values upheld by the Catholic Church and the monarchy.³ These three recent approaches to revolutionary studies illustrate the immense value of studying the sacred in the context of the French Revolution.

In this paper, I use the analyses of Merrick, Hunt, and Ozouf to explore how the French Revolution demonstrates the existence of the sacred despite its explicit attempts to remove traditional revealed religion from society. Lynn Hunt, in an

¹ Jeffrey W. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

² Lynn A. Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 198.

³ Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

article detailing the relationship between the sacred, the French Revolution, and one of sociology's most influential thinkers, Emile Durkheim, offers a point of departure for this paper. She writes, "Though it can be argued that a fuller account of the sacred requires attention to cultural and perhaps even psychoanalytical sources of motivation, a more fundamental problem still remains: what are the boundaries of the sacred (and can they be theoretically delineated)?"⁴ To understand more fully the concept of the sacred and its possible boundaries, I consult the work of Durkheim, the historian of religions Mircea Eliade, and the sociologist Jacques Ellul, each of whom offered guidelines for comprehending the sacred and its role in society. Their insights shed light on the nature of the sacred, allowing us to further appreciate the use of the sacred in the studies of Merrick, Hunt, and Ozouf. The application of Durkheim's, Eliade's, and especially Ellul's analyses to specific events during the French Revolution helps to determine the possible "boundaries" of the sacred sought by Hunt. Finally, I argue that the French Revolution, during its most radical phase between 1793 and 1794, exhibited the characteristics of a sacral society as defined by Ellul.

The Sacred in Theory

Emile Durkheim's definition of religion in his classic 1912 work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, relied heavily on the idea of the sacred. With his declaration that a "religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things," sociological approaches to religion have endeavored to understand the phenomenon of the sacred and its relationship to religious

traditions.⁵ Durkheim was fascinated by the French Revolution because he believed it demonstrated the universal nature of his approach to the sacred. "The aptitude of society for setting itself up as a god or for creating gods was never more apparent than during the first years of the French Revolution."⁶ The Revolution offered proof that his definition of religion could be applied not only to the Australian aboriginal society he studied as the basis for *Elementary Forms*, but also to modern societies.

Mircea Eliade followed in the path traced by the German scholar Rudolf Otto, whose 1917 study *Das Heilige* focused more on the irrational nature of religious experience than did Durkheim's sociological approach to religion.⁷ However, Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane* claimed to delineate the "phenomenon of the sacred in all its complexity, and not only in so far as it is irrational."⁸ Eliade's approach differed from Durkheim's through his distinction between the religious people of "primitive" societies and the nonreligious people of modern societies. Eliade admitted that a nonreligious person, or profane person, cannot fully break from his or her religious past. "Profane man cannot help preserving some vestiges of the behavior of religious man, though they are emptied of religious meaning. Do what he will, he is an inheritor."⁹ But he or she is not the same. While Durkheim made no sociological distinction between primitive and modern societies, Eliade argued that for all the

⁴ Hunt, "The Sacred and the French Revolution," in *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 39-40.

⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965), 62.

⁶ Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 244.

⁷ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

⁸ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1959), 10.

⁹ Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 204.

“religious” activities of nonreligious people, there remains a fundamental difference between them and religious people. The distinction is worth quoting in its entirety.

As we saw, it is the experience of the sacred that founds the world, and even the most elementary religion is, above all, an ontology...[and] religion is the paradigmatic solution for every existential crisis. It is the paradigmatic solution not only because it can be indefinitely repeated, but also because it is believed to have a transcendental origin and hence is valorized as a revelation received from an *other*, transhuman world...But modern man’s “private mythologies”—his dreams, reveries, fantasies, and so on—never rise to the ontological status of myths, precisely because they are not experienced by the *whole man* and therefore do not transform a particular situation into a situation that is paradigmatic. In the same way, modern man’s anxieties, his experiences in dream or imagination, although “religious” from the point of view of form, do not, as in *homo religious*, make part of a *Weltanschauung* and provide the basis for a system of behavior.¹⁰

According to Eliade, the sacred for nonreligious man does not create an objective way of ordering the world or give meaning to experience as it does for religious man.

At this point, the objection could be raised that Durkheim dealt only at the level of society, while Eliade spoke the language of the individual. In other words, Durkheim’s study of the sacred in society does not allow for direct comparison with

Eliade’s study of the sacred in relation to the individual. However, Durkheim’s entire argument moved from society to the individual. Society, including the values it sacralizes, orders the experience of the individual. “The cult which the individual organizes for himself in his own inner conscience, far from being the germ of the collective cult, is only this latter adapted to the personal needs of the individual.”¹¹ The individual does not create his own sacred values; instead the values of the group become his values. Conversely, Eliade began with the individual and then moved to society. Rather than look to society for his (or her) values, the individual “conceives of himself as a microcosm. He forms part of the gods’ creation; in other words, he finds in himself the same sanctity that he recognizes in the cosmos.”¹² Religious individuals existentially consider the world to be a paradigm of themselves, ordering their activities and social relationships symbolically in accordance with the natural world.

Finally, the work of Jacques Ellul profoundly illustrated conceptions of the sacred in the modern world. While this paper is not the place to elucidate his thesis in detail, it should be noted that Ellul believed the “modern western technical and scientific world is a sacral world.”¹³ Because earlier civilizations interacted with and depended directly on nature, the sacred was associated with things—the sun, lightning, trees, buffaloes—of the natural world. But the advances made in technology in the modern world have effectively desacralized nature as the fundamental order in which humanity interacts and depends. Instead of living in a natural environment, Ellul observed that

¹¹ Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 208.

¹² Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 165.

¹³ Jacques Ellul, *The New Demons*, trans. C. Edward Hopkin (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 70.

¹⁰ Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 210-211.

humanity now lives in a technical milieu. According to Ellul, technology “finds expression with everybody as the marvelous instrument of power, linked always with mystery and magic...Technology is sacred as the common expression of the power of man. Without it he would feel poor, alone, naked, deprived of his makeup...”¹⁴ Similarly, instead of a sacred individual—a king, a priest, or a magician—governing a group, the modern world sacralizes an entire people and governs through the concept of the nation-state.

Like Durkheim’s sociological approach to the sacred, Ellul saw no difference between the traditional religions of “primitive” societies and the secular religions of modern societies. “In a world which is difficult, hostile, formidable, man (unconsciously, spontaneously, yet willingly, to be sure) attributes sacred values to that which threatens him and to that which protects him, or more exactly to that which restores him and puts him in tune with the universe.”¹⁵ The sacred provides a point of reference, an order in which an individual can make choices in the world, a “guarantee that he is not thrust out into an illogical space and a limitless time.”¹⁶ As with Durkheim, Ellul understood the sacred to be organized around pairs of polar opposites. Durkheim showed that the difference between the sacred and the profane is not simply a hierarchical relationship—the sacred being “higher” than the profane—but their complete and absolute heterogeneity. He boldly claimed that “in all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another.”¹⁷ Reviewing Ellul helps to clarify

Durkheim’s point. “A sacral society is one in which everything, including whatever is not sacred, is judged *from the standpoint of the sacred*. The profane is not the sacred, but it can exist only in a society which orders everything with reference to the sacred.”¹⁸ The sacred and the profane exist in tension with each other; they can never cross paths, yet they also cannot exist without each other.

With this in mind, Ellul is valuable to our discussion for his articulation of the process of sacralization and desacralization. Throughout history, every society has been organized in reference to the sacred, but that is not to say that the sacred has not been challenged or called into question. According to Ellul, Western civilization has experienced several periods of desacralization: the emergence of Christianity in the Roman world that desacralized the pagan cults of the empire; the Protestant Reformation, which profaned the medieval sacred of the Catholic Church; and, beginning with the Enlightenment, science and reason became desacralizing agents against religious “superstition.” In each case, however, a process of sacralization or re-sacralization began to occur almost simultaneously. Quoting Ellul, desacralization involves a “double attack...On the one hand, the sacred was irresistibly reinstated...and on the other hand, what had been the instrument of desacralization became itself sacred.”¹⁹ Christianity, once it had destroyed the pagan cults and became the state religion of the Roman Empire, engaged in a process of sacralization by instituting sacraments, establishing a hierarchical order of priests and bishops, and venerating saints as an act of worship. The Reformation called all these sacralizations into question by claiming that scripture did not justify them,

¹⁴ Ellul, *New Demons*, 74.

¹⁵ Ellul, *New Demons*, 50.

¹⁶ Ellul, *New Demons*, 50.

¹⁷ Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 53.

¹⁸ Ellul, *New Demons*, 48.

¹⁹ Ellul, *New Demons*, 58.

yet at the same time the doctrine of *sola scriptura* established the Bible as a sacred text. In this process, the sacred, once it has been desacralized, can never regain its sacred status in society again. Once the former sacred has been “explained and rationalized, [it] can never rise again from the ashes which are now scattered and swept away.”²⁰ This continuous process of sacralization and desacralization is a key component of the sacred and will be crucial for our discussion of the French Revolution.

Ellul also offered boundaries for the sacred that will be relevant in the case of the French Revolution. For Ellul, “there is no sacred in a society unless absolute value, rites of commitment, and embodiment in a person are *conjoined*.”²¹ Absolute value entails an idea that cannot be altered, challenged, or criticized. It is the point of reference from which all else is judged. By rites of commitment, or rites of initiation, Ellul means training exercises that one must go through in order to participate in the sacred. Once these are completed, the individual “cannot renounce the sacred, nor violate it...The ultimate value of the group must become *his* ultimate value.”²² Thirdly, the sacred must have someone to “incarnate” it. This person is the most committed of the group, and he or she demonstrates the ideal by living in accordance with the sacred values. Ellul explained the codependence between the three components of the sacred’s boundaries in this way:

The rite of commitment implies a commitment to the sacred value, and at the same time it implies a fixation on the exemplary person as a model. The exemplary person is the most committed of all through more

exacting rites and in close relation to the sacred value. The sacred value has no meaning unless people are marked to obey it and unless there is a man to incarnate it. Under those conditions the sacred can truly be an order of the world and not a metaphysical abstraction.²³

In summary, Ellul’s understanding of the absolute dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, his demonstration of the process of sacralization and desacralization, and his explicit boundaries of the sacred give us a conceptual framework in which to examine the French Revolution.

The Sacred in the French Revolution

In *Desacralization of the French Monarchy*, Jeffrey Merrick writes: “In the France of the ancien régime, God sanctified the king, and the king defended the ancestral faith of the country as well as the worldly privileges of its ministers.”²⁴ Ever since the Merovingian king Clovis had been baptized a Christian in 498, the French monarchy and the Catholic Church governed the nation of France hand in hand. By the seventeenth century, the apologist for divine-right absolutism, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, asserted that royal authority and the king’s person were sacred. “God establishes kings as his ministers, and through them reigns over the people...It is clear from the foregoing that kings’ persons are sacred, and that any attack upon them is sacrilege.”²⁵ The absolutist system, reaching the apex of its success during the reign of Louis XIV between 1643 and 1715, ruled France

²³ Ellul, *New Demons*, 57.

²⁴ Merrick, *Desacralization*, 2.

²⁵ “The Nature and Properties of Royal Authority,” *Politics Derived from the Words of Holy Scripture, 1678*, in *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, ed. Jack R. Censer and Lynn Hunt (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

²⁰ Ellul, *New Demons*, 64.

²¹ Ellul, *New Demons*, 55.

²² Ellul, *New Demons*, 56.

effectively as long as political and religious controversies could be avoided. However, during much of the eighteenth century, religious issues like the papal bull *Unigenitus* and the Damians Affair embroiled the monarchy in the conflicts that ensued between Catholic Jesuits, Catholic Jansenists, and Protestant Huguenots. These religious struggles inevitably became political challenges to the king's authority because of the nature of absolutism's marriage of politics and religion. Merrick argues that desacralization, which he defines as "the breakdown of the conjunction of religion and politics that characterized traditional conceptions of kingship," was a product of these religious conflicts.²⁶ The king's failure to successfully quell political and religious controversies desacralized the monarchy and opened it up to increasingly hostile attacks on many different fronts leading up to 1789.

Merrick's study of the desacralization of the French monarchy brings us to the eve of the Revolution. Lynn Hunt's *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* completes the story with her description of the ultimate act of desacralization, the king's execution. At the beginning of this paper, I termed Hunt's work "experimental." Hunt also realizes that her study, which relies heavily on Freudian psychoanalysis, enters uncharted, and perhaps dangerous waters. "The very mention of the name Freud by a historian is for some a red flag of danger."²⁷ She does not offer individual psychoanalyses of the major figures of the Revolution; rather her goal is to study the French people as a collective. Her debt to Durkheim's movement from society to the

individual becomes obvious at this point. Hunt wants to discover "the ways that people collectively imagine—that is unconsciously think about—the operation of power, and the ways in which this imagination shapes and is in turn shaped by political and social processes."²⁸ At this point, an explicit connection between "operation of power" and the sacred is not made, but when compared with Ellul's analysis of man's unconscious association of "sacred values to that which threatens him and to that which protects him," the idea of the sacred seems to lie just beneath the surface. Hunt also incorporates the thesis of literary critic René Girard concerning ritual sacrifice and the scapegoat.²⁹ Rather than seeing, as Freud does, the killing of the king as a ritual sacrifice of the father, Girard interprets the king as a scapegoat, a "surrogate victim" whose death ameliorates the entire community's fear of its own violence.³⁰ Hunt alternates between Freud and Girard in her reading of Louis XVI's execution while also using artwork and literature of the period to develop her thesis of the "family romance." Hunt's experimental methodology may not convince all readers, but her work does contribute to a further understanding of the sacred in relation to the French Revolution.

In her chapter three, "The Band of Brothers," Hunt examines the king's trial, the event of his execution, and its memory in the minds of revolutionaries in the subsequent years. According to Hunt, at the trial the king was never referred to as "father," and the proceedings that treated Louis as an ordinary criminal "helped push even further the desacralization of the

²⁶ Merrick, *Desacralization*, x. See Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution 1560-1791* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996) for a more complete analysis of these religious controversies that threatened absolutism.

²⁷ Hunt, *Family Romance*, 8.

²⁸ Hunt, *Family Romance*, 8.

²⁹ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

³⁰ Hunt, *Family Romance*, 11.

monarchy.”³¹ Hunt believes this demonstrates the attempt of many of the Convention’s deputies to sever all affiliation with their formerly sacred king. One of the Jacobin deputies declared on the day of the execution: “Today he [Louis] has paid his debt; let us speak of it no longer, let us be human; all of our resentment must expire with him.”³² One year later, there was no major celebration planned for the anniversary of the king’s execution. Were some deputies perhaps feeling guilty, had they “violated what Freud called one of the basic laws of totemism, that which forbade the killing of the totem animal?”³³ In other words, were they feeling the disconcerting effects of transgressing against the sacred? In his own comments on the execution of Louis XVI, Ellul seemed to think it very possible. “The condemnation and execution of the sacred person par excellence, the focal point of the sacred forces, the instigator, the initiator of vital powers, was a mutilating, uprooting experience and a loss of psychic moorings.”³⁴

However, this was not the only reaction to the king’s trial and execution. Radical republicans tended to celebrate the event as a new birth of liberty. Hunt suggests that the “radicals could only reject the sacredness of the king by killing him and taking on that sacredness for the people as a whole. Ritual sacrifice and the metaphorical eating of the king’s body were the essential means of effecting this transformation.”³⁵ Before the trial, the most ardent revolutionaries such as Robespierre and Saint-Just believed the very existence of the king threatened the goal of a French

Republic. Robespierre, who supported immediate execution rather than a trial, declared to the Convention: “In fact, if Louis could yet be tried, he might be found innocent. Do I say ‘found’? He is presumed innocent until the verdict. If Louis is acquitted, where then is the revolution? If Louis is innocent, all defenders of liberty are slanderers.”³⁶ The risk of a trial would be dangerous to the Revolution. Despite earlier opposition to the death penalty in the Constituent Assembly, Robespierre believed that if the king were allowed to live, he would be a constant counter-revolutionary threat. Later, as the trial progressed slowly, Robespierre expressed dismay and again called for immediate action. “Each instant of delay brings us a new danger; all delays awaken guilty hopes and further embolden the enemies of liberty.”³⁷

Ellul’s analysis offers an explanation for Robespierre’s impassioned speeches against the king. According to Ellul, the sacred or “the order which man has established for himself must be total if it is to be an order. If a person who has denied that order continues to survive, that is proof that the order is not an order.”³⁸ For Robespierre, the Revolution had become sacred, and Louis represented the ultimate threat to it. As long as the king continued to live in opposition to the Revolution, its ideals could not be realized; instead those ideals were believed to be continually threatened. Ellul’s insight also explains the reasons for the increasingly vulgar attacks against the king before his execution—the pornographic images of the king impotent in bed with

³¹ Hunt, *Family Romance*, 55.

³² Deputy Bourdon, *La Société des Jacobins: Recueil de documents pour l’histoire du club des Jacobins de Paris*, vol. 4, *Juin 1792 à janvier 1793* (Paris, 1892), 689, quoted in Hunt, *Family Romance*, 56.

³³ Hunt, “The Sacred and the French Revolution,” 35.

³⁴ Ellul, *New Demons*, 61.

³⁵ Hunt, *Family Romance*, 60-61.

³⁶ From his speech to the Convention on December 3, 1792, in *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, ed. Michael Walzer, trans. Marian Rothstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 131.

³⁷ From his speech to the Convention on December 28, 1792, in Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 179.

³⁸ Ellul, *New Demons*, 54.

Marie-Antoinette and the depictions of the royal family as pigs—that Hunt discusses in her chapter, “The Rise and Fall of the Good Father.” In the process of desacralization and sacralization, “perfect purity, when it is desacralized, becomes the very rationale of prostitution.”³⁹ During the French Revolution, the king, formerly the sacred father, became the most vile adversary of the people. The young revolutionary Saint-Just makes this clear in his speech before the Convention arguing against a trial. “And I say that the king should be judged as an enemy; that we must not so much judge him as combat him.”⁴⁰

If we continue with Ellul’s explication of the boundaries of the sacred, the sacralization of the Revolution was nearly complete in the minds of Robespierre and Saint-Just, now members of the Committee of Public Safety when “terror became the order of the day” in September of 1793. Ellul’s first boundary, absolute value, “is one of the sure signs of what a given person or group holds sacred. There is the untouchable, or again, that which cannot be called into question.”⁴¹ For Robespierre and Saint-Just, the principles of the Revolution were their absolute, their “untouchable” values. From September 1793 until the ninth of Thermidor (July 27, 1794) they governed through terror in order to root out all opposition to the Revolution. Robespierre offered its justification: “It is necessary to annihilate both the internal and external enemies of the republic or perish with its fall.”⁴²

³⁹ Ellul, *New Demons*, 62.

⁴⁰ From his speech to the Convention on November 13, 1792, in Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 121.

⁴¹ Ellul, *New Demons*, 55.

⁴² Robespierre, “Report upon the Principles of Political Morality which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic,” February 5, 1794 (18 Pluviôse, Year II), (Philadelphia, 1794).

One might raise the objection that the Terror was simply a makeshift government instituted to deal with the momentary needs of the French nation. After all, this “thesis of circumstances” reminds us that the countries of Europe were amassed together against France to destroy its revolution and re-establish the monarchy. At the same time, civil war and counter-revolutionaries threatened the revolution from within. Were not Robespierre and the Committee simply reacting to the current needs of the French state, rather than attempting to institute sacred values?⁴³

Robespierre’s “Report Upon the Principles of Political Morality,” given to the Convention on February 5, 1794, is an important justification of the Terror and a glimpse into the mind of its most convincing leader. It seems to suggest that the Terror was more than just a response to immediate political realities. In the opening paragraph, Robespierre admits that to this point “we have been impelled thro’ the tempest of a revolution, rather by a love of right and a feeling of the wants of our country, than by an exact theory, and precise rules of conduct, which we had not even the leisure to sketch.” But the rest of the speech develops Robespierre’s ideals for a revolutionary “faith,” an absolute that aims to guarantee the “tranquil enjoyment of liberty and equality; the reign of eternal justice, the laws of which are graven, not on marble or stone, but in the hearts of men.” He frequently proclaims that truth, justice, and reason are “eternal” and that virtue is “happily...natural in the people.” What is the aim of this glorious revolution? “We wish, in a word, to fulfil the intentions of nature and the destiny of man, realize the promises of philosophy, and acquit

⁴³ See R. R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941) for the most influential statement of the “thesis of circumstances.”

providence of a long reign of crime and tyranny.” Robespierre spoke with all the fervor of a believer in the sacred goals of the Revolution. Was it simply political rhetoric? Anticipating Robespierre’s meteoric rise to power, Mirabeau thought differently. “He will go far because he believes everything he says.”⁴⁴

As the Terror continued, opponents of the Revolution identified by the Committee of Public Safety met their fate by the blade of the guillotine. First to go were the ultra radicals, the Enragés and Hébertists who were the most voracious advocates of de-christianization. To them Robespierre responded, “To preach up atheism is only one way of absolving superstition and accusing philosophy; and war declared against the deity is only diversion in favour of royalty.”⁴⁵ Then came the moderates, led by Danton and Camille Desmoulins, who, in Robespierre’s view, wished to stop the Revolution before it had achieved its goals. Even Robespierre’s long-lasting friendship with Desmoulins did not prevent him from ordering his friend’s execution as a counter-revolutionary. Interpreting the Revolution, Ellul suggested that it “was personified as an object of admiration, to be venerated by the worthy and to inspire terror in the guilty. Behind the image of the nation or of liberty was that of revolution. Nothing could be allowed to impede its triumphant progress, not because its proposed claims were valid, but because it was valid in itself.”⁴⁶ For the Revolution to be absolute, any opposition had to be silenced immediately.

The Revolution during the Terror seems to meet Ellul’s first criterion for determining the existence of the sacred in a society. But does revolutionary France offer examples of the other two, rites of commitment and

embodiment in a person? To look for rites of commitment in relation to the Revolution, Mona Ozouf’s *Festivals and the French Revolution* provides a place to start. Ozouf’s study of revolutionary festivals—through issues like space, time, educational goals, and popular life—begins with an important question, “what is a festival?” For her study, Ozouf uses the two dominant, yet diametrically opposed, sociological and psychological typologies outlined by Durkheim and Freud. For Durkheim, the festival was a “gathering together of the community, which is alone capable of producing a collective state of excitement,” while Freud insisted that “festive excitement can spring only from the transgression of prohibitions, from the excess authorized by the festival.”⁴⁷ The collective spirit of assembling alone, or the sanction to break with social mores? Ozouf finds that most of the festivals accorded with Durkheim’s interpretation. Yet she does, like Hunt, offer a Girardian reading of Freud’s typology to explain the violence that accompanied a number of festivals. In this interpretation, “the festival uses violent parody only to deliver the celebrants from it; the function of this well-regulated transgression is to prevent it from spilling over into social violence; the festival plays at violence in order to contain it all the better.”⁴⁸ In the same way that the king’s execution can be interpreted as ritual sacrifice of a scapegoat, the festival mimics the community’s desire for violence and acts as an outlet for its transgressions.

Ellul and Eliade also provided interpretations that help to clarify Ozouf’s definition of a festival. Ellul’s understanding of festival seemed to agree more with Freud, as he stated that “there is no festival without reference to a final value, which is affirmed and transgressed.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 130.

⁴⁵ Robespierre, “Political Morality.”

⁴⁶ Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution*, trans. Patricia Wolf (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 87.

⁴⁷ Ozouf, *Festivals*, 31.

⁴⁸ Ozouf, *Festivals*, 103.

Whenever some power wanted to institute the festival of reason, it had to divinize reason before the action made sense.”⁴⁹ Eliade spoke of the festival as an eternal return to a society’s origins. “In the festival the sacred dimension of life is recovered, the participants experience the sanctity of human existence as a divine creation.”⁵⁰ Ellul agreed, proposing that in the use of Roman symbols the revolutionary festival “took the form of a mythical return to the first ideal moment of the absolute beginning, but instead of being creation, as in primitive mythology, that *in illo tempore* [in that time] was the origin of society.”⁵¹ In analyzing the diversity of these interpretations, it seems that a festival can broadly be defined as a manifestation or celebration of the sacred. A festival reminds a community of its sacred values, while allowing it to break free from the normal flow of life. Durkheim concluded that the French Revolution’s festivals were instituted “to keep the principles with which it was inspired in a state of perpetual youth,” yet they did not last “because the revolutionary faith lasted but a moment.”⁵²

In her chapter, “The Future of the Festival: Festival and Pedagogy,” Ozouf discusses the educational intentions of festival organizers during the Revolution. From the belief of Enlightenment thinkers in the possibility of improving society through education, “the organizers of the festivals inherited a fervent belief in the ability to train minds.”⁵³ While schools could be used to indoctrinate children in the principles of the Revolution, the festivals could be applied to all of society as an “adult” education for those who would never attend a republican school. To achieve these goals,

the leaders of the Revolution scrutinized every detail of a festival in order to produce the desired effect. Rather than rely on two-dimensional images for visual representation, they preferred sculpture. As one festival organizer put it, “The productions of sculpture are infinitely closer to nature than pictures.”⁵⁴ They also believed that commentary should always accompany an image to ensure uniformity of interpretation. The festivals were intricately designed to educate, and there was little doubt about the republican principles its pupils were supposed to learn.

Ozouf’s study ultimately argues that the revolutionary festivals, while disappearing soon after Napoleon came to power in 1799, succeeded in sacralizing the French Revolution’s most cherished values. “Rights, liberty, and the fatherland, which the Revolutionary festival bound together at the dawn of the modern, secular, liberal world, were not to be separated so soon.”⁵⁵ Do the educational goals of the festivals studied by Ozouf, especially in light of her argument about the successful “transfer of sacrality,” correspond to Ellul’s second component of a sacral society, rites of commitment? As Robespierre summed up the vision of all festival organizers, “A system of well-organized national festivals would be at once the most gentle of fraternal ties and the most powerful means of regeneration.”⁵⁶ Regeneration, the powerful rallying cry of revolutionary discourse, was the means by which a “new people” of France would be created. The festivals were

⁴⁹ Ellul, *New Demons*, 143.

⁵⁰ Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 89.

⁵¹ Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution*, 70.

⁵² Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 476.

⁵³ Ozouf, *Festivals*, 197.

⁵⁴ G. M. Raymond, *De la peinture considérée dans ses effets sur les hommes en général et de son influence sur les moeurs et le gouvernement des peuples* (Paris: Pougens, Year VII), quoted in Ozouf, *Festivals*, 206.

⁵⁵ Ozouf, *Festivals*, 282.

⁵⁶ Robespierre, “Report on Religious and Moral Ideas and Republican Principles,” May 7, 1794 (18 Floréal, Year II), in *The French Revolution*, ed. Paul H. Beik (New York: Walker, 1970), 311.

inherently related to this educational program to create virtuous citizens of the French Republic. The festivals can be seen as rites of initiation for the French people which, according to Robespierre, would allow them to “awaken those generous sentiments which are the charm and ornament of human life...induce enthusiasm for liberty, the love of country, and respect for the laws” and remember the “immortal events of our revolution.”⁵⁷

The third component of Ellul’s boundaries of the sacred for our study of the French Revolution—embodiment in a person—has been implied throughout this paper. Maximilien Robespierre, the “Incorruptible,” is the best candidate for representing the Revolution in a person. He proclaimed its eternal virtues, he defended it against all conspirators, and he attempted to educate and initiate the people in its supreme values. According to Ellul, the person who embodies the sacred “is the point of reference for all the people, to show them how they should act, how they should appear, and how they should behave toward the sacred.”⁵⁸ A revealing passage from his speech to the Convention on May 7, 1794, demonstrates Robespierre’s devotion to and embodiment of the Revolution, an example for all the people of France to follow.

O my country! If fate had placed my birth in a distant and foreign region, I would have addressed to heaven unceasing wishes for your prosperity; I would have shed tears of sensibility at the recital of your struggles and your virtues; my attentive soul would have pursued with restless ardor all the events of your glorious revolution; I would have envied the destiny of your citizens; I would have envied your

representatives. I am French, I am one of your representatives. O sublime people! Receive the sacrifice of my whole being: happy is he who is born in your midst! Still happier he who can die for your well-being!⁵⁹

Robespierre set the course for political events during the Terror by attributing all of his actions to the absolute value of the Revolution. He presided over the Festival of the Supreme Being and supported the development of a national system of festivals, the means by which the French people could undergo rites of commitment to the Revolution.

As such, Robespierre’s revolutionary career fulfills Ellul’s third component of a sacral society, embodiment in a person. As Patrice Gueniffey fittingly writes, “this was the man in whom the spirit of the Revolution was made flesh.”⁶⁰

Conclusion

The French Revolution is undoubtedly a world-historical event that fundamentally influenced modern conceptions of liberty, rights, nationalism, and political culture. In recent decades, historians have begun to interpret the Revolution from many different angles, moving away from the Marxist interpretation that previously dominated revolutionary historiography. The work of Merrick, Hunt, and Ozouf represents some of this diversity in approaches to studying the French Revolution. By incorporating sociological and psychological theories into their research, they demonstrate the value of an interdisciplinary approach and open up new avenues for future interpretations that

⁵⁷ Robespierre, “Religious and Moral Ideas,” 311.

⁵⁸ Ellul, *New Demons*, 56.

⁵⁹ Robespierre, “Religious and Moral Ideas,” 301.

⁶⁰ “Robespierre,” in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 299.

move beyond the reductionist socioeconomic models of the Marxist school.

I conclude by returning to our three sociological theorists and their understanding of the sacred to speculate on how they have or might have interpreted the French Revolution. Emile Durkheim left no doubt that the Revolution represented the emergence of a new sacred center toward which the people of the France oriented themselves. The principles of the French Revolution

are believed in not as theorems but as articles of faith. They were created neither by science nor for science; rather they result from the very practice of life. In a word, they have been a religion which has had its martyrs and apostles, which has profoundly moved the masses, and which, after all, has given birth to great things.⁶¹

He believed the Revolution confirmed his definition of religion as a phenomenon “relative to sacred things” which unites people into a “single moral community.” Conversely, Mircea Eliade would likely have been less enthusiastic about attributing sacred values to the Revolution. In his view, the Revolution would have corresponded more with the “private mythologies” of nonreligious man than the ontological myths of *homo religiosus*. Despite Robespierre’s attempt to institute the Cult of the Supreme Being, Eliade would have emphasized its usefulness to revolutionaries as a civil religion to control the masses rather than sincere belief in a transcendent God. The revolutionary fervor

and the festivals quickly went away because they never achieved sacred status in the minds of the people.

Appropriately I end with Jacques Ellul, whose understanding of the sacred and its boundaries has guided my interpretation of the French Revolution. Like Durkheim, Ellul looked to the Revolution to demonstrate his theory of desacralization and sacralization, which supported his belief that humanity cannot live in a completely desacralized world. The sacred is always re-established because it is a necessary point of reference, “a set of guides and discriminations, ready-made to facilitate life in this universe.”⁶² Especially during the Terror, the French nation exhibited the characteristics of a sacral society as defined by Ellul: the Revolution itself took the form of an absolute value, festivals served as rites of commitment for the people, and Robespierre embodied revolutionary principles through his actions and speeches and set an example for all of France to follow. However, in contrast with Durkheim’s view of the Revolution giving “birth to great things,” Ellul saw unfortunate consequences imbedded in the idealistic goals of the Revolution. “But suspicion has only one target: whatever weakens the state; and only one purpose: to make the state supreme arbiter in all matters. The state thereby acquires a totalitarian function—a great discovery made by that revolution of liberty.”⁶³ In attributing sacred values to the Revolution—thus to the State as well—the French revolutionaries also gave birth to tragic things that became horrible realities in the twentieth century.

⁶¹ Durkheim, “The Principles of 1789 and Sociology,” in *On Morality and Society: Selected Writings*, ed. Robert N. Bellah (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 35.

⁶² Ellul, *New Demons*, 51.

⁶³ Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution*, 84.

**“FAREWELL TO THEE, IRELAND”:
IRISH IMMIGRANT GIRLS IN
AMERICA**

Erica Spangler

*Sad was the day we said farewell,
Dear native land, to thee;
And wander'd forth to find a home,
Beyond the stormy sea.
Hard then our fate; fast flow'd the
tears,
We tried to hide in vain,
At thought of those we left behind,
And might ne'er see again.¹*

-Anonymous

This poem exemplifies the feelings of the scores of Irish immigrants who left Ireland for opportunities abroad. Between 1815 and 1920, over five million Irish immigrants came to America.² Although historians have illuminated the Irish Immigrant exodus, many have failed to emphasize the great contribution the Irish women have made to American society. Historians such as Reginald Byron, author of *Irish in America*,³ and William Barnaby Faherty, who wrote *The St. Louis Irish*,⁴ have paid too little attention to the demographics and marriage patterns of the Irish immigrant women. When examining these factors one finds that many Irish immigrant women traveled single and

decided to remain single and support themselves. In Irish-American families, women usually dominated, and their values, especially their emphasis on education, helped to produce significant social mobility for their daughters growing up in America.

Several factors explain the high numbers of Irish immigrants. First, they felt that the situation in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century was unbearable. They believed that they could not be much worse off in America, so they wanted to leave Ireland.⁵ Helen Ross Hall immigrated to the United States in the late 1860s; she recalled her feeling about immigrating:

We talked about America a great deal and wondered and wondered if it really was as ideal as some said... I don't know just when we first decided to go to America. It may have been the night we sat by the pool in the moonlight and watched the great golden moon silently move westward. It seemed like sort of an omen and we felt that our future lay to the west beyond the ocean where all men were created equal.⁶

The terrible economic situation in Ireland reached its peak during the potato famine in mid-nineteenth century Ireland. The Irish existed mainly on potatoes. This dependence became disastrous in 1845 when “a little-known fungus” destroyed forty percent of the potato crop.⁷ The failure of the crop resulted in the death of some one million people.⁸ America became an escape for the starving poor of Ireland.

¹ Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 144.

² Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 140.

³ Reginald Byron, *Irish In America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

⁴ William Barnaby Faherty, *The St. Louis Irish* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2001).

⁵ Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 45.

⁶ Helen Ross Hall, “My Life,” edited by Marguerite Conroy, McLean County Museum of History Archives, Bloomington, Ill.

⁷ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 143.

⁸ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 143.

The famine and poverty in Ireland changed marriage patterns. Early marriages could be very costly. As historian Ronald Takaki claims, emigration became the only means for Irish men and women to attain early marriage and economic independence.⁹ Irish women found that many non-inheriting sons lacked the resources to marry and that their own possibilities for marriage were extremely limited without dowries.¹⁰ Only one sister might be able to marry, but the others were forced to compete for the few jobs that existed on the island.¹¹ Immigration to the United States provided young Irish men and women opportunities for work as well as marriage, and they began arriving in droves.¹²

Most emigrants were typically male before the famine, but Irish American women soon reached large numbers in the major cities. In Ireland women were often important contributors to their families incomes until the demand for hand-spun yarns declined in the mid 1800s.¹³ As a result, they became the migrants of choice within their families.¹⁴ Unlike other European women immigrating to America, Irish women traveled to America single without any male guardians. This was abnormal in the history of European emigration. In 1860 New York, Irish women outnumbered Irish men 117,000 to 87,000.¹⁵ This massive migration of women is praised

in a song by James Connally entitled "Labour in Ireland":

*Oh brave, brave Irish girls,
We well might call you brave
Should the least of all your perils
The Stormy ocean waves.*¹⁶

Most of the Irish immigrants were used to agricultural life in Ireland, but found that most employment was available in cities. In the urban setting, Irish women confronted problems of "poor nutrition, crowded housing, and contaminated water, as well as exhausting and perilous work."¹⁷ Irish women faced low pay and long hours in almost every line of work. For the most part, these women found jobs to support themselves, their families, and relatives in Ireland in the areas of domestic service, sewing, and some factory work. According to James Nolan, "In 1900, seventy-three percent of all Irish born women in the United States had jobs outside the home compared to sixty-two percent of British and fifty-nine percent of the Italian female immigrants."¹⁸ Irish women actually "suffered less overt job discrimination than did Irish men," because they faced little competition in their line of work.

Over half of Irish-born women worked as domestic servants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, compared to only nine percent of Italian female workers.¹⁹ They were mainly single women and were paid from eight to ten dollars a month.²⁰ Since the servants lived in the home, employers "could demand that they cook, clean, dust, iron, launder, scrub, and

⁹ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 73.

¹⁰ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 155.

¹¹ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 12.

¹² Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 83.

¹³ Ruth-Ann M. Harris, "Come You All Courageously: Irish Women In America Write Home," *Eire-Ireland* 36 (2001), 170.

¹⁴ Anne O'Connell, "Take Care of the Immigrant Girls: The Migration Process of Late Nineteenth-Century Irish Women," *Eire-Ireland* 35 (Fall/Winter 2000/2001), 133.

¹⁵ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 154.

¹⁶ Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*, 30.

¹⁷ Patricia Kelleher, "Maternal Strategies: Irish Women's Headship of Families in Gilded Age Chicago," *Journal of Women's History* 13 (2001), 85.

¹⁸ Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 69.

¹⁹ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 156.

²⁰ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 155.

mind children around the clock,” states historian Hasia R. Diner.²¹ As they did their long hours of labor, “servants were required to wear caps and aprons, badges of social inferiority.”²² Although the servants lived in the household, they were never considered part of the family. “They were present but invisible in a very intimate setting,” says Ronald Takaki.²³ There were many difficulties and hardships associated with domestic servant work. However, live-in domestic servants lived in healthier environments than other Irish workers. They lived in the best neighborhoods and ate the same food, although leftovers, as the rest of the household.²⁴

Many women preferred to work in factories because of the lack of privacy involved with living in an employer’s home. With domestic servitude, “it was not just her labor that was purchased, but the laborer herself,” explains Takaki.²⁵ Some Irish women were forced into factory labor, particularly married and widowed women with children.²⁶ According to Takaki, Irish women were prevalent in the New England textile mills of Lawrence, Holyoke, and Fall River, and they represented fifty-eight percent of the total workforce in the Lowell Mills.²⁷ With this occupation came low wages and dangerous working conditions. In 1874, for example, a fire in a Fall River mill claimed the lives of fourteen women, all of them Irish.²⁸ On January 10, 1860, Lowell’s Pemberton mill building collapsed, trapping nine hundred workers while a fire broke out. One hundred sixty women were seriously hurt and eighty-eight were killed.²⁹

Sewing was another occupation for Irish women. By 1900, Irish women made up a third of all seamstresses and dressmakers in the United States.³⁰ Married women and widows found sewing a way to combine watching their children while they needed for a living.³¹ For example, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the famous union leader, lived with her aunt in the Bronx, a widowed tailoress whose sewing supported her and five children.³² This was not an option with domestic or factory work.

Irish women sent much of their wages home to their families. Irish immigrant women working in the United States sent over five million dollars to Ireland.³³ This money was often used for their sisters’ dowries.³⁴ The money also provided means for the transport of family members to America. Anne O’Connell attributes the mass movement of female immigrants to a chain network of women helping other female and male relatives across the sea.³⁵ Mary Mountain, a domestic servant in Gardner, Massachusetts earned enough money in domestic service to bring over several sisters and brothers who together established the Irish community in that town.³⁶

Many Irish women decided to stay single after reaching the United States. They found that they could support themselves without the help of a husband. Having children would also make earning a wage even more difficult. The most common work, domestic servitude, often required women to live within the employers home, making it impossible for Irish women to live with their children. There was less

²¹ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 93.

²² Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 57.

²³ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 157.

²⁴ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 90.

²⁵ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 158.

²⁶ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 74.

²⁷ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 158.

²⁸ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 159.

²⁹ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 159.

³⁰ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 159.

³¹ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 77.

³² Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 69.

³³ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 70.

³⁴ Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 77.

³⁵ O’Connell, “Take Care of the Immigrant Girls,” 133.

³⁶ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 37.

marriage in the United States among the Irish than any other group.³⁷ According to Diner, “The vast majority of prominent Irish women—labor leaders, school teachers, religious leaders, and actresses—never married.”³⁸ Staying single allowed these women to support themselves and have more control over their life course.

Irish women who decided to marry had different households than other immigrant women. Many Irish families were mother-centered, as Irish men’s status and power in the home declined after migration because the women had jobs, education, and respect.³⁹ Irish women were an essential part of the Irish workforce in the United States. In the late nineteenth century over half of Chicago’s fifteen to twenty-four year old Irish workers were female.⁴⁰ Irishwomen’s leadership of families “assumed motherhood entailed not just responsibility, but also rightful authority over sons and daughters who remained under their care.”⁴¹ Irish women made strides for equality within their households.

Unfortunately, many Irish women lost their husbands to death and desertion. As a result, twenty percent of Irish families were female headed.⁴² A study of 572 desertion cases from around the world found that the deserted were overwhelmingly Irish.⁴³ Some separations in Irish marriages were mutual, and Irish women would sometimes be the ones to end the marriages. The dangerous jobs that the Irishmen were forced to take left many Irish women widows.⁴⁴ These included railway work,

factory work, and fighting during the American Civil War.

The female-headed households of Irish women reflected their hard work and courage. Female headship should be regarded as an accomplishment, not as a failure.⁴⁵ In most cases, women had little choice but to take charge and take care of their family on their own. The only other realistic alternative was having no family at all.⁴⁶ Mary Malone came to Chicago nearly forty years of age and a widow in 1874 with her youngest son, three-year-old Patsy, and her oldest daughter Kate. She desired to reunite herself and her five children in the United States. She placed Kate in a domestic service job and took a live-in job at Cook County Hospital. She was able to bring her entire family to Chicago eighteen months later but was not able to live with them. Her daughters, Kate and Julia, held jobs while she paid for her other children to attend school and live with “the Sisters” at the orphan Asylum. Three years after immigration, Malone was able to reunite her family into one home, with the exception of Julia who worked nearby.⁴⁷ Malone’s accomplishment is an example of the hard work and determination required for female headship of families in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There were great difficulties holding families together with one paycheck, difficulties that deeply affected Irish immigrant children. As mentioned earlier, the chief jobs for single mothers were factory work and sewing, if those women desired to live with their children. Women would have their relatives or older siblings watch their children while they worked in the factories, or they could sew at home while taking care of their children themselves. In either case, the hard work of

³⁷ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 47.

³⁸ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 49.

³⁹ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 46.

⁴⁰ Patricia Kelleher, “Young Irish Workers: Class Implications of Men’s and Women’s Experiences in Gilded Age Chicago,” *Eire-Ireland* 36 (2001), 156.

⁴¹ Kelleher, “Maternal Strategies,” 96.

⁴² Kelleher, “Maternal Strategies,” 84.

⁴³ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 59.

⁴⁴ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 61.

⁴⁵ Kelleher, “Maternal Strategies,” 97.

⁴⁶ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*, 97.

⁴⁷ Kelleher, “Maternal Strategies,” 82.

these women formed impressions on their daughter's future goals. Elizabeth Flynn recalled in her memoirs:

The change from the pleasant clean little city of Concord, to the drab bleak textile center of Manchester, was sufficient to impress even a five-year-old child. We lived there nearly three years. The gray mills in Manchester stretched like prisons along the banks of the Merrimac River; fifty percent of the workers were women and they earned a dollar a day.... The "mill children" left school early to take dinner pails to their parents. The mothers took time off in the mills to nurse their babies who were cared for by elderly relatives.⁴⁸

The young girls saw the difficulty of their mothers' work. Few had the desire to continue in their mothers' line of work in factories or households. "In 1900, only nineteen percent of the Irish women born in America worked as servants or laundresses, compared to sixty-one percent of the immigrant generation."⁴⁹ The American born Irish women were entering white-collar employment as secretaries, nurses, and teachers.⁵⁰

The main reason the second generation of Irish women were able to enter into the higher level of employment was education. The Irish tended to live in the cities where schooling was readily available. When the Irish migrated to small towns, they built their own schools. Mrs. John Dudley's family immigrated to America during her early childhood; they moved from Chicago

to Nebraska in 1871. She recalled her early schooling in an interview conducted in the 1930s: "At first there was no school in the neighborhood. After a few years we built a small school building. We had three months of school during the year. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography was taught."⁵¹ Similarly, Georgiana Trotter helped with advancements in education in her town of Bloomington, Illinois, in the late nineteenth century. The town elected her to the Board of Education and used her family-owned lumber company to construct a number of school buildings, including St. Mary's Parochial School. When she died, "deep feelings of regret" engulfed the community. As one writer explained, "her active life was interwoven with many of Bloomington's early enterprises. Her never tiring zeal responded to all efforts for the advancement of public improvements and the cause of education."⁵²

The Irish took advantage of their opportunities to attend school. School enrollment of Irish born females was 91.4 percent compared to 90.9 percent of American born males and 90.5 percent of American born females.⁵³ Irish females held high literacy rates. Between 1899 and 1910, 97.4 percent of Irish immigrant women could read. Given these literacy rates, it is not surprising that Irish women were able to acquire white-collar jobs. The rate of Irish women teachers was particularly high. Helen Ross Hall, for example, had four daughters who became schoolteachers.⁵⁴ As

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl: My First Life (1906-1926)* (New York: International Publishers, 1955), 36.

⁴⁹ Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*, 43.

⁵⁰ Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 160

⁵¹ "Mrs. John Donnelly," available from <http://rs6.loc.gov/amhome.html>, accessed 3 April 2002. This is the site for the Library of Congress' historical collections. The interview was done by Frederick W Kaul, employed by the federal writers project, in 1938.

⁵² Obituary of Georgina Trotter, no date, McLean County Museum of History Archives, Bloomington, Ill.

⁵³ Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 69.

⁵⁴ Hall, "My Life."

Diner rightly concludes, “school teaching for the second generation was what domestic service had been for the first.”⁵⁵ These women took advantage of the opportunities their mothers gave them through their hard work and sacrifice.

Irish immigrant women broke through social barriers because of their hard work, unique family life, and high mobility. They took advantage of the opportunities in America and paved the way for their success and that of their daughters. They went from poor tenements to the symbolic “lace curtains” of the middle class. They may have been afraid, but they did not let fear defeat them when they left their beloved homes and families for the hope of a bright future abroad. These Irish women immigrants sacrificed their love for their homeland so that future generations would have the opportunity to better their station in the world. A poem by an anonymous author captures these sentiments, illuminating the determination that guided Irish women in America:

*Farewell to thee, Ireland the land of
our birth
The pride and the glory, the gem of
the earth
We sail with sad hearts to a land far
away
In search of that bread that may fail
if we stay*⁵⁶

-Anonymous

⁵⁵ Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*, 96.

⁵⁶ Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*, 30.

SLAVE AND SCRIPTURE: BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF AN AFRICAN- AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

Mark Frederickson

In the antebellum South, both slaves and slave owners examined the Bible's role in society. To the slaves, the Bible showed that "God moved *within* human history" to aid oppressed people.¹ In contrast, slaveholders developed a "slaveholding ethic" from the Bible that "provided powerful moral justification" for the continuation of slavery.² This examination suggests the Bible was not being used as a universal guideline for Christian conduct, but rather as a living document being applied to fit the needs of specific people. Slaves were drawn to the Scriptures because the Bible spoke to them in a way that helped them make sense of their lives. This engagement ultimately created the foundation for the emergence of a specific African-American interpretation of Christianity.

This essay focuses on how slaves interpreted the Bible to produce a form of Christianity that related to their experience. Throughout this distinct interpretation of the Bible, a pattern emerges where the initial pragmatic application of the Bible led to

higher questions regarding morality and abstract Biblical applications. The analysis begins with the pragmatic applications of Scripture, such as the reasons why Christianity appealed to slaves and the ways in which slaves identified with Biblical characters and stories. It then moves on to more complex and abstract applications of the Bible that resulted in slaves experiencing the moral dilemma of serving two masters, the issue of moral superiority, the problem of achieving spiritual equality, and lastly, whether vengeance could be justified religiously. Slaves' development of a distinct Biblical interpretation was a perpetual and evolving process that further defined slaves' resourcefulness and creativity in establishing meaning in their lives.

Biblical interpretation was significant simply because of the impact religion had on nineteenth-century American society, especially the South. The early Republic experienced dramatic political and cultural changes, and Americans, even nonbelievers, saw religion as a stabilizing factor.³ Religion was also arguably the central component of the antebellum South's culture and society. From one perspective, religion was used as a tool for maintaining social control rather than promoting salvation.⁴ A former Texas slave illustrated this use of Christianity: "We went to church on the place and you ought to heard that preachin'. Obey your massa and missy, don't steal chickens and eggs and meat, but nary a word 'bout havin' a soul to save."⁵

¹ Milton C. Sernett, "Slaveholding Religion and the Christianity of Christ," in Milton C. Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 102.

² Randy J. Sparks, "Religion in the Pre-Civil War South," in John B. Boles, ed., *A Companion to the American South* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 170.

³ Donald C. Swift, *The American Religious Experience* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), xiii.

⁴ George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972), 36.

⁵ George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972). Federal Writers' Project, *Slave Narratives* (Hereafter FWPSN), Texas, Part 1, 135.

Religion also saw its influences in the southern defense of slavery and secession, community, political and social reform movements, family, political party affiliation, economics, and cultural distinctiveness. Thus, the “most religious age in the entire history of the South” gave birth to the way in which the antebellum South became identified and subsequently defined.⁶

In addition to broadly influencing southern society and justifying the enslavement of human beings, religion also affected southerners’ moral orientation. Religion helped to clarify the individual’s role in greater questions of meaning and existence.⁷ The Bible provided guidelines for personal conduct that its adherents considered above the laws of the land; God was ultimately the righteous judge. Albert Barnes, a prominent northern Presbyterian minister, considered the Bible the “acknowledged standard of morals” in America:

The questions of morals and religion—of right and wrong, know no geographical limits; are bounded by no conventional lines... [T]hey are questions which no existing compacts or constitutions forbid us to examine; and though there *are* rights which one part of a country has which are not to be invaded by others, yet there are no enclosures within which the questions of right and wrong may not be carried with the utmost freedom.⁸

Barnes’ statement failed to acknowledge secular influences, such as civil laws and political offices, in solving larger problems. It may also have overestimated the Bible’s impact on Americans’ lives. However, the Bible’s centrality in the early nineteenth-century South should not be underestimated, for “evangelical Protestantism came to dominate the religious life of most Southerners,” which affected “all but a few Southern men and women, black as well as white.”⁹ In short, many Americans, whether slave owners or slaves, turned to religion for moral guidance and reassurance.

Slaves embraced the doctrines of Christianity for many reasons. Because of the obvious cultural differences between Africa and the New World, African gods and cults no longer applied. The middle passage across the Atlantic led many Africans to believe their gods, who seemed unwilling to protect them in an obvious time of despair, had abandoned them. Furthermore, the societies of western Africa had long been exposed to other customs and culture. In a tradition of openness, the conquered and conquerors often adopted each other’s gods.¹⁰ Slaves’ resourcefulness became apparent from this experience because the New World survivors devised new religious structures to cope with the demands of slavery.

The demographics of African slaves provided additional reasons for the diminishing significance of African gods. Most slaves were initially young males who, as sociologist E. Franklin Frazier noted, are “poor bearers of the cultural heritage of a people.”¹¹ In addition, the reproduction rate of African-American slaves meant that the

⁶ Clement Eaton, *The Civilization of the Old South* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 181.

⁷ Swift, *The American Religious Experience*, xiii.

⁸ Albert Barnes, *Scriptural Views of Slavery* (Philadelphia: Parry & McMillan, 1855), 20-21.

⁹ Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁰ Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 298-299.

¹¹ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 1-2.

number of imported adult slaves from Africa decreased. By the time of emancipation, the United States had ten times the number of slaves it had imported from abroad. In contrast, at the end of the slave trade and slavery in select Caribbean countries, islands such as Saint Domingue had only half as many slaves as they imported from abroad.¹² These numbers briefly illustrate the generational success of American slaves.

Lastly, religion became a form of social cohesion for slave communities. Within those communities, slaves used religion, particularly the Bible, as a means of education. Reading and teaching the Bible's messages to other slaves allowed for an informal education, and in some cases led to further educational pursuits and even literacy. Such education resulted in personal pride and accomplishment.

But the main reason why the messages contained in Scripture appealed to slaves was because they provided meaning in slaves' lives. Chattel bondage left little room for the hope of anything better, which created a vacuum that Scripture filled. According to Scripture, all devout Christians, including slaves, were equal in God's eyes. The teachings of Jesus promised salvation and hope for a life beyond the here-and-now. Beyond salvation, heaven furnished thoughts of freedom, even if it was not secular freedom. The Bible contained messages that gave hope to those slaves who were uneducated. A former Alabama slave described himself as being "unlearned and ignorant" on four separate occasions during an interview.¹³ This slave drew upon a passage from Acts 4:13, which speaks of the hope and possibilities for the unlearned: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary

men, they were astonished..."¹⁴ The story of Exodus also appealed to slaves, for it was a way of expressing their sense of historical identity as a subjugated people. The commonality of experience between the story and the Africans was enslavement. What is most striking about this common bond was that Christian slaves knew the ending of the Exodus story, which had profound implications for their own unfinished story.¹⁵ In many ways, the Bible appealed to slaves because it gave them hope. It was a way to make sense out of, and give purpose to, a chaotic and burdensome experience. In summary, the Bible appealed to slaves because the stories and lessons applied to their circumstances. But how they identified with Biblical characters and stories is critical to the understanding of how slaves interpreted Biblical passages.

Slaves hoped for the eventual day of liberation, and they subsequently drew descriptions from the Bible as a way to predict their own deliverance. This pragmatic use of Biblical narratives gave the slaves a common identity with the ancient Jews and a hope they could find nowhere else in the New World. This slave identification with Biblical characters and stories explains how slaves used religion as a way to cope with their struggle under the yoke of slavery.¹⁶

Biblical characters afforded a way for slaves to relate themselves to other oppressed peoples throughout history—a connection that had no meaning for white slave owners and non-slave owners. The Hebrews were the Biblical characters slaves most strongly identified with because of their common heritage of enslavement. Like the Hebrews in Egypt, African-American

¹² Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 90.

¹³ FWPSN, Indiana, 299-305.

¹⁴ Acts 4:13, *Holy Bible*, New International Version (hereafter NIV).

¹⁵ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 311.

¹⁶ Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup*, 32.

slaves were a despised minority in a foreign land.¹⁷ Both Jews and Africans endured the hardships of bondage against their will. Exodus 1:14 alludes to the hardships the Hebrews experienced, which American slaves observed and lived through daily: “They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.”¹⁸

Beyond identification with the Hebrews as a people in general, Joseph was one particularly important individual whose life experience spoke to slaves. Initially, Joseph was stolen and sold into slavery against his will, just as Africans were. Genesis states: “[H]is brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.”¹⁹ Africans, too, were stolen from their homeland by other Africans, if not by kin. But how does the experience of being stolen apply to the slaves who were born in America and knew no other homeland? Being stolen took on a different meaning for American born slaves. These slaves suffered the loss of their dignity as human beings, their rights as people born and living on American soil, and their traditional culture and practices as a foreign people. Traces of African culture survived, but eventually became diluted by the long separation from Africa and subsequent exposure to European cultures. In addition, the historical purposes of enslavement had not changed. Slavery still existed as a source of manual labor. Techniques of bondage were also similar even if conditions were not, as Psalm 105 illustrates: “And he sent a man before them—Joseph, sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons.”²⁰ With so many

similarities to the Jews, American slaves easily related to their situation in Biblical history.

Biblical stories provided more than just personal identification with Biblical characters. They also assisted in explaining present suffering, and more importantly, gave slaves hope for their future because they knew how certain stories ended. If the slaves believed they too were God’s chosen people, then why would God not help them just as He previously helped His *other* chosen people, the Israelites? The liberation of God’s chosen people was one message slaves believed the Bible foretold. Slaves believed Biblical stories were reoccurring in the present day; the past messages of the Bible were being played out all over again.

Slaves contended that the story of Exodus and the eleventh chapter in the Book of Daniel were direct references to the American political currents of the mid-nineteenth century and the drift to Civil War. Their views of deliverance from slavery had obvious connections to the story of Exodus, which, above any Biblical story, was the most applicable to how slaves viewed chattel bondage. Indeed, upon encountering southern slaves, a Union Army chaplain noted the emphasis they placed on Exodus: “There is no part of the Bible with which they are so familiar as the story of the deliverance of the children of Israel.”²¹ A former Florida slave retold his perception of the slaves’ exodus from slavery, which was not a journey from a foreign land, but rather one of emancipation and subsequent gain of freedom: slaves would “pray out loud for God to help ‘em and in time you see, He did.”²² Another former slave approached the story of Exodus differently, insisting that

¹⁷ Barnes, *Scriptural Views of Slavery*, 86-87.

¹⁸ Exo 1:8, NIV.

¹⁹ Gen 37:28, NIV.

²⁰ Psa 105:17-18, NIV.

²¹ As cited in Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 311. From W.G. Kiphant, Letter of May 9, 1864, Decatur, Ala., A.M.A. Archives, Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, New Orleans.

²² FWPSN, Florida, 142.

slave owners deserved to be punished just as the pursuing Egyptians had been: “I hate white people and de flood waters gwine drown some mo.”²³ The story of Exodus had a distinct meaning for slaves that was inaccessible to whites.

The eleventh chapter in the Book of Daniel further mirrored American political animosities on the verge of the Civil War. Titled *The Kings of the South and the North*, the story told of northern kings so powerful that the “forces of the South will be powerless to resist.”²⁴ Eventually, the northern kings triumphed over the southern kings who held Israel in captivity. As Albert J. Raboteau mentioned, “The destruction of Israel’s enemies easily and naturally fit the slaves’ desire that whites suffer just retribution for the brutality of slavery.”²⁵ For most of America, the North’s victory over the Confederacy solved the ultimate question regarding the definition of the Union. But to Christian slaves it was also a fulfillment of God’s plan for His chosen people. Not only did God travel throughout history, but the deliverance of His chosen people proved to the slaves that He controlled history.

Slave owners also turned to the Bible, though not necessarily to identify with its characters or stories. Instead, slave owners needed the Bible to apply to African-Americans specifically as slaves.²⁶ This specific interpretation was crucial to the overall existence of southern society where “[n]othing escaped, nothing, no one,” from feeling the effects of slavery.²⁷ Proponents

of slavery who looked to the Bible for justification could point to the fact that Biblical patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all had slaves. Thus, the existence of slavery itself was viewed as consistent with God’s will. 1 Corinthians states: “Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called?”²⁸ To slave owners, this passage justified slavery as an institution during Biblical times through the present day.

Once slavery was seen as valid, proponents of slavery used Biblical passages to maintain social order among their slaves. Ephesians states: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ...Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men...”²⁹ In addition, 1 Timothy mentions that all those “under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered.”³⁰ Both passages refer to slave conduct towards masters and how that conduct reflects obedience to God. Here one witnesses how masters used the Bible as a tool of social control, since Christian slaves avoided disobedience to God. Understanding the ways the slaves and abolitionists and the slave owners interpreted the Bible illustrates the complexities and ambiguities associated with the question of slavery and religion.

Slaves’ distinct interpretation of Scripture allowed them to better understand the Word of God, but it also led to a moral dilemma of having to serve two masters. Protestantism was the dominant tradition in the antebellum South. Fundamentally, Protestantism is guided by self-determination—the belief in salvation

²³ FWPSN, Virginia, 11.

²⁴ Dan 11:15, NIV.

²⁵ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 312.

²⁶ Sernett, *Black Religion and American Evangelicalism: White Protestantism, Plantation Missions, and the Flowering of the Negro Community, 1781-1865* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1975), 59.

²⁷ Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York, 1946), 117.

²⁸ 1 Cor 7:20-21, NIV.

²⁹ Eph 6:5, 7-8, NIV.

³⁰ 1 Tim 6:1-2, NIV.

through faith alone. A potential result of this is staunch individualism, which conflicted heavily with the paternalistic nature of slavery in which masters were the sole providers for their slaves. Chattel bondage did not allow slaves the freedom to act for themselves and live their lives according to the doctrine of self-determination the Bible supposedly professed. What was a slave to do when confronted with a demand that conflicted with Christian ethics, such as when a preacher tried “to make the niggers steal from the mass’rs”?³¹ In outward expressions, slaves often accepted their situation and their masters’ paternalistic treatment as consolation while on earth, as a former slave suggested: “Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.”³² Internally, however, slaves transformed this moral dilemma as a way to achieve a superior status in the eyes of God.

If the masters had the upper hand on earth, slaves believed they would finally get the upper hand in the kingdom of heaven. Slaves understood that they and their masters would one day stand before the Divine throne “where God would balance the scales.”³³ In retelling the story of her master’s “awful mean” treatment, a former slave noted: “I can’t lie ‘cause I got to go before my God, and she’s [the mistress] dead and can’t speak for herself...”³⁴ Since slaves believed their Christian practices and interpretation of the Bible were taken less out of context, their reading of Scripture confirmed their moral superiority.³⁵ One moral precept of the Bible is to watch over fellow brothers and sisters, and slaves scrutinized the words and messages of their white masters and preachers with that

precept in mind. As Milton C. Sernett observed, “Slaves were able to judge inconsistency of conduct by holding up the performance of their masters and mistresses against the mirror of common humanity and the Christian Gospel.”³⁶ Slaves often found that since “[t]he Gospel was so mixed with slavery,” preachers lacked the moral authority to profess “Christianity Proper.”³⁷ Instead, slave-holding preachers were conveying a distorted version of Christianity.

The pulpit provided one stage on which moral superiority was defined. Preaching the Gospel required an obligation outside of oneself; a preacher was a minister of God’s Word and was responsible for getting the message to Christians. Fulfilling that moral obligation correctly and justly was a large responsibility. One black slave preacher “trembled at [the] thought of preaching the gospel, but something seemed to push [him] forward in that direction.”³⁸ Often, as in the case with white preachers, the pulpit was indeed a place where Christian morals were challenged and defined.

Peter Randolph, an ex-slave, provided a first hand account of the inability of a Christian preacher (Brother Shell, a slave-owning minister) to adhere to that moral responsibility. After a moving Gospel reading in which he was brought to tears, Randolph noted that “Brother Shell had at length felt the spirit of the Lord in his heart; and many went away rejoicing that a heart of stone had become softened.”³⁹ However, on Monday morning Brother Shell was back flogging a slave. This eyewitness account from Randolph easily applied to other white

³¹ FWPSN, *Unwritten History of Slavery*, 34.

³² FWPSN, *Indiana*, 301.

³³ Sernett, *African American Religious History*, 6.

³⁴ FWPSN, *Unwritten History of Slavery*, 277.

³⁵ Sernett, *African American Religious History*, 7.

³⁶ Sernett, *Black Religion*, 87.

³⁷ Peter Randolph, “Plantation Churches: Visible and Invisible,” in Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History*, 64.

³⁸ FWPSN, *Indiana*, 300.

³⁹ Randolph, “Plantation Churches,” in Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History*, 64.

preachers who abused the Gospel and its intended purpose.

As in other instances where slaves turned to the Bible for justification, the Bible again provided the evidence slaves needed to validate their moral superiority. Randolph alluded to the Biblical story of Ananias and Sapphira and the betrayal of trust in Acts 5:1-11 as an example. Ananias was entrusted with money, which he kept from his wife. Upon learning of this, the Apostle Peter stated, “What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.”⁴⁰ Randolph referred to this story because it mentions a person who abused the trust given unto him. Brother Shell and other white slave-owning preachers, like Ananias, had also lied to men. More importantly, they lied to God. Slaves witnessed this tendency of white preachers and developed a sense of moral superiority based on their uncorrupted practice of Christianity.

If slaves had masters who were guided by Christian principles, slaves were a part of a Christianity that brought with it spiritual equality among its adherents. Although it was not political or social equality, it was the basis for the hope of subsequently achieving complete equality. As Ira Berlin mentioned, “The rush for spiritual equality became entwined with the profound desire for worldly equality.”⁴¹ But being equal in God’s eyes had its positive and negative consequences for slaves here on earth.

Spiritual equality affected slave-master relationships. Slaves who had benevolent Christian masters felt they were blessed by God’s grace. This motivated slaves to consciously adhere to proper Christian conduct when interacting with their masters. For example, one slave remarked: “I allus

treat ebrybody as good as I kin, and I uses my manners as good as I knows how, and de Lawd sho’ has took good keer of me.”⁴² Another slave looked forward to celebrating this spiritual equality, if not on earth, then in Heaven. “It won’t be long now ‘fore us will walk dem golden streets han’ in han’.”⁴³ This former slave’s account showed a rare fellowship shared between master and slave, one marked by humanity and decency.

Plantation missionaries introduced slaves to communal aspects of Christianity to which they previously had minimal exposure. The impact of the missionaries led to the “increase in the size and structure of the black evangelical community” overall.⁴⁴ Out of the emerging black religious communities came a certain religious identity that spoke of spiritual equality. The Baptist and Methodist denominations were most common because of their popularity among the southern whites. But the Baptist and Methodist churches appealed to slaves for reasons other than geography. The Baptists in particular allowed for greater participation among the congregation, something slaves readily embraced rather than sitting in the gallery in the rear of the church as they had done before. If slaves could identify with “their” church and worship “their” black Christianity, then how could it not be equal to the white man’s Christianity? It was no longer an internal spiritual equality that slaves held. Rather, their identity and equality became apparent through outward expression.

These examples of spiritual equality show a positive relationship between master and slave. However, negative associations with spiritual equality also resulted.

⁴⁰ Acts 5:4, NIV.

⁴¹ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 139.

⁴² FWPSN, Alabama, 13.

⁴³ FWPSN, Indiana, 358.

⁴⁴ Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 149.

Although some slave owners encouraged their slaves to convert to Christianity, many slave owners viewed religious exposure and conversion as a threat to the social order. Baptism was one important reason why slave owners objected to slave conversion. Leviticus states: “[L]ove your neighbor as yourself.”⁴⁵ If Christian slave owners baptized their slaves, that implicitly meant a declaration of the slave’s equality of rights with other Christians.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, conversions did occur, but with the purpose of applying the Bible to slaves as an inferior race of people instead of as fellow Christians. Charles Colcock Jones and other plantation missionaries led the battle of carrying the Gospel to the slaves. Their goal was simple: to propagate the Biblical ideals of temperance, faithfulness, forgiveness, and compassion to the slaves in hopes of making them Christians who would be easier to manage. However, slave revolts “led by black men who claimed religious validation for their causes, made slaveholders wary of missionaries’ assurances” that Christianity would have calming effects on slaves.⁴⁷

If a slave was spiritually equal to whites, then why should the equality stop there? Should equality be political and social as well? If so, who determined this step? Slaves sometimes determined this step for equality through insurrection, which, as Berlin noted, was one last card slaves could play.⁴⁸ The scope of this essay precludes a detailed discussion of slave resistance. I will, however, look into how slaves justified insurrection as a righteous action according to their interpretations of the Bible.

Slavery “put a [slave] not only in peril of liberty, limb, and life itself,” but also created tempting opportunities that would “send him in haste to the bar of God with a lie upon his

lips.”⁴⁹ At what point would slaves take up vengeance and retaliate against their masters, thus lying to God and jeopardizing their attainment of salvation? A slave who adhered to proper Christian behavior, was loyal, and had a benevolent master would less likely entertain feelings of vengeance. In contrast, a slave who adhered to proper Christian behavior and was loyal but had a brutal master would more likely seek vengeance for the evils of slavery. Some slaves believed insurrection was exempt from God’s judgment because the action defied an obvious evil and was not an act of personal revenge. Denmark Vessey and Nat Turner were such slaves.

In 1822, Vessey led a conspiracy to revolt in Charleston, South Carolina that was based upon Biblical justification. Although Berlin stated Vessey “could quote liberally from the Declaration of Independence,” indicating that he was motivated by the revolutionary currents of the era, fellow conspirators of Vessey alleged that he used scriptural texts to gain support.⁵⁰ One conspirator confessed that Vessey “read in the Bible where God commanded...it was no sin for us to do so, for the Lord had commanded us to do it.”⁵¹ According to Vessey, his insurrection was justified because it was sanctioned by the Bible.

Nine years later Nat Turner led the bloodiest slave revolt in American history in Southampton, Virginia after he felt “directed

⁴⁵ Lev 19:18, NIV.

⁴⁶ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 101.

⁴⁷ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 165.

⁴⁸ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 2.

⁴⁹ James W. C. Pennington, “Great Moral Dilemma,” in Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History*, 87.

⁵⁰ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 362.

⁵¹ As cited in Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 163. From “A Narrative of the Conspiracy and Intended Insurrection, Amongst a Portion of the Negroes in the State of South Carolina in the Year 1822,” John Oliver Killens, ed., *The Trial Record of Denmark Vessey* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 11, 14, 46, 95-97, 159.

to act by an omen from God.”⁵² Turner was a student of the Bible who testified that from a young age he was “ordained for some great purpose in the hands of the Almighty.”⁵³ The insurrection was the battle of good versus evil that Turner believed the Bible foretold. Turner could be seen as a quasi-prophet, for he used what the Bible prophesied to inspire followers to act upon the Word of God. According to Rawick, “The accounts of these uprisings indicate that they were preceded by all-night prayer meetings.”⁵⁴ Righteous vengeance undoubtedly resulted from the culmination of slaves’ interpretations of the Bible.

The Slave Narratives provide us insight into the ways that slaves interpreted the Bible and how slaves applied those interpretations to their lives. Beyond that, the Narratives shed light on how slaves viewed mainstream religion in the American South during the first half of the nineteenth century. According to Sernett, “Black criticism of the hypocrisy of Southern white religion [was] a prominent theme in the slave narratives.”⁵⁵ Out of the Slave Narratives comes an indication of the role the Bible played in slaves’ lives. As Erskine Clarke commented, slaves sought the Word of God not only for the hope of salvation beyond the here-and-now, but also “to forge resources for resistance in the present.”⁵⁶ One slave stated after emancipation that “[t]he people don’t notice God now because they’re free.”⁵⁷ Her testimony suggests that some slaves only used Christianity as a

coping resource. Biblical interpretation did not eliminate the horrendous conditions of slavery for slaves, but it arguably made their situation more tolerable. It also enabled slaves to get “situate[d] in a universe which demand[ed] interpretation.”⁵⁸

Both slaves and slave owners turned to the Bible to understand the “peculiar institution.” Slaves’ examination of Scripture thrust the Bible into the course of history yet again, as it was sought out for its historical relevance by an oppressed people. In the course of that interpretation, slaves created a specific Christianity apart from mainstream white Christianity in nineteenth-century America. Slaves’ interpretations of Scripture challenged the universalism of Christianity and suggested that there are “Christianities” instead of a single faith. Ultimately, the flowering of a distinct African-American church bloomed within American society, a church and version of Christianity that was “fundamentally different from what had gone before.”⁵⁹ The difference was based on the fundamental guide of Christianity: the Bible. The black church and religious community—what Raboteau, Sernett, and others called “invisible”—had its foundation within the pages of the Bible.

⁵² Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 164.

⁵³ *The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the late Insurrection in Southampton, Va. as fully and voluntarily made to Thomas R. Gray...*, in Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History*, 91.

⁵⁴ Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup*, 112.

⁵⁵ Sernett, *Black Religion*, 87.

⁵⁶ Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin’ Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), xii.

⁵⁷ FWPSN, South Carolina, Part 1, 120.

⁵⁸ Sernett, *African American Religious History*, 8.

⁵⁹ Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, xiv.

THE UNION NAVAL BLOCADER AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CONFEDERACY

Lee Dvorak

Since the day General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, debate has raged over why the Confederacy lost the Civil War. Some historians have claimed that the Union naval blockade was the main reason for the South's logistical problems that nearly all historians blame, in part, for the Confederacy's defeat. For example, a recent major analysis by David Surdam goes so far as to argue that the blockade actually caused the South to lose the war.¹ Other historians, however, provide convincing evidence that the blockade was not even the most important factor in the South's supply problems, let alone in explaining why the North won. This paper will synthesize that evidence and demonstrate that the blockade had only marginal impact on the Confederacy and that other factors were more responsible for causing the logistical problems that weakened the South's war effort.

In order for a nation to successfully wage war, it must first have at its disposal the materials to wage that war. These materials include not only the weapons of war but also all of the resources necessary to sustain that nation and its population throughout the conflict. At the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, the Confederacy lacked many of these essential materials and would either have to produce them or get them from outside its borders. Ultimately, the Confederacy would fail to meet either of

these requirements to the degree necessary to defeat the Union. In the overall strategy of the Civil War, the blockade was the Union's effort to prevent the Confederacy from obtaining those war materials from outside its own borders.

Just days after the fall of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln issued his Blockade Proclamation, with the aim of posting warships to interdict commerce in and out of the South's major ports. Lincoln believed that a blockade would serve two important purposes: first, it would reduce the South's access to imported war material; and second, it would demonstrate to foreign governments his intention to defeat the rebellion. These objectives depended upon the blockade's effectiveness. Indeed, if the blockade was not effective, foreign powers would not recognize it.

At the outbreak of hostilities, the Union Navy had only forty-two operational vessels, and many of these were off at foreign ports. This meager force faced the daunting task of guarding numerous Southern ports and over three thousand miles of coastline. To be effective, the blockade would have to stop the flow of supplies through all of these locations, in all types of weather and sea conditions. Given these difficulties, as historian Frank Owsley observes, "neither the South nor Europe dreamed that the United States could blockade the South."²

At the same time that the Union blockade was established, the Confederacy faced the immediate task of supplying its army. Until it could establish the manufacturing capacity to produce the necessary weapons itself, the South would have to import those weapons. As events would turn out, "home production never reached a level where it could supply even one-half of the military's needs. Imported

¹ David G. Surdam, *Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

² Frank Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 251.

supplies were vital to the Confederacy's existence."³ Confederate purchasing agents were sent to Europe to buy the materials of war on the open market. They needed both weapons for the Army and ships for the Confederate Navy. Whether they could get through the blockade, however, remained to be seen.

The success or failure of the blockade would largely depend on a new generation of fast ships, the steamers. The first steamer to run the blockade was the *Bermuda*, an iron-hulled merchantman with a large carrying capacity. The *Bermuda* was loaded in England with private goods and Confederate munitions, including eighteen rifled field pieces, four heavy seacoast guns, 6,500 British Enfield rifles, and 20,000 cartridges. The *Bermuda* arrived at Savannah, Georgia, on 18 September 1861 and reported seeing no blockaders.⁴ The weapons brought in by the *Bermuda* helped fill a desperate need of the Confederacy.

The distribution of those very weapons, however, would uncover a problem that plagued the Confederacy throughout the entire war. Army officers and government officials from different states struggled with each other over possession of the arms. General Lawton seized 3,000 Enfield rifles for the Georgia militia and Governor Brown tried to seize any private arms that were on the ship.⁵ For the rest of the war, those who wound up with the supplies were not those for whom the supplies were intended and who may not have had the most critical need. This issue was part of a larger mindset that hampered the Confederate war effort. Confederate politicians believed that each unit, and most of all, each State, was independent, not only from the Union but

from the Confederacy itself. Perhaps the worst example of this was when Georgia Governor Brown, in a power struggle with the Confederate Government and in direct defiance of President Davis, furloughed the armies protecting Atlanta and let the Union Army under General Sherman march into Atlanta virtually unopposed. Some historians have argued that the Confederacy "died of State's rights," and such an example is strong evidence of that.

Individual Confederate citizens also put themselves ahead of the needs of the Confederacy, constantly hampering the war effort. For example, the desire for luxury items from Europe for private use directly competed with the need for war supplies. Precious cargo space on blockade-runners was used for these luxury items at the expense of guns and ammunition. "As profit in luxury goods was considerably greater than in war supplies," explains historian Spencer Tucker, "much of the trade was in consumer goods rather than more important military supplies."⁶ A classic, if fictional example of this idea is the blockade-runner of Hollywood fame, Captain Rhett Butler from the movie *Gone With The Wind*. Like Butler, many of those who ran the blockade did so transporting silk dresses and fine hats for personal profit instead of bringing guns and cannons for the Confederate cause. This evidence indicates that even when the blockade was successfully run, the supplies that did get through sometimes did not consist of what was needed for the war effort.

To support the argument that the blockade was not the proximate cause of the Confederate defeat, evidence must be provided that proves the blockade was ineffective; this requires a more detailed examination of the facts. The Confederacy

³ Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 226.

⁴ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 50.

⁵ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 51.

⁶ Spencer Tucker, *A Short History of the Civil War at Sea* (Wilmington, N.C.: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 17.

sent the able Captain Caleb Huse and a team of agents to Europe for the purpose of purchasing ordinance and artillery.⁷ Captain Huse was at the head of a long and massive supply line that began in Europe and ended in Confederate ports. Even British merchants began to organize their own blockade-running firms. It was soon determined that the best course of action was to ship supplies in large tramp steamers from Europe to the islands of Nassau and Bermuda. There the cargoes would be offloaded and transferred to smaller, faster ships that could more effectively run the blockade.⁸ As Tucker notes, “Speedy, low-silhouette ships were specifically built for blockade-running—painted a slate gray to render them almost invisible, they would chose a moonless night to run past Union blockaders.”⁹ These tactics allowed the South to import, for a time, “an almost uninterrupted stream of supplies from Europe.”¹⁰

A further examination of the quantity of supplies that successfully passed through the blockade proves its ineffectiveness. Tucker, for instance, concludes that “most blockade runners got through,” he estimates that eighty-four percent of those attempting to enter the port of Wilmington were successful and that the ratio was the same for other Southern ports.¹¹ This means that the Union blockade stopped a mere sixteen percent of the ships passing through Southern ports, which must certainly be considered ineffective!

⁷ Frank Vandiver, *Confederate Blockade Running Through Bermuda 1861-1865* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1947), xi.

⁸ Vandiver, *Confederate Blockade Running Through Bermuda*, xv.

⁹ Tucker, *A Short History of the Civil War at Sea*, 18.

¹⁰ Vandiver, *Confederate Blockade Running Through Bermuda*, xix.

¹¹ Tucker, *A Short History of the Civil War at Sea*, 18.

The ineffectiveness of the blockade is supported by numerous additional facts. Tucker calculates that over the course of the war, about 300 steamers tried to run the blockade; “over 1,000 of 1,300 attempts were successful.”¹² Another historian, Stephen Wise, argues that “by the summer of 1862, the flow of supplies enabled the Confederate armies to stand up to the numerically superior Federals.”¹³ The Confederacy continued to penetrate the blockade until the very end of the war, providing its armies with desperately needed supplies. According to Wise, “From October 1864 to January 1865, the Ordinance Bureau imported nearly 50,000 rifles and carbines, over 400,000 pounds of lead—these items, plus chemicals and other goods needed for the production of munitions kept the Southern armies properly equipped.”¹⁴ By this late stage of the war the Union blockade had grown to hundreds of ships, concentrating on fewer and fewer Southern ports, yet the supplies continued to get through. All of the numbers and statistics available indicate the same thing: that most of the supplies got through the blockade. Even at the time of its greatest strength, the Union blockade could not stop the flow of supplies.

King Cotton diplomacy added to the Confederacy’s supply problems. The South’s main export was cotton, and its overseas diplomacy relied on the belief that economies of England and France were dependent upon an uninterrupted flow of the crop. Throughout much of the war, the Confederacy held the idea that these European powers would violate the Union blockade to maintain that cotton flow. As Owsley states, “Until well into the third year of the war the Confederate Government and

¹² Tucker, *A Short History of the Civil War at Sea*, 20.

¹³ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 226.

¹⁴ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 196.

its people relied primarily upon this power of cotton to coerce rather than persuade England and France to interfere in some way with the struggle in America so as to ensure an adequate supply of this staple.”¹⁵ In order to hasten and ensure this process, the Confederacy established a self-imposed cotton embargo. No cotton would be shipped to Europe, though it could likely have passed through the blockade. Throughout the South, Confederate leaders urged planters “not to ship any portion of their crop of cotton to the city, or not to remove it from their plantations until the blockade is fully and entirely abandoned.”¹⁶ Cotton was left to rot in the fields and on the wharves where it had been stockpiled, and hundreds of thousand of bales were burned during the spring and summer of 1862.¹⁷

At the same time in Europe, Confederate purchasing agents desperately needed financing to meet the growing demand for supplies. But without cotton to sell, they could not get it. Meanwhile, the diplomatic objective of the embargo never materialized, as England and France would not go to war over cotton. “The crisis forced a reexamination of their long-cherished belief in King Cotton.”¹⁸ In the meantime, the purchasing power that could have been gained from the sale of cotton was forever lost to the war effort. This crucial blow to the Confederate war effort was not because of the blockade but rather in spite of it. The South could have shipped vast quantities of cotton to Europe, especially in 1862, when the blockade was still quite ineffective and many Southern ports remained open. Instead, King Cotton went up in smoke along with more and more of the Confederate hopes for victory. “King Cotton had failed,” Wise rightly concludes,

“and with it the South’s most influential foreign affairs policy collapsed.”¹⁹

The loss of Southern seaports was another major contributing factor to the Confederate defeat. While it has been shown that the vast majority of blockade-runners did get through, they had fewer ports available as the war progressed. This was not due to the blockade itself, but rather to the other naval operations, such as amphibious landings, the bombardment of forts and seaports, and the capture of those strategic ports. These naval operations, conducted in concert with ground offensives, captured and closed one port after another. Many of these ports were also important railheads, with railroads capable of running vital supplies throughout the South. Loss of these strategic ports limited the available options for running the blockade and further narrowed the Confederate supply lines.

One of the South’s most crucial ports was lost early in the war. As Wise observes, “New Orleans was the largest cotton port in the world, serving as the focal point for the tremendous commerce that funneled down the Mississippi valley. New Orleans should have been the South’s most important blockade-running port.”²⁰ The city of New Orleans came under attack on 18 April 1862 by a combined Union attack of General Butler’s troops on land and Admiral Farragut’s naval forces. On April 24, in a daring assault by Farragut, he managed to slip past Confederate defenses and capture the city. The impact of this loss on the Confederate war effort cannot be overemphasized, especially since it occurred so early in the conflict. Tucker calls it “undoubtedly the most important Union naval victory in the western theater and one of the most important of the entire war.”²¹ It

¹⁵ Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, 1.

¹⁶ Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, 30.

¹⁷ Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, 48.

¹⁸ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 92.

¹⁹ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 93.

²⁰ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 75.

²¹ Tucker, *Civil War at Sea*, 67.

had major implications for the blockade-running efforts in the Gulf and the ability of the Confederacy to supply its Western armies. “The city’s potential as a blockade-running port was never fulfilled,” Wise stresses, “and, on its capture, the Confederacy lost a tremendous and irreplaceable resource.”²² This scenario was repeated at ports throughout the South during the course of the war. Even though the blockade-runners were still able to get through, they were left with fewer ports to take their precious cargoes, as the Union continually cut Confederate supply lines.

Despite the blockade and the loss of ports, evidence shows that supplies continued to get through to the Confederacy until the very end of the war. Stockpiles of food and weapons existed in the South even as Lee surrendered. Even Surdham notes evidence “that millions of rations were en route to troops in February 1865,” although destruction of the South’s railroads hampered their delivery.²³ The surprising fact is that the Confederacy did have significant quantities of supplies even in the final months of the war. Similarly, Charles Wesley shows in his analysis of the Confederacy’s defeat that in early 1865 “rations for more than four months were stored in the principal depots between Charlotte, Danville and Weldon; and that before April 20, more than 700,000 rations had been collected—in a district that had been thought destitute.”²⁴ He also points out that “at Richmond, the Union armies found large quantities of foodstuffs, following its evacuation by the Confederates, and loads of rations were captured by the Union soldiers at Appomattox.”²⁵ At various locations,

Union armies found large quantities of shoes, uniforms, weapons, and other essential items for the war effort.

If the blockade was truly ineffective and all these supplies existed in the Confederacy, then why were some Confederate soldiers starving and marching in bare feet? The answer to this important question lies in the failure of the Confederacy to adequately distribute the supplies within its own borders. “Insufficient internal transportation of all types plagued the Confederacy, causing the surplus of supplies in one area while soldiers starved nearby.”²⁶ As General Sherman and his army cut a sixty-mile wide swath through Georgia, they destroyed hundreds of miles of rail in the process. The South started the war with a poor transportation system that was systematically taken apart from the seaports to the railroads.

It is impossible to overstate the effect that the failure of this system had on the Confederacy. Many historians, Surdham concedes, cite the South’s backward transportation system “as the proximate cause of the South’s demise.”²⁷

A variety of logistical problems, then, played a role in the Confederate defeat. These included irrational supply priorities, the failure of “cotton diplomacy,” the loss of strategic seaports, and the destruction of the South’s already poor railroad system. Equally important, the Union blockade was ineffective, and it did not interfere with Southern logistics to a degree great enough to account for the Confederacy’s defeat. As Wise correctly asserts, “Because of the work of the men involved in blockade-running, a supply lifeline was maintained until the very last months of the war. Defeat did not come from the lack of material.”²⁸ The reasons

²² Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 80.

²³ David G. Surdham, *Northern Naval Superiority*, 84.

²⁴ Charles H. Wesley, *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc. 1937), 13.

²⁵ Wesley, *Collapse of the Confederacy*, 15.

²⁶ Wesley, *Collapse of the Confederacy*, 15.

²⁷ Surdham, *Northern Naval Superiority*, 72.

²⁸ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 226.

for the Union victory over the South have been debated for nearly 150 years, and will likely go on for many more. Hopefully this paper will help clarify the place of the Union naval blockade in the debate over the Confederate war effort.

THE CHINESE CONNECTION: REFUGEE INFLUENCES ON JAPAN'S ARCHIPELAGO

Chris Herrmann

Introduction

The origins of the people we now know as the Japanese have remained shrouded in mystery and mythology. New archeological fieldwork has aimed at shedding some light on the issue. This paper explores the suggestion that refugees from the mainland of Asia flooded onto the Japanese islands in the wake of the collapse of the Zhou Confederacy in China. I will explore three areas of evidence that suggest a connection between the mainland and the archipelago of Japan: evidence in changing pottery-making techniques, the evolving mythology of Japan, and agricultural advances that emerged during the period. A look at pottery reveals dramatic changes in both style and technology—changes that occurred relatively rapidly in terms of the timeline of technological advances of this type witnessed in other areas of the world. The mythological stories, although not presented here as historical fact, hold clues as to how the Japanese people perceived themselves and their origins. The correlations between the myths and archeological evidence suggest these stories do possess some elements of truth. Finally, agricultural advances, particularly in rice cultivation, not only suggest the rapid transfer of technology from the mainland, but also the formation of governmental structures needed to control irrigation and made possible by surplus labor. The interweaving of these three topics suggests that something significant happened on the mainland and forced

farming communities to abandon their landholdings in search of refuge on the archipelago.

In theory, the fall of a dynasty and armed conflict between the Chinese states would be substantial enough to push an established group away from its base and to foster its reestablishment in a new location. As we look at these topics, we must keep in mind that “archeological theories are working hypotheses, subject to testing and refining and that we never ‘know’ prehistoric reality absolutely.”¹ There is proof that a number of people came to the islands during the period of the fall of the Zhou Dynasty in China. There is proof that the culture of Japan changed dramatically during this period. There are clearly two distinct groups today on the Japanese islands, one that can be traced to aboriginal peoples and another that is closely related to the people of the mainland. The evidence is suggestive, but the question remains: did the people we know today as the Japanese actually migrate from the mainland to conquer the native inhabitants, to bring an end to the Jomon culture, and to establish the Yayoi culture?

The Literature

Japanese mythology has been examined by several scholars who suggest Japanese identity stems from a rebirth of civilization for the people that settled the islands. With most of the literature placing the Yayoi period (300 BC-300 AD) during the same time as the Warring States Period in China in the wake of the Zhou descent, there appears to be a broader stage for cultural change on the Japanese islands than can be accounted for in purely local phenomena.

Explicit reference to refugees as a source of Japanese civilization is found in Michiko

¹ Richard Pearson, “The Contribution of Archeology to Japanese Studies,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 2 (Summer, 1976), 324.

Aoki's *Ancient Myths and Early History of Japan*.² My argument parallels much of Aoki's work in looking to refugees from the collapse of the Zhou Confederacy as the spark that ignited cultural change. These refugees brought with them the tools that would forever shape Japanese society. Aoki's work also deals with how mythology relates to Japanese realities.

Further reference to the mainland connection is found in the recent scholarship of William Farris. Farris has conducted extensive fieldwork, particularly along the southern coast of the Korean Peninsula. However, I feel compelled to use his work somewhat cautiously. At times, Farris brings too much to the argument, which suggests that he may be stretching to find evidence of a connection and so clouds some of the evidence he presents.³

John W. Hall's *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*⁴ provides some depth to the use of myth in the formation of the Japanese identity, and in turn in the formation of a civilization. The Japanese creation myth revolves around the birth of the Japanese islands as creations of the sun deity known as Amaterasu. The origins of the myth itself are cloudy. It appears first in the official histories written by the Yamato line in the seventh century. Whether the myth was created to justify Yamato dominance or was an older myth co-opted by the Yamato is unclear. Eventually the myth came to be taken as a literal rendering of the creation of Japan and the Japanese people. It was also a source of the belief the emperor was himself divine. The mythology

of the Japanese nation also includes stories of conquest and expansion. It is to these tales that we will look for any evidence of historical truth couched in legend.

Pottery: Evidence of Rapid Cultural Shift

Archeological evidence provides perhaps the most compelling support for the refugee hypothesis. This evidence relates to three periods of Japanese history known as the Jomon (c. 1050–300 BC), the Yayoi (c. 300 BC–250 AD) and the early Kofun (c. 250–552 AD) periods. The dates assigned to these periods are at times somewhat arbitrary. However, as we shall see, the split between the Jomon and the Yayoi was both clearly evident and incredibly rapid. The Jomon period is named for its pottery. “Jomon” literally means “cord pattern”, which describes the way the pottery of this era was decorated. The longevity of the period was defined by little in terms of technological advances. The Jomon were hunter-gatherers who lived almost exclusively along the coasts of the islands. Their principal foods were fish and shellfish. The sudden arrival of the Yayoi period is defined by the introduction of new technologies, agriculture, social structures, and cultural elements. The Yayoi period is again named for its pottery, although this time for the area where this type of pottery was first unearthed. This period witnessed the introduction of wet rice cultivation, increased settlement, and population growth. In addition, this period saw the arrival of both a bronze and an iron age in close succession, in particular contrast to the timetable on the mainland.

Pottery offers some of the strongest evidence of social and technological advances in early societies. This evidence takes several forms. Perhaps the most obvious, but most often overlooked by casual observers, is the presence of pottery itself. Pottery was used to store surplus food.

² Michiko Aoki, *Ancient Myths and Early History of Japan: A Cultural Foundation* (New York: Exposition Press, 1974).

³ William Wayne Farris, *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures: Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Ancient Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).

⁴ John W. Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968).

Food surpluses in turn allowed for labor surpluses. This signals one primary condition needed for the development of civilization. In addition, the processes used to produce the pottery pieces represent changes in technology. Also, residue found in the pottery can add insight into what these people were eating, another clue about the degree of settlement.

It is in fact the dramatic change in pottery styles that defines the break between the Jomon and Yayoi periods. The firing techniques used in the Yayoi were dramatically more advanced and have analogs on the Korean peninsula. The rapid changes in pottery techniques and technologies, and the striking similarity between these processes and those used on the mainland, suggest these advances were introduced from the mainland. Technology transfers of this nature during the period were normally slow, since they were facilitated by what some historians refer to as the Market Village System. However, the shift from Jomon techniques to Yayoi techniques was extremely rapid. This suggests an unusual transfer method. The evidence suggests a probable migration into the area of people already familiar with these advances. It is possible that refugees brought the new techniques with them.

Jomon or “cord pattern” pottery was just as the name suggests. It was made of unwashed clay cords that were wrapped around a narrow base. As the cord was wrapped around itself, the rim of the bowl, or urn, became bigger. Eventually the rims were the main source of decoration, and over a relatively slow period of time they became more elaborate.⁵ The newly formed piece was then fired over an open flame, usually a fire pit at a temperature of about 400-500 degrees Fahrenheit. Since the fire was open rather than in an enclosed kiln,

imperfections were common.⁶ This evidence suggests that these artifacts were made very simply, using the most basic methods of clay pottery making. This had been going on for many centuries with little change until a wave of people, possibly refugees, changed the process.

With its establishment in the mid-eleventh century BC, the Zhou Confederation brought some 300 years of relative stability to much of the mainland. This stability became tenuous at best during the Spring and Autumn Period and collapsed into chaos during the Warring States Period. With the complete collapse of the Zhou in 403 BC, disorder and disunity became the order of the day. Warfare was constant and widespread. There can be no doubt this 200-year period of constant conflict gave rise to massive migrations of refugees. Chinese records suggest entire populations were uprooted and relocated.

Within 100 years of the onslaught of chaos on the mainland, we begin to see the rapid emergence of Yayoi culture on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. During the Jomon period, small populations of hunters and gatherers inhabited Kyushu. They would have provided little resistance to a large migration of technologically superior refugees from the mainland. Kyushu, only 140 miles from the tip of the Korean peninsula, would be an obvious embarkation point for the refugees. Archeological evidence shows the subsequent spread of Yayoi culture from Kyushu north around the Inland Sea and onto the Yamato plain. These Yayoi settlers brought with them new weapons, advances in agriculture, irrigation, and construction, as well as new pottery making techniques.

The most distinct contrast between Jomon and Yayoi pottery is found in the production process. The Yayoi artifacts are

⁵ Andrew Roy Miller, *Japanese Ceramics* (Tokyo: Toto Schuppan Co. Ltd., 1960), 18-20.

⁶ Soame Jenyns, *Japanese Pottery* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 28.

of washed clay shaped on a potter's wheel and fired at a high temperature.⁷ This type of pottery required a high level of studied skill.⁸ Both their methods and the type of kiln they employed were nearly identical to those found on the mainland. It follows that these skilled persons had migrated directly from the mainland and brought these ideas with them. Had a technology transfer more typical of the era taken place, the timeline would have been significantly broader. The use of a kiln is strong evidence of mainland influences. Pottery baked in a kiln would be more durable than the open-pit fired Jomon pottery. The difference in overall design suggests differences between the two peoples. One prominent design dating to the early Yayoi period continues to be used today in the production of sake bottles.

Other Archeological Evidence

The advent of an iron age following closely on the heels of a relatively brief bronze age suggests a rather unusual pattern of development in Japan. Unlike the more gradual advances seen on the mainland, these two stages of development occurred at nearly the same time. This suggests changes that could not easily be attributed to trade exchanges or other prevalent patterns of technology transfer. Tool and weapon making techniques were introduced around the time of the Zhou collapse. Again, it seems plausible that these techniques were brought to the Japanese archipelago by refugees fleeing chaos on the mainland, where such techniques were by this time commonplace.

Aioki claims that “the Iron Age came to provide men with a restless climate by breaking down previous orders only to evoke their potentiality to form a larger

concept of mankind.”⁹ The advances in weaponry that the bronze and iron ages brought to China allowed people to revolutionize certain aspects of their lives. Refugees from the fall of the Zhou came to Kyushu armed with weapons unlike any known to the Jomon inhabitants. These small clans of hunters and gatherers were poorly equipped to defend themselves. The progression from stone to bronze to iron was atypical in Japan. This fact can be attributed to the introduction of ironworking technology into a stone age environment. The new technologies spread quickly. In fact, most earlier tools were completely replaced by iron implements by the middle of the Yayoi period.¹⁰ Bronze artifacts are also found in abundance alongside iron pieces because the Yayoi people made ritual use of bronze figures.

Another important element introduced to the Japanese islands at this time was wet rice cultivation. The Yayoi people appear to have had contact with some elements of Chinese agricultural techniques.¹¹ This may suggest that those who introduced wet rice cultivation had not done so voluntarily. Farmers are tied to the land, which is particularly true for wet rice cultivation because it is labor intensive. Unlike some grains that can be sown by semi-nomadic peoples and left to be harvested later, constant attention must be paid to the crop to ensure a harvest. The more labor applied, the greater the output. At no time in antiquity had the populations of East Asia reached the point of diminishing returns. In other words, there was no population pressure on the crop. The cultivators were tied to their land. Only an extreme event would have driven them away.¹² The social

⁷ Miller, *Japanese Ceramics*, 20.

⁸ Tsugo Mikami as quoted in Jenyns, *Japanese Pottery*, 61.

⁹ Michiko Aioki, *Ancient Myths*, 12.

¹⁰ Farris, *Buried Treasures*, 50.

¹¹ Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, 18.

¹² Aoki, *Ancient Myths*, 9.

instability caused by the collapse of the Zhou Confederacy would have been just such an event. The end of social order, the rise of banditry, influxes of border peoples into the settled areas—all would have provided impetus for a refugee migration, and all were results of the Zhou decline. Agricultural migrants would move in search of fertile soil they could claim. The Japanese islands would appear as a gift from the gods. The islands were inhabited by semi-nomadic groups with no long-term settlements. During this period we see the emergence of agricultural settlements, first in the south on Kyushu, and then progressing north to the Yamato Plain. This represents the logical path for any migration from the mainland through the Korean peninsula. The migrants brought with them bronze and iron implements, such as plows and hoes. Irrigation techniques found on the mainland were put into place as wet rice cultivation became the norm.

Within only 100 years, the Yayoi Culture represented by these advances had come to completely replace the Jomon culture from the Yamato Plain south. Elements of Jomon culture continued in the northern areas of Honshu Island for some time, but before long the Yayoi dominated all of the fertile land between the southern tip of Kyushu and the Kanto Plain surrounding modern-day Tokyo.

Archeological evidence suggests the emergence of class distinction as well. During the late Yayoi period, c. 300 AD, another social change took place, although this time gradually and less dramatically. The new period is known as the Kofun or Tomb Period and is defined by the massive burial mounds built for regional rulers. Buried along with the dead were iron and bronze artifacts that allude to the incredible wealth of the permanent resident.¹³ The

¹³ Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, 21.

existence of these tombs suggests several things about the Japanese society of this time. Obviously, a great deal of wealth and power was represented by the ability of an individual to have such a burial. Social organization would have been essential, and class distinctions would have been blatantly clear. These tombs are found not only throughout the regions dominated by the Yayoi migrants, but also along the southern coast of Korea, again suggesting a close relationship between the two cultures.¹⁴

Mythological Stories Offer Some Insight

As with many cultures, the Japanese people have defined their collective identity through a unique mythology. Using their unique creation stories, the Japanese people set themselves apart from the rest of Asia and linked their culture with the divine. The Japanese people remained pre-literate until the seventh century AD, and it was only through the introduction from Korea of Buddhism and its accompanying texts in the Chinese script that the Japanese began to make use of a written script to relate their oral language. In the mid-eighth century, the Chinese written language was used to record for the first time Japanese histories. It is in these texts, principally the *Nihon Shoki* and *Kojiki*, that we find the Japanese creation myths. One of these tales that aligns most readily with the refugee hypothesis is the story of Japan's first emperor, Jimmu. In order to understand Jimmu's relevance here, it is necessary to briefly outline the principal creation story.

The legend of Japan's origins begins with the creation of the heavens and the earth. Two deities, Izanami and Izanagi, who were brother/husband and sister/wife, are fishing in the vast sea. Their catch is the Japanese islands, which rise out of the horizon. A long list of deities residing in heaven fight over possession of the islands.

¹⁴ Jenyns, *Japanese Pottery*, 35.

The conflict eventually comes to earth, where the deities form groups associated with particular areas of the archipelago. The principal area was a fertile region along the northern shores of the Inland Sea, the Yamato Plain. The second area, Izumo, was a small area along the Sea of Japan. A third area was located in northern Kyushu. A descendent of the Sun God, Kamu Yamato Iware Hiko, takes up arms in northern Kyushu and fights his way north through Izumo and onto the Yamato Plain, defeating the descendents of the Storm God along the way. Here he establishes himself as the first in a long line of Yamato emperors and takes the reign name Jimmu. Outlying areas are eventually brought under Jimmu's rule.¹⁵ Jimmu is at once a human ruler and a descendent of the gods. The *Nihon Shoki* includes a passage in which Jimmu states,

Now I have heard from the Ancient of the Sea, that in the East there is a fair land encircled on all sides by blue mountains. . . . I think that this land will undoubtedly be suitable for the extension of the Heavenly task, so that its glory should fill the universe. It is, doubtless, the center of the world.¹⁶

The land Jimmu refers to is the Yamato Plain, which by the time of the *Nihon Shoki*'s writing was the seat of wealth and power for the Yamato line. The story goes on to describe how the native people were conquered and slaughtered, all in the name of the Heavens and the Gods. Hall's 1896 translation makes note of the Ainu people in reference to the conquered natives.¹⁷ This

¹⁵ Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, 27-28.

¹⁶ W. G. Aston, *Nigongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956), 110-111.

¹⁷ Aston, *Nigongi*, 124.

suggests an understanding, even at that time, that the people we call the Japanese had migrated north from Kyushu, displacing the native inhabitants as they went. This scenario supports the refugee hypothesis in that a large group with military superiority moved from Kyushu to the Yamato Plain, displacing the local inhabitants.

The influx of people fleeing the chaos of the mainland could have been the historical element found in the collective memory of the Japanese people in the guise of Emperor Jimmu's push north. Although these stories cannot be taken as historical fact, it is important to note that the Japanese looked to these stories as a means of defining who they were and where they came from. The fact that their creation myths include a northward migration suggests support for the refugee hypothesis. A war of conquest took on the air of divine intervention. The refugees-cum-invaders became semi-divine warriors, cleansing the sacred islands of defaming elements.

The Chinese Histories

The Chinese first mentioned the Japanese as the Wa or "Dwarfs", but this was not until 297 AD.¹⁸ By this time the short-lived Qin Dynasty had united the warring states into a true empire and had been replaced by the Han Dynasty, which had in turn given way to the three kingdoms of Wu, Shu Han and Wei. When these three kingdoms were reunited by the Western Qin, that dynasty's historians set out to write a history of each of its predecessors. The first reference we have of Japan in written sources comes from the History of the Wei. The Chinese mention of the Wa includes hints at the cultural development of the time. These accounts suggest the culture had developed beyond its hunter-gatherer base

¹⁸ Kenneth G. Henshall, *A History of Japan: From Stoneage to Superpower* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 11.

and was exhibiting class distinctions and such government activities as tax collection.¹⁹ From this it seems plausible that while China had its interests turned toward internal problems, Japan had experienced cultural development through external influences.

The History of the Wei (*Wei Chi*) was supposedly written before 297 AD. It documents warfare in the area of the East China Sea. According to this document, Japan was unified under a sorceress queen named Pimiko. She was unmarried and was assisted in her reign by her younger brother. By 238 AD the Chinese government had officially recognized Pimiko and her island nation by offering her gifts in exchange for tribute. According to this history, when Pimiko died a great mound was erected in her honor. This form of burial suggests the move from the Yayoi into the Kofun, or Tomb, period. Although there is no clear or dramatic break between the Yayoi and Kofun periods, the latter is defined by the construction of massive tombs for the elite.²⁰ Once again these tombs suggest organization of labor as well as a hierarchy, since only the elite could finance and build such a massive tomb. Many workers would have been involved in the construction of such a tomb as the one described as being built for Pimiko.

Although the Chinese historians were notoriously creative in their writings about the rise and fall of the previous Chinese dynasty, they appear to have been fairly honest in reporting contacts with others. So we can accept that the Chinese had some contact with a matriarchal society from an island east of Korea. Was that society Japan? Many Japanese historians throughout the ages have thought so. In fact, writers

seeking to support the Yamato imperial line used these stories to their benefit. They noted the similarity between Pimiko and Himiko, which could mean Sun Princess, perhaps a reference to Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, ancestor of the Yamato line. And the land she was said to rule was Yamatai, perhaps a misspelling of Yamato.²¹ But this similarity could be misleading. Miko is a common word for a person in a leadership role, and Yama means mountain. Perhaps the similarity is not so striking when we take this into account.

Cultural Shifts

Today, the Ainu, descendants of the original inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago, live on government reservations on the northern island of Hokkaido. There can be no doubt that their ancestors once lived on the main island of Honshu and were, over time, driven north by the ancestors of the modern Japanese. The only questions are when and from where this second group arrived. Are the Ainu descendants of the Jomon culture and the Japanese descendants of the Yayoi? Or, as the Japanese historians have long contended, are today's Japanese descended directly from the original inhabitants of the islands? Archeological evidence shows the Yayoi cultural shift moved from Kyushu north to the area surrounding the Inland Sea. Perhaps the ancestors of the Japanese really are descended from Emperor Jimmu, who fought his way north to conquer the Yamato Plain. Evidence suggests that the Jomon culture did not evolve into the Yayoi culture, as was the case with the shift from Yayoi to Kofun. In fact, Jomon pieces continued to be made by the inhabitants of the northern regions well into the Yayoi period. The older techniques had not died out. They had been forced out and replaced by newer,

¹⁹ William De Barry, ed., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 7.

²⁰ De Barry, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 8.

²¹ Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, 26.

more advanced techniques that were also found on the mainland.²²

The final major element that demonstrates how dramatically the social and cultural landscape of Japan changed during this period is agricultural. The new arrivals from the war torn mainland not only brought with them bronze and iron working techniques, but also wet rice cultivation. Although the introduction of this hardy crop surely had a serious impact on food supplies, I would like to focus my comments instead on how its introduction would have impacted social organization. Wet rice cultivation demands massive irrigation works. Early Yayoi settlements were primarily small villages located near sufficient water sources.²³ Irrigation works were an immediate feature of wet rice cultivation. By the middle of the Yayoi period, cultivation was controlled by elite clans who had possession of iron and bronze weapons manufactured on the mainland.

The nature of wet rice cultivation demanded the formation of some type of social hierarchy in order for the extensive irrigation systems to be maintained as public works. Settlement around the rice cultivating areas and a developing social hierarchy are key elements that define the transition to a new period. Organization was key to rice cultivation, and the emerging hierarchy ensured it. Evidence of class distinction begins to arise with graves found with symbols of wealth such as mirrors.²⁴ The classes become even more apparent in the Kofun period. This period displays more evidence of social hierarchy in that the tombs were built for the higher classes and organization of labor was needed to build the great mounds of earth.

Although there are two schools of thought about how wet rice cultivation was introduced to the Japanese islands, both schools could support the refugee hypothesis. One school of thought has been dubbed the Rice Culture School. Adherents of this theory emphasize the importance of rice throughout Japanese history. They point to the fact that rice cultivation was the basis of the early taxation system as evidence that it was widely grown even in the earliest periods.

The second school of thought is the Non-Rice Culture School. This group claims that in the early and middle Yayoi period more than half the carbohydrate consumption came from grains other than rice. It argues that rice was grown more by the elites of society and not by everyone.²⁵ Neither of these scenarios excludes the refugee hypothesis. The Rice Culture argument would fit since the necessary social structures needed to maintain elaborate irrigation works for rice cultivation would demand taxation to support the emerging governing elites. The influx of refugees would have been divided into two groups—those with and those without metal tools. Those with the tools would have become the elite directing the efforts of the rest in the construction of a new social order based on rice cultivation.

The Non-Rice Culture argument fits as well. The refugees would have supplanted the native Jomon inhabitants, forcing many to flee to the north. However, it is likely that large populations of the Jomon would have been assimilated, perhaps at the lowest echelons of society. The well-armed and socially organized refugees would have lorded over the natives. Naturally, not all of the aboriginals would have been assimilated

²² Miller, *Japanese Ceramics*, 23.

²³ Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, 18.

²⁴ Farris, *Buried Treasures*, 40.

²⁵ Otsuka & Mori's work, *The Toro Site*, is referenced in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 33.

since there is still evidence of Ainu descendants to the north in Hokkaido.²⁶

This can be tied to a refugee issue in the sense that these people were more agriculturally based than the earlier peoples; it follows that a great event must have taken place in order for them to be uprooted. An agricultural society is one that is tied to the land and is stationary. A second point is that irrigation and the sharing of water supplies rely on cooperation among the farmers. Irrigation lines would have to pass from one plot of land to the next in order for a substantial yield to take place. For farmer G to get water from farmer A, he would have to cooperate with all the farmers in between A and himself. The farmers needed to share resources and to cooperate in order to survive. A hierarchy of elites would have been needed to squelch any conflict between farmers and to make sure everyone was sharing the water and maintaining the irrigation ditches and dikes.

Analysis and Discussion

Wet rice cultivation has an extremely high point of diminishing returns. By increasing labor, the output of a given plot of land can also be increased. A rise in food production would allow for population growth. The added labor would, in turn, lead to greater food production. In the case of wet rice, this cycle can continue in the absence of natural disaster or human blunder for quite some time. This allowed settled populations to grow and also allowed for surplus labor to emerge. Clearly this type of society was not present among the nomadic hunter-gatherers of the Jomon. Agricultural advances, coupled with better tools and weapons, gave the migrants a definite edge over the earlier inhabitants of the islands. The refugees found a land of abundance and took it away from the previous residents.

The mythology points this out clearly in Jimmu's march to the north.

This drive to the north is evident in our other supporting elements as well. Jomon pottery artifacts have been found in northern Japan that date to the same time as some Yayoi artifacts, suggesting the Jomon were a displaced culture. This is also apparent with the Ainu population that still exists today in Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan. Their hunter-gatherer ancestors were driven north by the encroaching Yayoi civilization. The legends of Emperor Jimmu's divine war describe the northward advance but claim the battle was between rival factions of the Japanese people, not between the older, native population and new arrivals. Agricultural wealth based on the fertile areas surrounding the Inland Sea gave rise to the Yamato culture. The Yamato historians themselves describe a migration north from Kyushu to the Yamato Plain, although they claim the migration was in order to reclaim land that was divinely granted to them. Wet rice cultivation and a social hierarchy that would guarantee public works were completed, and wet rice growing provided enough food resources to allow this to happen.

When taken as a whole, the various elements of circumstantial evidence related here seem to point to more than coincidence. It is possible, then, that the people we know today as the Japanese are actually descended from refugees who fled the mainland of Asia during the chaotic Warring States Period in China and moved quickly to supplant the natives of the islands and establish an advanced agrarian society.

²⁶ Henshall, *Japan: From Stoneage to Superpower*, 9.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL: DISCREDITING SURVIVORS' TESTIMONY

Kona Taylor

Did the Holocaust take place? To most people the answer is obvious. Not only can one see the camps that were used for these mass killings, but there are also the horrific eyewitness testimonies from the survivors of these camps. Even with this and other evidence, some deny that the Holocaust took place. These Holocaust deniers contend that Jewish people are “perpetrating an ‘enormous political and financial fraud’ on the world by circulating the ‘massive lie’ that millions of them were the victims of a nonexistent Holocaust...”¹ As recent as 1998, Holocaust deniers were publishing this propaganda in college newspapers across the United States. These publications brought about both a large amount of media coverage and much debate over the validity of their statements. One of the key concepts deniers use to refute the Holocaust is the idea that Holocaust survivors are unreliable witnesses who give inaccurate testimony. Subsequently, by rejecting survivor testimonies, deniers then move on to deny the existence of the Holocaust. In order to nullify the claims made by Holocaust deniers, this paper reveals that many deniers are misusing sources to discredit Holocaust survivor testimony. To demonstrate their misuse of materials, the original sources of two of the most widely publicized facts deniers use were located, and their misuse of the materials was revealed.

¹ Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1997), 105.

After reviewing books, newspapers, and internet sites written by Holocaust deniers, it became quite clear that most deniers stick with a few main arguments against survivor testimony. The two most widely used arguments focused on Holocaust Survivor Syndrome and the testimonies of survivors archived in Yad Vashem, Israel’s national authority for the remembrance of the Holocaust. Upon first realizing that Holocaust deniers were redundantly using these same two facts, it appeared that authenticating their arguments would be relatively simple, yet this was far from the case. In order to refute the facts being used by deniers, various books, newspapers, internet sites, and Yad Vashem were used and cross-referenced.

The most important issue many deniers manipulate is Holocaust Survivor Syndrome. This syndrome is referred to in revisionist writings as evidence of the unreliability of survivor testimony. While very few deniers offer anything more than a vague definition of this syndrome, psychologists associate it with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). After World War II, many psychologists had taken note of the unique symptoms experienced by Holocaust survivors and labeled it Holocaust Survivor Syndrome, yet it was not until after Vietnam that this unique set of symptoms entered the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) as PTSD.²

The DSM-III was published in 1980, yet in 2003 Holocaust deniers are still using the obscure name of Holocaust Survivor Syndrome instead of its current name of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. A likely cause for the continued use of the name Holocaust Survivor Syndrome is its obscurity. Not many people realize that Holocaust Survivor Syndrome is actually

² Henry Krystal, Yael Danieli, “Holocaust Survivor Studies in the Context of PTSD,” *PTSD Research Quarterly* 5 (1994), 1-5.

PTSD, an accepted and commonly understood disorder. If Holocaust deniers used PTSD rather than Holocaust Survivor Syndrome as a means of refuting the testimonies of survivors, it is doubtful that the public would acknowledge many of these writings favorably. Regardless of these facts, Holocaust deniers use the term Holocaust Survivor Syndrome as method of discrediting survivor testimony.

One of the most widely publicized and quoted examples of how Holocaust deniers integrate Holocaust Survivor Syndrome into their denial of survivor testimonies can be seen in Patrick Buchanan's "Dividing Line" article from 1990. In this article Buchanan discusses Israel's Supreme Court decision about whether John Demjanjuk should be sentenced to death.³ Buchanan's main point is that both the trial and potential death sentences were completely groundless because of inaccuracies and unreliability in survivors' testimonies. Their testimonies, in his estimate, were completely unfounded, and he likened them to evidence given in the Salem witch trials. Following this line of reasoning, Buchanan made one of the most well known and most quoted statements in regards to both Holocaust denial and Holocaust Survivor Syndrome:

Since the war, 1600 medical papers have been written on the "Psychological and Medical Effects of the Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors." This so-called "Holocaust Survivor Syndrome"

involves "group fantasies of martyrdom and heroics."⁴

Buchanan's statements about the Holocaust and survivors' testimonies have been fodder for both sides of the issue since their publication in 1990. Those opposed to Holocaust denial use Buchanan's statements as a call for action against deniers, while Holocaust deniers quote Buchanan as a reputable source in their publications. Many of these denier publications can be found on the Historical Revisionism website, which not only supports Holocaust denial, but also houses one of the largest inventories of denial literature.

Located on the Historical Revisionism website is an *amicus curiae*, or friend of the court, brief filed on behalf of John Demjanjuk by Tadeusz Skowron, the Secretary for the Polish Historical Society. The Polish Historical Society is a Holocaust denial group that attempts to gain credibility by using the term "Historical" in its name. Out of many statements this brief made against Holocaust survivor testimony, one was remarkably similar to the statement made by Buchanan.

There have been more than 1600 medical papers written on "The Psychological and Medical Effects of the Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors." Exhibit 32. This "Holocaust Survivor Syndrome" involves "Judaic group fantasies of martyrdom and heroics," and was described years ago by Jewish psychologists. Exhibit 33.⁵

³ John Demjanjuk was a Cleveland autoworker who was suspected of being "Ivan the Terrible," also known as the "butcher of Treblinka." Stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1981, he was later extradited to Israel, where he was convicted and sentenced to death in 1988. The Israeli Supreme Court overturned the conviction in 1993, which allowed Demjanjuk to return to the U.S.

⁴ Patrick Buchanan, "Dividing Line," *New York Post* 17 March 1990. Available on-line from <http://www.holocaust-history.org/~jamie/buchanan/column.html>; accessed 2 October 2002. This site is the Holocaust History Project.

⁵ Tadeusz Skowron, "Amicus Curiae Brief," available from

The similarities between the *amicus curiae* brief and Buchanan's statements are easily discernable. Along with these similarities, these statements also seem strange because Posttraumatic Stress Disorder does not include anything about fantasies, group or otherwise. Currently the American Psychological Association sets the criteria for PTSD as having experienced "impaired functioning following exposure to a traumatic event" that causes the person to "relive or re-experience the trauma, intense fear, avoidance of even related stimuli, generalized numbing of emotional responsiveness, and heightened autonomic arousal."⁶ Equally as strange is the fact that thousands of doctors and psychologists of varying nationalities throughout the world have described Holocaust Survivor Syndrome, not just Jewish psychologists, which Buchanan and other deniers tend to imply.⁷

While these reasons are not enough to completely cast doubt on the credibility of Holocaust deniers, it is also intriguing to note that neither of these articles states the source of their information. There are no references either within or at the end of Buchanan's article, nor in the *amicus curiae* brief, where exhibits are referred to but none are listed. When contacted, the webmaster for the Historical Revisionism website gave an intriguing response about where the information could be located:

I have been struggling for ten years to get them from the author. So far

<http://www.vho.org/GB/c/AmicusCuriaeDemjanjuk.html>: accessed 10 October 2002. This site is entitled Historical Revisionism: World War I, World War II, and Holocaust.

⁶ Jeffery S. Nevid, Spencer A. Rathus, Beverly Greene, *Abnormal Psychology in a Changing World* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2000), 180.

⁷ Henry Krystal, *Massive Psychic Trauma* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1968).

without any success. He is utterly disorganized and claims he cannot find them "right now." So the answer is unfortunately no. Since the document was filed with a US court, I can only assume that the exhibits do exist. Sorry.⁸

This response, combined with an inability to locate other information that could possibly validate the brief, led to an apparent dead end. Fortunately, another article on the Historical Revisionism website partially revealed where the deniers' statements appeared to be coming from.

In "The German Justice System: A Case Study," author Claus Jordan used the same references employed by Buchanan and the *amicus curiae* brief. Yet unlike the other two, Jordan indicated that he was quoting directly from a Dr. O. Wolansky, who was "one of the leading experts on this subject [Holocaust Survivor Syndrome] today."⁹ Upon looking at the full quotation in context, however, it became rather clear that this source was not credible or reliable.

Dr. Wolansky's statement refers to the many problems surviving a concentration camp can cause, but in looking at it I found what other deniers had not mentioned:

...The true horrors and the stress of the concentration camps were forgotten by survivors with the passing of the years, and were supplemented by group fantasies of martyrdom borrowed from heard or

⁸ G. Rudolf, Webmaster for the Historical Revisionism website, E-mail response. 20 October 2002.

⁹ Claus Jordan. "The German Justice System: A Case Study" available from <http://www.vho.org/GB/Books?dth/fndpoljust.html>; accessed 30 September 2002. Located on the Historical Revisionism website.

read materials or by delusions
confabulated anew.¹⁰

While this statement sounds relatively close to what deniers are stating, it is quite revealing to note that other deniers managed to leave out the part discussing the “true horrors and stress of the concentration camps.” This part was likely left out because including it would indicate that there were terrible things occurring in the Nazi concentration camps. The other aspect of this quotation that needs to be assessed is the credibility of the person who made it.

To fully assess the credibility of Dr. Wolansky’s statement, it was imperative to research other articles he had written. The reference provided by Jordan noted that Dr. Wolansky’s statements were made at a conference for the Polish Historical Society, a known Holocaust denial group. No published sources were found for Dr. Wolansky on PsycInfo, a reliable database of psychology and psychiatry abstracts from 1872 to the present. Also insightful is that a bibliography covering all areas of the Holocaust also failed to include Dr. Wolansky.¹¹ A lack of publications and association with a known Holocaust denial group make it very difficult to assume Dr. Wolansky’s credibility as an expert on Holocaust Survivor Syndrome.

To further refute Buchanan’s and the brief’s claims about Holocaust Survivor Syndrome, the second half of their statements needs to be evaluated. In *The New York Times* (February 4, 1994) a letter to the editor makes it clear that the “more than 1600 medical papers written on ‘The Psychological and Medical Effects of the

Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors” was actually a bibliography written by Robert Krell and Leo Etinger to aid those researching the Holocaust.¹² Thus the facts many deniers are using to refute the existence of the Holocaust are actually in reference to a research bibliography entitled “The Psychological and Medical Effects of Concentration Camps and Related Persecutions on Survivors of the Holocaust” that was written to aid in understanding the Holocaust.¹³

This bibliography combines all known materials in the psychological, psychiatric, social work, and personal account fields of the Holocaust into one source. The bibliography does document over 1,600 papers written on the medical and psychological effects of concentration camps. Yet, a quick glance at the index reveals there are actually only sixty-three papers written specifically on Survivor Syndrome. Also, Robert Krell and Leo Etinger published this bibliography to help document the horrors of the Holocaust, which is completely contrary to how deniers are using it. In their publications, deniers word their statements to make it appear that these 1,600 papers all document a lack of credibility of Holocaust survivor testimony, which is the exact opposite of what the sources do. Equally interesting is that Dr. O. Wolansky, referred to as one of the “leading experts on this subject” and someone deniers quote profusely, has no publications listed in this bibliography.

Thus far, all of the facts have shown that all of the denier publications misrepresent and misquote their sources regarding Holocaust survivor testimony. Through the numerous mistakes in the reviewed deniers’ writings, one is left to conclude that their facts regarding Holocaust Survivor

¹⁰ Jordan, “The German Justice System: A Case Study.”

¹¹ Leo Etinger and Robert Krell, *The Psychological and Medical Effects of Concentration Camps and Related Persecutions on Survivors of the Holocaust* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1985).

¹² Tadeusz, “Amicus Curiae Brief.”

¹³ Etinger and Krell, *The Psychological and Medical Effects of Concentration Camps*.

Syndrome are not credible. To fully conceptualize the extent to which these deniers have bent the truth, the other common fact deniers cite will be discussed. This fact concerns the validity of the Holocaust survivor testimonies held in Yad Vashem.

The article “Polish Nation Libel,” found on the Historical Revisionism website, was only one of a few that attempted to slander Yad Vashem and the testimonies and records it houses. This article stated that testimonies from Holocaust survivors could not be taken as credible evidence and that “in 1986, Yad Vashem reported in the *New Jerusalem Post* that over half of testimonies of survivors on record are not credible. . .”¹⁴ Several deniers have also reiterated this statement in a number of different articles found both on the Historical Revisionism website and in newspapers. Two of these deniers include Patrick Buchanan and the author of the *amicus curiae* brief.

Buchanan states, “Reportedly, half of the 20,000 survivor testimonies in Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem are considered ‘unreliable,’ and not to be used in trials.”¹⁵ In the *amicus curiae* brief, the author also states, “Reportedly, half of 20,000 survivor testimonies in the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem are considered ‘unreliable,’ and are not to be used in trials. Exhibit 34.”¹⁶ At first these statements appear to cast doubt on the credibility of both survivor testimonies and Yad Vashem. Yet in looking at these statements in more depth, many problems appear with their use of this evidence.

¹⁴ Kielce Fraud, “Polish Nation Libel,” available from http://216.239.51.100/search?q=cache:8OR_cSf3G-4C:www.CapitalHill/Senate/8844/4aa.htm; accessed 2 October 2002. Found on the Historical Revisionism: World War I, World War II, and “Holocaust” website.

¹⁵ Buchanan, “Dividing Line,” 1.

¹⁶ Skowron, “Amicus Curiae Brief,” 1.

One of these problems is a common one among deniers: not one of the three deniers listed where they got their information from. Buchanan did not list any references, and the exhibits could not be located for the Brief. The “Polish National Libel” article did make mention of both a year and a newspaper, *Jerusalem Post*, but no mention was made of the title of the article, date published, or author, making it exceedingly difficult to locate the source of these statements. Unfortunately for deniers, one person was able to locate their source.

Jamie McCarthy, the webmaster for the Holocaust History Project, located the original source of these statements and made them easily accessible to the public. McCarthy located the source of the deniers’ statements in the *Jerusalem Post* from August 17, 1986. The main points deniers have been using relate to the following quote:

Over half of the 20,000 testimonies from Holocaust survivors on record at Yad Vashem are ‘unreliable’ and have never been used as evidence in Nazi war crimes trials, Yad Vashem Archives director Shmuel Krakowski has told the *Jerusalem Post*.¹⁷

This source does appear to back up the deniers’ statements that half of the 20,000 survivor testimonies in Jerusalem are considered “unreliable.” The problem arises in a letter to the editor two days after the printing of the original article in the *Jerusalem Post*.

In this letter to the editor, the director of Yad Vashem, whom the original article claimed to be quoting, wrote to set the

¹⁷ Barbara Amouyal, *Jerusalem Post*, 17 August 1986. Available from <http://www.holocaust-history.org/~jamie/buchanan/>; accessed 13 October 2002.

record straight in that he had been completely misquoted.

Sir, - I was deeply astonished to read Barbara Amouyal's front-page article of August 17, which is based in part on an interview with me. Many hundreds of the 20,000 testimonies held in our archives were extensively used in Nazi war criminal trials, contrary to what Amouyal wrote. I told Amouyal that survivors wrote their accounts for the record of history. I cannot understand why she made of it that survivors wanted "to be part of history". I said there are some—fortunately very few—testimonies, which proved to be inaccurate.¹⁸

This contradicts denier statements and the original *Jerusalem Post* article.

Also interesting to note is that the rebuttal letter in the *Jerusalem Post* was not printed in its entirety. The original letter from Shmuel Krakowski, the director of Yad Vashem, contained obvious differences with the one printed in the *Jerusalem Post*. The *Jerusalem Post* left out the second paragraph of the original letter: "Amouyal seems to have misunderstood what I tried to explain to her. In some cases she wrote exactly the opposite of what I said."¹⁹ The printed letter also left out the sentence: "The reader is thus misinformed as to the tremendous positive historical value of the accounts of Holocaust survivors."²⁰ These obvious differences between the two letters

¹⁸ Shmuel Krakowski. Letter to the Editor. *Jerusalem Post*; 22 August 1986. Available from <http://www.holocaust-history.org/~jamie/buchanan/>; accessed 13 October 2002.

¹⁹ Shmuel Krakowski, Letter to the Editor. Copy of original document. Dated Jerusalem, 18 August 1986.

²⁰ Krakowski. Letter to the Editor. Copy of original document.

are important to note because not only have deniers misused the information printed in the *Jerusalem Post*, but the *Jerusalem Post* itself has also misrepresented information.

It seems hard to believe that the deniers who wrote about Holocaust Survivor Syndrome are unaware of the rebuttal letter that was printed in the *Jerusalem Post*, and if they are, then they stand to be accused of more than just bad research. It is unethical for anyone, much less these deniers, to write and continue to use material that has been so publicly renounced and discredited. The constant misrepresentation places a significant amount of doubt on the validity of Holocaust deniers' facts, and it brings their methodology into question.

It is obvious that the Holocaust deniers whose publications were reviewed do not want people to locate their sources. They do not want people to locate their sources because their sources do not match what they want people to think or believe. In order to skirt around the truth, these deniers misquoted and misused their sources. Then in an attempt to cover up their discrepancies, they did not reference any of their materials or did so improperly.

Yet the real problem with these findings goes much deeper than these revelations. It relates to the importance of survivor testimony and the acceptance of the Holocaust. The Holocaust was a horrendous event whose goal was to eradicate an entire group of people. If the reality of the Holocaust is questioned, the door is then opened to forgetting the atrocities that occurred and to their happening again. Only through hearing the testimonies of Holocaust survivors can the true horror be understood and conceptualized. This is a daunting problem because once the survivors are gone and cannot speak for themselves, then who is going to speak for

them?²¹ All of the denier literature that was reviewed in this paper was determined to be not only inaccurate, but a sham, not worthy of our attention much less our acknowledgment. Thus it is imperative to the memory of the Holocaust that the facts used by deniers are not only questioned, but are researched to reveal the accuracy of their statements.

²¹ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 4.

**A DISCOURSE ON MACHIAVELLI:
ATTEMPTING TO RECONCILE *THE
PRINCE* AND *THE DISCOURSES ON
LIVY***

Josh Williams

Of the hindrances to understanding the political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli, few are greater than the seemingly contradictory themes of *The Prince* and *The Discourses on Livy*. Often, to accommodate both works a stringent, either-or mentality is employed. This approach has fashioned a dichotomy where each side holds Machiavelli's two chief political treatises to be irreconcilable. On one side are those claiming the Machiavelli found in *The Prince* as authentic, their influence evidenced by the current denotation of the term "Machiavellian" as representing nefariousness, treachery, and deceitfulness. Opposing this interpretation are those who focus on the Machiavelli of *The Discourses*. They christen *The Prince* either a politically motivated attempt to regain favor with the Medici or a satirical treatise. As both of these interpretations result from narrow, subjective readings, they are inadequate. Required is a wide, inclusive reading, recognizing both works as essential and interrelated facets of Machiavelli's overall political beliefs. Through this enjoinder, the two works complement rather than contradict each other as they combine to illuminate Machiavelli's political philosophy—a philosophy utilizing the pragmatic observance of change,

circumstance, and necessity as a means to bring about the "common benefit of all."¹

Quentin Skinner and Garrett Mattingly, both Machiavelli scholars, address the dilemma of the genuineness of *The Prince* from opposite ends of the spectrum. While Machiavellian scholarship is immense, the arguments of Skinner and Mattingly sufficiently encompass the debate here concerned. Skinner reads *The Prince* literally, as a political manual for monarchs, emphasizing the "requisite quality of moral flexibility."² Contrastingly, Mattingly holds the product of such an interpretation to "contradict everything else Machiavelli ever wrote and everything we know about his life," including *The Discourses*. As such, Mattingly dismisses Machiavelli's stated intent "to discuss and lay down the law about how princes should rule."³ To synthesize *The Prince* with Machiavelli's other works, Mattingly insists the treatise must be read as satire. Only then can the many oddities, such as his depiction of Cesare Borgia as a model prince, be understood. Ultimately, however, both Skinner and Mattingly are too stringent in their interpretations—the former leaves no room for satire, the latter little for sincerity.

The rigidity inherent in such interpretations does little to fashion a consistent reading of *The Prince*, let alone accommodate an overriding political theory. On one hand, if Mattingly's paradigm is used as a firm guide, what is to be thought of Machiavelli's admission about the evil nature of cruelty or his plea to forgive his speaking "in this way of what is evil...?"⁴ This does not sound like an author who

¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. by Leslie J. Walker (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), 97.

² Bernard Crick, "Politics and Morality," in Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 48-54.

³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. by George Bull (London: Penguin Classics, 1999).

⁴ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 30

Mattingly claims “delight[s] in intensifying the shock (from his prescribed ‘cynical immorality’) and deliberately employing devices to heighten it.”⁵ When speaking of cruelty, Machiavelli seems to genuinely struggle; cruelty is not to be employed wholly for the glory of the prince but rather for the “good of one’s subjects” (an idea that will be discussed below at length). Also, Mattingly seems to misstate Machiavelli’s feelings about Republics. He reiterates Machiavelli’s overwhelming preference for popular rule over Principalities but neglects the discussion regarding the determining effect of circumstance on possible forms of governance. On the other hand, if Skinner’s prescription were strictly followed, how can Machiavelli’s offering of Cesare Borgia as a model prince be understood? For it can be argued that Borgia was, as Mattingly wrote, “a notorious and spectacular failure.”⁶ Indeed, the possibility of political raillery must at least be entertained. However negatively Machiavelli himself speaks of taking the middle ground or being circumspect rather than impetuous, it is necessary to recognize *The Prince* as both theory and satire. One might then incorporate the ideas found in *The Prince* with those of *The Discourses*.

Any attempt to analyze Machiavelli’s political philosophy and ultimately reconcile *The Prince* and *The Discourses* must begin with the initial consideration of his insights regarding the historical nature of governments and societies. Two of Machiavelli’s key assertions crucial to the union of his treatises are found in these views. First is Machiavelli’s contention that there exist only two forms of state authority—Principalities and Republics—

and second, that human affairs are never stagnant but rather “ever in a state of flux.”⁷

In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli asserts that there are six historically recognized variations of governance—Principato (Principality), Ottimati (Aristocracy), Popolare (Democracy)—and their three corrupt equivalents: Tyranny, Oligarchy, and Anarchy. Assigning merit to each of the six, Machiavelli distinguishes the latter three as being “very bad” because of their corruptness and the former three as being “good in themselves” but having to be “classed as pernicious” due to the ease with which they become corrupt. Inherent in these appraisals is Machiavelli’s affirmation of the intrinsic instability of any human government and the subsequent cycles of “governmental transition” to which all societies are therefore subject.⁸

Machiavelli argues these cycles found their origins in humanity’s initial multiplication and subsequent progression away from an existence as “scattered beasts.” Men “drew together and, in order to better defend themselves, began to look about for a man stronger and more courageous than the rest, made him their head, and obeyed him.” As time progressed, the “notion of justice came into being,” and princes were chosen due to their “prudence” rather than “boldness.” Upon becoming hereditary rather than elected, the heirs of the former prince chose to “forsake virtuous deeds” for “extravagance, lasciviousness, and...licentiousness,” therefore becoming hated and consequently fearful of revolt. This was the genesis of Tyranny. As Tyranny gave rise to conspiracies led by “men conspicuous for their liberality, magnanimity, wealth, and ability,” an Aristocracy was created. Subordination of personal convenience to the common good, rule by law, and order are all characteristic

⁵ Garrett Mattingly, “The Prince: Political Science or Political Satire?” *The American Scholar* 27 (Autumn 1958), 482-491.

⁶ Mattingly, 181.

⁷ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 123.

⁸ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 106.

of this aristocracy. But as generations passed, the Aristocratic rulers—having “not been through the bad times”—became ill content with the prevailing “civic equality” and “reverted to avarice” and “ambition,” initiating the creation of an Oligarchy. At the hands of the masses, the Oligarchy shared the same fate as the preceding Tyranny, and—fearful of government of the few—a Democracy was established. From this democracy, however, rose Anarchy where “all sorts of outrages were constantly committed.” The cycle had now come full circle returning to its initial state of disorder, again necessitating the formation of a Principality.⁹

After a Principality has been reestablished, Machiavelli claims the cycle seldom repeats itself completely. He writes, “Rarely [does a state] return to the same form of government, for there can scarce be a state of such vitality that it can undergo often such changes and yet remain in being.”¹⁰ If the Principality is strong and relatively well organized, it can be maintained so long as the Prince remains free from corruption. But if the Principality is weak and disorganized, the cycle will be broken by either self-destruction or forced acquiescence to a stronger state.

As an alternative to the above scenario, Machiavelli argues it is possible for a Republic—mixed governance consisting of Principality, Aristocracy, and Democracy—to emerge from the Principality. Republics, Machiavelli claims, surpass Principalities in strength, stability, adaptability, and longevity, for in a Republic each facet of the government “keep[s] watch over the other.”¹¹ It is important to note that while Machiavelli holds Republics as the best and most stable form of government, he is well aware of their lack of immunity to the forces

of change; like Principalities, Republics are subject to eventual degradation by means of forced submission to stronger states or by way of corruption (whether the decline of civic *virtù* or the formation of factions).

In the above arguments Machiavelli affirms that there exist only two forms of government, Principalities and Republics—Oligarchy and Aristocracy are subsequently reduced to mere transitory phases linking a Principality to either its reestablishment, the formation of a Republic, or conquest by a stronger state. Machiavelli also identifies the universal and perpetual dualism of improvement and decline, which manifests in each society a ceaseless struggle to maintain stability and order.¹² From these assertions, the relationship of *The Discourses* and *The Prince* to Machiavelli’s comprehensive theory, as well as his motives for writing each, becomes apparent.

In the preface to Book One of *The Discourses*, Machiavelli states these motives as being “impelled by [a] natural desire [he had] always had to labour, regardless of anything, on that which [he believed] to be for the common benefit of all.” As Machiavelli equates “common benefit of all” with political stability, the attempt to bring about this stability therefore constitutes the purpose of both *The Prince* and *The Discourses*.¹³ Machiavelli intended the former as a pragmatic guide to aid the founding and maintaining of Principalities, the latter as a guide to aid the founding and maintaining of Republics. His emphasis on stability above any specific form of government clearly reconciles Machiavelli’s seemingly paradoxical support of both Republics and Principalities—he is in favor of either, depending on the circumstances.

Machiavelli judges circumstance to determine the necessary form of government in a society; some areas are suited to

⁹ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 106-109.

¹⁰ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 109.

¹¹ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 109.

¹² Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 123.

¹³ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 134.

Principalities while others are suited to Republics. Machiavelli submits that the successful establishment of a government contrary to what the society's circumstances dictate is a feat "only a man of outstanding brain-power and authority can handle, and such men are rare."¹⁴ So rare are these men that Machiavelli lists only a handful from history. Therefore, although Machiavelli sees Republics as being far superior to Principalities, he clearly recognizes that they are not feasible or beneficial everywhere. Any attempt to establish a Republic in spite of circumstances indicating its improbability is a much greater detriment to the well being of the populace than the establishment of a well-founded Principality, for in executing the former, ruin or disorder will almost certainly ensue.

Taking into account the effects of circumstance, Machiavelli details the conditions necessary for the successful founding of either a Principality or Republic. Concerning Republics, he claims first that a respect of custom and tradition must be present, for this is the only means through which civic *virtù* can be maintained. Following this reasoning then, is the necessity of civic *virtù* itself. Machiavelli claims that a Republic cannot exist without civic *virtù*: "In a state which has been under a prince and has become corrupt freedom cannot be restored even if the prince and the whole of his stock be wiped out."¹⁵

A final prerequisite for Republican rule is the presence of equality. He writes:

Let, then a republic be constituted where there exists, or can be brought in to being, notable equality; and a...principality, where there is notable inequality. Otherwise what

is done will lack proportion and will be of but short duration.¹⁶

Machiavelli's notion of equality differs from its modern connotation. To Machiavelli, the greatest characteristic necessary for equality is the absence of landed gentry—"those who live in idleness on the abundant revenue derived from their estates, without having anything to do either with their cultivation or with other forms of labour essential to life."¹⁷ This assessment implies the need for a large middle class of merchants or artisans living in towns whose "wealth is based on merchandise and movable goods; in other words, the town must dominate the countryside."¹⁸

As each of these traits is a prerequisite for a Republic, it follows for Machiavelli that the absence of these qualities warrants a Principality. Without the preconditions for a Republic, Machiavelli hails a Principality as the only means to promote peace and stability, for "men born in such conditions are entirely inimical to any form of civic government."¹⁹ Here again Machiavelli adheres to stability over one particular form of government, which helps explain the writing of two separate treatises.

The maintenance of each government becomes the last reconciling facet of Machiavelli's theory. While varied circumstances call for different manners of rule, the prescription for maintenance of each embraces congruent themes and methods. Setting aside specifics contingent on the particular form of government, both plans of maintenance flow from a single principle—pragmatism. Where previous aspects of Machiavelli's theory called for the recognition of change and

¹⁴ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 247.

¹⁵ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 158.

¹⁶ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 247.

¹⁷ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 245-246.

¹⁸ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 245-246.

¹⁹ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 245-246.

circumstances, his model of maintenance requires the acknowledgment of necessity.

First, it is essential for both Principalities and Republics to recognize the necessity of adapting to change and fortune. Concerning Principalities, Machiavelli claims it is better to adapt quickly to fortune rather than to weigh carefully the options; “it is better to be impetuous than circumspect.”²⁰ A prince’s ability to act quickly is precisely the reason why aspects of Principality should be incorporated into the structure of Republics. Machiavelli claims “that Republics which...have recourse neither to a dictatorship, nor to some form of authority analogous to it, will always be ruined when grave misfortune befalls them.”²¹

The necessity of recognizing the nature of man is another aspect of Machiavelli’s scheme of maintenance. Machiavelli’s appraisal of humankind is remarkably consistent in both *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. He deems man’s judgment to be superficial and easily altered through persuasion. Regarding the general character of men, he holds them to be “ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers[;] they shun danger and are greedy for profit.”²² Men are good only out of necessity and would “sooner forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony.”²³ To counter the fallibility of man, Machiavelli holds that a government—be it Principality or Republic—must rule as if “all men are wicked.”²⁴ Machiavelli recognizes the separation of Christian morality from politics as the only means to achieve this end.

While Machiavelli perceives Christian morality to be a hindrance to a government’s ability to rule effectively, it is false to claim

he discourages religion in general. On the contrary, Machiavelli upholds religion as an absolute necessity, claiming “there can be no surer indication of the decline of a country than to see divine worship neglected.”²⁵ According to Machiavelli, religion serves many purposes, such as keeping order during the transition following the death of a prince and unifying the people. As an example of the virtues of religion, Machiavelli points to numerous Republics in Germany, where people pay their taxes by merit, without witnesses, and where all the necessary taxes are nevertheless collected.²⁶

Machiavelli regards Christianity as hopelessly corrupt: “Indeed, should anyone reflect on our religion as it was when founded, and then see how different the present usage is, he would undoubtedly come to the conclusion that it is approaching either ruin or a scourge.”²⁷ The effect of this corruption, coupled with the moral limits placed on government by Christianity and the Pope, diminishes its usefulness in government.

Machiavelli regards the separation of Christian morality and politics as the only path to effective governance. In its place, Machiavelli calls for the assertion of political morals in which the ends justifies the means and the good of all comes before the good of the individual. He claims, “Reprehensible actions may be justified by their effects, and that when the effect is good...it always justifies the action.”²⁸ Inherent in this method is again Machiavelli’s pragmatism and concern for the well being of the populace and the state.

Throughout *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, Machiavelli continually alludes to examples of his methodology that both

²⁰ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 82.

²¹ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 196.

²² Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 54.

²³ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 54.

²⁴ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 112.

²⁵ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 142.

²⁶ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 244-245.

²⁷ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 144.

²⁸ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 132.

princes and Republics should maintain. Here again, Machiavelli lays out nearly identical blueprints in both treatises. With regards to the duality of generosity and stinginess, he asserts that it is "...splendid if one has a reputation for generosity,"²⁹ but in order to be seen as generous the Prince must be cheap. If the prince is generous to men of nobility, then he would be forced to oppress the masses with taxes. *The Discourses* contain an identical message under the heading, "A Republic or a Prince should ostensibly do out of Generosity what Necessity constrains them to do."³⁰

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli also debates the issue of whether to be a kind prince who is loved or a cruel prince who is hated. Here again is a notable departure from Christian morality and its call for a prince who is always kind and honorable and therefore loved. Machiavelli says a prince must occasionally be cruel and unafraid of being hated. Machiavelli's argument actually denotes the worst kind of cruelty as the irresponsible wielding of kindness. The prince should not seek popularity over law and order, but instead should use a few harsh examples to maintain unity and loyalty among his subjects.³¹ *The Discourses* again contain a similar message; in Republics "it is better to rely on punishment rather than on considerateness," but only in moderation.³²

Just as each argument above represents Machiavelli's view of human nature, so too does his stance on the honesty of governments. He argues that because of man's deceitful nature, those who rule must know when to keep their word and when it is in their interests to break it. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli describes this as the necessity of being like both the fox and the

lion.³³ Regarding a Republic's necessary deceitfulness, Machiavelli asserts, "What Princes have to do...Republics also must do until such time as they become powerful and can rely on force alone."³⁴

One senses that Machiavelli is just as relevant today as he was in Renaissance Florence. His view of the necessity of removing Christian morality from politics leaves a lasting impression. In addition, by pointing out the enormous "gulf between how one should live and how one does live"³⁵ and the paradox of using evil to accomplish good, Machiavelli brought forth a dilemma that still tears man's conscience. The assumption that evil is a necessary means to achieve progress, stability, and order directly contradicts the liberal view that progress and well-being stem directly from man's rationality, morality, and potential for good. As Bernard Crick writes, Machiavelli's ideas were a "sword which was plunged into the flank of the body politic of Western humanity, causing it to cry out and struggle with itself." This Machiavellian dilemma that man encounters will always be present; if the dilemma is no longer recognized it will only be, as Crick exclaims, "because our nerves have gone dead."³⁶

²⁹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 51.

³⁰ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 234.

³¹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 53.

³² Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 460.

³³ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 56.

³⁴ Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 311.

³⁵ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 49.

³⁶ Crick, Bernard, "Politics and Morality," 66-67.