

## Premodernist Undergraduate Symposium 2018

### ABSTRACTS

#### 1. George Andrei, "Ethnic Politics and the Saxon Colonization of Medieval Hungarian Transylvania"

This project examines the settlement of the Saxons in the Voivodeship of Transylvania (a voivode was a rank roughly equivalent to a mixture of a governor and a landed prince) within the Hungarian Kingdom immediately before and after the Mongol Invasion of 1241. This project attempts to understand the political and inter-ethnic effects of the Saxon settlement in context of the integration of Transylvania (including the Vlach and Pecheneg natives of the area) into Hungary. The research question is as follows: How did the Crown utilize policy based on "otherness" to secure its expansion, stability, and state centralization? This project analyzes the ever-present theme of inter-ethnic relations and how certain groups are utilized as a tool by the state; in the scope of this project, the Saxons were used as an empire-building tool, which allowed the Hungarian Kingdom to add not only land, but also people groups, to their empire. It also, due to context, analyzes early governmental centralization efforts in Central-Eastern Europe by the Hungarian Kingdom in the high and late Medieval periods (mid 1200s -1300 specifically for this study) and the use of different treatments toward and utilization of different ethno-regional groups.

#### 2. Billy Timmermeyer, "Paul and Politics"

What was believed to be the proper relationship between a government and its citizens shifted frequently for premoderns. Pressing concerns often arose in the premodern world as citizens faced oppression, persecution, and negligence from their government, and many developed theories of how to best respond to such challenges. For premodern Christians, Romans 13:1-7 played an integral role in determining how they should act with respect to civil government. Does Paul's letter to the Romans actually constitute a political theory or ethic, though? This paper argues that Romans 13:1-7 was not intended to comprise a political ethic and that premoderns who invoked this passage often imposed their own culturally-influenced agenda upon it in their interpretive work. Premodern thinkers such as Origen, Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, and others who engaged in interpreting Romans 13:1-7 as a political ethic are explored in this paper. Despite only focusing on seven lines of text, the implications of this paper are far from limited. The historical development of the interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 was crucial for premodern Christians in the East and the West, and it can serve as a basis for understanding many major premodern events such as the Protestant Reformation and even the American Revolution. Additionally, the lasting impact of premodern political interaction with this text can be seen in more recent times, especially in the mid 1900's during the rise of Fascism. Overall, this paper serves as a discussion of the relationship between premodern Christian interpretive work and political philosophy as well as an exploration of cultural and historic influence upon such interpretations.

#### 3. Michele Sdao, "St. Polycarp of Smyrna: A Historical Enigma"

Saint Polycarp of Smyrna, a second-century Christian bishop and martyr, is an historical enigma. Although he is a crucial link between Christians of the first and second centuries, the extant documents surrounding Polycarp give only a few opaque insights into this historical figure. The problem is that scholars no longer see Polycarp as the mystery which the texts present. They have

grabbed at any information they can in order to fledge out his biography, without taking into account the possible legendary nature of certain accounts, and without considering the possibility of multiple independent traditions concerning Polycarp. The texts surrounding Polycarp can be broken into two categories. Ignatius's *Letter to the Magnesians*, *Letter to the Ephesians*, *Letter to Polycarp*, and *Letter to Smyrna*, Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, fragments of Papias, and Irenaeus' *Letter to Victor* have reliable information for the historical Polycarp. The remaining texts are historically unreliable for Polycarp's biography because they represent several independent, non-historical traditions that seek to capture Polycarp's legacy. These texts include the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* and *Letter to Florinus*, the Harris Fragments, and the *Vita Polycarpi*. I analyze the reliable texts and then the unreliable ones in order to demonstrate that the historical Polycarp differs from the legendary Polycarp. The unreliable texts represent two different, independent legendary traditions, namely a Johannine and a non-Johannine Polycarp, with different motives and functions of portraying Polycarp in their own way. While the unreliability of the legendary accounts and their function in using Polycarp to support the authors' own religious agendas indicate that they should not be used to fledge out Polycarp's historical biography, these accounts do present significant functions, implications, and historical data for the time periods and communities in which they were written, which I trace in my paper. Several significant conclusions can be drawn from this critical methodology: the historical apostolic link between Polycarp and John the apostle is false, scholars must cease from attempts to date the Martyrdom of Polycarp precisely, and there was at least one tradition among Christians which had no knowledge of a connection between Polycarp and John.

#### 4. Chris Newman, "African Spirituality in Pre-Antebellum America"

The historical and religious relationship between enslaved Africans and Christian missionaries has often been misinterpreted. It has widely been assumed that Christianity was the religious influence on the lives of enslaved Africans. This historical narrative has been given without much, if any, consideration to the spiritual practices and beliefs of Africans before enslavement. In this, the story of enslaved Africans from a religion view is one where Christianity was their only source of religious instruction and experience. The purpose of my presentation, therefore is to reassess the spiritual lives of enslaved Africans, removing the false claims of Christianity's dominion over enslaved African's lives and present a more concise, historically accurate examination of African spirituality's influence on enslaved Africans. In this, I will begin by focusing on the case of Nat Turner, his connection to African spirituality and the association it had on his ultimate rebellion. Next, I will turn my attention to African spirituality in Africa and examine how it helped to shape the structure of Africa prior to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Upon analysis of Africa's role in shaping African Spirituality, I will focus on African Spirituality in America, explaining how and why African spirituality was retained, practiced and influential to the development of what became known as the Black Church post-Emancipation.

#### 5. Sara Pierce, "The Role of Drama in the Field of Psychology"

Drama has played an integral part throughout the history of medicine. In this way, it continues to develop not only modern doctors and practitioners but also emerging psychologists and research psychologists. Such as early drama helped to develop the rise of Hippocratic medicine within ancient Athenian society, embracing the study of drama will lead to better interactions with participants within research studies as well as psychologists and psychiatrists with their patients. If psychology is

to continue to develop as a science, those practicing it can highly benefit from these humanities studies.

#### 6. Shiyong Lu, "Pomme d'Ambre: Jewel of the Arabian Spice Trade"

Pomme d'Ambre, known in English as pomander, is a ball or pill made of precious animal products along with other imported spices. It was considered as a medical amulet that could protect people from plagues, which was the reason why it was highly valued by Medieval royalties and nobles. Most of its ingredients were precious exotic aromatics brought to Europe by Arabic merchants, which was another reason why it was popular among nobles: In general, only nobles had the financial ability to afford them. In this paper, I've compared the ingredients of several existing recipes of pomander to find out what makes Medieval people believe that the pomander has the power to protect them. Analyzing the recipes also helps form an understanding of Arabian spice trade between Europe and Middle East, and the influence of Arabian incense making. The recipes I used includes one written by medical faculty of the University of Paris in 1368, and two from the Tudor court, probably writing within the time of Mary I.

#### 7. Stephanie Yoon, "Mountebanks, Defecators, and the Anti-Social: Curiosities of the *Macclesfield Psalter*"

This paper will endeavour to give an introduction to the manuscript, "rediscovered" in 2004. I will share its provenance, as well as a very brief introduction to the genre. I will discuss its codicological features and the restoration which was done. My main focus, however, will be to describe and posit interpretations for three broad-ranging themes in the psalter's marginalia. Namely, the representation of physicians (the mountebanks), graphic "toilet humour" (the defecators), and a series of illuminations featuring subjects who seem to turn away from us, the audience (the anti-social). The paper will be presented with the bonus of many fun images projected onto the screen for reference.