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**Gef ûs dago gehuulikes r d, drohtin the g do. An enquiry into the role of the Heliand in the conversion process of the Saxons.**

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L.J. Onderwater Master Thesis Ancient History. An enquiry into the role of the Heliand in the conversion process of the Saxons.

*Gef ûs dago gehuulikes rād, drohtin the gōdo.* An enquiry into the role of the Heliand in the conversion process of the Saxons.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction Master Thesis L.J. Onderwater.

*Thus he forsook  
the shade of the forest,  
the spot in the wood,  
And again He did seek  
the company of earls,  
the illustrious thanes  
and the throngs of men(... )  
He began to gather together,  
Youths for disciples,  
young men and good,  
Word-wise warriors. <sup>1</sup>*

In this scene, Jesus departs the wilderness after his temptation by Satan. The desert like atmosphere of the wilderness in the Bible is transformed to the image of a deep and dark forest. Jesus is described as a noble Saxon warrior lord, looking for young warriors to join his retinue. In the Heliand, Jesus is a Saxon lord, a *Drohtin*, rather than a rabbi from Judea.<sup>2</sup>

The Heliand is written in Old Saxon and it is a Gospel harmony. This means that the four Gospels that tell the life and deeds of Jesus have been merged into one continuing book.<sup>3</sup> It has almost 6000 lines, written in alliterative verse. It is divided into 71 fitts, songs. The book has taken selective passages from the Gospels and completely transformed the atmosphere of the scenery.<sup>4</sup> The Heliand was written somewhere between 822 and 840 during the reign of Louis the Pious.<sup>5</sup> Before 772, Saxony had been mostly pagan and more importantly, independent. This changed after 772 when Charlemagne decided to attack Saxony. After years of brutal warfare, the entirety of Saxony had been conquered by

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy 1989, 58; Scott 1969, lines 1123-1126, 1148-1150.

<sup>2</sup> Murphy 1999, 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Zurla 2004, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Zurla 2004, 21 ; Murphy 1989, IX, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Murphy 1989, 12-13; Zurla 2004, 24-27; Hummer 2004, 1-8. In a now lost preface to the Heliand, the poem is dedicated to *Ludouicus(sic) piisimus Augustus* and some have argued( for example Vredendaal 2006, 24) that these titles have also been used by his son Louis the German, which puts the possible late date for the Heliand around 850. However, Hummer convincingly argues that the title in the preface can only have meant Louis the Pious. And this favors an earlier writing date for the Heliand.

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Charlemagne by 804.<sup>6</sup>

One of the aims of Charlemagne's conquests was the spread of Christianity.<sup>7</sup> The Saxons were no exception to this rule. The Frankish Royal Annals on the Frankish conquest are full of instances of mass baptisms. These mass baptisms all followed major Frankish victories, so it is safe to assume they were not all that voluntarily. In the Carolingian world, baptism was the signifier of conversion.<sup>8</sup> Although baptism is indeed a very significant event, it is difficult to imagine that one's religion and philosophy of life are completely altered after one event, especially if it is not out of your own volition. It takes time to internalize the new religion, to get accustomed to the new rituals and the overall impact it has on your life. This view is shared by several historians writing on the spread of Christianity within Saxony. They have built their views on modern conceptions about baptism and parallels with the process in Scandinavia. And they also use a source from late ninth century Saxony.<sup>9</sup> This is the *Translatio Sancti Liborii*, an account of the transfer of the remains of Saint Liborius from Le Mans to Paderborn in 836. After Charlemagne had subjugated the Saxons, he knew that his work was not yet done and he ordered the construction of churches in order to instruct the Saxons. For they were still uninformed 'rudes' in the faith at that time and had to learn how to be good Christians.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, sources indicate that this was the case for both the elite and the common people. In a petition from 815 a nobleman asks Louis the Pious for the restoration of its ancestral lands, that have been taken from him by pagan family members after his conversion to Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

Christianity had not yet fully taken hold in Saxony in the first half of the ninth century and most were not yet well educated in the faith. In this research, I want to take a closer look at the Heliand and the role it could have played in further bringing its nominally converted Saxon audience into the faith of Christianity. I will try to accomplish this by using the following research question: *Around the year 800 AD the Saxons were conquered by Charlemagne and forcefully converted to Christianity. However their conversion process was not complete as can be seen in sources from the ninth century. In this period the Heliand was*

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<sup>6</sup> Annales regni Francorum, 772 ( Translation: Scholz 1972 48-49.); Einhard, Vita Karoli Magni, 7( Translation: Dutton 1998, 20-21.)

<sup>7</sup> Reuter 1991, 65-66.

<sup>8</sup> Rembold 2018, 203.

<sup>9</sup> Examples are Kahl 2011, Carroll 1999 and Shuler 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Flierman 2017, 132-133.

<sup>11</sup> Carroll 1999, 224-225.

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*written and it is therefore possible that the Heliand was intended to aid the Saxons in improving their Christianity. How could the Heliand have aided in the conversion process towards Christianity of the Saxons?* The sources from the late ninth century indicate that the Christianization of Saxony went very well during the second half of the ninth century.<sup>12</sup> However, exactly how much the Heliand had a part in this is difficult to quantify. There are not sources directly describing the effect. Therefore the historical approach will be coupled with a theoretical approach. To do this, three theories will be used intensely. The first is from R. Murphy in his book *The Saxon Savior. The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth Century Heliand*. Murphy believes that the aim of the author was to write a version of the Gospels that could appeal more to the nominally Christian Saxon elite; An elite of which many members were in Christian in a sense, but had not yet internalized the faith. According to Murphy the way the Heliand was written would appeal more to the audience and by doing so their 'inner conviction' towards Christianity would be strengthened. The author did so by alluding to religious symbolism, old cultural traditions and recent historical events.<sup>13</sup> The allusions play a critical role in this thesis. The whole of chapter three will be dedicated to the historical context, the old society and religion of the Saxons, to explain and to show what these allusions referred to. An important aspect of these allusions is that it gives words or phrases a sort of a double meaning in the Heliand; it means A in the text but it also alludes to the B known to the Saxons. For example the scene where Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate. In the Gospels it is mentioned twice that Jesus was bound, but in the Heliand it is repeated time and again. Many of the ancestors of the audience in the Saxon Wars had been prisoners of war too.<sup>14</sup> So the 'the binding' in this context refers both directly to Jesus being bound, an indirectly to the memory of being bound of the Saxons.

Murphy's interpretation is the basis for both the historical and theoretical analysis of the Heliand. For the theoretical analysis I will also use two other sets of theories. The most important theoretical tool for the analysis in order to find an answer to the research question is the work of H. Versnel from his book *Coping with the Gods. Wayward readings in Greek mythology*. In *Coping with the Gods*, Versnel looks into different phenomena from ancient Greek polytheism. While the subject matter differs greatly between chapters, there

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<sup>12</sup> Rembold 2018,186-187.

<sup>13</sup> Murphy 1989, 10-28. Murphy 2010, 34-39.

<sup>14</sup> Cathey 2002, 238-239.

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is one overarching theme, that Versnel has dubbed 'inconsistency'. This inconsistency comes from the fact that in many ancient Greek texts, there seem to be 'problems'. The problem is that we cannot make sense of parts of these texts, because of the ambiguous, multi-interpretable or outright contradictory statements that can be found in these texts. In his book Versnel ventures to find ways how the Greeks were not bothered by such inconsistencies in the texts. Inconsistency is the main theme of the book. In the introduction of an earlier work on the topic, *Ter Unus*, Versnel argues that it is the best umbrella term for the different kind of problems he encounters.<sup>15</sup> But for this thesis the more specific problems related to ambiguity and multi-interpretable texts are important. The key to analysis of the Heliand in this research are the allusions with a double meaning in the Heliand. The ambiguity and/or possible double interpretation is what makes them function in that regard. The specific theories taken from Versnel for this thesis allow me to deal with the double meaning of the allusions. How this works exactly will become clear in the next chapter, when the theories of Versnel are explained in detail.

Versnel looks at the phenomena from a historical and anthropological point of view, not a theological one. As such, he is not looking for solutions in the sense of convincingly arguing which of the possible positions is the right one and how to make sense of texts where the wrong position is present. Instead he comes up with solutions on why the Greeks did not perceive the same problems as we do. How they coped with these inconsistencies/ambiguities in their daily lives. Hence the title of the book; *Coping with the Gods*. In this research I will use a combination of some of the theories/ solutions that he offers, on the Heliand. Because I believe that the theories that were written on ancient Greek polytheism by Versnel can also be used when looking at the Heliand, due to the fact that Versnel's with problems related to ambiguity/ possible double interpretation and these are important elements for the analysis of the allusions in the Heliand. With these theories I hope to find how the Heliand may have worked as a vehicle for bringing the audience closer to the Faith of Christianity.

CSR studies religion from a cognitive psychological angle. Religion is studied through looking at the cognitive processes at work while people experience or discuss religion. For example J. Larsson uses CSR to study Ancient Greek polytheism, specifically at similar

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<sup>15</sup> Versnel 1990, 1-35.

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problems as Versnel. For example, both tackle the problem of the nature of the Greek Pantheon in the ancient texts.<sup>16</sup> For this research a small part of this discipline will be used, taken from Larsson and I. Pyysiäinen in order to complement the theories of Versnel.<sup>17</sup> Versnel also heavily borrows from various branches of psychology so it is quite a sensible combination.

In the second chapter the exact theories taken from Coping with the Gods, Murphy and CSR will be explained in detail, and it will be shown how they are to be used in the subsequent analysis.<sup>18</sup> The third chapter will be on the historical context of the Saxon Wars, the Christianization of Saxony and the Heliand itself. This chapter serves three purposes: firstly, it shows the historical context in which the Heliand was written, and most importantly, why it was written. The reason for its writing can be found in the Saxon Wars and the subsequent Christianization of Saxony in the ninth century. Secondly, it will give the information on the Heliand itself; both the general information, as well as the contents of the book. And thirdly, the concepts to which allusions refer will be explained. For example, historical events, the old religion, and elements of the old Saxon culture. In the fourth chapter, the analysis of the Heliand in order to find an answer to the research question will take place. I will look at a selection of themes of allusions from the Heliand and analyze these with the help of Murphy, the historical context, Versnel and CSR. The first is the basis and the latter two being the new analytical tool for research on the Heliand.

The main source for this work is the Heliand.<sup>19</sup> An important element of the analysis is comparing the differences between the texts of the Gospels and the texts of the Heliand in order to determine what was added or changed by the author of the Heliand. There the Gospels are the second important source.<sup>20</sup> For the historical context other important sources are the Frankish Royal Annals, various relic *Translationes* from late ninth century

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<sup>16</sup> Larsson 2011, 23-31.

<sup>17</sup> Pyysiäinen 2001 & Pyysiäinen 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Just to be clear, the introduction is chapter 1.

<sup>19</sup> I am unfortunately unable to properly read Old Saxon and have therefore made use of translations. I have used a combination of a Dutch translation ( Vredendaal 2006) an English translation( Scott 1969) and sometimes paragraphs cited in works such as Murphy 1989, Cathey 2002 and Zurla 2004. The main reason for the use of multiple translations is the fact that the all translations are somewhat lacking. The Dutch translation does not capture the wide array of allusions that are present in the Heliand as is shown by other authors. The Old Saxon, including the numbering of the lines, is also not included. The English translation does not have those problems, but it is inconvenient to use, as it is only accessible online and not in book form. To solve this problem, the lines from the English translation will be included when the Dutch translation is cited.

<sup>20</sup> The Bible I will be using is the King James version by Thomas Nelson publishers from 2017.



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Saxony and a bibliographer of Charlemagne, Einhard. The historical context is important to understand the allusions.

The relevance of this thesis is twofold. The first is to acquire a better understanding of how documents such as the Heliand may have worked for the improvement of the Christianity of newly converted peoples. Because throughout history, there are more examples of contemporary Christian texts that have been altered in order to appeal more to the recipient audience. Two examples are the tale of Andreas and the Jesus Sutras. The tale of Andreas is an Anglo-Saxon poem from around the eight to tenth century, in which the apostle St. Andrew is transformed into an old English hero. The Jesus Sutras are a collection of seventh to ninth century Nestorian texts from China where parts of the Gospels or others Christian works have been written in such a way that they resemble Buddhist texts, such as the *Milinda Panha*. With the outcomes of this research it is hopefully also possible to understand the working of these texts better and to understand yet more about conversion to Christianity in general. The second point of relevance is trying to find out whether the combination of ideas of Murphy, Versnel and CSR on ancient Greek polytheism are also applicable to texts from a later period. Versnel deals with ambiguity in texts. And ambiguity is one of the ways the Heliand works through its allusions. And seeing how much 'sense' Versnel is able to make of many intricate problems for Greek polytheism, it would be very useful if these theories are also useful for other and later religious documents.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Introduction.

In this chapter the three sets theories that will be used to analyze the Heliand will be explained. Firstly I will explain the interpretation by Murphy in more detail. Secondly, I will present the different theories of Versnel. And thirdly, I will present what I will use from CSR. In the final section(2.4) these three sets of theories will be combined into the working theory of this thesis. It will be also be shown how these newly formed theory will be used upon the Heliand.

### 2.2 The interpretation of the Heliand by G. Murphy.

I will now discuss G.R. Murphy and his interpretation of his the Heliand. Murphy has argued for his interpretation in several of his books and articles.<sup>21</sup> The book that I have used most intensely is the *Saxon Savior. The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth Century Heliand*.<sup>22</sup> Murphy is an American reverent and Germanist by trade. In most of his studies he combines his interest in Christianity and German literature. He has not only written extensively on the Heliand, but also on other German literary works and their relationship to Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

Murphy believes that the Heliand was written by a Saxon cleric. The cleric his aim was to write a version of the Gospels that could appeal more to the nominally Christian, Saxon elite. The intention being that a to the audience more appealing version of the Gospel would strengthen their 'inner conviction' and transform the nominally Christians into actual Christians.<sup>24</sup> How did the author of the Heliand achieve this? According to Murphy his interpretation the author did so by alluding to images, memories and concepts known and dear to the Saxons. This varied from religious symbolism to references to cultural traditions and recent historical events. Murphy believes that by setting the story in a more recognizable setting and by conjuring all the familiar or sympathizing elements the story of Jesus would resonate more with the audience and therefore the audience would become more susceptible to Christianity.<sup>25</sup> This process was strengthened by the setting of the

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<sup>21</sup> Murphy 1989, Murphy 1999, Murphy 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Murphy 1989.

<sup>23</sup> <https://gufaculty360.georgetown.edu/s/contact/00336000014RkSzAAK/g-murphy>

<sup>24</sup> Murphy 1989,ix, 10-28. Murphy 2010, 34-39.

<sup>25</sup> Murphy 2010, 34-39, 46-47, 51-52.

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Heliand. It was written in such a way that the events did not take place in first century Israel, but in ninth century Saxony.<sup>26</sup> Also important is the fact that the author of the Heliand frequently encourages his listeners to not have doubt and to keep having faith.<sup>27</sup>

As stated in the introduction, Murphy's analysis is the basis. And from that basis on I will expand towards a working theory to be used on the Heliand. The first expansion is with the allusions.

### 2.3 Coping with the Gods.

In this chapter the two theories from Versnel's *Coping with the Gods. Wayward readings in Greek Theology* will be explained. I will firstly present them separately and then combine them into what I will take from Versnel to the final paragraph in order to formulate the working theory for the analysis of the Heliand. Versnel deals with all kinds of problems with texts on Greek polytheism, with the overall theme of inconstancy. But as noted, for thesis the focus will be more on problems related to ambiguity and double-interpretation.

How could the Greeks have produced texts full of ambiguity and inconstancy? If you look at ancient Greek philosophy, logic and rationality were very important. The modern philosophy of logic is still extremely influenced by Aristotle's thoughts on the matter. Versnel's answer is featured in the title of the book; they coped with it. A large part of the book is dedicated to show how the Greeks coped with various of these problems. In this section I will show both the 'problems' present in Greek religious texts, as well as the theories that Versnel offers as a solution. At the end of the chapter the combination of these theories, together with CSR and Murphy's interpretation of the Heliand will be formed into one theory. This theory will be used in the analysis of the Heliand.

The first problem and subsequent solution deal with the overall nature of Greek polytheism. Is the Greek pantheon an organized and logical system? Or a chaos full of different local pantheons and traditions? This larger question consists of several smaller questions such as the names of gods, the difference between the gods of myth and everyday life and geographical differences. The larger question can best be explained by zooming in on one of these sub questions. I will deal with the divine names here.

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<sup>26</sup> Murphy 1989, 10-28. Murphy 2010,35.

<sup>27</sup> Murphy 1989, 43-44.

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The Homeric pantheon is quite clearly demarcated, consisting of famous gods with their own distinct function, identity and characteristics; Zeus, Apollo, Hera, etc. However, in Greek texts you do not see just Zeus or Apollo, but also Zeus Meilichios and Zeus Olympios to name but a few. Are these 'Zeuses' with different epithets all manifestations of the one Zeus? Or are they different gods with the same name? The former is usually taken for granted and the question is often not asked or ignored. I personally only discovered the problem while reading Versnel, after years of studying ancient history. But Versnel does a splendid job in showing that the question is too easily brushed aside if you look at the ancient texts. There are texts that upheld the view that these were manifestations of the same god. But quite a few of them seem to indicate that gods with the same name but different epithets are not perceived as multiple manifestations of the same god, but as completely different gods. And there are texts in which both positions are held at various points.<sup>28</sup> And the questions are quite similar when looking at problems such as the difference between gods of myth and gods of everyday life; The humble snake-like Zeus Meilichios can hardly be seen as the thunder god of mythology. How did the Greeks cope with these issues? According to Versnel, the answer can be found in a combination of linguistics and cognitive psychology. Versnel expands on the ideas of linguist Wallace Chafe. In your mind, all kinds of knowledge are stored. However, you can only focus at a small section of your knowledge at the same time. And what you focus on depends on what is contextually required at that time.<sup>29</sup> While talking about history you focus on your historical knowledge, but you will replace your focus from historical knowledge to musical knowledge if the topic of the conversation is changed to music. To quote Versnel: ' At any given moment, the human mind can focus on no more than a small segment of everything it knows. 'both in speech and in perception, we have to allow for *sequences of different foci of consciousness*( my italics).<sup>30</sup> The knowledge that comes to the forefront depends on what the context requires and as such a shift in context triggers a shift in the focus of your consciousness. This all seems quite logical. But how then do contradictory ideas/ concepts in your mind not clash? How could the Greeks have both believed in their local religious

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<sup>28</sup> Versnel 2011, 60-65.

<sup>29</sup> Versnel 2011, 82-87.

<sup>30</sup> Versnel 2011, 83.

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customs and pantheon, and also in the gods of myth?<sup>31</sup> Because to us, these two ‘systems’ are clearly not compatible. Here Versnel adds the idea of a ‘virtuoso winking process’, a concept that he borrows from sociopsychology. Winking entails that one of your eyes is closed and the other is open. But not both closed or both open. And that is how the winking process works in combination with the sequences of foci of consciousness. While shifting focus because of a change in context, a winking process prevents different foci or ideas from clashing. They do not clash because ‘the eyes are not simultaneously open’. This allowed the Greeks to cope with contradictory notions regarding their pantheon, without having difficulties with the fact that their convictions were not compatible logically.<sup>32</sup> The final important element from Versnel comes from later in the chapter. When discussing the problem of where gods live; on Olympus, their temple or omnipresent. Here, roughly the same problem occurs as with divine names. Aside from the shift according to context, Versnel adds another element here. The element of ‘choice’; gods live where they are expected to live relevant to the context. Although Versnel talks more about need and preferences, the element of agency is present. Where they are ‘expected to be’ and that is in a way up to the believer himself. In essence, he decides the place of the god relevant for his situation. Not to completely replace context with your own preference, but there is an element of agency to it.<sup>33</sup>

So there are three important elements here; The shift in foci of consciousness according to context, combined with the virtuoso winking process with the element of choice from the question of commuting gods. In essence that comes down to the fact that we change the focus point of our knowledge according to what the context requires, with an element of agency added.

The second theory comes from the sixth chapter of the book. In this chapter Versnel

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<sup>31</sup> The question whether the Greeks actually believed in the gods of myth, or in gods at all is interesting and featured in Versnel, but will not be discussed here.

<sup>32</sup> Versnel 2011, 259-260. A good example that humans do this is my personal experience with studying the Free Will debate in philosophy. At the time when I studied this, the consensus was that neuropsychological finds led to the conclusion that the theory of determinism( all events are the result of the combination of natural laws and past events) was the right one, and as such the position of humans having genuinely Free Will was made very difficult. However, this was the view in the classroom. Outside the classroom no one thought of not having control about one’s own decisions, even if merely hours before that idea was presented as a very difficult to be debunked theory. At the time I was already aware of such a winking process going on in my head, and this fits neatly into Versnel’s theories on sequences of foci of consciousness and a virtuoso winking process.

<sup>33</sup> Versnel 2011, 88-95.

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looks at ruler cults and kings pretending to be divine/ gods. One of the main questions being; did anyone ever believe that a ruler was actually divine? Here Versnel combines different concepts into an interesting take on that question. The first concept is that of sincere hypocrisy, which he borrows from a Dutch poet. The idea is that religion to many people is something of a honest or sincere pretense. In a way people do not fully believe their religion, but most of the time, and especially during religious acts or rituals, people sincerely pretend to believe. This notion becomes very useful when combined with the concept of 'the ludic'. Versnel defines this as ' the capacity to deal simultaneously and subjunctively with two or more ways of classifying reality. ' This might sound contradictory towards the idea of shifting foci of consciousness as discussed earlier, but it is more of an extension. It works like this: The audience hears the Heliand. There is an allusion to, for example, an old god. The allusion serves as the trigger that shifts your focus of consciousness to where the allusion alluded to. You( the reader, listener) might be both aware of the 'real' situation( the story of the Heliand) and the other part of the game( the old god), but due to your focus of consciousness and your honest hypocrisy you really 'play the game'. And that is how the theories combined of Coping with the Gods works.<sup>34</sup> But there is an element missing here. How does being aware of both the story of the Heliand, and the old god, help in a conversion process? For that we need an emotional component and that component comes from the third source of theories; The Cognitive Science of Religion.

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<sup>34</sup> The theories of this thesis only really work/ make sense on the Heliand when they are all put together, but for the convenience of the reader and clarity's sake I have included this separate explanation of Versnel only.

## 2.4 The Cognitive Science of Religion.

I will now introduce the theory from the Cognitive Science of Religion(CSR). As stated in the previous section, CSR will add an emotional component that is missing from the combination of Versnel and Murphy. As stated in 2.2, Murphy believes that the Heliand works by alluding to familiar elements to the Saxon audience in order to make Christianity more palatable for the nominally converted Saxons. And with Versnel's theories you can explain on a deeper level how such an allusion might work. But how exactly does that make the concepts from the Heliand more palatable? An element of CSR can explain that. The concept I want to add here are *minimally counter intuitive* superhuman agents or concepts. I will explain this step by step:

Agents are living beings like humans; they have desires, take actions and have cognitive abilities. These elements combined are called agency; an agent is a being with agency. An important aspect of agents is the ability to recognize agency in orders. The second step is the perception of agency of superhuman beings, or superhuman agents. Think of Gods, ancestors, mythological heroes, etc. An important element in CSR is that humans recognize agency on superhuman agents. Psychological tests on human children have shown this recognizing of agency of superhuman agents.<sup>35</sup> The third step is the prevalent practice of anthropomorphism of superhuman agents. Which means, presenting gods as (super)humans. Versnel deals with this problem too in his book.<sup>36</sup> With the superhuman agent element explained, I will now move to the minimally counterintuitive. In understanding religious experiences, there is a difference between intuitive and reflective cognition. Intuitive cognition comes from our lives in the world, and we understand them naturally. Take for example certain intuitive inferences; If I walk through the rain, I will get wet. Or, if I put my feet into the water, my feet will get wet. On the other hand, reflective inferences do not come automatically from living in the world, but are taught, or come about from our own analysis or experience with other situations. For example; I know that it rains because the colder air condensates, which leads to rain. This can also be used in a

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<sup>35</sup> In the book by Pyysiäinen an experiment is mentioned where children from the age of 5 are shown a cracker box full of stones. When asked what their mother would think is inside the box, they answered crackers. When asked what God would see, they answered stones. The children were thus from a very young age both aware of God's agency and superhuman abilities.

<sup>36</sup> Versnel 2011, 379-385.

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religious context: intuitive: If I pray, God will understand me. Reflective: God understands my prayer in English, as well as prayers in all other languages, because he needs to know all languages in order to understand people's prayers. According to S. Stowers as presented by Larsson, most of the everyday religious experiences for normal believers are intuitive. Reflective religious experiences come about when people think critically about these phenomena and form theologies or mythologies.<sup>37</sup> This also partly explains the question of the name of the Greek Gods; Zeus Meilichios and Zeus Olympios are different gods (intuitive) or they are manifestations of the same Zeus (reflective).<sup>38</sup> Counter intuitive means that it is not intuitive. For example, in the Netherlands it often rains. From sloppy rain to the occasional waterfall like torrent. There is a huge difference, but they are still intuitive. But if the water suddenly changed into stones, that would be counter intuitive.<sup>39</sup> But what is the relevance of counter intuitive agents or concepts for religion? According to the authors, they are everywhere; religious concepts, works of fiction but also scientific discoveries and theories are examples of counter intuitiveness according to Pyysiäinen and the many authors he mentions.<sup>40</sup> But in order for them to be effective in religious or literary contexts, counter intuitive is not enough, they have to be *Minimally Counter Intuitive (MCI)*. It means that they are counter intuitive, but to a certain extent. Many examples are to be found in religion; a god can make himself invincible, or he can fly. While a god as an anthropomorphic superhuman with agency is intuitive, that he can fly is not; normal humans cannot fly.<sup>41</sup> MCIs are the basis on which CSR is built. Firstly, psychological research shows that religious MCIs are best recalled, in comparison to intuitive concepts, or maximally counter intuitive concepts. They stay with us the longest and are the most recognizable. Most importantly, they incite the strongest emotional response.<sup>42</sup> According to CSR researchers, humans think with the help of mental tools/ mental organs that help them structure the information given to them. According to P. Boyer, as presented by Larsson, Religious MCIs work best to trigger such tools.<sup>43</sup> ' In cognitive terms they activate multiple mental systems, " those that govern

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<sup>37</sup> Larsson 2016, 11-14.

<sup>38</sup> Larsson 2016, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Larsson 2016, 11-14, own examples.

<sup>40</sup> Pyysiäinen 2002, 114-116.

<sup>41</sup> Larsson 2016, 19-20.

<sup>42</sup> Gonze 2006; Larsson 2016, 19-21.

<sup>43</sup> Larsson 2016, 20-21; Pyysiäinen 2001, 19-22; Pyysiäinen 2002, 115-116. To understand them more easily, the idea is quite comparable to the schemata from Kant.



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our most intense emotions, shape our interaction with other people, give us moral feelings and organize social groups”<sup>44</sup> Hearing and experiencing religious MCIs in literature can bring about this mental effect and that is relevant for the current research as we are looking at what subtle references to religion might have done to people’s convictions. It is relevant in the sense that, according to Larsson, we can use it to have a more emic approach to religion.

<sup>45</sup> While an etic approach at religious belief or phenomena can be very useful if you want to place those experiences into a wider socio-historical context, for this research the emic approach is more useful. Larsson gives the example of a fictive conversation between an ancient Greek farmer and a modern historian on his sacrifice for a hero. The modern historian tries to implement all sorts of functional and political functions to the sacrifice; community building, using the temple to claim the land surrounding it etc. But the Greek himself talks about his personal religious attachment to the hero and his sacrifices to him in the temple. With an emic stance and CSR point of view you can appreciate his personal bond with this MCI superhuman agent and better understand his religious experience. Because of the modern research on MCIs and our knowledge of the reactions they incite, we can make a better guess of the religious and emotional response that ancient believers such as Greeks or Saxons had when encountered with such a religious MCI. And that provides us with the emotional component that was lacking in just the combination of Murphy and Versnel. And that is what ultimately makes the CSR approach with the emphasis on MCIs useful for this research. Being able to take a more emic approach towards their religious feelings is therefore helpful in order find the effect the Heliand might have had. Now we can also judge the emotional effect that an allusion the old religion or culture in the Heliand might have had. With all the components now explained separately, in the next section the three will be combined into one theory.

## 2.5 Conclusion and the forming of a theory

In this section the elements of Murphy, Versnel and CSR will be combined into one theory that will be applied to the analysis of the Heliand in chapter four and will hopefully yield

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<sup>44</sup> Larsson 2016, 21.

<sup>45</sup> An emic approach wants to look at phenomena from the insider’s side, while etic looks at this from the outside. An emic approach to religious experiences tries to relate to what the actor did, why he did it and what it meant to him, while an etic approach looks at this action in a broader social and historical context.

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useful results. For convenience the name of this theory will be the combination of the three; VMC(Versnel, Murphy, CSR) In this section I will explain how I hope VMC will work in chapter four. But whether it does remains to be seen in the actual analysis.

The central thesis of Murphy is that the author of the Heliand is constantly alluding to the past with Saxon images, be it from mythology, religion or historical occurrences. He does this in order to make the story of Christ more familiar to the Saxon audience. And the familiar images in the Heliand make the audience more sympathetic and susceptible to Christianity. The way the author achieved this was in multiple ways. One way was to transform the landscape of the Heliand from the Levant to northern Europe. For example, during the temptation of Christ. The other way was by the usage of what I have dubbed the 'double meaning' of certain words and phrases to create the allusions. This can be seen with the following example. In fitt 12 the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist is described. In the Heliand, as Jesus rises from the water, a dove lands on his right shoulder.<sup>46</sup> In scripture, a dove is present, but it is not specified where the dove lands. The author of the Heliand did this deliberately. In this manner, it is a reference to the old god Odin/ Woden and his ravens *Huginn* and *Muninn*. At the end of each day, the ravens flew on Woden's shoulder, and told him all what had happened in the world that day. In the Heliand the detail is added of where the dove lands precisely. Because it clearly alludes to the mythology of Woden, the placement of the dove in the text gets this double meaning. But that does not mean that the text of the Heliand is insignificant. While it implicitly refers to Woden, the actual text says that the dove lands on Jesus. The interpretation of Murphy is followed in this research. For the analysis my focus will be more on the allusions and less on the change of the scenery in the Heliand. Before I move to CSR and Versnel, there is more to be said on the allusions.<sup>47</sup> The allusion to Woden at Jesus' baptism is but an example of multiple references to Woden in the Heliand. And there are more examples of multiple allusions to one particular concept or memory of the Saxons. In this thesis I have called multiple allusions to the same concept, themes of allusions. So all the references to Woden are one theme. In the analysis in chapter four, it will be the different themes of allusions that will be analyzed through the combination of the three theories, Murphy, Versnel and CSR.) I have chosen to work themes of allusions because together they will hopefully better illustrate what the possible effect

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<sup>46</sup> Murphy 1989, 77-80.

<sup>47</sup> This is my own addition, not from Murphy's thesis.

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might have been. The fits in which the allusions occur will be compared to their corresponding passages from the Gospels. In this way we can see the changes that the author of the Heliand made, in order for the allusion to occur. After that the allusions will be analyzed through VMC. I will now broadly outline how I possibly see this theory working in chapter four: An important part of CSR was minimally counterintuitive concepts(MCI). I believe the allusions can serve as MCIs because on the one hand the allusions are very familiar to the audience, but hearing them in the context of the story of Christ in the Heliand, is not. Together it is then slightly counter intuitive to hear these allusions in the Heliand. We know that as an MCI, the allusion incites a strong emotional response. If you add the theory of Versnel you can see the following. Take the theory of Versnel of the Ludic approach; playing the game, is, I believe, applicable. Versnel defined this as being simultaneously aware of two realities. The two realities are created by the double meaning of the phrasing of these allusions. The one by what is going on in the story of the Heliand and the other by the meaning of the phrasing(of the allusion) known to the audience. But it not syncretism, the Saxon concept and the Christian message are not merged. This is due to the other elements from Versnel; the shift in foci of consciousness and the virtuoso winking process. Shifts in foci of consciousness are triggered by the context. I believe that an MCI can serve as such a trigger. As quoted above, religious MCIs trigger mental images that can be highly emotional. Such a reference/ MCI thus shifts the foci of consciousness to an important emotional and religious mental space. The allusions start 'the game', and as such you are both aware of the reality of the story of the Heliand, and of the old familiar religion, to which your focus of consciousness has moved due to the effect of the religious MCI. But the two realities do not clash problematically due to the virtuoso winking process.

And this is the working theory for the analysis in chapter four. I hope that it will help in order to find the possible ways in which the Heliand might have helped in the conversion process of the Saxons. I hope to find the effect of beings simultaneously aware of the two realities, while the allusion as an MCI has incited the emotional response connected to the allusion to old religion, old culture or old society of the Saxons.

But before the analysis will take place, the allusions need to be explained. This will be done in the next chapter.

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## Chapter 3. The Historical Context.

This chapter is on the historical background of the Heliand. This includes the following elements: Firstly, the Heliand itself, secondly the historical context of the Saxon Wars, thirdly the Saxon culture and religion, and fourthly, the Christianization of Saxony. For all the four elements of this chapter the emphasis will be on historical events or societal/ religious characteristics that will be used in the analysis of the Heliand later in this research. Aside from the use for the analysis, this chapter will also explain the Heliand's place in history. The Heliand cannot be properly understood without the events of the Saxon Wars and the subsequent incomplete Christianization of Saxony. And to understand the possible role it had in the improving the Christianity of the Saxons it is important to understand the historical context in which it was written.

### 3.1 The general information on the Heliand.

The Heliand is an Old Saxon Gospel harmony. It is divided into 71 fitts( songs, chapters) of almost 6000 lines. The Heliand is very likely based on the so called *Codex Fuldenis* by Victor of Capua, which in turn is a Latin translation of the Syriac Gospel harmony by Tatian, from the later third century CE called the *Diatessaron*.<sup>48</sup> The author is unknown. The scholarly consensus is that it was a monk.<sup>49</sup> Various translations of the Diatessaron were popular throughout Europe and the Middle East in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Another important source for the Heliand is the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by *Hrabanus Maurus*, the abbot of the monastery of Fulda.<sup>50</sup> Of the Heliand there are currently five sources. Two manuscripts; M( preserved in the Bavarian *Staatsbibliothek* in Munich) and C( preserved in the British Museum in London) and three fragments. Scholars consider M as the oldest and date it to the middle or late ninth century, and C is considered to be from the tenth century.<sup>51</sup> M is also the best manuscript to use. It has more lacunae than C, but the Old Saxon is purer and there are fewer errors in the text.<sup>52</sup> While M is old, scholarship agrees that it is based on another earlier text, and was not written by the original author. This brings us to the questions of when the Heliand was written and where. Throughout the

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<sup>48</sup> Rembold 2018, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Murphy 1989, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Vredendaal 2006, 25.

<sup>51</sup> Murphy 1989, 26-27.

<sup>52</sup> Zurla 2004, 11; Murphy 1989, 27.

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history of scholarship on the Heliand, multiple places of origin have been suggested and argued for.<sup>53</sup> However, modern scholarship mostly agree on the monastery of Fulda.<sup>54</sup> The main arguments are based on the two sources for the Heliand: The commentary on Matthew was made by Hrabanus Maurus, who was the abbot at Fulda from 822 to 842. And the Gospel harmony by Victor of Capua was in the possession of Fulda at that time.<sup>55</sup> This leads to the question of when it was written. Maurus finished his commentary in 821, which provides the earliest date. The latest date has been a heated topic of debate. One of the difficulties comes from a later, Latin introduction to the Heliand. In the introduction the poem is dedicated to *Ludouicus(sic) piissimus Augustus* and there has been discussion whether this refers to Louis the Pious, or his son Louis the German. However H. Hummer has convincingly argued for Louis the Pious as the only possible reference, based on an intensive study of the titles employed by the two.<sup>56</sup> This places the latest possible date for the Heliand at 840.

The date of its creation is important because, as we will see in 3.5, the Christianization of Saxony was not going well yet at that time. In the previous chapter a theory, VMC, was created to find out the role the Heliand could have played in the conversion process of the Saxon. Let us now move to the contents of the Heliand, in order to show what will be analyzed in chapter four.

### 3.2 The contents of the Heliand.

The author transformed the landscape of the Bible from first century Judea to eighth century Saxony. Also noteworthy are the names of the towns. Saxony did not know any cities, but it knew fortified places, called *Burgs*. Throughout the Heliand, cities are portrayed as burgs; Romaburg, Nazarethburg, etc.<sup>57</sup> Most striking is the way Jesus is depicted and especially his relationship to the apostles. The basic political unit of the Saxons was the *Gau*, led by a single leader. While many of these noblemen had become wealthy landowners after the Frankish conquests, traditionally they had been military men. Tacitus described the Saxon

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<sup>53</sup> Rembold 2018, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Murphy 1989, 27; Zurla 2004, 22-24; Rembold 2018, 22-23; Vredendaal 2006, 25.

<sup>55</sup> Rembold 2018, 23.

<sup>56</sup> Hummer 2004, 1-8.

<sup>57</sup> Murphy 1989, 16. For example Fitt 1 *Rûmuburg*, Scott 1969, line 11 & fitt 4, *Nazarethburg*, Scott 1969, Line 257.

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society as a society of strong warrior leaders, followed by their retinue.<sup>58</sup> Such a leader was called a Drohtin and his followers were called *Thanes*. These followers, young free men, chose their own Drohtin to follow, in order to gain wealth and glory. In the Heliand Christ and his apostles are presented as a Drohtin and his followers. The followers fought for the Drohtin, who in return supported them with friendship, wealth and land. This support is called *mnt*.<sup>59</sup> The military loyalty of these followers is also present in the Heliand. When Jesus is taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane, the scene in which Peter wants to defend 'his Lord' is much expanded and the actual military deed is made more concrete. This shows the respect for and role of military prowess in Saxon society.<sup>60</sup> According to C. Zurla, the author tried to portray Peter as a *Berserker*, warriors mad of devotion to Woden who would fight in some sort of trance.<sup>61</sup> The extra attention to military prowess is also present in fitt 48, after Jesus has announced that despite the danger, he will go to Jerusalem. In the Gospel of John 11:16, Thomas says one sentence: 'Let us go, that we may die with him'. In the Heliand this scene is much longer and Thomas talks a long time about their honor and obligation to come to their lord's aid; it would be a holy duty to follow their Drohtin, and to die for him.<sup>62</sup> Drohtin however, is not only used for Jesus, but also many times for God. The usage of the word is one of the clearest examples of how allusions to the Saxon culture were made in order to make Christianity more familiar and acceptable; by constantly referring to Jesus and God with the word traditionally used for the leader of the household/ Gau and military retinue.<sup>63</sup> I believe that this is the most fundamental change the author of the Heliand made. By presenting Jesus and God as lords, faith in God is presented as the loyalty towards a chieftain. Faith is transformed into loyalty.<sup>64</sup> I believe that by doing so, the Saxon audience would better understand the meaning of the story, and it would connect more on a personal level to them. Which would presumably help in their attitude towards Christianity. Therefore, faith as loyalty is one of the themes of allusions in chapter 4.

The Drohtin was a military leader, a nobleman. The elite noble culture and social stratification is very present. Jesus descends of king David, both through Mary and Joseph. All

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<sup>58</sup> Zurla 2004, 126-130.

<sup>59</sup> Zurla 2004, 130.

<sup>60</sup> Heliand, fitt 58 ( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 198-201.) Scott 1969, lines 4858-4900.

<sup>61</sup> Zurla 2004, 145-146.

<sup>62</sup> Murphy 1989, 97-98; Heliand fitt 48 ( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 173-176.) Scott 1969, lines 3993-4002.

<sup>63</sup> Zurla 2004, 126. For example in the Lord's Prayer, Fitt 19, Scott 1969, Line 1607.

<sup>64</sup> Murphy 1999, 12-21.

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the apostles and important characters are either noble from the start, or are ennobled before the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. And they are all rich. Zacharias receives the guests after the birth of John the Baptist in his wine hall.<sup>65</sup> After his birth, Jesus is given the most beautiful clothes and jewels. And the men outside are not shepherders, but horse attendants.<sup>66</sup> It is noteworthy that the scene of Mary and Joseph receiving no room at the inn is omitted. Such a breach of the custom of hospitality would probably have been problematic for the audience.<sup>67</sup> The noble culture also presents itself in the form of feasting, and especially in the drinking culture.<sup>68</sup> More emphasis on drinking can be seen during scenes as the wedding at Cana and the death of John the Baptist.<sup>69</sup> It is especially present in Jesus' prayer to God on the Mount of Olives. Shortly after the Last Supper Jesus goes outside with Jacob, John and Peter. Jesus fears the torments that await him, but eventually he accepts his fate. He raises his cup and drinks to his father as a warrior would praise and toast his liege lord.' If you want it to be this way, then I want to drink it: I take this chalice in my hand, and drink it to your honor, my lord chieftain, powerful protector.<sup>70</sup>

In this subchapter the nature of the contents of the Heliand were explained, especially the transformation of Jesus from a Jewish Rabbi to a Saxon Drohtin. In the analysis in chapter four, the changes that the author made to the story are very important. These changes include the allusions that will be used in the analysis. For example, the notion of faith in God being transformed into loyalty to one's lord will be an important element of the analysis and is one of the themes of allusions.

In the next two subchapters, the other things alluded to in the Heliand will be shown in the historical context and the society of the Saxons before the Saxon Wars.

### 3.3 Saxon society before the Wars

In this section the political organization and the religious and cultural world of the Saxons will be explained.

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<sup>65</sup> Vredendaal 2006, 20; Heliand, fitt 3 ( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 56-59.) Scott 1969, line 3228.

<sup>66</sup> Heliand, fitt 5 ( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 65-67.) Scott 1969, lines 5379-6380, 5387-5390.

<sup>67</sup> Zurla 2004, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Zurla 2004, 167-168.

<sup>69</sup> Zurla 2004, 168. Heliand, Fitt 24 & 33 ( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 117-119 & 137-140). Scott 1969, lines: 1994-2087 & 2698-2799.

<sup>70</sup> Heliand fitt 57, ( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 195-198.) Scott 1969, lines 4746-4768; Murphy 1989, 104-105.( Citation Murphy 1989, 104:25-28.)

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Saxon was an external name used upon them by others, in for example Frankish annals. It was probably not used by the Saxons themselves, especially prior or during the Frankish wars. The Frankish Royal Annals mention more specific local groups or people within the 'Saxons'. In 775 the Saxon *Austreleudi* under Hesi and the *Angarii* with their leader Bruno submitted to Charlemagne. In 780 the *Nordliudi* were baptized, and they are mentioned again in 798 after they rose up in rebellion.<sup>71</sup> In various legal codes of the ninth century, such as the Second Saxon capitulary and the Law of the Saxons, there are different legal customs attributed to three distinct groups: the *Westphalians*, *Eastphalians* and the *Angarians*.<sup>72</sup> Before the conquest, Saxony was divided into three regions or provinces, and this corresponds with the distinct groups of the capitularies; *Westphalia*, *Eastphalia* and *Angria*. They can be seen on the map below.<sup>73</sup> These 'provinces' were divided into about a hundred Gaus. They varied in size, and were led by a single chieftain, the Drohtin.<sup>74</sup> For example the baptism of the *Austreleudi* and *Angarii* took place in the *Bückegau*.<sup>75</sup> During the Saxon Wars, there is evidence of both the provinces, and individual Gau making peace with Charlemagne.<sup>76</sup> There was one overarching political institution and that was a general assembly taking place annually at Marklohe on the Weser, the *Volksversammlung*. Here all the Gau leaders plus 36 representatives of each Gau gathered. One thing this assembly could do was to appoint a wartime leader, leading 'all Saxons' for a short period.<sup>77</sup> One of these was Widukind, who in this endeavor remained a leading figure in Saxon resistance to Frankish conquest until 785.<sup>78</sup>

The number of representatives from each Gau was not a coincidence. 36 representatives meant 12 representatives from each of the three social castes; the *Edhilingui*, nobility, the *Frilingi*, freemen and the *Lazzi*, semi-freemen. Slaves were not part of any of the castes. T. Reuter argues that caste should be the term applied, since intermarriage between the groups was punishable by death.<sup>79</sup> The difference between the

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<sup>71</sup> Rembold 2018, 40-41.; *Annales regni Francorum*, 775, 780, 798( Translation: Scholz 1972, 51-53, 58, 76.)

<sup>72</sup> Rembold 2018, 41.

<sup>73</sup> See the map on page 27.

<sup>74</sup> Reuter 1991, 66.; Zurla 2004, 138.

<sup>75</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, 775, (Translation: Scholz 1972, 51. )

<sup>76</sup> Reuter 1991, 66.

<sup>77</sup> Reuter 1991, 66. Zurla 2004, 139.

<sup>78</sup> Zurla 2004, 136-137.

<sup>79</sup> Reuter 1991, 66-67.



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castes can be seen in the difference in *Wergeld* between the castes.<sup>80</sup> That of an Edhilingui was eight times higher than that of a Lazzi.<sup>81</sup> This rigid social stratification and subsequent class consciousness is very present in the Heliand as we have seen.

Forsaichistu diobolae? — <i>ec forsacho diobolae.</i>	Forsakest thou the devil? — <i>I do forsake the devil.</i>
end allum diobolgelde? — <i>end ec forsacho allum diobolgeldae.</i>	And all devil worship? — <i>I do forsake all devil worship.</i>
end allum dioboles uuercum? — <i>end ec forsacho allum dioboles uuercum and uuordum thunaer ende uuoden ende saxnote ende allum them unholdum the hira genotas sint.</i>	And all devil work (witchcraft)? — <i>I do forsake all devil work and words, Donar and Wotan and Saxnot and all those demons that are their companions.</i>
Gelobistu in got alamehtigan fadaer? — <i>ec gelobo in got alamehtigan fadaer.</i>	Believest thou in God, the Almighty Father? — <i>I do believe in God, the Almighty Father.</i>
gelobistu in crist godes suno? — <i>ec gelobo in crist gotes suno.</i>	Believest thou in Christ, the Son of God? — <i>I do believe in Christ, the Son of God.</i>
gelobistu in halogan gast? — <i>ec gelobo in halogan gast.</i>	Believest thou in the Holy Ghost? — <i>I do believe in the Holy Ghost.</i>

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Almost nothing is known of the Saxon religion before the conquest, and mostly comes from Christian sources. In these sources, the depiction of the paganism is pejorative and often more literary trope than probable reality.<sup>83</sup> But we do know four elements of their religious life, and all four of them will be seen in chapter four. The Saxon revered gods. We know the names of *Donar*, *Woden* and *Saxnot* thanks to the eight century Saxon Baptismal Vow, shown above. In this document would-be Christians promise to forsake their old religious way and promise to be good Christians. *Donar* and *Woden* are well known gods from Germanic Paganism and were worshipped in various forms with different names northern Europe.<sup>84</sup> *Saxnot* seems to have been more of a specific Saxon God; the name means something along the lines of ‘fellow Saxon’. But unfortunately it is not known what the Saxons thought of their gods and how they influenced their lives. But we know that they did influence their lives, given the clear allusions to *Woden* in the Heliand.<sup>85</sup> Allusions to *Woden*

<sup>80</sup> In case of murder, the amount of money to be paid to the family of the deceased in order to avoid a blood feud.

<sup>81</sup> Reuter 1991, 66-67.; Zurla 2004, 138-139.

<sup>82</sup> <http://lowlands-l.net/grammar-new/saxons.php> (Last checked 8-12-2021)

<sup>83</sup> Vredendaal 2006, 15; Rembold 2018, 198

<sup>84</sup> For example, *Woden* was known as *Odin* and *Donar* as *Thor* in the Scandinavian tradition.

<sup>85</sup> Heliand, fitts

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are also a theme of allusion in chapter four.

The second element is the role of fate, *Wurd*. It is the unchangeable force of fate and the moving of time. Everything moves and changes through the inescapable power of *Wurd*.<sup>86</sup> Even the Gods such as Woden would eventually subject to their fate during the end of the gods in *Ragnarök*.<sup>87</sup> It was not actively worshipped however, since it could not be moved.<sup>88</sup> But it must have played an important part in the minds of the Saxons, because the author of the Heliand found it necessary to incorporate it into the Heliand. It is mentioned several times. To find a place for *Wurd*, it is mostly given the power of accidentals in the story; for example in the birth of John the Baptist, God is responsible for his birth, but *Wurd* is responsible for the accidental elements of his creation, such as the color of his hair, or his abstinence from cider or wine.<sup>89</sup> In a few fits *Wurd* seems to retain its power over life and death. But it is used there in that manner to later show the greater power of God and Jesus over *Wurd*. Which is significant given the traditional power *Wurd* had. Therefore the greater power of God and Jesus over *Wurd* will also be a theme of allusion.

The Saxons also venerated aspects of nature such as certain trees and streams.<sup>90</sup> Such an important holy place, pre-conquest, was the *Irmisul*. It is not quite certain what it was or where exactly the *Irmisul* stood. It is sometimes presented as pillar or as a tree (trunk). Murphy believes that it was a representation of the *Yggdrasil*, the cosmic tree of life of Germanic and Norse mythology.<sup>91</sup> It was the first target of Charlemagne during the Frankish Wars, which indicates its importance. The last element of the Saxon religion was the veneration of the dead. In a story of the Frisian king *Redbad*, the king is ready to convert to Christianity and to be baptized.<sup>92</sup> However, moments before his baptism, he learns that as a Christian he will not meet his ancestors after death. This prompted him to decline the intended baptism.<sup>93</sup> The significance of ancestors for the Saxons will also be one of the

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<sup>86</sup> Murphy 1989, 33-35.

<sup>87</sup> <sup>87</sup> De Keyzer 2013, 249.

<sup>88</sup> Murphy 1989, 75-76.

<sup>89</sup> Murphy 1989, 33-37. Accidental in the philosophical sense. The accidental elements of a being are those that can change without changing the essence of a being. The essence of a being is what makes a being that being; without it, it would be something else. For example, the essence of a student is studying at a university. Whether that student has black or brown hair is accidental, as it is not important to essence of being a student.

<sup>90</sup> Vredendaal 2006, 14-15.

<sup>91</sup> Murphy 1989, 15

<sup>92</sup> The Frisian and Saxons are said to have been be less distinguishable than the different names tend to indicate, and as such it is probable that they shared many religious characteristics. See Vredendaal 2006, 9, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Vredendaal 2006, 9, 15.

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themes of allusion in chapter four, due to the interesting twist to the part of the Magi in the Gospels. The story of Redbad is also significant in the sense that it shows how much the pre-Christian religious life meant to the people. In describing the conversion of people from forms of paganism to Christianity the emphasis is always on the new religion. This is partially due to the lack of sources on the previous religion, partly due to the often present idea that paganism is somewhat more primitive, and that the believer is going in a forward direction. The latter is certainly not always true and it leads to diminishing the value and the role that pre-Christian religious beliefs had for their believers. The step to Christianity really was a step away from an emotionally and socially important part of their lives and must have been difficult for many people. The changes that would occur to Saxon Society were predominantly caused by the Frankish conquest of Saxony. These wars will be described next.

### 3.4 The Saxon Wars

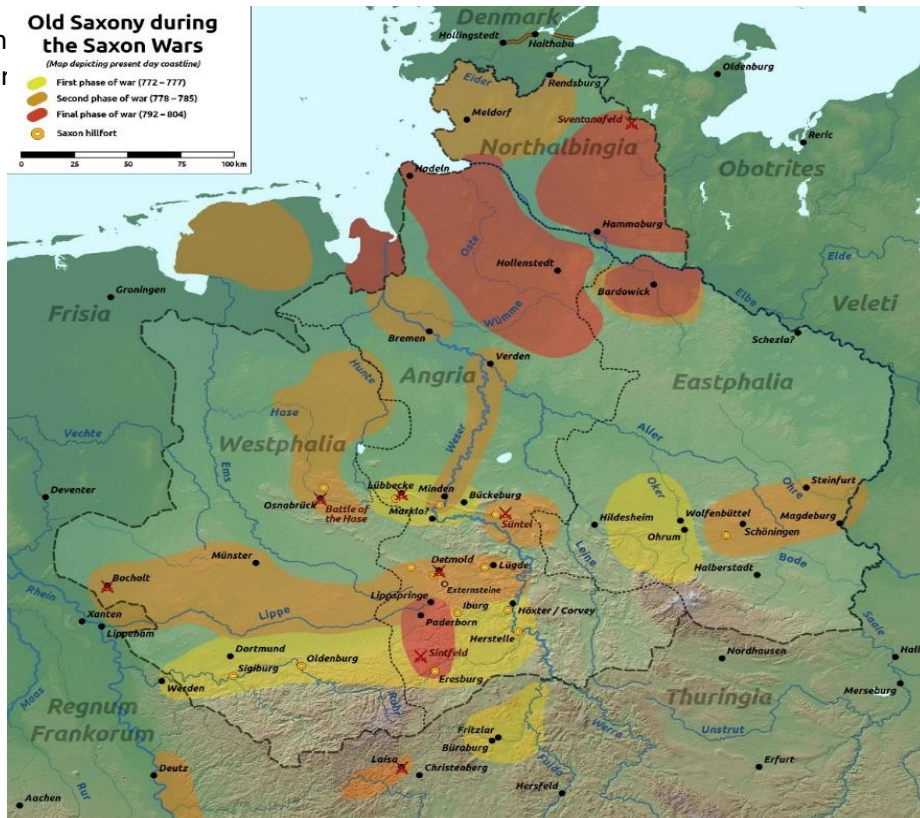
The Saxon wars lasted for 32 years, between 772 and 804. According to Einhard the war originated in border disputes: 'There were underlying causes that threatened daily to disturb the peace, particularly since our borders and theirs ran together almost everywhere in open land, except for a few places where huge forests or mountain ridges came between our respective lands and established a clear boundary'<sup>94</sup> The religious zeal of Charlemagne can have been another motive; the first Saxon place that Charlemagne attacked was where the Irminsul stood, an important religious symbol to the Saxons. According to Reuter the border disputes were the first reason. Only after 776 did the Frankish strategy change to conquering and Christianization Saxony.<sup>95</sup> The Frankish Annals mostly support this: In 773 the border with Saxony was left unsecured and without a treaty. In 774 an attack was launched, which returned with booty. Only in 775 a major campaign is launched into the interior of Saxony where extensive treaties and oaths of fealty are mentioned.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7: 8-12. (Translation: Dutton 1998, 20)

<sup>95</sup> Reuter 1991, 65-66.

<sup>96</sup> *Annales regni Francorum, 773-775.* (Translation: Scholz 1972, 49-53)



The wars can roughly be divided into three parts. The first from 772 to 785, with major military campaigns and battles between the belligerents. In this period the Saxons were led by the nobleman, Widukind, chosen by the *Volksversammlung*. During this period, the Frankish annals are full of Saxons breaking their promises, with bloody Frankish responses. Eventually Widukind is beaten and baptized, with Charlemagne as his personal sponsor. With Widukind gone, the combined resistance faded.<sup>98</sup> The second period is between the surrender of Widukind in 785 and 793, with no mention of fighting. The third period is from 793 to 804. In 793 the Saxons rebelled again, and the years 793-797 were full of conflict. Afterwards the Saxons rebelled again, and the Franks responded with punitive expeditions.<sup>99</sup> In the last years of the war, The Franks undertook mass deportations of the Saxons. There were several of them, and the largest occurred in 804, when the Saxons were moved to lands in 'Gaul and Germany'. Their lands were given to the Slavic allies of the Franks, the *Obrotites*.<sup>100</sup> According to Einhard, this was the final blow to end the Saxon Wars.<sup>101</sup> What is important to note is the sheer brutality of the wars during the first phase of the war. The annals seem to delight in violent acts towards the Saxons. Between 772 and 785, the only year in which no

<sup>97</sup> <https://rotergeysir.net/map-saxon-wars/> (last checked 08-12-2021)

<sup>98</sup> <sup>98</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, 785( Translation: Scholz 1972, 62,63.)

<sup>99</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, 772-804( Translation Scholz 1972, 48-84.

<sup>100</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7( Translation: Dutton 1998, 20-21.); *Annales regni Francorum*, 804 ( Translation: Scholz 1972, 84.)

<sup>101</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7( Translation: Dutton 1998, 20-21.)

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mass baptism or massive acts of violence is mentioned is 773. And in that year violence of Saxon side is described, while Charlemagne was occupied with a large campaign against the Lombards.<sup>102</sup> The most gruesome act took place in 782. The years 777-780 saw victories for the Franks and many casualties for the Saxons. But in 781 they rebelled 'as usual' and managed to defeat the Franks twice, in 781 and 782. The Franks repaid in kind. The rebellions were crushed, and in 782 an assembly was held in which the Saxons had to swear oaths, and bring forth the main conspirators of 781. All 4500 of them were executed that day, near Verden.<sup>103</sup> Because of this brutality it can be reasonably assumed that it had a large traumatic impact on the psyche of the Saxons. Therefore, the tragic experiences of the Saxons during the wars will also be one of the themes of allusions.

In the following section, two specific events of the wars that feature in the analysis of the Heliand will be discussed in more detail. These are events of such dramatic nature that they probably still would have been present in the mind of the audience. And the allusions to these events in the Heliand are quite obvious and both will be themes of allusion in chapter four.

The first event is the destruction of the Irminsul. Charlemagne began his campaign in 772 by attacking the Irminsul. Almost the entire entry for that year talks about its destruction, supposedly accomplished with the help of a divine miracle. The mention of this miracle ( and thus the greater power of God) shows how important it was to the Franks that this place was destroyed<sup>104</sup> Murphy credibly argues that Charlemagne took his inspiration from *Boniface*. In his missionary campaigns into Germania some decades earlier, he had frequently employed the method of cutting down sacred trees before the eyes of the devotees. With Frankish soldiers to back him up. The aim was to show the powerlessness of the old gods and the strength of the new God.<sup>105</sup> The destruction of one of their most important cult centers must have been a shock to the Saxons. In the Heliand this event is alluded to in the first fitt. The four writers of the Gospels were chosen to write down the word of God. The text continues by saying that one of the purposes of the Gospels was to

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<sup>102</sup> Annales regni Francorum, 772-285( Translation: Scholz 1972,48-63.)

<sup>103</sup> Annales regni Francorum, 772-285( Translation: Scholz 1972,48-63.)

<sup>104</sup> Reuter 1991, 65; Annales regni Francorum, 772( Translation: Scholz 1972, 48-49.)

<sup>105</sup> Murphy 1989, 13-14.

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fight evil; to 'chop it down'. With the word in old Saxon being '*fellie*' as in felling a tree.<sup>106</sup>

The second events are the mass baptisms. In the Royal Frankish Annals several instances of mass baptism are mentioned. Baptism was also a sign of submission to Charlemagne.<sup>107</sup> In 776 the Franks broke a Saxon incursion. In the aftermath the defeated Saxons signed treaties, swore oaths of loyalty and sent hostages. After that, Charlemagne himself came to Saxony. A countless number of fighters with their wives and children came in great terror (supposedly for Charlemagne) to the river Lippe, to be baptized. This was repeated a year later, when Charlemagne came to Saxony again. This time many Saxons came from all corners of the land, and were baptized.<sup>108</sup> In 780 Charlemagne held assembly at the source of the River Lippe, and again a large number of Saxons came. According to the Annals, the entire people of the *Bardengau* and many of the Nordliudi were baptized.<sup>109</sup> The last time baptism is mentioned is in 785, when Widukind is finally defeated and baptized.<sup>110</sup>

In the Heliand in fitts 11 and 12 the work of John the Baptist, as well as his baptism of Jesus are described. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke the baptisms of John are presented as demonstration of repentance of sin.<sup>111</sup> In the Heliand the emphasis is changed from repentance of sin, to receiving a new faith; conversion.' Many did gather, to Bethany there, the bairns of Israel. Came there to John, the king's underlings all. People to learn, and received belief'.<sup>112</sup> The scene where Jesus is baptized is notably longer than in the Gospels, taking up an entire fitt.<sup>113</sup> The image of Jesus being part of the groups that is baptized (the Saxons) is strengthened by another change from the Gospels. In the Heliand there is also a lot of emphasis that Jesus was being baptized along with the crowds, which in the Bible is only explicitly mentioned in the Gospel of Luke.<sup>114</sup> The two examples of Frankish brutality towards the Saxons. has become clear by these examples. In the next section the Christianization of Saxony will be described. The brutality of the Franks cannot be separated from that process. The Saxons were forcibly converted to the faith of the people who had fought them so harshly. Granted, there is evidence of Saxon violence, but the sheer delight

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<sup>106</sup> Heliand, fitt 1( Translation, Vredendaal 2006, 51) Scott 1969, lines 26-28.; Murphy 1989, 15.

<sup>107</sup> Rembold 2018, 67, 76-77.

<sup>108</sup> Annales regni Francorum, 776,77( Translation: Scholz 1972, 55-56.)

<sup>109</sup> Annales regni Francorum, 780 ( Translation: Scholz 1972, 58.)

<sup>110</sup> Annales regni Francorum, 785( Translation: Scholz 1972, 62,63.)

<sup>111</sup> Matthew 3:1-3, Mark 1:4-5, Luke 3:3.

<sup>112</sup> Heliand, fitt 12( Translation: Vredendaal 2006 )Scott 1969, lines 950-953.

<sup>113</sup> For perspective, one fitt is the length of about 3-4 modern book pages.

<sup>114</sup> Heliand, Fitts 11-12. (Translation, Vredendaal 2006, 83-88) Scott 1969, lines 965-980.; Murphy 1989, 77-79.

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in which the annals seem to relish when describing their deeds towards the Saxons is striking. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that this treatment of the Saxons by the Franks added to the difficulty of the Christianization of Saxony.

### 3.5 The Christianization of Saxony.

In this section the Christianization of Saxony will be explained. It will be shown that this process went slowly in the first half of the ninth century, but from around the 850s there is evidence that Christianity was really taking a strong hold.

The first target of Charlemagne was an important religious center, the Irminsul. The Royal Annals state that the Saxons had to either convert or be exterminated. Bringing the Saxons into the faith was a major, if not the priority of Charlemagne in his conquest. In this section the Christianization of Saxony will be discussed.

The Saxons had encountered Christianity before. Although the Saxons clung to their paganism, they had been subject to Frankish Christian missions over the years. These missions were neatly intertwined with the Frankish rulers. An example of these is the Anglo-Saxon missionary *Liafwyn*. He was sent from Utrecht to Saxony. He built a church in Deventer, which is currently known as the St. Lebuïnus church.<sup>115</sup>

Charlemagne started this process during the wars. In 785 he issued the 'Capitularies on the Region of Saxony'. These administrative rulings were predominantly aimed at subduing the practice of paganism. In these Capitularies 'being pagan' as well as performing pagan practices such as cremation, was punishable by death. Brown notes that the Franks with Charlemagne and his successors were allied with their strong church<sup>116</sup> 'both of which were committed to a quite unprecedented degree, to the 'correction' and education of their subjects.<sup>117</sup> The capitularies have been infamous for their harsh nature. Brown also notes that a small number of clergymen, such as Alcuin, did not agree with such ruthless policies. They believed that Christian missions should be more about preaching and persuasion.<sup>118</sup> Charlemagne began to send missionary sponsors to different regions from the start of the war. Several sources indicate that from the beginning, Charlemagne had divided Saxony into different ecclesiastical districts, but they differ on the division. The setting up and financing

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<sup>115</sup> Vredendaal 2006, 10-11. The Latinized name of Liafwyn was Lebuïnus.

<sup>116</sup> Brown 2013, 432-433

<sup>117</sup> Brown 2013, 433: 7-9.

<sup>118</sup> Brown 2013, 432-433

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of religious centers appears to have been erratic and opportunistic. There are three examples of early monasteries, founded by 'outsiders' who did receive some support. These are Fulda, founded in 744 by a disciple of Boniface. Corvey founded in 822 by Louis the Pious. And Werden, founded by the first bishop of Münster, the Frisian Liudger, in 830. But Fulda was not in Saxony proper, but in neighboring Hesse and received only support from a few noble families in the proximity. Corvey and Werden would be a successful institutions in the second half of the century, but the initial local support was reluctant. The development of local endowments of Christian institutions also went slowly. The only monasteries founded by Saxons before the half of the century were Werden in 800 by the son of Widukind, and a nunnery in Wendhausen in 830.<sup>119</sup> The large endowments for the religious institutions only seems to have picked up steam in the 850s, after which there are a few examples of such endowments.<sup>120</sup>

The textual sources are hard to evaluate. The most important religious texts for Saxony in this period are four relic *translationes*; accounts of the transportation of the relics of saints to new homes in Saxony and the subsequent miracles they inevitably brought about after arriving. Three of them were written by Saxons, and one in Fulda. These are the *Translatio St. Viti* from around 840. The *Translatio St. Alexandri* from around 865( written in Fulda), *The Translatio St. Pussinae* from around 870 and the *Translatio St. Liborii* from around 890 to 910.<sup>121</sup> All stories follow roughly the same narrative; the faith of the Saxons was not yet strong enough, or they were still pagans and the relics were brought to Saxony to improve their faith, or to bring them into the faith in the first place.<sup>122</sup> Rembold believes that in the St. Alexandri and the St. Liborii the notions about remaining paganism are a literary construct in order to give more glory to the translation of the relic; if a large part of the population was still not in the faith, or on the verge of lapsing, the effect of the relic was all the more praiseworthy. The translations are in her eyes a good indicator that the Christianization of Saxony was going well.<sup>123</sup> Shuler also sees the invention of history and tradition, but in a different manner. One striking feature is the way the initial forced conversions by Charlemagne are presented. They only appear in the Sancti Alexandri, in the

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<sup>119</sup> Caroll 1999, 224-226.

<sup>120</sup> Rembold 2018, 163-164.

<sup>121</sup> Shuler 2010, 44, 45, 49.

<sup>122</sup> Shuler 2010, 42-52.

<sup>123</sup> Rembold 2018, 199-202.



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other translations the history is twisted and the Saxons are presented as converting out of their own volition after the initial push. Or that they only continued in their error because they were such noble people, but after realizing their mistake, they immediately moved to Christianity.<sup>124</sup> Both the *Sancti Liborii* and the *Sancti Alexandri* are also markedly elitist. Which is no surprise, given the fact that they were written in Christian and elite environments. In both accounts it is written that the nobility gracefully accepted Christianity, but that the masses required much more effort.<sup>125</sup> This is probably largely true, but as we have seen with the petition to Louis the Pious, not the entire nobility embraced Christianity right away. And of the monastery of Corvey it is said that the first monks were poor in property but rich in faith.<sup>126</sup> The overall judgement on the translations must thus be that they were written in the second half of the ninth century, were elitist and that they generally tried to shed the initial reaction to Christianity of the Saxons in a more positive light, especially with regards to the nobility. The invention of history present in these translations makes them difficult to follow. As stated above, not the complete nobility embraced Christianity right away. Aside from the petition to Louis the Pious and the analogical work of modern authors, there is a third argument to be made. And that can be found in the *Heliand* itself. That the *Heliand* was intended for an elite lay audience is the consensus among many historians. However, through the contents of the *Heliand* you can see the difficulty the audience had with some of the core teachings of Christianity. This can be seen in how the Sermon on the Mount is presented in the *Heliand*. Take the first beatitude 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' (Mt 5:3) This is changed into: 'He said those were blessed, of the people in this middle realm, who, in their attitude, were poor through humility: 'for them is granted the eternal kingdom in all holiness, eternal life on the meadows of heaven'.<sup>127</sup> Humility was not a Saxon virtue and to ease the concept in, the sentence is put in the indirect discourse and there is much more emphasis on the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, and that kingdom is also made more concrete.<sup>128</sup> Another example is the fifth beatitude; 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy'.<sup>129</sup> In

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<sup>124</sup> Schuler 2010, 47.

<sup>125</sup> Schuler 2010, 45, 51.

<sup>126</sup> Carrol 1999, 225.

<sup>127</sup> Murphy 1989, 83.

<sup>128</sup> Murphy 1989, 83-84; *Heliand* fitt 16( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 95-98) Scott 1969, 1300-1304.

<sup>129</sup> Matthew 5:7.

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the Heliand this is transformed to: 'Blessed are those who have kind and generous feelings within a hero's chest: the powerful holy Lord will be kind and generous to them.'<sup>130</sup> To avoid the accusation of cowardice( wanting people to be merciful towards you) the concept is changed into that of a powerful hero, who could be mild, which would be a praiseworthy quality.<sup>131</sup>

The author does not shy away from this difficulty and the messages of the beatitudes are presented to paper. But just looking at the intellectual elasticity the author has to employ here shows that not everyone in the audience was yet fully Christian. Why should core teachings of Christianity be presented in a difficult and more palatable way for someone who is already fully versed in the faith? For these people it should not have been necessary. But since they are presented in such a way, it was at least necessary for some of the audience.

The Christianization of Saxony before the writing of the Heliand can be seen as incomplete. The petition to Louis the Pious shows that not all nobles had embraced Christianity yet. And the apparent lack of enthusiasm for the foundation of religious institutions shows that too, although it does not say whether the nobility was not Christian altogether, or that they were not yet that invested in Christianity yet, even though they might have already been baptized. This is also confirmed by the textual sources, although they are difficult to assess. The final argument for the incomplete Christianization must thus be sought in the contents of the Heliand itself. In the text, one can clearly see the difficulty that the author had in explaining some of the core teachings of Christianity. This problem would not have been there, had the audience already been fully versed in Christianity.

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<sup>130</sup> Murphy 1989, 86; Heliand fitt 16( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 95-98) Scott 1969, 1311-1314.

<sup>131</sup> Murphy 1989, 86.

## Chapter 4. Analysis of the Heliand.

### 4.1 Introduction.

In this chapter, the contents of the Heliand will be analyzed. This will be done in the following way: Throughout this thesis we have seen seven different types of allusions come across. These seven themes of allusions, plus the Heliand's version of the Lord's Prayer will be analyzed here.

The analysis is twofold. Firstly the allusion itself is explained; what creates the allusion. This will be done with the information from chapter three and comparing the text of the Heliand to the texts of the Gospels on the same topic. Because of my own inability to read Old Saxon the aid of the commentary of modern experts on the Heliand will often be used as well.<sup>132</sup> Secondly, the theory of VMC, created in chapter 2.3 will be used to fully find out what message/lesson could have been conveyed with the allusion. Afterwards these messages will be combined to find the overall possible working of the Heliand in the conclusion. A maybe redundant disclaimer is that the author was of course not aware of how his allusions have worked on a deeper level.

VMC will be implemented as follows: Throughout the Heliand there are allusions to the old religion, culture and society of the Saxons. The way these allusions work is because of the 'double meaning' of the phrasing. The passages are on one hand just part of the text of the Heliand, but because they also allude to known concepts to the Saxons, these passages attain a double meaning to the audience. The allusion itself, or a part of it, then functions as an MCI that triggers the emotional response in the audience connected to the mental system of that MCI. For example the dove as raven of Woden then triggers your mental system related to the memory and worship of Woden. On the other hand, there is the reality of the text that says the dove landed on Jesus. But due to the shifts of your focus of consciousness, which do not mix according the virtuoso winking process, the concepts do not blend, but stay separate parts of the two realities of the 'ludic element' theory of Versnel. Woden does not become Jesus, but through the emotional response generated by the memory of Woden( as explained by CSR)while also being aware of the dove landing on

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<sup>132</sup> The works that will be used are Murphy 1989, Murphy 1999, Murphy 2010, Cathey 2002 and Zurla 2004.

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Jesus, the allusions can serve as implicit messages/ lessons directed at the audience of the Heliand. And the intent of these messages was the improvement of the Christianity of the audience. In this chapter through the analysis of the themes of allusions these messages will be sought and explained. Together they will form the answer to the research question.

## 4.2 The analysis of the Heliand.

The first theme of allusion is the image of felling. As can be seen in the historical context, the first act of war of Charlemagne was the destruction of the Irminsul. In the Heliand the word for felling trees 'Fella' is used twice in a significant context. The first use is in fitt 1. It is told that the writers of the Gospels were given power by God to tell the stories of God and Jesus. Their words, among other things, defeated evil. '*That sea scoldin ahebbean helagaro stemnun godspell that gouda... efto derbi thing, firin werk fellie*' They should lift up the good Word of God with their holy voices.. so that it might chop down every perverse thing, every work of evil'.<sup>133</sup> The second usage is in the Sermon on the Mount in fitt 17.<sup>134</sup> Jesus says that he has not come to destroy the old Law, but to fulfill it. The corresponding section of the Heliand is much longer and emphatic than the Gospel text. The author acknowledges that prophets of old (*forasago*, more like seers in the Heliand) told the good people (the ancestors of the audience of the Heliand) how to live and do right. The Heliand has not come to chop down these words. And later he uses the image again, when he says that he did not come to 'fell the seers words', but to fulfil them, much the like the Gospel version.<sup>135</sup>

If you look at these allusions through VMC you can see the following: In the first fitt the allusion is the word felling in an unusual usage for the destroying of evil. It moves your focus of consciousness to the destruction of the Irminsul and it activates your mental system of the story of its destruction and the emotions attached to it. But you also still hear what is actually being said in the Heliand; that evil was to be chopped down. Through the game you are aware of the two realities simultaneously, which do not clash because of the shift in foci of consciousness and the virtuoso winking process. The message conveyed through this allusion is a daunting one. The old evil faith had to go in order for the good new Christianity

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<sup>133</sup> Murphy 1989, 15. Scott 1969, 28.

<sup>134</sup> Heliand, Fitt 17 (Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 98-102.) Scott 1969, lines 1422 & 1429.

<sup>135</sup> Zurla 2004, 152-154.

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to rise. And it is no coincidence that the message is given at the very beginning. While the other messages will generally be more positive, the author makes his overall goal indisputably clear at the very beginning: Christianity had to rise over the evil old faith. But this message is somewhat softened by the next two usages in fitt 17. Here the message almost seems opposite. Through VMC you are experiencing both the destruction of the Irminsul and the words of Jesus that he does not want to destroy all that is good of the old religion, but to improve upon it. This serves two purposes. It gives a positive note to the old religion; if Jesus wants to improve upon it, then it was not all bad. And secondly, the idea of continuation; not everything is gone, a part of the old way lives on.

The twofold message that is conveyed through the image of felling then is the following: The loyalty of the author is clear, the old way had to give way to Christianity. This idea is immediately presented in the first fitt and the audience knows his intentions. The old religion, of which Irminsul stands symbol here, was evil and the felling of the tree was a victory of the good, Christianity. But a concession is made with the two other usages: Not all the good ways of old are gone, a part lives on within Christianity. And by giving that concession a few fitts later, the emotional effect must have been there. If the idea that everything will be gone has been presented to you earlier, a concession later will have a stronger positive effect. In doing so the author tries to legitimize Christianity in relationship to the old faith, and sympathize with the audience in giving them the positive, but rather vague, promise that not everything of the old way is gone.

The second theme featured in the historical context is that of mass baptism. Both the baptism of the crowds by John as well as his baptism of Jesus are shown in the Heliand. The difference in the Heliand is the reason why people get baptized in these scenes. In Luke 3:3 the reason is repentance for the remission of sins.<sup>136</sup> In the Heliand the baptism is for receiving a new faith; for conversion, based on the Saxon wording used.<sup>137</sup> In the Gosepls, the scene is relatively short. Jesus was baptized by John and the Holy Spirit as a dove descended upon Christ, with the words of Gods clamoring that Jesus is his son.<sup>138</sup> In the Heliand an entire fitt is dedicated to Jesus' baptism, including the hesitation of John from Matthew. In the Heliand it is also made clearer that Jesus was baptized amidst the crowds.

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<sup>136</sup> Luke 3:3

<sup>137</sup> Murphy 1989, 77-78. Heliand, fitt 12( Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 86-88.) Scott 1969, lines 950-953.

<sup>138</sup> Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22. John 1:28-34

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The scenes of baptism would have been understood to refer back to the instances of mass baptism during the Saxon Wars. This is made clear by the emphasis on the crowds, and the change of the reason for being baptized from repentance of sin to receiving a new faith. At this point of the Heliand it was clear that Jesus would be the hero of the story, and of Christianity in general. Jesus receiving the faith in the same manner as they had must certainly have been counterintuitive to the audience. But because Jesus is described as a warrior lord in the Heliand, it is also fitting in a way, which together qualifies it for being an MCI. The process through VMC is as follows. The baptism of Jesus functions as the MCI and that activates the mental system of the remembrance of the forced baptism of the recent forefathers of the audience. Which is a very drastic thing they had to endure. But the game has two sides. On the one hand there are the strong emotions related to the memory of the forced baptisms. On the other hand the positive note of the other side. Jesus had been skillfully described as the powerful would be hero up to this point of the story. The baptism of the crowds and of Jesus is described as a wonderful and powerful event. So the audience sees the hero of the story undergo the same faith as their forefathers, which was described as being a positive event. If you combine this with the fact that baptism is presented as receiving a new faith, the message and effect of the author is clear. He tries to change the baptism as a negative event to a positive event. This point was important to come across, because this is where the Saxons received the new faith. By removing the negative associations of the event of receiving the faith, Christianity itself is giving more legitimization. And it can be seen as an emphatic device employed by the author, to show that Jesus underwent.<sup>139</sup> And making the life of Jesus more relatable to the audience can also be seen as a form of legitimizing Christianity.

The third theme to be discussed has partly the same intention as mass the baptism to sympathize with the Saxons. The theme is Jesus being presented in agony or otherwise physically impaired, in an attempt to sympathize with the Saxon audience. There are three fitts where Jesus is in torment. This is in fitt 57 where Jesus goes to pray in the garden of Gethsemane with James, John and Peter. And in fitt 61 where a captured Jesus is presented to Pontius Pilate. The third time is during the crucifixion, which will be discussed below.<sup>140</sup> In

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<sup>139</sup> Cathey 2002, 226-227, 238-239.

<sup>140</sup>Heliand, Fitts 57 & 61 (Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 195-198, 207-208) Scott 1969, lines 4746- 4763 & 5113, 5118,

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the Gospels the anguish of Jesus is also very present, especially in the Gospel of Luke: ' And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'<sup>141</sup> The Heliand retains the sweat as blood, but there is an addition of tears and more doubt and fear, especially for the death of his body. This would have resonated heavily with men who knew real battle.<sup>142</sup> When Jesus is brought before Pilate it is emphasized that he is bound in chains and that he is a prisoner of war. In the Gospels it is mentioned twice that Jesus was bound, but in the Heliand it is repeated time and again. Many of the ancestors of the audience in the Saxon Wars had been prisoners of war too.<sup>143</sup> If you look at these allusions through VMC you can see the following. Through these scenes the agony of Jesus is emphasized in order to sympathize with the audience and the tragic memory of the war. All the scenes in which Jesus experiences agony take place very late in the Heliand. Which means that Jesus has figured as the strong and powerful Drohtin for most of the story. Which includes multiple miracles such as performing a resurrection. That a hero must endure suffering during his journey is normal during an epic story. But Jesus was presented as way more powerful than the average hero in the Heliand. I believe that this can therefore qualify as an MCI. As stated both the instances of the violence that Jesus had to endure would have been known to the audience. As the MCI activates the mental capacities connected to these sorts of events, the emotions that are connected through this theme would have gone to the forefront. And because of the Ludic element during the story, the audience was thus simultaneously aware of their own suffering, as well as the suffering of the powerful Jesus. And because of the emotional response that was instigated by the MCI the audience would also have become more sympathetic of the suffering of Jesus. And seeing that the Son of God went through some of the same ordeals as your ancestors would bring about a closer connection to the new faith. And secondly, Jesus never wavers in his faith, despite the difficulties he had to face because of it. This shows the audience that you had to keep faith in God, even if it brought you suffering.

The coming three sets of themes all relate to the old religion of the Saxons. The fourth set of fitts to be discussed are those on the *Magi*. The Heliand places much more emphasis on the coming of the wise men. Two entire fitts are dedicated to them.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Luke 22:44.

<sup>142</sup> Cathey 2002, 226-227.

<sup>143</sup> Cathey 2002, 238-239.

<sup>144</sup> Heliand, fitts 7 & 8. ( Translation; Vredendaal 2006, 72-77.) Scott 1969, lines: 537-699.

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According to Murphy and Cathey, the reason for this is because the Magi provided the author with an excellent opportunity of legitimizing Christianity. Important figures in the Heliand are often presented as 'word-wise' ; *wordspâha*, which compliments their intelligence and ability with words; the audience knows their words are to be taken seriously.<sup>145</sup> The Magi tell of a great ancestor of theirs from the east who was also word wise and able to read God's speech, God's spell ( *Rekkien spel godes*) from the sky, because God had allowed him to be able to do so. The reading from the sky meaning interpreting the stars. The ancestor had foretold of the coming of Christ and their meeting.<sup>146</sup> The Magi are thus presented as having an ancestor who foresaw the coming of Christ. In chapter 3 we have seen that ancestor worship was one of the important pillars of Saxon paganism.<sup>147</sup> The powerful ancestor of the Magi who was able to read the word of the gods( although the Heliand clearly implies that the ancestor of the Magi could read the words of God from the stars) is a good example of an MCI super-agent. The mental system relating to the ancestors of the audience would have been activated. The focus of consciousness was on their own ancestors after the MCI, but since the story would continue, they would also return to the story and the ancestor of the Magi. Via the ludic element they would have been simultaneously experiencing the remembrance and emotional response by the mental organ for their own ancestors, as well as the story of the Magi. So while you experience the connection with your ancestors, you hear a story of a wise ancestor who could read the coming of Christ in the stars. This has the effect that Christianity would be seen as a good option because the coming of Christ is told by a powerful ancestor, while you are experiencing the emotional memory of your own ancestors. So by placing emphasis on the Magi and their famed ancestor the author tries to plant the seed in the mind of the audience that wise ancestors have positively foretold the coming of Christ. This conveys the message that Christianity is a good choice and also that it would not be shameful towards your ancestors to be a Christian.

The fifth theme I want to discuss is that of God being more powerful than Wurd. During this research, the fact that the Heliand consists of many allusions to the old faith has come across many times. However, the Heliand is very consistent in promoting Christianity,

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<sup>145</sup> The Magi are called word-wise in fitt 7, Scott 1969, line:563.

<sup>146</sup> Cathey 2002, 162-165; Murphy 1989, 50-51. Scott 1969, lines: 569-597.

<sup>147</sup> See the example of Redbad in chapter 3, page 22.



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and this can be seen in the relationship between God and Wurd. God is consistently (implicitly) described as being more powerful than Wurd. In the eighth fitt, after Herod has sent the Magi on their way, he plans to kill the boy of whom they spoke. He plans to visit the kid and then covertly murder him. But as can be read in the Heliand, God knew what Herod was planning and decided to intervene. In the Heliand you really see the thought-process of God and by that the message that the author tries to convey here is the power of God over Wurd. He thinks whether he will intervene( and thus twist fate) and decides to do it.<sup>148</sup> A second example of this comes from fitt 26. In this fitt the story of the dead boy in Nain is told. It is said that he was the joy of his mother's life, until Wurd, the great measurer took him.<sup>149</sup> Wurd is named twice in the same sentence here, so the emphasis is clearly on the role of Wurd in the death of the boy. This was done deliberately by the author. Because as Jesus sees the crying mother and her dead son he decides to intervene. In the Gospels Jesus touches the bier and tells the boy to get up. In the Heliand it is said that 'Jesus himself touched the boy with his holy hand and commanded him to get up.' In this way more significance is given to the act of Jesus; he touches him with his own holy hand. By placing emphasis on both the role of Wurd in the death of the boy and the act of how of Jesus resurrects the boy, the author of the Heliand really shows that Jesus is more powerful than Wurd. His own actions led to the altering of faith, in the ultimate way; raising someone from the dead.<sup>150</sup> That resurrections are a powerful tool to be used in showing God's power over Wurd can also be seen in fitt 49. In this fitt the resurrection of Lazarus takes place, but not in an identical way as the boy from Nain. In fitt 26 the emphasis is on the actions of Jesus. In fitt 49, Jesus prays to God, as a thane to a Drohtin, and asks for God's help and Lazarus is resurrected by the Holy Spirit entering his body.<sup>151</sup> The Saxon audience would have been very familiar with the notion of Wurd. And as read in chapter 2, religious concepts are often MCIs. The mental system activated would be on Wurd itself, and then especially the meaning in Saxon context. As an indestructible, unchangeable force, that affects and changes everything. In Germanic Paganism even the gods as Woden and Donar would ultimately be subject to their fate to die during the *Ragnarök*.<sup>152</sup> But in the fitts of the

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<sup>148</sup> Cathey 2002, 165. Scott 1969, 644-648.

<sup>149</sup> Heliand, fitt 26, (Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 121-123.) Scott 1969, lines: 2186-2188.

<sup>150</sup> Murphy 1989, 38-39. Scott 1969, lines: 2198-2218.

<sup>151</sup> Heliand, fitt 47, (Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 176-178.) Scott 1969, lines: 4093- 4104.

<sup>152</sup> De Keyzer 2013, 249.

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Heliand, Jesus and God are shown as being more powerful. Especially in the scenes where they defeat death, a fate the Old Gods could not escape, nor change. By doing so, Jesus and God are presented as more powerful than Wurd. This is an argument for the power and truth of Christianity. In the echo of Boniface, Christianity is presented as a stronger and better religion than the old one. A very sound tactical move, which probably was not missed by the audience.

The next theme of allusions are those to Odin/ Woden, the leader of the gods in many forms of Germanic and Scandinavian paganism. Several allusions are made to him in the Heliand. The first one has already come across and in the explanation of the VMC. It is the story of the dove on Christ's shoulder after his baptism. All the four Gospels tell that after Jesus' baptism the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descends upon Christ. And in Matthew, Mark and Luke the Voice of God is heard saying that Jesus is his son. Both also occur in the Heliand, but the place where the dove lands on Jesus is given more detail; he lands on Jesus' shoulder. Woden had two ravens, Huginn and Muninn who flew around the world soaking up the day's information and at night landing on Woden's shoulder and telling him all that had happened that day. The ravens were part of his standard iconography. The image of Jesus receiving the dove upon his shoulder was then clearly meant as a parallel to Woden. The allusion to Woden in the Christian Heliand can be seen as the MCI, which would activate the mental system relating to the memory of Woden. And on the other hand, Jesus is described in the same manner in the Heliand. The positive connotations that the audience would have had towards Woden would as such be connected to Jesus at that time. This is also what Murphy thought the author wanted to achieve with this allusion; it was a way to sympathize with the old religious sentiments of the Saxons. Presenting Jesus in this way allowed the Saxons to think that not all of the old way was lost, but that a part lived on.<sup>153</sup>

For the other allusions to Woden, I will first shortly tell a famous story about Woden. Woden is also known as the master of the Runes. The way he rose to this position is rather peculiar. Woden hung himself on the *Yggdrasil* for nine days, while fasting and being impaled with spear. 'Myself to myself, to Woden'. During this process he peers into the depths and he grasps the meaning of the runes and returns to the world.<sup>154</sup> There are two allusions to this story, at important parts of the Heliand. The Sermon on the Mount is very

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<sup>153</sup> Murphy 1989, 80.

<sup>154</sup> De Kezzer 2014, 236-237.

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important in the Heliand. Eight of the 72 fitts are dedicated to the sermon.<sup>155</sup> The Heliand repeats that it is taking place on a mountain several times. Before the start of the Sermon, at the end of fitt 15, the apostles are called to Jesus to join him on a '*te theru runu*' 'to a secret council'.<sup>156</sup> And more importantly is what is said in nineteenth fitt. The apostles ask Jesus how to pray, how to greet 'The Wielder', how to speak to God, for Jesus knows how to do these things. To do so they ask Jesus to 'reveal the Runes'<sup>157</sup>. Which Jesus answers by giving the Lord's Prayer, which will be discussed shortly. So through VMC on the one hand you have the allusion to one of the major qualities of Woden, the teaching of the Runes to people. And on the other hand Jesus who is in many ways doing the same thing. Just as the scene with the dove, the message to be conveyed here is one of continuation. The second instance the story of Woden features is during the crucifixion scene. The author makes the parallel between Jesus and Woden in this scene clear with a few words. Initially the cross and the process of crucifixion are more described in terms of hanging from the gallows, but before Jesus is placed there, the image changes. The soldiers set up a '*bôm an berege*' a tree on the mountain.<sup>158</sup> By calling the cross a tree on the mountain the parallel between Woden hanging from the Yggdrasill and Jesus hanging from the cross is made. But aside from the sense of continuation, there was another motive. Through VMC you have on the one hand Woden teaching the runes, and on the other hand Jesus hanging on the cross. But the overall message only becomes clear later with Jesus his resurrection. During the crucifixion Jesus is equated with Woden, but he is later shown to be stronger, by conquering death, which Woden could not do. Therefore the message is that Jesus is stronger than Woden. The allusions to Woden are part of one of the overall tactics of the Heliand by creating a sense of familiarity for the audience. But it can also more specifically be seen as showing a form of continuation. By presenting Jesus in the same way as Woden on a couple occasions, the idea is formed that a part of Woden would live on within Christianity. But in the story on the cross the point is made that Jesus is stronger. The message conveyed here is combination of creating a sense of continuation, while also showing that Jesus and Christianity are more powerful.

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<sup>155</sup> The Heliand, fitts 16-23. (Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 95-116.) Scott 1969, lines: 1279-1993.

<sup>156</sup> Murphy 1989, 81. Scott 1966, lines: 1272-1273.

<sup>157</sup> Zurla 2004, 41-42.; Heliand, fitt 19 (Translation: Vredendaal 2006 105) Scott 1969, line 1595. In the English translation the word runes is used, whereas the Dutch translation has chosen the word 'secret'.

<sup>158</sup> Murphy 1989, 111. Scott 1966, lines: 5532-5535.

The next set of fitts I want to discuss are the fitts where Jesus and God are presented as a *Drohtin*. I will not highlight all the instances, but I will cover the most interesting ones. In the historical context it was said that presenting God and Jesus as warrior lords, *Drohtin*, the effect was created that faith in God is shown as loyalty towards one's Lord. Through the analysis of these fitts through VMC it will become clear how these allusions conveyed two parts who together form the most important message that is conveyed through the Heliand, in my opinion. Firstly the fitts will be presented, and then the analysis.

In fitt 14 Jesus starts to gather followers, just as a *Drohtin* would assemble his warrior retinue. 'He forsook the shade of the forest, the spot in the wood, And again He did seek the company of earls, the illustrious thanes and the throngs of men(...)he began to gather together, Youths for disciples, young men and good, Word-wise warriors.'<sup>159</sup> In the fifteenth fitt as he ascends the mountain before the sermon it is said that 'Then the mighty Christ, Went up on a mountain, the Mightiest of Bairns; And he sat aside from the rest. There he chose for Himself Twelve specially picked men true and loyal. Good folk whom He wished with him as His vassals, disciples of Him, their master each day'.<sup>160</sup> They were to become members of his *gesîðskepea* his personal warrior retinue.<sup>161</sup> But being a member of a *Drohtin's* retinue was a free choice. This can also be seen in fitt 14, where it is said about Matthew that 'He became our Lord's man; the royal warrior chose for himself Christ as his lord, a more generous mead giver than he had ever had before as a liege lord in this world.'<sup>162</sup> What the *Drohtin* Jesus did in return can be read in fitt 35 where the story of Jesus walking on water to save the apostles is told. In the fitt Jesus is the powerful *Drohtin* who protects his followers from the raging storm. This protection can be seen as a form of *mun*. The story is accepted as a parable for keeping faith when that faith is questioned.<sup>163</sup> In the Heliand this keeping faith is connected to the cultural significance of remaining loyal to your *Drohtin*, and the rewards that he will bring you. This loyalty towards one's *Drohtin* was also in battle. Throughout the Heliand the apostles are often called warriors. The author grabbed his chance to show the warrior prowess of the apostles when Jesus is taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane in fitt 58. Peter fights fiercely and without fear because they want to

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<sup>159</sup> Murphy 1989, 58; Scott 1969, lines: 1123-1126, 1148-1150.

<sup>160</sup> Heliand, fitt 15, (Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 93-95.) Scott 1969, lines: 1248-1254.

<sup>161</sup> Zurla 2004, 159.

<sup>162</sup> Murphy 1989, 62: 8-11. Scott 1969, 1196-1201.

<sup>163</sup> Zurla 2004, 112-113; Murphy 1989, 57-73; Scott 1969, lines: 2899-2973.

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capture his beloved lord and liege. The fighting scene is much expanded and Peter is really shown as a great warrior. In the same fitt is said that they wanted to die defending their Lord.<sup>164</sup> The same can be seen in fitt 48 where Thomas argues passionately that they have to follow their Lord to Jerusalem because it is their holy duty to follow their lord and stand with him, even if it leads to your own death.<sup>165</sup> Throughout the Heliand the word *Drohtin* is both used for Jesus as well as for God. In fitt 57 when Jesus laments his coming faith in the garden of Gethsemane, he lifts his cup to God and tells Him that he will accept his faith if God wishes it so. He signifies this by raising his chalice to God as a warrior would his chieftain. *'ik nimu thene kelik an hand. Drinku ina thi te [diurðu,]Drohtin frô mîn, mahtig mundborro. ( I take this chalice in my hand and drink it to your honor, my lord chieftain, powerful protector)'*<sup>166</sup> In the Gospels, the cup is a metaphor for his suffering.<sup>167</sup> The author of the Heliand has seized upon the opportunity to once more present faith in God as the loyalty to your chieftain, which the toast signifies. The same occurs in fitt 67. Jesus addresses God as *Drohtin* in a plea when he is in agony on the cross. He calls to his almighty father and his *liebo Drohtin* and speaks the famous tragic words 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'.<sup>168</sup>

This has been a selection of the most relevant occasions where Jesus and/ or God are presented as *Drohtin*. Together they show multiple interesting aspects of this tactic by the author. For the audience the loyalty towards a *Drohtin* was well known. So that in itself is not counterintuitive. However, I believe that Jesus or God presented as such is. Although ( a part of) the audience had not yet fully embraced Christianity, they did now what it was. And they did know of Jesus and God, which can be seen in the Saxon Baptismal Vow.<sup>169</sup> The two merged together can therefore be judged to be counterintuitive.

The audience hears the story of Jesus and God presented as *Drohtin*. Jesus is described as a lord seeking his warriors(, fitt 14) a lord for which his loyal warriors would die. ( fitts 48 and 58) And Jesus in his darkest hours also refers to God as *Drohtin*. In both the scene with the cup as the scene on the cross the loyalty that Jesus exercises towards his Lord God is exemplary. In both scenes Jesus really laments what is to come, or what is happening

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<sup>164</sup> Heliand, fitt 58, (Translation: Vredendaal 2006, 198-201.)Scott 1969, lines: 4858-4900.

<sup>165</sup> Heliand fitt 48, Vredendaal 2006, 173-176. Scott 1969, lines: 3993-4002.

<sup>166</sup> See the citation on page 22, note 70.

<sup>167</sup> Matthew 26:36-42, Luke 22:39-46, John 12:27.

<sup>168</sup> Scott 1969, lines: 5635-5638.

<sup>169</sup> See the map on page 27.

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to him, but he accepts his faith out of loyalty for his lord. The MCI of Jesus and God as Drohtin would activate the mental systems of the Saxons connected to the deeply ingrained sense of loyalty towards one's Drohtin, as well as the systems of their contact with Christianity before the hearing of the Heliand. At the same time they continue to hear the story in which the two concepts have been intertwined. So at the one hand you have the activated mental systems and subsequent emotions of loyalty towards your Lord, as well as that of Christianity. On the other hand there is the Heliand in which the two concepts are connected. Looking at VMC, through the ludic element you experience both of these sides simultaneously. Therefore in your mind the concepts could truly mingle, and the idea of Christian faith being described as loyalty towards your lord could take hold. I believe that this is the most important device employed by the author, because this is the most fundamental change from the Gospels. The idea is present integrally throughout the Heliand. It is also enhanced by the fact that the author is constantly adding the phrases such as 'do not doubt' or 'keep the faith.'<sup>170</sup> By using this term for Jesus and God the faith in Christianity is presented in terms that all members of the audience would understand deeply.<sup>171</sup> It would also connect to them on a personal level, because of the deeply ingrained cultural significance of the *Drohtin*, as we've seen in the historical context. By presenting Jesus and God as lords the author skillfully conveys the message of loyalty to your lord as faith in God. And the idea is that in this way the audience would accept having faith in God more readily.

But the allusions convey a second message. And that has to do with the apostles. They are presented as warriors and thanes. But not just ordinary, but exemplary warriors who possess all the qualities you could wish for in such a warrior. This was presumably also an ideal present in the mind of the audience, because of the cultural significance. Furthermore, it is emphasized that they chose Jesus out their own volition. A good choice, because Jesus and God are presented as very good Drohtin. Jesus is described as 'the ultimate mead giver' and their ability and willingness to provide aid, munt, is also acknowledged multiple times. If one looks at this through VMC you can see the following. The apostles as ideal thanes can be seen as an MCI because it was an unexpected merger of the two concepts. The audience would have experienced the emotional response connected to the notion of the ideal warrior. And in the text you see the followers of Christ being such

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<sup>170</sup> For example in fitts 4, 11, 22, 43 and 53.

<sup>171</sup> Murphy 1999, 14-21.

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ideal warriors, who are very loyal to Christ. Through these fitts two parts of a message were given. The first part is the now ingrained idea of the faith in God as the loyalty towards one's Lord. And the apostles are shown to have that in abundance. This is then coupled with the notion that the people who show to have that loyalty in the Heliand, the apostles, are proficient warriors and loyal thanes who chose Christ for himself. In this way the idea is given that Christianity( following Christ) was the right choice for the right people. This tactic by the author thus makes Christianity appeal both more personally, and favorably.

The next part of the analysis is slightly different. Instead of focusing on a theme of allusions, the focus will be on a section of the Heliand. This section is the most important prayer in Christendom, the Lord's Prayer. The prayer is a part of fitt 19 and the notion of faith as loyalty is presented in multiple ways during the prayer. The Lord's Prayer is a very important element of Christianity, and it is very interesting to see the Heliand's version of it. That is why as the last part of the analysis, I want to take a closer look at the Lord's Prayer. The text in the Heliand is as follows:

*Father of us, the sons of men.*

*You are in the high heavenly kingdom.*

*Blessed be Your name in every word.*

*May Your mighty kingdom come.*

*May Your will be done over all this world, just the same on earth as it is up there  
in the high heavenly kingdom.*

*Give us support each day, good Chieftain<sup>172</sup>*

*Your holy help, and pardon us, Protector of Heaven,*

*Our many crimes, just as we do to other  
human beings.*

*Do not let evil little creatures lead us off*

*to do their will, as we deserve,*

*but help us against all evil deeds.<sup>173</sup>*

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<sup>172</sup> *Gef ûs dago gehuulikes rād, drohtin the gōdo* (See title page)

<sup>173</sup> Zurla 2004, 159. She cites a translation of Murphy(1992) that was unavailable to me. Also see Scott 1969, lines: 1600-1612.

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As stated above in the Heliand, the Lord's Prayer is given to the apostles in response to their requests to know the secret runes and the power to talk to and move God. As such the Lord's Prayer is given the image of a Magic recitation, a valuable and powerful secret.<sup>174</sup> The prayer itself contains many interesting elements. God is called Drohtin ( Good chieftain) in the prayer and he is asked for support multiple times. Which makes sense in the notion of faith as loyalty; support in the form of munt was one of the key obligations of the Drohtin. Noteworthy is the omission of bread, which is replaced by support, 'rad' in Old Saxon. According to Murphy this might have to do with the fact that the rich audience of the Heliand would not find it fitting to ask someone for bread. Instead the more usual support, or advice given by a Lord to one's warrior is asked of God.<sup>175</sup> Not only rad, God is also asked to provide holy help; spiritual guidance. In the prayer this holy help is asked in the same breath as the rad, who are therefore connected. And another form of munt is present in the form of protection. Protection against the 'evil little creatures' who played a huge role in the minds of the Saxons. This is also not the only instance in which evil is described in this way. In fitt 13, where the struggle of Jesus versus Satan in wilderness is told. Satan is presented as *kraftiga wihti*, which were elven beings or demons, from the deep forest. This adds to the image of the scene, in which the author transforms the desert from the Gospels into a dark deep forest.<sup>176</sup> In the Lord's Prayer, God is not asked to deliver us from evil, but to protect us from 'little evil creatures, 'lêða wihti'.<sup>177</sup> And having someone who can protect you from this evil was necessary.<sup>178</sup> And lastly, according to Zurla, in this form the prayer can also be seen as a warriors oath, asking for protection. An idea which rings very true, if you look at the text. In the prayer God is asked for many things, and the implicit return of the believer is his loyalty to God.<sup>179</sup>

In the most important prayer of Christendom you can see all kinds of interesting elements that relate to the notion of faith presented as loyalty. As such, it is the most concrete example in the Heliand of this notion; A warrior asking his chieftain for support,

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<sup>174</sup> Zurla 2004, 155

<sup>175</sup> Murphy 1989, 91.

<sup>176</sup> Cathey 2002, 170-171.; Heliand, fitt 13, (Vredendaal 2006, 88-90) Scott 1969, line 1030.

<sup>177</sup> Cathey 2002, 181. Scott 1969, line:1610.

<sup>178</sup> Zurla 2004, 160-161.

<sup>179</sup> Zurla 2004, 159-161.



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spiritual guidance and protection, with the prayer as an echo of an old warriors' oath. In the most important prayer, the most important message is conveyed.

### 4.3 Result of the analysis

In this chapter the Heliand was analyzed. The messages that could be discerned after the analysis of the Heliand will be described here. In the next chapter the overall conclusion of this research will be given. The focus point of the analysis in this chapter were the allusions within the Heliand. These allusions had a double meaning. They play their role in the Heliand as the actual text, but the allusions also refer to elements from the extra-textual world, for example Germanic Paganism or old cultural values of the Saxons. These allusions were analyzed through what I have dubbed VMC, because it is a combination of theories from H. Versnel, G. Murphy S.J. and the Cognitive Science of Religion. By analyzing the allusions with VMC it was possible to discern messages implied in these allusions and the effect these messages would likely have had on the audience of the Heliand. The outcome is a variety of messages, but they all relate to a few core ones. I have deduced five of those core lessons from the allusions. I believe that these messages all relate to certain doubts about Christianity that the audience logically still might have had, based on the historical context and analysis of the old Saxon society.

The first message is one of continuation. This can be seen with the image of felling, which receives its more positive connotation in fitt 17, after it was used in a purely negative way in fitt 1; not everything of the old way will be felled. It is also visible in fitt 12 with the dove as the allusion to Woden after Jesus his baptism. It signifies that a part of Woden will live on within Jesus. The audience hears that a part of their old ways will continue within Christianity, which is a reassuring message. The second core message is the emotional appeal of Jesus empathizing with the audience. The idea is that sympathizing with the audience would Christianity make more appealing. This can be seen in the theme of baptism, where Jesus is shown to have undergone the same faith as the ancestors of the audience; mass baptisms. It can also be seen in theme 3 where the suffering of Jesus is shown. These allusions predominantly show this message of Jesus sharing their fate. And seeing that Jesus went through the same ordeals as your ancestors would also forge a more personal connection. The third and fourth core messages have to do with the legitimization of Christianity. There are two ways in which these messages are given. The first is showing that

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Christianity is more powerful than the old religion. This is present in the first fitt, where evil must be 'felled'. And felled referred to the destruction of the Irminsul, which was a tactic in the tradition of Boniface; destroying symbols of paganism in order to show the greater strength of Christianity. This message also comes across in themes 5 and 6 on Wurd and Woden, especially if you combine the two. Through several fitts it is shown that Jesus and God were able to bend Wurd to their will. Which in itself shows that Christianity is very powerful. But combined with the fitts in which Jesus is presented as Woden, the message becomes more precise. Jesus could do everything that Woden did, and more, because unlike Woden and the other old gods, Jesus was able to bend Wurd and defeat death.

The second way in which Christianity is legitimized is by showing how good and positive Christianity itself is. This can be seen in theme two with the baptism of Christ, theme 4 on the Magi and in presenting the apostles as loyal thanes of Christ. With the way the baptism is described, the negative image of (mass) baptism is altered. Baptism is presented as positive event in the Heliand. Especially if the hero of the story( which at that point was well established) undergoes this process eager and willingly. It is also significant that the aim of the baptism is changed from repentance of sin to receiving a new faith. With the Magi, Christianity is given credence by the usage of the significance of forefathers. The Magi had a wise ancestor who foretold the coming of Christ and through VMC you can see that this ingrains the idea in the minds of the audience that ancestors had foretold the coming of Christianity. And giving the importance of those ancestors to the audience, this is very favorable towards Christianity. That Christianity is good can also be seen in the way the apostles are presented. They are described as the perfect, brave and loyal thanes of Jesus. These were all qualities the audience would have admired. By presenting the most important followers of the hero of Christianity as very praiseworthy people, their faith was also shown in a very positive light.

The last message is that of presenting faith in God as loyalty towards one's Lord. This idea is constantly reinforced by the frequent way of describing Jesus and God as Drohtin. It is also very present in the Lord's Prayer. This had multiple effects. The first is that faith in God is explained in way the audience would understand it better. With the deeply ingrained notion of loyalty towards one's lord now coupled with faith in Christianity, it would be easier for the audience to have this faith and they would understand it better. Because of the fact that this notion was so deeply ingrained in the mind of the audience, the faith in Christianity

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would connect to them on a more personal level if it were presented as loyalty towards your lord.

These are the results of the analysis through VMC. In the next chapter the conclusion to this research will be presented. In the conclusion the answers of the previous analysis will be combined with the research as a whole in order to find out how the Heliand could have aided in the conversion process of the Saxons.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion.

In this thesis I have looked at the role that the Heliand could have played in the conversion process towards Christianity of the Saxons in the aftermath of the Frankish Wars and the subsequent forced conversion of many of the Saxons. In the Carolingian times, baptism was the signifier of conversion; after your baptism, you were a Christian. However modern research has determined that conversion must be seen more as a process overtime, in which the believer internalizes the faith. In ninth century Saxony, this process was not yet complete for a part of the Saxons. This can be seen both through sources from the ninth century, as well as the text of the Heliand itself, in which you can see the intellectual elasticity the author had to employ to make certain core teachings of Christianity acceptable to the audience. In the second half of the ninth century, the sources indicate that the Christianization of Saxony was going better. Since the Heliand was written between 822 and 840, it made therefore sense to look at the role the Heliand could have played in this Christianization process.

Because of the inability to interview the audience of the Heliand, or the lack of possible sources that talk about the effects of the Heliand, it was necessary to resort to another research method. The solution was found in the creation of a multidisciplinary analytical tool that was dubbed VMC. In VMC three elements were combined. The first element was a combination of several theories from H. Versnel's book, *Coping with the Gods*. This book was written on research problems relating to Greek Polytheism, but I have found that several of his solutions were also applicable to a later historical text such as the Heliand. The second element was the interpretation of G. Murphy's interpretation of the Heliand. He believed that the Heliand was full of allusions to concepts known to the Saxons, which would make the material more palatable for the audience. The third element was a part of the Cognitive Science of Religion on minimally counter intuitive concepts. It allowed me to look at the possible emotional impact that parts of the Heliand could have had, because of the psychological research on which CSR is based.

To find an answer to the research question this process was followed: Several themes of allusions that could best show the workings of the Heliand were gathered and explained. These allusions were explained by comparing them to parallel Gospel passages and analyzing them through the information from the historical context and Saxon society before they

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were conquered by Charlemagne after the Saxon Wars. The results were then analyzed through VMC in order to find their possible workings towards to improvement of the Christianity of the Saxons. This analysis yielded five core messages/ lessons that were given through the Heliand to the audience.

I believe that these messages are how the Heliand could have aided in the conversion process of the Saxons. By teaching the audience several lessons through different types of allusions to their old society and religion, they would come to understand and internalize Christianity more. The lessons all relate to different doubts that the audience still might have had towards Christianity. The first message is that a part of the old faith would live on within Christianity. It is hard to leave your old ways behind, especially in a society where ancestors played a large role in the minds of the people. By assuring that not all of the old way was gone in Christianity, the choice to completely embrace Christianity is easier to make. The second message is that the Son of God had to go through some of the same ordeals as the ancestors of the audience. Jesus sharing their faith was a powerful emphatic device. The fact that many Saxons had suffered during the Saxon Wars by the hands of Frankish Christians may have left a bitter resentment towards Christianity. Showing that Jesus had to face the same torments brings Jesus closer to the audience. And the fact that Jesus never wavers in his faith despite his suffering shows that despite possible difficulties that come with being Christian, it was something worth enduring. The third message is that Christianity is stronger than the old religion of the Saxons. Looking at Boniface's missionary work, this was a very useful message for the spreading of Christianity. It can also be seen in the Lord's Prayer, where God is asked for protection and munt. If your old gods had allowed you to be successful and achieve many glories, why would you change to Christianity? Seeing that the new religion was stronger and better equipped for protecting you from evil, was a huge argument in favor of Christianity. The fourth message is that Christianity is a good and positive religion. Again, it is very possible that many Saxons still had some resentment for Christianity, given the acts by Frankish Christians during the war, and the Saxons' subsequent forced conversion. By showing Christianity in a positive light, and by highlighting the good qualities it had, the aim is to change some of the audience its negative perception of Christianity. And the fifth was not so much a message, but more of an idea that was given to the audience. That idea was that faith in God was the same as faith in your lord. And because faith in your lord was such a deeply ingrained and personal feeling for the audience,

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this would have helped in them embracing faith. And because the most loyal followers of Jesus, the apostles, were presented as exemplary thanes, the notion that Christianity was the good choice is also given to the idea of faith as loyalty.

As such, I believe that the Heliand could have aided the conversion process of the Saxons by taking away possible doubts by the messages that are given to the audience by the different types of allusions. And these messages could be filtered from the allusions by CSR.

In this thesis I have focused on where the Christianity of the audience was possibly lacking( and where the Heliand could help) from a historical and sociological perspective. For example the resentment that the audience still might have felt towards Christianity due to the events of the Saxon Wars. In chapter 3.4 I shortly touched on the doctrinal improvements that the author tried to achieve in the Heliand by changing the nature of some of the beatitudes in such a way that it would be more understandable for the audience. Because I did not find more examples of this than the few beatitudes, that was not the focus here, but it would be a possible next ground of research for the workings of the Heliand.

But I believe that the most fruitful of the next possible areas of research can be in applying VMC to comparable texts to the Heliand, such as the Jesus Sutra's. The reason for why this is applicable must mostly be sought within Coping with the Gods. Most of the problems that Versnel deal with relate to matters of ambiguity. And the ambiguous, multi-interpretable nature of texts such as the Heliand is precisely where most of its effectiveness can be found.

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