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## Race and imperialism: twelfth-century English attitudes towards Scotland

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**Race and Imperialism;**  
**Twelfth Century English Attitudes Towards Scotland**

‘There are those who believe they can compile sets of ... traits to form coherent paradigms, which they call races. For them, the other races are those that are impure and abominable, and their own, pure and admirable. By authorising this peculiar superiority for themselves, they also presume to enjoy advantages of a different order: economic or political, for example, or perhaps psychological, or simply a measure of prestige’.<sup>1</sup>

Albert Memmi, a Jewish sociologist whose childhood in French Tunisia has given him a particular insight into the dynamics of cultural and political colonialism, wrote this definition of racism in the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> He argues that racial prejudice is founded upon the assumption of superiority by a particular group or ‘race’, and draws upon a variety of perceived and actual differences. This sense of superiority might cover character, appearance, religion, sexuality, technology, economics, or methods of making war. Memmi’s view of modern racism bears comparison with Welsh medieval historian R. R. Davies’s comment regarding Norman views of other societies that ‘these cultures were approached and categorised in an attitude which ranged from supercilious curiosity to outright condemnation’.<sup>3</sup> There are, therefore, comparisons to be drawn between modern racism and the perceived cultural antipathies of medieval Britain, particularly in light of the beginnings of English national identity. Indeed, Robert Bartlett argues that ‘for the majority of medieval writers, ethnicity was defined by and manifested in culture as much as, or more than, descent’.<sup>4</sup>

The evidence for what might be described as a ‘racist’ attitude towards the Scots from writers based in England comes to the fore in the early twelfth century, at least a generation after the Norman Conquest in 1066. John Gillingham asserts that, as early as the 1130’s ‘we can trace a developing sense of Englishness’.<sup>5</sup> By this point, a new ‘Norman-English’ identity was emerging in literary and intellectual circles, incorporating historical awareness of both Norman and Anglo-Saxon society, and partially in opposition to the pre-existing ‘Celtic’ cultures of the British Isles. Use of this term, however, should be restricted to twelfth-century writers who’s work reflects an awareness of this dual heritage, and upon who’s writings modern historians largely base their conceptualisations of medieval Scotland<sup>6</sup>. Consequently, the impact of this new sense of Norman-English identity on Scotland will form the basis of this paper. Comparisons will be drawn between intercultural friction in the twelfth century, and the concept of racism as it is

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<sup>1</sup> A. Memmi, *Racism* (London, 2000), pp. 93-4.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Memmi, cf. [www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Memmi.html](http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Memmi.html).

<sup>3</sup> R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest; the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> R. Bartlett, ‘Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity’, in *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (2001), p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> J. Gillingham, ‘Henry of Huntingdon and the English Nation’, in *The English in the Twelfth Century; Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> The term is in no way synonymous with ‘Anglo-Norman’, which generally refers to the cross-channel aristocracy that grew up in England and Normandy in the wake of the Norman Conquest. John Gillingham has discussed the growth of English identity in the wake of the Norman Conquest, cf. J. Gillingham, *English in the Twelfth Century*.

understood today. The paper will also dispute the claims made by sociologists such as Oliver Cromwell Cox, an African-American writer specialising in the study of race, that:

‘There was in medieval Europe – indeed in the Christian world – an effective basis for the brotherhood of peoples ... In the Middle Ages, then, we find no racial antagonism in Europe’.<sup>7</sup>

Norman-English accounts of the Battle of the Standard in 1138, between the Northumbrians and an invading Scottish army under David I, provide evidence that contradicts this view.<sup>8</sup> Henry of Huntingdon, an archdeacon in the East Midlands, describes the Scottish invasion in the following sensationalist manner:

‘[The Scots] ripped open pregnant women and tore out the unborn fetuses. They tossed children on the points of their lances. They dismembered priests on the altars. They put on to the bodies of the slain the heads cut from crucifixes, and changing them round, they put back on the crucifixes the heads of the dead. Everywhere the Scots attacked would be filled with horror and barbarity, accompanied by the cries of women, the wailing of the aged, the groans of the dying, and the despair of the living’.<sup>9</sup>

Ailred of Rievaulx, a Yorkshire monk and friend to the Scottish king himself, describes how the Scots ‘wrought cruel dooms upon the church and the priests, upon either sex and every age’.<sup>10</sup> Ailred also describes a Scottish raiding force of 1079 as ‘the cruel army ... ready for spoil, prompt for slaughter, eager for crime, neither sparing for entreaty nor resting for satiety’.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, John of Worcester, another twelfth century chronicler, records how ‘very many [of the English] were captured, despoiled, imprisoned, and tortured, and ecclesiastics were slain for the sake of their church property’.<sup>12</sup> These extracts illustrate a collective sense of outrage over the methods used by Scottish warriors. Furthermore, they demonstrate that this view was not limited to the North, often raided by the Scots, but was expressed equally by southern historians, such as Henry of Huntingdon and John of Worcester, who had no direct experience of Scottish incursions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> O. C. Cox, *Race; A Study in Social Dynamics* (New York, 2000), p. 10. For more information on Cox, cf. [www.nalis.gov.tt/Biography/DrOliverCCox.htm](http://www.nalis.gov.tt/Biography/DrOliverCCox.htm).

<sup>8</sup> For the political background to the Battle of the Standard, cf. R. H. C. Davis, *King Stephen 1135-1154* (London, 1967), pp. 36-7.

<sup>9</sup> Henry, archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. & trans. D. Greenway (Oxford, 1996), pp. 710-1.

<sup>10</sup> Ailred of Rievaulx, *Eulogium Davidis Regis Scotorum*, in *Pinkerton's Lives of the Scottish Saints II*, ed. W. M. Metcalfe (Paisley, 1889), pp. 445-6, translated in *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers*, ed. & trans. A. O. Anderson (London, 1908), p. 179n.

<sup>11</sup> Ailred of Rievaulx, *Saints of Hexham*, in *The Priory of Hexham, Publications of the Surtees Society* 154, ed. J. Raine (1863), p. 178, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 101.

<sup>12</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester III*, ed. & trans. P. McGurk (Oxford, 1998), pp. 236-7. It is likely that John relied in part on other sources for his knowledge of events in the North of England, including the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Cf. *Chronicle of John of Worcester III*, pp. xix-xxxii.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the 5 raids on Northumbria made by Malcolm III Canmore, King of Scots (1057-1093), cf. A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland, the Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 118-21.

Consequently, a stereotype of Scottish war making can be discerned in the writings of twelfth-century historians living in England, which depicts the Scots as bloodthirsty and barbaric. John Gillingham explains this pejorative view of the Scots as a symptom of the chivalric code's influence across Northern Europe. He describes the ethos of chivalry as 'an attempt to limit the brutality of war by treating the defeated in a more humane fashion'.<sup>14</sup> This was a form of warfare to which the Scots did not subscribe, and Norman-English ecclesiastics, increasingly affected by chivalric and romance literature, consequently viewed their methods as morally reprehensible.<sup>15</sup> The military historian David Nicolle asserts that, as late as the end of the eleventh century 'warfare on the Welsh and Scottish borders largely remained a matter of raid and counter-raid'.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting, however, that similar methods of war were still commonplace within continental Europe, as demonstrated by the 1073 entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which records that:

'In this year King William led an English and French raiding party across the sea, and won the land of Maine, and the English greatly despoiled it; they did for vineyards, burned down towns, and greatly despoiled that land, and bent it all into Williams hands, and afterwards they turned home to England'.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, there is little evidence to suggest that, at this early stage of their development, the ideals of chivalry had any but a superficial impact on European warfare, in spite of their prevalence in the literature of the period. Nevertheless, it was the intelligentsia rather than the warriors who recorded the history of the time, and their enthusiastic adoption of chivalric values ensured that they would view the indiscriminate violence of raiding as an affront. Consequently, Scottish methods of waging war gave Norman-English writers the basis for a sense of moral superiority.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, an important motivation for raiding was slave taking; an activity in which the Scots engaged but which their southern neighbours condemned. The Northumbrian monk Symeon of Durham recounts how, following a Scottish raid on the north of England in 1070 'Scotland was, therefore, filled with slaves and handmaids of the English race, so that even to this day ... no cottage can be found without one of them'.<sup>19</sup> He then goes on to record how, during the same raid 'infants snatched from their mother's breasts were thrown high into the air, and in their fall

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<sup>14</sup> J. Gillingham, 'Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth Century Britain', in *Haskins Society Journal* 4 (1992), p.77.

<sup>15</sup> For a further discussion of Post-Conquest Norman and English perceptions of Scottish methods of warfare, cf. M. Strickland, *War and Chivalry; the Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy 1066-1217* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 324-9.

<sup>16</sup> D. Nicolle, *Medieval Warfare Sourcebook; Warfare in Western Christendom* (London, 1999), p. 75

<sup>17</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. & trans. M. Swanton (London, 1996), Ms. E, 1073, p. 209.

<sup>18</sup> A similar dynamic can be seen in twelfth century justifications for the Anglo-Saxon campaign of 1063 against the Welsh King 'Griffin' (Gruffudd ap Llewellyn). Symeon of Durham claims that it was 'on account of the frequent ravages which he carried on in the territories of the Angles and the insults which he had frequently offered to his Lord King'; Symeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, in *Symeon of Durham II, Rolls Series* 75, ed. T. A. Arnold (London, 1885), p. 176, translated in Symeon of Durham, *A History of the Kings of England*, ed. & trans. J. Stevenson, facsimile reprint 1987 (London, 1855), p. 129. Moreover, John of Worcester's description of a Welsh raid in 1137 is very similar to Norman-English depictions of Scottish raids on Northumbria. John records how 'the Welsh laid waste all around them, setting fire to townships and castles, killing all who resisted whether innocent or not'; *Chronicle of John of Worcester III*, pp. 228-9.

<sup>19</sup> *Historia Regum*, p. 192, translated in *History of the Kings*, p. 139.

were received on the points of lances and pikes thickly piled on the ground'.<sup>20</sup> Ailred of Rievaulx makes a similar claim about the treatment of women and children, describing the Scots as they 'cut to pieces pregnant women and children'.<sup>21</sup> Although these acts may not have been indiscriminate, but were committed with the purpose of severing the bonds that linked new slaves to their previous lives as husbands and fathers, their brutality only served to increase Norman-English condemnation of Scottish methods of warfare.

There are notable parallels between this twelfth century attitude towards slave taking, and that of the Anglo-Saxon archbishop Wulfstan of York. Writing in the early eleventh century, Wulfstan bemoans the fact that 'Often two pirates, or sometimes three, will drive herds of Christian men out through the people from sea to sea, huddled together as a public shame to us all'.<sup>22</sup> His lament, written during a period of heavy Danish incursion, does not refer to the institution of slavery *per se*, but rather hinges upon the fact that the Danish slave-takers were not Christian. Once a Dane enslaved an Anglo-Saxon, that slave was effectively removed from Christianity. As David Pelteret argues, the Church of Wulfstan's period 'accepted the institution of slavery as part of the natural order of society ...[and] felt no qualms about keeping slaves on its own lands'.<sup>23</sup> So Wulfstan's complaint did not stem from an ethical difficulty over the concept of slavery, but was due to the paganism of the slave-takers. In the 1100's, however, Norman-English commentators describe Scottish slave taking in the same way, despite the fact that the Scots, unlike the Danes, were Christian.<sup>24</sup> Evidently an ideological change had occurred in Britain during the intervening hundred years, which not only differentiated between Christian and pagan, but also discriminated between different Christian societies. This can be traced back in part to the Norman Conquest, and the support given to the expedition by the Papacy.<sup>25</sup> William of Poitiers, biographer and admirer of William the Conqueror, records that 'seeking the approval of the Pope [Alexander II] the Duke received a banner with his blessing, to signify the approval of St Peter'.<sup>26</sup> Papal endorsement for the Conquest was a mutually shrewd political move, and had far-reaching ideological implications. By aligning himself with the Papacy and the Papal Reform movement, the Conqueror legitimised his claim to rule England. Indeed, the support of the Papacy for the late eleventh-century Normans directly contributed to the belief maintained by the following generation of early twelfth-century Norman-English writers that

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Ailred of Rievaulx, *Relatio de Standardo*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I. III*, *Rolls Series 82*, ed. R. Howlett (London, 1886), p. 187, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 179n.

<sup>22</sup> Wulfstan of York, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, ed. D. Whitelock (London, 1939) p. 60, translated in Wulfstan of York, *Sermon of Wolf to the English*, in *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, ed. & trans. M. Swanton (London, 1975), p. 120.

<sup>23</sup> D. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England; from the Reign of Alfred until the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 255-6.

<sup>24</sup> The post-Conquest slave trade with Ireland also came under attack from twelfth century Norman- English writers. William of Malmesbury condemns 'the schemes of those rascals who had an established practice of selling their serfs into Ireland' - William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum I*, eds. & trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, & M. Winterbottom (Oxford 1998), pp. 496-7.

<sup>25</sup> For a further discussion on the value of papal support, cf. R. Allen Brown, *The Normans and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1969), pp. 148-9.

<sup>26</sup> William of Poitiers, *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, eds. & trans. R. H. C. Davis & M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1998), pp. 104-5.

they had, in the words of R. R. Davies ‘a duty to introduce their values and norms - political, economic, moral and ecclesiastical – to less fortunate peoples’.<sup>27</sup>

Norman-English chroniclers also accuse the Scots of sexual depravities, some of which are linked to the Scottish slaving practices already discussed. The mid-twelfth century northern chronicler Richard of Hexham describes how, in 1138:

‘They carried off as well the noble widowed matrons and the chaste maidens. Stripped also, and bound and fastened together in troops by cords and thongs, they drove them away before them’.<sup>28</sup>

John of Hexham, whose work precedes that of Richard, supports this account. John reports that the Scots ‘slew all the men, and bound together with cords the maidens and widows, naked, in troops, and drove them away into Scotland under the yoke of slavery’.<sup>29</sup> Here, Scottish slave taking is geared towards capturing women in order to provide concubines and household servants.<sup>30</sup> Influenced by the Papal Reform movement of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these ecclesiastical writers linked monogamy with piety, and it was therefore natural that they would be offended by the keeping of concubines.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Ailred of Rievaulx claims that, prior to the Battle of the Standard, the Scots ‘raped beyond the manner of men’.<sup>32</sup> John of Hexham, meanwhile, records that ‘the Scots also broke into the sanctuaries of the Lord, and in the consecrated places committed acts violent [and] lewd’.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Turgot, prior of Durham and biographer of Queen Margaret of Scotland, mother of David I, writes that ‘[they allowed] illegal wedlock with stepmothers, as also a surviving brother’s marriage with the wife of a brother who had died’.<sup>34</sup> There is a perception in these accounts that the Scots are sexually degenerate, enslaving women, keeping concubines and engaging in rape and acts of wanton

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<sup>27</sup> Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Richard of Hexham, *De Gestis Regis Stephani*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*. III, p. 156, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 187.

<sup>29</sup> John of Hexham, *Continuations to the Historia Regum*, in *Symeon of Durham II, Rolls Series 75*, ed. T. A. Arnold (London, 1885), p. 290, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 181.

<sup>30</sup> These accounts are to some extent at odds with those cited earlier, which depict women and children being slain by the Scots. It is therefore possible to speculate that raiding practices were by no means fixed or consistent, even within a single raid. For more on the possible roles of female slaves on late eleventh century estates, cf. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>31</sup> Moreover, as C. N. L. Brooke argues, ‘in the wake of courtly love came a more refined appreciation of the relations of men and women’; C. N. L. Brooke ‘Gregorian reform in Action; Clerical Marriage in England 1050-1200’, in *Change in Medieval Society; Europe North of the Alps 1050-1500*, ed. S. L. Thrupp (New York, 1964), p. 63. This change in the conceptualisation of women within European society would certainly have impacted upon the institutions of female slavery and concubinage.

<sup>32</sup> *Eulogiam Davidis*, p. 445, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 179n.

<sup>33</sup> *Cont. to the Historia Regum*, pp. 290, translated in *Scottish Annals*, pp. 181-2.

<sup>34</sup> Turgot, *Vita Sanctae Margaretae Scotorum Reginae*, in *Symeon of Durham I, Publications of the Surtees Society 51*, ed. J. H. Hinde (Durham, 1868), pp. 263-4, translated in A. O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History; AD 500 to 1286 II* (London, 1922), pp. 70-3. The *vita* has been ascribed to Turgot, monk and later prior of Durham, although his authorship is not entirely without doubt.

sexuality. Moreover, Scottish marriage practices are criticised as sinful within the ethical framework of the Reform Church.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, religion is an important source from which racism proceeds in the modern world, and religious friction was by no means lacking between the societies of England and Scotland in the twelfth century, as seen in reports of the Battle of the Standard itself. According to Richard of Hexham, the Northumbrians:

‘... hung a silver pyx with the body of Christ, and the Banner of St Peter ... with the purpose that Jesus Christ our Lord should by the presence of his body be their leader in this battle, which they had undertaken in defence of his church ... and by a just judgement of God, they who had pitiably slain many, and left them unburied, were themselves slain much more pitiably’.<sup>36</sup>

Ailred of Rievaulx, meanwhile, recounts that ‘priests, white-clad in their sacred robes, went around the army with crosses and relics of the saints’.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Henry of Huntingdon describes how, in response to a benediction upon the Northumbrian army ‘every Englishman answered, and the hills and mountains echoed “Amen, Amen!” At the same moment, the Scots army called out their ancient rallying cry ... “Albani, Albani!”’.<sup>38</sup> These extracts feature strong religious imagery, and portray a Christian war against an almost pagan enemy. Significantly, Ailred, Richard and their contemporaries were writing not long after the Second Crusade of 1145-7, and it is likely that this influenced their interpretation of events.<sup>39</sup> As Christopher Tyerman asserts, the major protagonist of the Second Crusade in Northern Europe was Bernard of Clairvaux, whose ‘revivalist preaching played down the image of Jerusalem, and broadened the ideological and geographic parameters of the movement’.<sup>40</sup> By using Crusading imagery, the chroniclers placed the Scots in the same religious category as the Muslims of the Middle East, Spain and Italy.<sup>41</sup> In his discussion of medieval ethnicity, Bartlett addresses this issue, noting that; ‘if ethnicity is situational strategic, it is highly likely that it would be invoked where expedient, and it was’.<sup>42</sup> By appealing to the divine, the Norman-English historians ascribe a cultural and therefore racial supremacy to themselves that is defined in part through religion, and is supported by God Himself. As Gillingham puts it, these writers were ‘discarding the familiar

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<sup>35</sup> The same accusations are levelled at the Welsh by Gerald of Wales, who writes that ‘incest is extremely common amongst the Welsh, both in the lower classes and better-educated people. There is no fear of God before their eyes, and they have no hesitation or shame in marrying women related to them in the fourth or fifth degree, and sometimes even third cousins’; Giraldi Cambrensis, *Descriptio Kambriae*, in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*.VI, *Rolls Series* 21, ed. J. F. Dimock (London, 1868), p. 215, translated in Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales / The Description of Wales*, ed. & trans. L. Thorpe (London, 1978), pp. 262-3.

<sup>36</sup> *Gestis Regis Stephani*, p. 162-4, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p.200 & 205.

<sup>37</sup> *De Standardo*, p. 191, translated in *Scottish Annals*, pp. 201-2.

<sup>38</sup> *Historia Anglorum*, pp. 716-7.

<sup>39</sup> For a full account of the Second Crusade, cf. H. E. Mayer, *The Crusades*, trans. J. Gillingham (Oxford, 1972), pp. 96-109.

<sup>40</sup> C. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades* (Chicago, 1988), p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> For the presence in and impact of Islam on Medieval Europe, cf. W. M. Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 2-14 & 44-57.

<sup>42</sup> R. Bartlett, *Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race*, p. 51.

concept of barbarian as equivalent to pagan, and formulating a new one – one which allowed for the possibility of Christian barbarians’.<sup>43</sup>

Support for this can be found throughout contemporary Norman-English sources. Richard of Hexham relates how, prior to the Battle of the Standard, the Scots:

‘... dismembered the crucifixes of the churches in the basest manner they could, to Christ’s dishonour ... [and] ... they dug up the altars ... and upon them mangled priests and innocents’.<sup>44</sup>

Henry of Huntingdon, meanwhile, claims that the Scots ‘have violated the churches of God in this country, have spilt blood on altars [and] have murdered priests’.<sup>45</sup> These sources illustrate the attempts of their authors to denigrate the Scots for their lack of concern for the sanctity of churches and church property. Not only are the Scots portrayed flouting chivalric sensibilities, but also they are depicted as acting without regard for the laws or members of the Christian Church<sup>46</sup>. There are, however, various accounts of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy engaging in equally sacrilegious behaviour. In 1087, for instance, William the Conqueror received the injury that killed him during a raid on Mantes in which, according to Orderic Vitalis, his army ‘set fire to the castle and burned it, together with the churches and houses’<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, William of Newburgh, a monk of the later twelfth century, records how Geoffrey de Mandeville, an Anglo-Norman noble in the reign of Stephen:

‘... gathered a band of ruffians and forced his way into Ramsey Abbey. He drove out the monks, and did not hesitate to make so famous and holy a place a den of thieves, nor turn God’s sanctuary into a home of the devil’.<sup>48</sup>

Evidently, whilst such attacks on the church were a source of moral outrage to ecclesiastical historians, they were a common part of war making in England and France and not, as writers such as Richard of Hexham and Henry of Huntingdon imply, peculiar to the ‘barbaric’ Scots. Indeed, R. R. Davies argues that Norman-English accounts of the Scots desecrating churches may have been in part an attempt to justify political conquest ‘as a campaign of ecclesiastical reform and spiritual regeneration’.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> J. Gillingham, ‘The Beginnings of English Imperialism’, in *The English in the Twelfth Century*, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> *Gesta Regis Stephani*, p. 152, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 179n.

<sup>45</sup> *Historia Anglorum*, pp. 714-5.

<sup>46</sup> The same tactics are employed by Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury (1070-1089) in an attempt to extend influence over Ireland. Lanfranc asks Toirdelbach, king of Munster, to ‘banish from your kingdom all these evil customs and all others that are similarly condemned by canon law’; Lanfranc of Canterbury, *The Letters of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury*, eds. & trans. H. Clover & M. Gibson (Oxford, 1979), epp. 10, pp. 72-3.

<sup>47</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis IV*, ed. & trans. M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1973), pp. 78-9. It should also be noted that William’s raid on Mantes bears many similarities to the Scottish raids on Northumbria that so outraged twelfth-century Norman-English commentators.

<sup>48</sup> William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs I*, eds. & trans. P. G. Walsh & M. J. Kennedy (Warminster, 1988), pp. 68-9.

<sup>49</sup> Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, p. 16.



Significantly, accusations of this Scottish degeneracy are not only limited to periods of conflict. In his biography of Queen Margaret, Turgot notes that the Scots

‘... neglected to take the sacraments ... of Christ on the holy day of Easter ... [and] were wont to celebrate mass contrary to the custom of the whole church, with I know not what barbarous rite ... they were accustomed also to neglect reverence for the Lord’s days’.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, Queen Margaret, a grandniece of the Anglo-Saxon king Edward the Confessor, is presented as a positive religious influence on Scotland. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports that:

‘She would increase the glory of God in that land, and direct the king out of the path of error, and turn him and his people together towards a better way, and lay aside the evil customs which that nation earlier followed – just as she afterwards did’.<sup>51</sup>

As early as the late eleventh century, Scottish Christianity was regarded as, in terms of the tenets of European church reform brought over by the Normans in 1066, backward and inferior.<sup>52</sup> It was, therefore, inevitable that Norman-English intellectuals of the twelfth-century would come to view their culture as a ‘civilising’ influence on the Scots. Indeed, it seems clear that religion served as a foundation for friction between England and Scotland, and not as the basis for the Christian fraternity suggested by Oliver Cromwell Cox, as cited above.

Scotland was also considered by Norman-English writers to be economically inferior to England. John Gillingham argues that ‘by the later twelfth century it was conventional to see Celtic regions as fundamentally pastoral economies’<sup>53</sup>. He continues by asserting that Norman-English historians ‘evidently accepted the ancient notion that pastoral economies were unlikely to be able to sustain civilised life’<sup>54</sup>. Moreover, in his biography of Margaret, Turgot comments that ‘she had caused merchants to come by land and sea from various regions, and to bring very many precious wares that were still unknown there.’<sup>55</sup> The implication is that Margaret is opening

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<sup>50</sup> *Vita Sanctæ Margaretæ*, pp 263-4, translated in *Early Sources*, pp. 70-3. Although he was a native of Lincolnshire, ‘Turgot’ seems to be a Norse name. Nevertheless, his unkind depiction of the Scots in the *Life of St Margaret* is comparable to those expressed by historians such as Ailred of Rievaulx and William of Malmesbury. It can therefore be argued that Turgot was aware of and formed part of Norman-English literary consciousness. For more on Turgot’s origins, cf. W. M. Aird, *St Cuthbert and the Normans* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 152-3.

<sup>51</sup> ASC, Ms. D, 1067, p. 201. The entry is probably a later interpolation. For more on Margaret’s influence on Scotland, cf. G. W. S. Barrow, ‘Companions of the Aetheling’, in *Anglo Norman Studies XXV* (2002), pp. 35-45.

<sup>52</sup> Significantly, Gerald of Wales directs similar accusations of sinfulness against the Welsh by arguing that ‘it was because of their sins, and more particularly the wicked and detestable vice of homosexuality, that the Welsh were punished by God’; *Descriptio Kambriæ*, p. 216, translated in *The Journey Through Wales / The Description of Wales*, p. 264. Gerald not only highlights the failure of the Welsh to comply with the tenets of Christianity, but also accuses them of sexual acts that were viewed by the Church as depraved.

<sup>53</sup> J. Gillingham ‘The Beginnings of English Imperialism’, in *English in the Twelfth Century*, p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> *Vita Sanctæ Margaretæ*, p. 241, translated in *Early Sources*, p. 68.

Scotland up to enriching trade, and that until she arrived, the kingdom was an economic back-water which merchants did not consider worth visiting. Turgot continues this theme by passing comment on the effect that Margaret had on the appearance of the Scots:

‘The natives, compelled by the queen, bought clothing of different colours and various ornaments of dress. Arrayed at her instigation in different refinements of dress, they bore themselves so that they seemed to have been in some sense reformed by this elegance’.<sup>56</sup>

The tone communicates the writer’s feelings of condescension towards the Scots. He intimates that the dress and fashions of Scotland were rude and coarse in comparison to those of England and continental Europe, to which Margaret is accustomed, and he depicts Margaret encouraging the Scots to attire themselves in a more ‘civilised’ manner. Ailred of Rievaulx furthers this derogative view of Scottish appearance when he mockingly compares the primitive battle-dress of the Scot to the advanced weaponry of the Northumbrian army at the Battle of the Standard:

‘Who then would not laugh, rather than fear, when to fight against such men runs the worthless Scot with half bare buttocks ... and now they challenge to war their conquerors; their masters; they oppose their naked hide to our lances, our swords and our arrows using a calf-skin for a shield’.<sup>57</sup>

Additionally, Richard of Hexham remarks that the Scots ‘... rely upon swift feet and light armour’.<sup>58</sup> These writers may be mocking the Scots for their lack of proper clothing, but they are also passing comment on Scottish technological inferiority in comparison to their own warriors.<sup>59</sup> By highlighting the poor standard of Scottish weaponry, they imply that the Scots deserve to be conquered because of the inadequacy of their technology.

References to David I in contemporary Norman-English sources further demonstrate the cultural differences that these authors saw between the Scots and themselves. David spent much of his childhood and adolescence at the court of the Norman Kings of England, and was heavily influenced by the continental value-system embraced by both the Norman-English *literati* and the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. William of Malmesbury, a monk of southern England writing in the 1120’s, comments that he was:

‘... a young man of more courtly disposition than the rest, since he had from boyhood been polished by familiar intercourse with the English, and rubbed off all the barbarian gaucherie of Scottish manners’.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *De Standardo*, p. 187, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 197.

<sup>58</sup> *Gestis Regis Stephani*, p. 34, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 177.

<sup>59</sup> Gerald of Wales also notes the technological superiority of the English in comparison to the Irish, who he claims ‘go naked and unarmed into battle ... [and] regard weapons as a burden’ - Giraldi Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernica*, in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera V, Rolls Series 21*, ed. J. F. Dimock (London, reprint 1964), p. 150, translated in Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, ed. & trans. J. O’Meara (London, 1951), p. 101.

<sup>60</sup> *Gesta Regum Anglorum I*, pp. 726-7. The text was completed in 1125. Cf. *Gesta Regum Anglorum II*, p. xxxvii.

Ailred of Rievaulx voiced this view directly to his Scottish readers when he wrote that King David ‘... has joined your barbarian customs with the Christian religion’.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, William of Newburgh echoes this sentiment, describing David as ‘a civilised King of an uncivilised race’.<sup>62</sup> Although David was King of Scotland, his socialisation in England meant these writers regarded him far more favourably than they did his subjects. David was viewed as a native king civilised by his time in England, and expected to keep his barbarous people in check. As a result, Norman-English writers saw David’s 1138 invasion of Northumbria as a betrayal. Ailred of Rievaulx describes a scene on the eve of the Battle of the Standard in which Robert de Brus pleads with David to make terms rather than fight<sup>63</sup>. Through Robert, Ailred asks David why he fights ‘against the English, truly and the Normans ... are these not they with whom thou hast ever found useful counsel, and ready help, and willing obedience besides’.<sup>64</sup> This is reinforced when he continues ‘new to thee is this confidence in Galwegians, attacking with arms today those by whose aid thou hast hitherto ruled’<sup>65</sup>. The source implies that David is turning his back on the civilised values given to him by his southern mentors, choosing instead the barbarism of his native land. It is significant that Ailred chooses Brus, a man with lands in both England and Scotland, as the means by which to chastise David. Indeed, it is entirely plausible that Ailred’s rebuke is also directed at those nobles who’s lands lay largely within Scotland, and who therefore, like David, chose to align themselves with the ‘native’ Scots and the Galwegians rather than their own culture<sup>66</sup>. Indeed, these Galwegians were in any case only nominal subjects of the Scottish kings, as the term seems to refer to the semi-autonomous people of western Scotland and the Hebrides.<sup>67</sup> As far as Norman-English historians were concerned, however, they embodied all that was most contemptible in Scottish society and served as a convenient symbol of Scottish barbarity.<sup>68</sup>

William of Malmesbury highlights the cultural differences between David and his people, recounting that

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<sup>61</sup> ‘Ipse barbaros mores tuos Christiana religione composuit’, *Eulogium Davidis*, p. 279.

<sup>62</sup> William of Newburgh, *History of English Affairs* I, pp. 102-3.

<sup>63</sup> This Robert was the forbear of the more famous Robert the Bruce who would eventually become King of Scotland.

<sup>64</sup> *De Standardo*, p. 193, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 183.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> For more information on the Normans who fought on the Scottish side at the Battle of the Standard, and the distinctions made between these men and the native aristocracy, cf. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, pp. 140-1.

<sup>67</sup> For an examination of the political autonomy of the Western Isles in the twelfth century, cf. R. A. MacDonald, ‘Rebels Without a Cause? The Relations of Fergus of Galloway and Somerled of Argyll with the Scottish Kings 1153-1164’, in *Alba, Celtic Scotland and the Medieval Era*, eds. E. J. Cowan & R. A. MacDonald (East Linton, 2002), pp. 166-86.

<sup>68</sup> Such conceptualisations of barbarism also characterise twelfth century Norman-English views of the Welsh and Irish. Ralph Diceto writes that the realm of the English Kings ‘contained within it some very barbarous inhabitants; the Scots and the Welsh’; Ralph Diceto, *The Historical Works of Master Ralph Diceto II, Rolls Series* 68, ed. W. Stubbs (London, 1876), p. 8, translated in J. Gillingham, ‘Foundations of a Disunited Kingdom’ in *English in the Twelfth Century*, p. 93. Moreover, Gerald of Wales comments that the Irish ‘are so barbarous that they cannot be said to have any culture’; *Topographia Hibernica*, p. 150, translated in *History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 101.

‘Soon after his accession he gave a three year exemption from the payment of dues to any of his countrymen who was prepared to raise his standard of comfort in housing, of elegance in dress, and of civility in diet’.<sup>69</sup>

Here William attributes to David a belief that Norman-English culture is far more advanced than that of Scotland in various aspects of secular and domestic life. Furthermore, Richard of Hexham, in describing Scotland, notes that ‘its inhabitants are barbarous and unclean, neither subdued by bitter cold nor stunted by severe hunger’.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, William of Malmesbury writes that, as the preaching of the First Crusade reached out all over Europe ‘the Scotsman forsook his familiar fleas’.<sup>71</sup> This is a pejorative image and indicates that William saw the Scots as dirty and unhygienic. Some chroniclers writing from a Norman-English perspective even went as far as to compare the Scots with wild beasts. Symeon of Durham asserts that ‘the Scots, more savage than beasts, delighted in this cruelty as an amusing spectacle’.<sup>72</sup> William of Newburgh furthers the derogative analogy, writing that ‘it was the delight of their inhuman nature, more savage than wild beasts, to cut the throats of old men, to slaughter little children, and to disembowel women’.<sup>73</sup> In an attempt to denigrate them, these historians portray the Scots indulging in acts of bestial cruelty, and the sources actually suggest that the Scots are less ‘human’ than the people of England.<sup>74</sup>

These anti-Scottish sentiments are echoed centuries later during the controversy surrounding the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland.<sup>75</sup> According to the early eighteenth century author Jonathan Swift ‘it was thought highly dangerous to leave that part of the island inhabited by a poor, fierce, northern people at liberty to put themselves under a different king’.<sup>76</sup> This echoes the anti-Scottish views of the medieval Norman-English writers discussed above. Meanwhile, as part of the debate leading up to the Act, the English parliamentarian Sir Edward Seymour was quoted in a political pamphlet of the time as remarking:

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<sup>69</sup> *Gesta Regum Anglorum* I, pp. 726-7.

<sup>70</sup> *Gestis Regis Stephani*, p. 34, translated in *Scottish Annals*, p. 177.

<sup>71</sup> *Gesta Regum Anglorum* I, pp. 606-7.

<sup>72</sup> *Historia Regum*, p. 191, translated in *History of the Kings*, p. 139.

<sup>73</sup> William of Newburgh, *Historia Regum Anglorum*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I I*, *Rolls Series* 82, ed. R. Howlett (London, 1886), p. 182, translated in *English Historical Documents 1042-1189 II*, ed. & trans. D. C. Douglas (London, 1953), p. 348.

<sup>74</sup> The same bestial comparisons are also made about the Welsh. According to John of Salisbury, ‘rude and untamed, they live like beasts and despise the word of life’ - *The Letters of John of Salisbury I; The Early Letters (1153-1161)*, eds. & trans. W. J. Millor, H.E. Butler, & C. N. L. Brooke (Oxford, 1986), epp. 87, p. 135.

<sup>75</sup> For more on the contemporary rhetoric surrounding the 1707 Treaty of Union, cf. P. W. J. Riley, *The Union of England and Scotland; A Study in Anglo-Scottish Politics of the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 1978), pp. 197-253.

<sup>76</sup> Jonathon Swift, *The Public Spirit of the Whigs in Political Tracts 1713-1714* (Oxford, 1953), p. 49, cited in *1707, the Union of Scotland and England in Contemporary Documents with a Commentary*, ed. P. H. Scott (Edinburgh, 1979), p. 15. It is worth noting that Swift was actually Irish rather than English, which perhaps underlines the success of English society in ‘Anglicising’ the other cultures of the British Isles.. For more on Swift cf. <http://swc2.hccs.cc.tx.us/htmls/rowhtml/swift/Life.html>.

‘What a bother is here about a union with Scotland, of which all the advantage we shall have will be no more than what a man gets by marrying a beggar; a louse for her portion?’<sup>77</sup>

Almost six hundred years after the Battle of the Standard, therefore, equally disparaging English conceptualisations of Scotland can be found. There is an enduring English prejudice against the Scots that can be traced from the medieval period to modern times. The French conceptual historian Pierre-Andre Taguieff best expresses this form of prejudice in his description of racism:

‘The relativity of innate abilities and talents, as well as their uneven allotment among individuals, becomes elaborated into incomplete and relative hierarchies between races and peoples.’<sup>78</sup>

This definition parallels twelfth century Norman-English attitudes towards the Scots, and this contempt for Scottish appearance, warfare, sexuality, religion and culture has much in common with current definitions of racial prejudice.<sup>79</sup> As far back as the twelfth century, the earliest outline of modern English identity could be discerned, built around the writings of intellectuals who were aware of both the Norman and English cultural traditions to which they had become heirs. It was only natural that this consciously constructed identity would come to view the Scots as fundamentally different from and racially subordinate to itself, and this was to precipitate centuries of Scottish subjugation. As Patrick Geary asserts:

‘...ethnic identity in itself was not the basis of political unity or opposition. Rather, political opposition was often expressed through the symbolic manipulation of these ‘pre-existing likenesses’ in order to mould an identity and a community in opposition to one’s enemies’<sup>80</sup>.

Indeed, notions of racial supremacy frequently provide an excuse for acts of political and cultural imperialism. Historians should beware of ‘generational chauvinism’, which views past societies as less complex than our own. Equally, they should not attempt to sanitise the past by portraying a utopian image of collective brotherhood throughout Western Christendom. Prejudice and bigotry existed then as they do now, and there is no reason to assume that racial prejudice was any less rife in the Middle Ages than it is today.

Marsden, R. (2004), ‘Race and imperialism: twelfth-century English attitudes towards Scotland’, in *A Panorama of Scottish History: Contemporary Considerations*, Kehoe, S. and MacPhail, I. (eds.), Glasgow, Glasgow University Press, pp. 10-23.

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<sup>77</sup> Sir Edward Seymour, quoted in A. Fletcher, *The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun* (Glasgow, 1749), p. 293, cited in Riley, 1707, *the Union of Scotland and England*, p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> P. A. Taguieff, ‘National Identity Framed in the Logic of Racialisation; Aspects, Figures and Problems of Differentialist Racism’, trans. B. Pony, in *Racism; Key Concepts in Critical Theory*, ed L. Harris (New York, 199), p. 312.

<sup>79</sup> The same applies to the Irish and Welsh, who were subject to a similarly racist treatment by Norman-English scholars – see footnotes throughout.

<sup>80</sup> P. Geary, ‘Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages’, in *Mittlungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983), p. 25.