

**HIMNA SMÍÐR – THE ANCIENT HEBREW CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR GOD IS THE MAKER OF HEAVEN IN THE OLD ICELANDIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AS A MARKER OF CHRISTIANIZATION IN ICELAND<sup>1</sup>**

**LA ANTIGUA METÁFORA CONCEPTUAL HEBREA DIOS ES EL CREADOR DEL CIELO EN LA LENGUA Y LITERATURA ISLANDESA ANTIGUA COMO MARCADOR DE CRISTIANIZACIÓN EN ISLANDIA**

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**Abstract:** The following article constitutes an analysis of the civilizing process of Christianization of medieval Iceland on a mental and linguistic micro-scale in the theoretical perspective of historical cognitive linguistics. According to the cognitive theory of language, language is isomorphic to mentality. A conceptual metaphor may be perceived as the smallest element in a conceptual system, the smallest meaningful unit of mentality inherent in language. When mentality in a society shifts, it is expressed in its cognitive system – that is, by the presence of cognitive structures typical of foreign culture and their dissemination in the indigenous conceptual system. In the case of medieval Scandinavia undergoing Christianization and Europeanization in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, we can observe this phenomenon in the interference of the metaphorical structures of Ancient Hebrew, Latin, and Germanic provenance in Old Icelandic language. I analyze the process of Christianization of medieval Iceland as a conceptual change, on the basis of the cultural transfer, resemantization and dissemination of the ancient Hebrew conceptual metaphor GOD IS THE MAKER OF HEAVEN in the language and literature of medieval Iceland. It contributed, together with other conceptual metaphors of Ancient Hebrew and Latin provenance, to the gradual change of

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mindset of medieval Icelanders towards Christianity, cognitive structure by structure, metaphor by metaphor, until they turned into Christians and Europeans by virtue of the conceptual, psycholinguistic, change.

**Keywords:** Old Icelandic literature, Biblical Hebrew, Latin, Old Icelandic, conceptual metaphors

**Resumen:** El presente artículo analiza el proceso de civilización de la cristianización de la Islandia medieval en una microescala psicolingüística desde la perspectiva teórica de la lingüística cognitiva histórica. Según la teoría cognitiva del lenguaje, el lenguaje es isomorfo con la mentalidad. Una metáfora conceptual puede ser percibida como el elemento más pequeño e indivisible del sistema conceptual abstracto, la partícula más pequeña pero significativa de la mentalidad de una comunidad dada reunida por su lenguaje. Cuando la mentalidad en una sociedad dada está sujeta a cambios debido a contactos interculturales, esto se expresa en su sistema conceptual a través del surgimiento de estructuras conceptuales típicas para una cultura extranjera y su difusión en el sistema conceptual indígena. En el caso de Escandinavia medieval sometida a cristianización y europeización en los siglos XI y XII, en el idioma islandés antiguo podemos observar este fenómeno en estructuras metafóricas con el origen hebreo bíblico, latín y germánico, o incluso preindoeuropeo. Este artículo analiza el proceso de cristianización de la Islandia medieval como un cambio conceptual sobre la base de la transferencia cultural, la resemantización y la difusión de la antigua metáfora conceptual hebrea DIOS ES EL CREADOR DEL CIELO en el lenguaje y la literatura de la Islandia medieval. Junto con otras metáforas conceptuales procedentes de antiguo hebreo y latín, contribuyó a un cambio gradual en la mentalidad de los islandeses medievales hacia el cristianismo, estructura cognitiva por estructura, metáfora conceptual por metáfora, hasta que se convirtieron en cristianos y europeos gracias al cambio conceptual y psicolingüístico.

**Palabras clave:** literatura islandesa antigua, hebreo bíblico, latín, idioma islandés antiguo, metáforas conceptuales

The syncretic character of the culture of high medieval Iceland and its inhabitants is a combination of various factors and influences. Its Old Norse substrate, Old English, Celtic and Lapp adstrates, and the superstrates of Christian and Latin provenance were brought together by cross-cultural transfers of various kinds. The superstrates of Christianity and Latin were themselves rooted in Hebrew and Greek traditions respectively. All this brings to mind the famous last words of Kolbeinn Tumason, a 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century skáld and chieftain from the clan of Ásbirningar of Skagafjörður in North Iceland. As the tradition has it, he was to recite them on his deathbed, dying from wounds received in the Víðiness battle, fought in Hjaltadalr in



1208 against Guðmundr góði Arason, then bishop of Hólar, and his lay partisans (Srholec-Skórzewska, 2011, pp. 111-117; Sverrir Jakobsson, 2018, pp. 195-199). Kolbeinn's final poem, and supposedly his last known words, composed in the *runhenda* meter, are preserved in *Guðmundar saga biskups*, a saga recorded in several versions by Icelandic monks from the orders of Saint Benedict and Saint Augustine in Þingeyrar and Þykkvibær cloisters between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century. The opening verses of Kolbeinn's poem are:

Hear, smith of heavens, / what the poet begs of you; / may mildly come unto me / your mercy. / So I call on you, / for you have created me. / I am your thrall, / you are my master<sup>3</sup>.

Heyr himna smiðr, / hvers skáldit biðr; / komi mjúk til mín / miskunnin þín; / því heitk á þik, / þú hefr skaptan mik; / ek em þrællinn þinn, / þú 'st dróttinn minn.

(*Guðmundar saga biskups*, 33; Kolbeinn Tumason: *Lausavísur*, 8-10)

By calling for *himna smiðr* (smith of heavens), whom was the skáld praying to? Was it the God of Christians, or Yahweh, who created both heaven and earth out of nothingness (*ex nihilo*) and only through uttering words (*ὁ λόγος*)? Or was it the pre-Christian, pagan god of the Scandinavians, Óðinn? The one who with his brothers, Vili and Vé, was known to have slaughtered the giant Ýmir and then built the world out of his body through a 'creative' rite of sacrifice: he carved the sky out of the giant's skull, then molded the earth from his flesh, the oceans he filled with his blood, he carved his bones into the mountains, stones and rocks he made out of his teeth, planted trees from his hair, and raised up the clouds made of his brain. Kolbeinn's prayer to the Christian God was rather a manifestation of Norse-Christian syncretism, in the form of the Christian Latin conceptual metaphor of GOD as the CREATOR of HEAVEN (as the Judeo-Christian God is perceived to be part of a profession of an artificer), but adjusted to the worldview of the medieval Icelanders in the process of its resemantization in the Old Norse context, to GOD as the SMITH / ARTISAN / CARVER / MASON of HEAVEN, as I argue below.

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<sup>3</sup> Translations of quotations in Old Icelandic and in other languages are my own except where otherwise stated.

In this article, I discuss the phenomenon of interference of the metaphorical structures of Ancient Hebrew, Latin and Old Icelandic languages brought by the civilizing process of Christianization of Iceland, with special focus dedicated to the transfer of the particular conceptual metaphor GOD as the CREATOR of HEAVEN. Thus, probing this process on a linguistic micro-scale, I analyze the transfer, resemantization and dissemination of the ancient Hebrew conceptual metaphor GOD is the MAKER of HEAVEN in the Old Icelandic language and literature, which contributed, together with other metaphors, to the gradual change of mindset of Icelanders towards Christianity, cognitive structure by structure, metaphor by metaphor, until they turned into Christians and Europeans by virtue of the conceptual, psycholinguistic, change.

According to the cognitive theory of language by Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980), language is isomorphic to mentality. Abstract thinking, as one of the mental tools innate in humans, manifests itself in the form of figurative language, predominantly as a metaphor. A conceptual metaphor, binding together language and mentality, may be perceived as the smallest indivisible abstract element in a conceptual world, the smallest meaningful unit of mentality inherent in language, a linguistic molecule of mentality. A conceptual metaphor is a figure of thought, the essence of which is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing, object, experience, or notion in terms of another - of different nature, and especially of casting abstractions, which are hard to grasp, by creating associations to the material world, which is more easily accessible. More extensive theoretical background of conceptual metaphor was provided in my article on the metaphor of fortune as a wheel in the Old Icelandic literature (Bartusik, 2019, pp. 104-107).

In common human experience, particularly for those who are not mystics, GOD does not commonly occur in nature, is intrinsically not available to sensory experience, and yet does not remain beyond the reach of human abstract imagination. It requires the ability of metaphorical thinking to permit the human mind to imagine and understand its essence, and one way of achieving it is through the form of a conceptual metaphor, in this case - GOD as the CREATOR of HEAVEN. The conceptual metaphor is formed when onto the abstract target domain of GOD are projected certain patterns inherent in the concrete source domain, available to

sensory experience, in this case - the CREATOR (for example - of HEAVEN), playing here an explanatory role.

Derived from ancient Hebrew, or even earlier Semitic conceptual systems as it can be traced back to Mesopotamia, the conceptual metaphor GOD is the CREATOR of HEAVEN and EARTH (*qoneh shamayim va' aretz* - קֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ) entered the Latin language in Late Antiquity as a result of the Christianization of the Roman Empire (Latin: *coeli et terrae creator*):

- Examples of use of the conceptual metaphor GOD is CREATOR of HEAVEN in the Hebrew Bible: *Bereshith* – *Genesis*, 1:1, 14:19, 14:22; *Shemot* – *Exodus*, 20, 11; *Yeshayahu* – *Jesaia*, 37:16, 40:28, 42:5, 44:24, 45:12, 48:13, 51:13; *Yirmiyahu* – *Jeremia*, 10:12, 32:17, 51:15; *Yonah* – *Jona*, 1:9; *Zekaryah* – *Sacharia*, 12:1; *Tehilim* – *Psalmi*, 88:12, 95:5, 113:15, 120:2, 124:8; 145:6; *Qohelet* – *Ecclesiastes*, 1:8; *Divre Hayyamim B* – *Chronica II*, 2:12.

- Examples of use of the conceptual metaphor GOD is CREATOR of HEAVEN in the Latin Vulgate Bible: *Genesis*, 1:1, 14:19, 14:22; *Exodus*, 20, 11; *Chronica II*, 2:12; *Psalmi*, 88:12, 95:5, 113:15, 120:2, 124:8; 145:6; *Jesaia*, 37:16, 40:28, 42:5, 44:24, 45:12, 48:13, 51:13; *Jeremia*, 10:12, 32:17, 51:15; *Sacharia*, 12:1; *Jona*, 1:9; *Ecclesiastes*, 1:8; *Prophetia Baruch*, 3:32; *Evangelium secundum Matthæum*, 11:25; *Evangelium secundum Joannem*, 1:3; *Actus Apostolorum*, 4:24, 14:14, 17:24; *Epistola B. Pauli Apostoli ad Corinthios Prima*, 8:6; *Epistola B. Pauli Apostoli ad Ephesios*, 3:9; *Epistola B. Pauli Apostoli ad Colossenses*, 1:16; *Epistola B. Pauli Apostoli ad Hebræos*, 1:2, 3:4, 11:3; *Apocalypsis B. Joannis Apostoli*, 4:11, 10:6, 14:7.

In the Early Middle Ages, the metaphor emerged in the vernacular European languages, Old Icelandic among them, and the Latin metaphorical expression *coeli et terrae creator* appeared most frequently as the Old Icelandic *himna smiðr*, when, after being brought to Scandinavia with Christianity and the Latin *Vulgata*, this metaphor underwent transformation and evolved there into a more concrete variant, the metaphor of GOD as the SMITH / ARTISAN / CARVER / MASON of HEAVEN.

The conceptual metaphor studied in this article is one of the central metaphorical concepts of Christianity, right next to FATHER, SHEPHERD (with flock), POTTER (with clay),

CREATOR, JUDGE and KING of PEOPLE, and MASTER of SERVANTS, which are used to conceptualize GOD in those languages and literatures to which the Bible has been the fundamental hypotext, a text on which many of the later literary works of a given language and literature of the Christian *oecumene* bloomed, a key cultural code (Coppedge, 2001, God as a creator, pp. 54-98, king, pp. 99-133, judge, pp. 207-242, shepherd, pp. 332-358).

The expansion of Christianity in medieval Europe is at the same time a period of intense linguistic interference between the Biblical and vernacular languages, a dissemination of Latin, Greek and Hebrew metaphorical concepts in the vernacular languages. Gradually, the societies of medieval Europe start to speak, and more importantly think, in these languages. Elements of the cognitive structures of Greek and Hebrew are transmitted to the vernacular languages through Latin, a medium that they have already integrated long before. Greek and Hebrew influenced Latin - Christian Latin in particular - which, in its turn, was imposed as a superstratum on the languages of the Christianized societies. Thus, Latin became a medium for conveying the symbolic culture of the ancient Middle Eastern tribe of Israelites, with whom Judaism originated and with it Christianity, initially a Judaic sect. It is worth noting, however, that a few phrases and words from the Hebrew language are also to be found in Old Icelandic contexts, specifically in runic sources and manuscripts, indicating some, although very limited, knowledge of the Hebrew language in medieval Scandinavia (Cole, 2015, pp. 35-42).

Linguistic transformations of this kind have usually either a social origin, and are triggered when one of the languages acquires a superior status due to its linguistic milieu (i.e. Latin as a language of the Scriptures propagated in Iceland by the Catholic clergy); a political origin, when the intellectual and political elite (i.e. the Catholic Church in Iceland) imposes their language on the rest of society, for example via education; or economical-cultural origin, when the cultural dominance and economic potency of the users of one language can force users of other languages to learn their tongue as an auxiliary language (e.g. of trade). Lastly, language changes have demographic causes, as a consequence of one population's numerical superiority in a given territory, caused by migration or colonization.

## The Christianization of Iceland

The influence of the Latin linguistic superstrate on the Old Icelandic substrate is connected to the Christianization of Northern Europe. Icelanders accepted Christianity at an assembly of all free men, the *alþingi* (Althing) in *Þingvellir* in the year 999 or 1000, through a political decision made by the Althing, with the intention to preserve the cultural *status quo* in which Old Norse paganism and Christianity coexisted in social sphere, without a clear intention of laying ground for any subsequent systematic eradication of paganism. Christianity was accepted by law, which only means that a regulation was introduced that Iceland was to become Christian and the Norse heathen practices were to be forbidden in public. Practice of the old religion was to be limited strictly to the private sphere, where pagan customs such as eating horseflesh, sacrificing horses or conducting infanticide (due to economic conditions on the farmstead) were still allowed for the time being (Orri Vésteinsson, 2000, p. 17; Winroth, 2014, p. 135). The legal changes did not result in immediate, radical transformation of mentality or worldview, but rather the social changes occurred slowly and gradually through the subsequent centuries, and unevenly across that rural and dispersed society.

In the year 1000 Iceland was therefore baptized by virtue of a political decision. But when did the country truly become Christian? How and when was the political decision of the year 1000 followed by a traceable mentality change? When did Icelanders start thinking in Christian categories?

### Markers of Christianization

There are several specific types of data that can serve as a marker of Christianization, which are useful in characterizing the ongoing process with its dynamics, the progress of conversion, and which can be used to address the question: when did the medieval Icelanders internalize the values and moral norms of Christianity?

The markers of Christianization that are typically used to determine its ongoing process have until now been derived from various kinds of evidence: narrative sources (the

adoption of the religion by the local elites as their ideology), antroponymy (personal names of Christian origin), toponymy (place names of Christian provenance), the legal order (the introduction of the new Christian Law (ON *kristinn rétr*, *kristin lög*), criminalization of pagan practices (child abandonment, animal sacrifices, horse meat consumption) (Pentikäinen, 1990, pp. 75-80), the development of Church's organizational structure (an expansion of the network of cathedrals, parishes and convents), the Christian skeletal inhumation burials, and the development of vernacular religious literature (the maturity reached by the society and its elites in understanding of the imported religion).

After the year 1000 new social structures were introduced: namely, the clergy and institutional Church. Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the first bishoprics in Iceland were established at Skálholt (1056) and Hólar (1106), initially subject to the Hamburg-Bremen archdiocese, then under Lund (1104) and Niðaróss (1153). In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the first Benedictine and Augustian monasteries were founded: in Þingeyrar (1133-1551), Þykkvibær (1133-1551), Munkaþverá (1155-1551), Flatey-Helgafell (1172-1551), Kirkjubær (1186-1551), Viðey (1225-1551), Reynistaður (1296-1551), Möðruvellir (1296-1551) and Skriðuklaustur (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries). They became the first centers for scholarly activity, education and literary production in Iceland, maintaining schools, libraries and scriptoria, and thus slowly establishing ground for social change. For both Iceland and the whole of medieval Europe, Christianization brought the introduction of a government that relied upon literate clergymen. With the Latin alphabet there came the Latin language, literature and culture, both Christian and Roman.

Archaeological evidence may also serve as a marker, as relics of Christian practices can provide quantitative data allowing to estimate the spread of the new religion to a larger percentage of the society. From the archaeological perspective, markers for this sort of social change are the remains of Christian rites in the remnants of material culture of the pre-Christian society of Iceland, particularly sacral architecture, burial sites, graveyards, and grave goods (material remains of Christian rituals). When pinpointed in the stratigraphic spectrum, they can reveal the chronology of events occurring in the process of social change in the designated area. This evidence depicts the society gradually abandoning pagan cremation and ship and tumulus burial customs, while adopting Christian skeletal inhumation burials. The



reception of the skeletal inhumation burial rite demonstrates the widespread influence of the canon law and theology on the society, in particular the teachings of Christian eschatology about the general resurrection of all the dead before the Last Judgment (Adolf Friðriksson, Orri Vésteinsson, 2011, pp. 58–61; Kristján Eldjárn, 2000, pp. 549-610; Byock & Zori, 2014, pp. 45-54; Nielsen, 1991, pp. 245–67).

### **Conceptual Metaphor as a Marker of Mentality Change**

Psycholinguistic material in the form of conceptual metaphors can be used as a marker of mentality changes, as evidence of Christian thinking. A significant measure of the progression of the process of Christianization, as a mental process, in Iceland can be achieved through the examination of conceptual metaphors imported from the Christian world and an analysis of the dissemination of Christian conceptual metaphors in the language and literature of Icelandic society.

In the theoretical perspective of historical cognitive linguistics (Musolff, 2009, pp. 233-247; Musolff, 2010, pp. 70-90), when mentality in a society shifts, it is expressed in its cognitive system – that is, by the presence of cognitive structures typical of a foreign culture and their dissemination in the indigenous conceptual system. In the case of medieval Scandinavia undergoing Christianization and Europeanization in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, we can observe this phenomenon in the colliding and coexisting languages and literatures, Old Icelandic and Latin, which were diffusing their influence and interacting with each other's structures. In this process of psycholinguistic change, Christian and Latin metaphors and more complex cognitive structures were gradually transferred, resemanticized and disseminated in the Old Icelandic language and literature.

Thus, shifting mentalities are always recorded in language. The mental processes of the Christianization and Europeanization of Icelanders are fossilised in the texts of Old Icelandic language and its literature, chronologically stretching from the pagan period of the Viking age to the Christian period of the Middle Ages. Although the conversion takes place almost two centuries before the first surviving manuscripts of the discussed Old Icelandic texts, the texts themselves are dated earlier, even to the period before or during the conversion. This fact

introduces an entire literary spectrum that shows the change in ideological implications from paganism to Christianity. The increase in the dissemination and frequency of Christian/Biblical Latin conceptual metaphors in the Icelandic conceptual system corresponds with the process of Christianization in Iceland. Christian conceptual imagery accumulates in the language and literature, which indicates a society beginning to think in a Christian way, and that the reception, integration and internalization of the cognitive elements of the incoming culture have finally taken place. Such profound social processes leave a significant imprint on the language.

### **Conceptual Metaphor GOD IS CREATOR/SMITH OF HEAVEN - Examples**

In what follows, I conduct a closer investigation of the dissemination of the conceptual metaphor GOD IS CREATOR OF HEAVEN, its diffusive spread in medieval Icelandic literature and its eventual adoption into the psycholinguistic system of Old Icelandic.

In the absence of a comprehensive corpus, the Old Icelandic linguistic material examined in this study comes from medieval Icelandic literature (Icelandic sagas, skaldic and Eddic poetry), which I surveyed myself, and the Old Icelandic dictionaries: the electronic version of the *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog – A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, and the printed versions of Fritzner (1867), Cleasby and Vigfússon (1957), and Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson (1931). The study covers 39 examples: quotes no. 1-22 - are excerpted from Old Icelandic prose texts; of which examples no. 1-3, 5-6 and 8 are translated texts; quotes no. 23-39 - come from skaldic poetry.

The corpus of texts that transferred to Iceland the foreign, Ecclesiastical Latin linguistic and cultural superstrate, which started to dominate in the import of texts between the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>-century Europe and Scandinavia, consisted of clerical texts translated from Latin, Biblical and theological writings (*þýðingar helgar*), and learned treatises (*spaklig fræði*) containing information about medical, mathematical, astronomical, computistic, and legal knowledge.

The oldest preserved manuscripts produced in Iceland are the collections of sermons dated to the later part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (*AM 237 a fol.*, dated to ca. 1140-1160, *AM 673 a I – II 4to*, ca. 1190-1210, *Stock. Perg. no. 15 4to*, ca. 1200, *AM 619 4to*, ca. 1200-1225), while these



sermons themselves can be dated to the early part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. These books of sermons, both translations from Latin and adaptations of original texts (Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2007, pp. 338-353), are as such saturated with the Christian and Latin system of conceptual metaphors.

Medieval homiliaries from Norway and Iceland (*AM 619 4to*, *Stock. Perg. no. 15 4to*) became the most common medium for the figure of GOD THE CREATOR, as they feature sermons and prayers bound to reach wide audiences in the context of Christian religious rituals performed during the Holy Mass (*Drottins daga mál*, *Nativitas Domini. Á jóladag [Fæðing Drottins]*, *Epifania Domini [Opinberun Drottins]*, *Credo [Trúarjátningin]*). Among them we find the *Hómilía IX, In epiphania domini sermo necessaria*, where St. Joseph's carpentry is correlated with God's creation of the world. Joseph the craftsman was chosen to be Jesus Christ's adoptive father because God created heaven and earth like a craftsman:

(1) Joseph, a smith, was intended to be the father of Jesus Christ on the earth. This may lead to the right understanding that a smith was an intended father to him, because of this that the God is this true smith, who with an unspeakable might smithied heaven, and earth, and sea, with all their adornments.

Joseph smiðr var ætlaðr faðer Iesv – Crist á iorðu. Þat ma ráða til rettrar scilningar er smiðr (∴ Jósep) var ætlaðr faðer hans. Þvi at guð er hinn sanne smiðr sa er með o – umrøðelegom mæte smiðaðe \*himen. ok iorð. ok sæ. með ollu sínu scruði.

(*Hómilía IX, In epiphania domini sermo necessaria*)

This homily is a translation of St. Augustine's sermon *In Epiphania Domini*:

Joseph therefore, a craftsman, was held to be the father on the earth of the Lord Savior, and also the God, who is truly the Father of the Lord, is not to be excluded from this labor : because he himself is a craftsman. For he himself is the artificer, who fabricated the machine of this world not solely with an admirable but also with an unutterable potency; thus this wise architect suspended heaven with subtlety, earth he founded upon its foundations, seas he fastened with rocks.

Joseph ergo faber in terris pater putabatur esse Domini Salvatoris, nec ab hoc opere Deus qui vere est Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi excluditur : nam est ipse faber. Ipse enim artifex, qui hujus mundi machinam non solum mirabili, sed etiam ineffabili potentia fabricatus est; tanquam sapiens architectus caelum subtilitate suspendit, terram mole fundavit, maria calculis alligavit.

(Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis: *Sermo CXXXV (a), In Epiphania Domini, v (b)*)

In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries continental European hagiography was adapted in Iceland as the *heilagra manna sögur*, a collection of translations of the Latin *vitae patrum*, bearing multiple references to the Christian cosmogony from the Book of Genesis (*Barbare saga*, 3, 5, *Crucis Legendæ*, 6, *Erasmus saga*, *Septem dormientes*, *Silvesters saga*, 22, *Viðræða líkams ok salar*), some manuscript fragments are dated to the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, while numerous manuscripts are extant from the late 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. At approximately the same time, in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, the first Old Icelandic translation of the Bible (*Stjórn*) came into existence (its earliest manuscript, *AM 226 fol.*, dated to ca. 1350-1360). It encompassed the books of Old Testament from the Book of Genesis to the Second Book of Chronicles. Afterwards came the *Gyðinga saga*, the translation of the Maccabean books of the Bible, the writings of Joseph Flavius and the *historia apocrypha* about Pontius Pilate, compiled most probably in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century by Brandr Jónsson, the bishop of Hólar (the earliest manuscript fragments *AM 655 XXV 4to* dated to ca. 1290-1310).

In *Stjórn*, the first verse of the Book of Genesis was translated thus: (2) *In the beginning God created heaven which was the Kingdom of Heaven itself* = *J opphafi skapadi gud himin þat er sealft himinriki* (*Stjórn: I. Mosebog*, 1). It is worth noting, however, how the Hebrew verse *b'reshit bara elohim et hashamayim v'et ha'aretz* = *בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ* (*Bereshith — Genesis*, 1:1) was reinterpreted in Christian theological commentaries interpolated into *Stjórn* (*I. Mosebog*, 1—2, 2—8, 14, 30, *II. Mosebog*, 21, 96, *II. Kongernes Bog*, 19, 363). This adaptation of the Latin Vulgata passage: „In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram” (*Genesis*, 1:1) is accompanied by the commentaries excerpted from the medieval *historiae scholasticae*, according to which God created heaven and filled it with the heavenly power, and he created Earth from

*the four elements of matter: fire, air, water and earth = ok iordina þat er at skilia samblandit ok usamit efni til fiogurra hófutskepna elldz ok loptz. vatz ok iardar (Stjórn: I. Mosebog, 1).*

In the first libraries of Icelandic cloisters and churches there were also medical, legal and historical treatises. In medical *miscellaneum* preserved in the *MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43* manuscript (the manuscript dates from the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), next to the conventional treatments we can find also prayers for healing. Among them, a prayer addressed to the Lord who created heaven, earth and all life. This prayer formula was supposedly able to stop bleeding:

(3) May the red blood stop itself, which I see running, may that burning firebrand stop the bloodrunning, may Our Lord help, he who once made heaven and earth and all Godly creations, drive back waves of your blood.

Stadviz rautt er eg renna se sa brand brenanda blod Rennanda stattu blod stod drottin vor medan hann skop himen ok jordok allar skepnur guds halltu apttur baru blodi þinu.

(*An Old Icelandic Medical Miscellany : MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43*, p. 51)

*Kristinn rétr, Kristinna laga þátr*, the Icelandic and Norwegian Church law based on the canon (*guðslög*) and Roman laws, was incorporated into Icelandic and Norwegian legal systems in the 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the preserved legal codices from 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century Iceland and Norway, such as *Grágás* (ca. 1117/8), *Gulapingslög* (in the manuscript *Codex Ranzovianus*, Don. var. 137 4to, dated to ca. 1250), *Jónsbók* (ca. 1280) and *Landslög Magnúss Hákonarsonar* (ca. 1274-6), the Church law section opens with the following legal provision: (4) *We will believe in God the Almighty Father, creator of heaven and earth = Ver skolom trya a gud fodur allzvaldanda skapara himins ok jardar (Den nyere Landslov, Nyere Christenret, udgiven af Kong Magnus Haakonssøn (Magnús lagabætir), vol. 2, pp. 22, 306; Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás, 1, vol. 1, p. 23; Jónsbók: The Laws of Later Iceland, II, 1, pp. 24–25. Cf. Den ældre Gulathing – Lov, 1–2, vol. 1, p. 3).* Due to the fact that these laws were repeatedly recited by the appointed official, the lawspeaker, yearly at the annual assembly, they were generally very well known by medieval Icelanders.

*Veraldar saga*, the medieval Icelandic *breuiarium* of the universal history written in Iceland in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (the oldest manuscript fragment, *AM 655 VIII 4to*, dated to ca. 1175-1225), based on the Bible and Latin historiography, tells of the world's history from its creation by God up until the scribe's days, that is, the reign of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. In accordance with medieval chronology, the history of the world started with Genesis and was to end with the Apocalypse. In the beginning of His six-day work of creation, God created all things visible and invisible, heaven, fire, water and earth without separating them. At the end of the first day, angels were created. On the second day of creation, God made heaven and separated it from the waters above and below. It was then that „all the living creatures were enclosed in the vault of heaven, as a nut in its shell“:

(5) On the first day, he created all things, both seen and unseen. And at that time no part of creation was separated from any other; everything, heaven, fire, water, and earth, were joined in that role which is now occupied by four distinct elements. On that day, all the angels were created. And when the highest angel saw his own beauty, he immediately erred and, along with all those angels who later turned against him, became God's worst enemy. It is said that a tenth of God's angels perished in this way. On the second day of the world, he created heaven and separated the water which is over heaven from that which is under heaven. And then all other corporeal creatures were enclosed within heavens, like a nut within its shell.

(*The World's Saga*, p. 1)

Enn fysta dag skapaði hann alla hluti sýniliga ok ósýniliga, ok var þá engi skepna greind önnur frá annarri: saman fór þá allt, himinn ok eldr, vatn ok jörð, í þvílíku rúmi sem nú fylla fjórar höfoðskepnur. Á þeim degi váro allir englar skapaðir. ok þegar er inn hesti engill sá fegrð sína þá villtiz hann ok varð inn versti guð anskoti ok þeir englar allir er eptir honum hurfo. svá er kallat sem inn títundi lutr hafi fariz af englum guð. – Á öðrum degi veraldar skapaði guð himin ok skildi vötn þau er yfir himni er frá þeim er í himni eru, ok var þá öll önnor skepna líkamlig lokin í himninom innan svá sem karni í notar skurni.

(*Veraldar saga*, 1–2)

In the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Hákon Hákonarson (1217–1263), king of Norway, ordered numerous manuscripts to be brought from France and England and translated into



Old Norse as a part of his cultural reforms, which aimed at the Europeanization of his kingdom (Irlenbusch-Reynard, 2011, pp. 388-389; Bagge 2016, pp. 53-75). Among them there was *Möttuls saga* (the earliest extant MS, *AM 598 I beta 4to*, dating from the time ca. 1300-1350), one of the translated Old French literary works, a saga of the magical mantle that would reveal infidelity if worn by women (the fabric would shrink and expose the body of an unfaithful woman). One of the episodes recounts a story in which the messenger of a fair lady from a far-away land arrives at the court of King Arthur to present him with this mantle. The messenger challenges the maidens present at court to try the mantle and test their virtue. It is worth noting that in this story, the messenger greets King Arthur with the following words:

(6) „may this God”, says he, “who created heaven and earth and everything that dwells on it, gives you blessings and guide you; crowned above everything that was and will be”.

„sá guð”, segir hann, „er skóp himin ok jörð ok allar þær skepnur, sem í heiminum eru, blessi ok varðveiti þik, hinn hæsti kórónaðr konungr, yfir alla þá, er verit hafa ok vera skulu”.

(*Möttuls saga*, 4)

Preserved in the *Fagrskinna* manuscript (dated to ca. 1220s), one of the oldest existing collections of the kings' sagas, there is a story about Haraldr *hárfagri* (850-932). In this fragment, Haraldr plans to overthrow the petty kings of west Scandinavia and – although he did not know Christianity – to replace the pagan deities by the single highest God, the only one worthy of the sole king of Norway:

(7) Here I swear that I will not make sacrifices to any of the gods worshipped by men, except for one, who created sun, gave order to heaven and created it.

þvi heit ec oc at engum guðe scal oc blot fœra. þeim er nu gofgha menn. nema þeim einum er solena gerði oc heiminum haghæde oc hann gerþi.

(*Fagrskinna*, A – text, III)

The saga of Haraldr operates with the theme of a noble heathen who is able to see through the falsity of the pagan gods and feels the need to replace them with one supreme god

– the maker of the world and humankind, the Christian God (Lönnroth, 1969, p. 20). King Haraldr is stylised as a noble heathen just as is Melchizedek from the Book of Genesis, a monotheist in the age of Abraham, although not of Jewish descent, as *Stjórn* also has it:

(8) With these offerings and presents, Melchizedek blessed Abram saying so: blessed be Abram by the highest god, the one who made heaven and earth, and blessed be the highest god, by whose protection and defence your enemies, Abram, have been given up into your power.

Meðr þessarri offran ok presenteran blezadi Melchisedech Abram sua segiandi. Blezadr uerdi Abram af hinum hæsta gudi. þeim sem skapadi himin ok iord. ok blezadr uerdi hinn hæsti gud. af huers hlif ok uerndan uuinir þinir gafuz Abram upp i þitt ualld.

(*Stjórn*, I. Mosebog, 14, 30)

This hardly seems accidental, as the clerical mind of the medieval Icelandic scribes also interpreted through the lens of the Bible the history of the Norwegian missionary kings, Óláfr Tryggvason and his successor, Óláfr Haraldsson, comparing them to John the Baptist and Christ himself (Abram, 2011, p. 173).

Frequent examples of linguistic realizations of the metaphor GOD IS CREATOR OF HEAVEN are found in the sagas and tales about the conversion of the Scandinavians to Christianity. The first Christian ruler of Norway was Óláfr Tryggvason, who ruled in the years 995-1000. Óláfr was also among the first Norwegian kings to support the Christian missionary activity in the remote North (Fidjestøl, 1997, pp. 211-227). *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* holds an account of a viking expedition where Óláfr and his warriors find themselves surrounded by enemies (written in Latin ca. 1190, the earliest Old Icelandic MS, AM 310 4to, dating from ca. 1250-1275). Óláfr orders his men to make the sign of the cross from wooden branches and call for God's help. He says: (9) *I know – says he – that there is an almighty God who rules in heaven and of whom I heard to bear the sign of victory in which a great power resides, and it is called the Cross = „Ek veit,“ sagði hann, „at sá er máttugr guð, er himnunum stýrir, ok þat hefi ek heyrt, at þat sigrmark á hann, er mikill krafr er með, ok er þat kallat kross“* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (eftir Odd munk), 12).





Later, having been saved from the trap, Óláfr experiences visions of heaven and hell. Eventually, he hears a voice urging him in his dreams to go on a journey to Greece, where he will learn true Christian faith. Afterwards, Óláfr returns to Kievan Rus' where he tells King Vladimir the Great of the Christian faith. From the darkness of heathendom, says King Óláfr: (10) *much more beautiful is faith where one does believe in God, their maker, creator of heaven and earth = miklu er fegri siðr at trúa á sannan guð ok skapara sinn, er gerði himin ok jörð (Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (eftir Odd munk), 13).*

After his coronation in 995, Óláfr turned to missionary activity. He began to preach Christian faith to his followers and subjects, Rögnvalld of Ærvik among them, to whom Óláfr said: (11) *I want you to believe in the one almighty God, the father, son and the holy spirit, creator of heaven and earth = ek uil ath þu truir a einn allzvalldanda guð fopur ok son ok helgan anda. skapara himins ok iardar (Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, 149).* Later sagas also recall this episode, including *Heimskringla* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* from the *Flateyjarbók* codex, MS dating from ca. 1387-1394 (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, 73, 75, 142, 149, 162).

King Óláfr Tryggvason fell in the battle of Eyrarsund in the year 1000. His missionary work was continued by his successor, King Óláfr Haraldsson, canonized after his death. According to *Heimskringla* (the text itself dating from ca. 1220s or early 1230s, the earliest MS fragment, *Kringla*, from ca. 1258-1264), King Óláfr would travel across Norway and convert people with words and by force, if need be. At the *Dælir* assembly King Óláfr said that people from other valleys overthrew their pagan sanctuaries and: (12) *they believe in this God who created heaven and earth, the omnipotent = ok trúa nú á sannan guð, er skóp himin ok jörð ok alla hluti veit (Snorri Sturluson: Óláfs saga helga, 112).*

The saga also tells of a warrior called Arnljótr *gellini* who wanted to join King Óláfr's service. Joining the *hirð*, a king's retinue, was possible only after becoming Christian. Up until that moment, Arnljótr, as he used to say, believed only in himself and his own strength. „Now I want to believe in you, my king” he said to Óláfr. The king answered: (13) *If you want to believe in me, you shall believe in what I teach you, you must believe that Jesus Christ created heaven and earth, and all men = Ef þú vill á mik trúa, þá skaltu því trúa, er ek kenni þér; því skaltu trúa, at Jesus Krístr hefir skapat himin ok jörð ok menn alla (Snorri Sturluson: Óláfs saga ins helga, 215).* Thus Arnljótr

was baptized and fought alongside Óláfr in his last battle. This account can also be found in the so-called legendary saga of St. Óláfr (*Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*, 35).

Óláfr *helgi* fell fighting the heathen enemies of Christianity in the battle of Stiklarstaðir in Norway in 1030. He left a son, Magnus, called the Good, *góði*. A separate saga was written about him (*Saga Magnús góða ok Haralds harðráða*, 6, strophe 31; Snorri Sturluson: *Magnús saga ins góða*, 28, strophe 41). In *Magnússdrápa* (ca. 1043-1047), a poem by Arnórr jarlaskáld, its author uses a *kenning* to denote God, a metaphor in the form of a genitive phrase or a compound word which is typical of skaldic poetry: *skapvörðr himins* = *the creative guard of heaven*. The poem praises Magnus' courage in battle against the Slavs, where he fought with his father's axe:

(14) With a broad axe, persistent / the ruler went forward - / the clash of swords happened near Hǫrða / the prince - and he took of the coat of mail / when the hilt - earth became divided by / the creative guard of heaven / hell crashed the pale skulls / was captured by king's hands.

Óð með øxi breiða / ódæsinn framm ræsir / – varð of hilmí Hǫrða / hjördynr – ok varp brynju, / þás of skapt, en skipti / skapvörðr himins jörðu, / – Hel klauf hausa fólva – / hendr tvær jöfurr spendi.

(Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson: *Magnússdrápa*, 10)

In the Sagas of Icelanders, the metaphor of GOD THE CREATOR usually appears in the narratives on the conversion of the Icelanders to Christianity.

In *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, the Saga of Hallfreðr Óttarson (the text itself from ca. 1200-1230, manuscripts, *Möðruvallabók* and *Flateyjarbók*, dating from the half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century), King Óláfr Tryggvason's chief poet, there is a description of Icelanders arriving in Norway and being baptized there by the order of the king: (15) *Óláfr told them to abandon heathen superstition and believe in one true God, maker of heaven and earth = það þá kasta forneskju og illum átrúnaði, en trúa á sannan guð, skapara himins og jarðar* (*Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, 5).

In *Fóstbræðra saga*, the Saga of Sworn Brothers (the text itself dated before 1200, MSS to the 14<sup>th</sup> century), the story of King St. Óláfr's warriors, we find that one of them, Þormóðr, proscribed and pursued by his enemies, finds shelter in the home of Gríma, the sorceress. She orders him to sit on her chair and pretend to be the god Þórr, holding an axe in his hands. Her



husband fills the room with smoke from the hearth and boils seal's meat in the cauldron. The aim of staging this scene is to confuse Þormóðr's enemies. To their surprise, Gríma says:

(16) „Rarely do I visit church to listen to the learned men's words. What comes to my mind now is that when I see this wooden figure of Thor – I can break it and set it on fire whenever I want. This is how I know that the maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible, who gives life to entire creation, is far superior to Thor and any other man”.

„Ek kem sjaldan til kirkju at heyra kenningar lærðra manna, því at ek á langt at fara, en fámennt heima. Nú kemr mér þá heldr í hug, er ek sé líkneski Þórs af tré gert, þat er ek má brjóta ok brenna, þegar ek vil, hversu miklu sá er meiri, er skapat hefir himin ok jörð ok alla hluti sýniliga ok ósýniliga ok öllum hlutum gefr líf ok engi maðr má yfir stíga”

(*Fóstbræðra saga*, 23)

We can find further examples in the Sagas of Icelanders. *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* (the text dating from late 13<sup>th</sup>- or early 14<sup>th</sup>-century, the earliest MSS from late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century) tells the story of Bárðr, descendant of trolls and giants, who came from Norway to Iceland, and Bárðr's son, Gestr. Gestr accepted a task from King Óláfr Tryggvason, who challenged him to go to Helluland in the North and plunder the mound of the pagan King Raknar. Having arrived there, Gestr fights the undead wights (*draugar*). Close to death, he calls for help from „the one, who created heaven and earth”, and swears that he would accept the faith of King Óláfr once he has left the cursed mound alive: (17) *Then Gest vowed to the One who had created heaven and earth to take faith that King Olaf proclaimed, if he got out of the mound alive = Þá hét Gest á þann, er skapat hafði himin ok jörð, at taka við trú þeiri, er Óláfr konungr boðaði, ef hann kæmist í burtu lífs ór hauginum* (*Bard's saga*, 20, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, 20).

In the saga of the Faroe Islanders, *Færeyinga saga* (the text dating from ca. 1200, MS *Flateyjarbók* from ca. 1387-1394), King Óláfr converts Sigmundur Brestisson to Christianity, offering him his friendship. The king expresses hope that: (18) *the king of heaven, creator of all things, will guide you through my words to the true knowledge of his holy name and faith = Þá hefi ek góða ván á, at hinn háleiti himnakonungr, skapari allra hluta, muni þik leiða til kynningar síns helga nafns og heilagrar trúar af mínum fortölum.* (*Færeyinga saga*, 296).

Among the Icelandic *þættir*, the short stories of the Icelanders, the theme of conversion is also a frequent one (see conversion *þættir*, Ashman Rowe, 2004, p. 459). In *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts*, the story of Thorstein Bull's Foot (MS *Flateyjarbók* from ca. 1387-1394), two Icelanders, Þorsteinn and Styrkarr, go skiing in the mountains and get into a fight with a clan of mountain trolls. Styrkarr calls for help to the maker of heaven and earth, promising to accept the faith of King Óláfr if both of them survive: (19) *he promised the Creator of Heaven and Earth that he would accept the faith which King Olaf proclaimed if he were able to find his companion Thorstein alive and sound that night = heitr nú á skapara himins og jarðar at taka við þeirri trú, sem Ólafr konungr boðar, ef hann fyndi á þeirri nátt Þorstein féлага sinn lífs ok heilan* (*The Tale of Thorstein Bull's-Leg*, vol. 4, p. 351, *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts*, 210—211, vol. I, pp. 286—287).

In the corpus of legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) there are two sagas on the matter of conversion, in which the protagonist travels to the South, learns about Christianity and accepts baptism. In *Eireks saga víðförla* (written probably around 1300, while the oldest MS, AM 657 c 4to, dates from ca. 1340-1390), Eirekr, son of the Þrándheimr ruler, goes on a quest to find *Ódáinsakr*, the Field of Immortals, Biblical Eden. Eirekr journeys as far as Constantinople, *Miklagarðr*, where he enters into a theological dispute with the emperor, tackling the topic of the existence and nature of God, and the existence of heaven and hell. The key question of their dispute is: (20) *“Who made heaven and earth?” The king says, “One made them both.” Eirekr asked, “Who is that?” The king answers, “God almighty who is one in divinity but three in distinction” = “Hværr gört hefði himin eðr jörð”. Konungr segir: „Einn gerði hvárttveggja.“ Eirekr spurði: „Hværr er sá?“ Konungr svarar: „Guð almáttigr, sá er einn í guðdómi, en þrennr í greiningu“* (*Eireks saga víðförla*, 2, vol. 1, p. 31). Eirekr was thus baptized in Constantinople and ventured further in search of Paradise, directed by the Byzantines to the Far East and India.

In the *Örvar – Odds saga* (the text is dated from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the oldest MS, *Stock. Perg. no. 7 4to*, from ca. 1300-1325), Oddr the Arrow goes on an *utanferð*, an overseas expedition to escape prophecy which foresaw him dead in his own land. Having reached Aquitaine, he questioned the local men what gods they believed in. They answered: (21) *We believe in him, who made heaven, earth, sea, sun and moon = Vér trúum á þann, er skapat hefir himin ok jörð, sjóinn, sól ok tungl* (*Örvar – Odds saga*, XVII, vol. 1, pp. 334—335).

The beauty of skaldic poetry comes from its masterful use of meters, alliterations, internal rhymes and kennings, the sophisticated metaphors built on periphrases. A word denoting the specific person, object, activity or idea is replaced by an indirect description in the form of a genitive phrase or a compound word. The conceptual metaphor GOD IS CREATOR OF HEAVEN also inspired several kennings as its linguistic realizations.

The 13<sup>th</sup>-century politician, historian and poet, Snorri Sturluson, specified in his *ars poetica* – the *Skáldskaparmál* (ca. 1220s) – which kennings were to be used for God and Christ:

(22) How should Christ be periphrased? By calling him CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, of angels and sun, the ruler of the world and the realm of heaven and angels, king of heaven, sun and angels, king of Jerusalem and Jordan, king of Greece, advisor of the apostles and saints. The poets of old wrote of Christ by the metaphor of the well of Urðr and Rome.

Hvernig skal Krist kenna? Svá at kalla hann SKAPARA HIMINSOK. JARÐAR, engla ok sólar, stýranda heimsins ok himinríkis ok engla, konung himna ok sólar ok engla ok Jórsala ok Jórdánar ok Griklands, ráðandi postola ok heilagra manna. Forn skáld hafa kent hann við Urðar brunn ok Róm.

(Snorri Sturluson: *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 52, pp. 76-77)

Several variations of the metaphor *skapari himinsok jarðar* can be found throughout the corpus of skaldic poetry. Arnórr *jarlaskáld* Þórðarson in his *Magnússdrápa* (ca. 1043-1047) refers to God by the name of (23) *skapvörðr himins*, the creative guard of heaven (Arnórr *jarlaskáld* Þórðarson: *Magnússdrápa*, 10); Markús Skeggjason (ca. 1040-1107) – (24) *Gramr glyggranns skóp grund ok himna*, lord of the house of storm, who made earth and heaven (Markús Skeggjason: *Fragments*, 1, p. 293); Einarr Skúlason in the poem named *Geisli* (1153) – (25) *himna geroir*, builder of heaven (Einarr Skúlason: *Geisli*, 65, p. 60); Kolbeinn Tumason (1173-1208) – (26) *himna smiðr* = smith of heavens (*Guðmundar saga biskups*, 33; Kolbeinn Tumason: *Lausavísur*, 8-10); Gamli *kanóki* in *Harmsól* (12<sup>th</sup> century, MS AM 757 a 4to from ca. 1400) – (27) *ern skóp hauðr ok hlýrni heims valdr* = mighty lord of the world, who made heaven and earth (Gamli *kanóki*: *Harmsól*, 1, 20, 25, 30, pp. 70–132); Skapti Þóroddsson (died 1030) – (28) *Kristr skóp ríkr ok reisti / Róms holl veröld alla* = Christ's power wrought this earth all, / And raised the Hall of Rome (Skapti Þóroddsson: *Fragment 1*, p. 356).

Eysteinn Ásgrímsson wrote in *Lilja* (ca. 1350):

(29) The Lord God, who is more precious than everyone, made in the beginning heaven and earth; he adorned them with three times three orders of angels; that is truly my belief. Before creation existed, and afterwards, he was nevertheless the same, sufficient in himself; he made the world and stretched out time, two [entities] of the same age in his power.

Herra guð sá er hverjum dýrri, / himin og jörð í fyrstu gjörði; / prýddi hann með þrysvar þrennum / – það er ríett trúa mín – eingla stíettar. / Áðr, var hann þó jafn og síðan / ærinn sier, en skepnan væri; / gjörði hann heim og teygði tíma / tvá jafnaldra í sínu valdi.

(Eysteinn Ásgrímsson: *Lilja*, 6, pp. 568-9)

Kálfr Hallsson (14<sup>th</sup> century) wrote in *Kátrínardrápa*:

(30) Thou shall not marvel at the temple built by the hand of man – so says the holy maiden to the giver of the fire of waves – look rather at the sky, waves and sun. King of people, wonder at the work of the king of holy angels; prince of the land of moon dressed the true god in human appearance.

‘Undraz þarftu ei hofið með höndum’, / heilög mæz talar slíkt við deili, / ‘heldur líttu á himin og öldu’, / hrannar báls, ‘og sól, gjört manna. / Þjóðar, hygg þú að þessu smíði / þeingils, fylkir, helgra eingla; / mildingr skryðdi mána folder / mannlígu holdi guðdóm sannan.

(Kálfr Hallsson: *Kátrínardrápa*, 8, 23, pp. 937, 946)

Such metaphors of God’s creative work were utilized also by several other, unknown skalds, the authors of *Heilags anda drápa* (13<sup>th</sup> century) – (31) *hreinskaþær himna*, the immaculate lord of heaven (*Heilags anda drápa*, 11, pp. 460—1); *Drápa af Máriaugrát* (14<sup>th</sup> century) – (32) *skaparinn skýfoldar*, the maker of the land of clouds (*Drápa af Máriaugrát*, 43, 50, pp. 789, 793—4); *Brúðkaupsvísur* (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries) – (33) *hreinn gramr sólar salar*, the pure king of the sun’s hall (*Brúðkaupsvísur*, 1, pp. 529—30), *Leiðarvísan* (12<sup>th</sup> century) – (34) *siklingr himinríkis*, the king of the heaven-kingdom, (35) *gramr hreggranns*, the king of the storm-house, (36) *snjallr sólar salkonungr*, (37) the excellent king of the hall of the sun (*Leiðarvísan* 14, 25, pp. 153—154, 163—4). The anonymous poem *Sólarljóð* (ca. 1200), the Song of the Sun, addresses God in the following verse: (38) *inn virki guð sá er skóp hauðr ok himin* = dear God who created heaven and

earth; and (39) *dularheim hefr dróttinn skapat / munafullan mjök* = the world of illusions was created by God, full of pleasures (*Sólarljóð*, 27, 35, 48, p. 329).

### Old Icelandic Culture-Specific Resemantization of a Metaphor

As demonstrated by the above instances, even though the Christian God is, under Latin influence, conceptualized in the Old Icelandic literature through such main source domains as HEAVEN and MAKER, we can observe a significant semantic shift in the Old Icelandic resemanitization of this Hebrew and Latin metaphor, a more materialistic understanding of the creation. It is not creation *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, as it is in the Hebrew and Latin texts of the Bible, but creation *ex materia*. Medieval Icelanders thought of God as a maker, craftsman, carver, carpenter, as smith and mason, who creates one thing from another, who shapes the matter, takes advantage of natural resources. Hence the verbs *að smíða*, *að skapa*, denoting activities of crafting the objects; and the nouns *gervir*, *skapari*, *smiðr*, typically reserved for craftsmen, masons and makers. God's creation, that is, heaven, was conceptualized through the metaphors derived from the source domain of a BUILDING, HALL, CASTLE, TOWN, STRONGHOLD, KINGDOM, as in the following linguistic realizations of this metaphor: *himna salr* = heaven's room, *himna höll* = heaven's hall, *himna garðr* = heaven's stronghold, *dróttins byggð* = lord's dwelling, *goðs höll* = God's hall, *engla höll* = angels' hall, *himna veldi* = heaven's state, *himinríki* = heaven's kingdom (Meissner, 1921, pp. 104–108, 369–386: Himmel, Gott; Sveinbjörn Egilsson & Finnur Jónsson, 1931, pp. 194, 250–251, 501–502, 521: goð, himinn, skapa, skapari, smíða, smiðr).

The indigenous concept of the world's creation as *creatio ex materia* seems to be the reason behind the discussed interpolations to the translation of *Genesis* in *Stjórn* and *Veraldar saga* about the creation of the world from four elements (*Veraldar saga*, 1–2, p. 4; *Stjórn: I. Mosebog*, 1–2, 2–8, pp. 7–24). In the examined texts we observe the interfacing concepts of two cosmogonies: the Hebrew-Semitic one and the Old Norse-Germanic, Indo-European. This semantic shift in the understanding of the metaphor can be viewed as a consequence of the differences in understanding of the act of creation itself: the *Æsir*, the Nordic gods, shaped, formed, made the world from the pre-existing matter – the body of the giant named *Ymir*. The

act of the making of the world by the Christian God could be understood in the way typical to the Nordic culture of people who thrived solely from the work of their own hands, as handicraft, no less than the act of shaping the raw matter into an artifact. To the peoples of the Iron Age craftsmanship, particularly blacksmithing, held a special status as an incarnation of the divine act of creation (Jørgensen, 2012, p. 13, Haaland, 2004, pp. 12–13). Among the Northern European societies the most vivid instance of this can be found in the Finnish history of Ilmarinen, the blacksmith god, the first to melt iron and forge it into the vault of heaven (*The Kalevala: Or the Land of Heroes*, pp. 78–93). Although, it has to be kept in mind that the *Kalevala* is a late collection of earlier oral poetry, compiled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and therefore it cannot be determined how early its lays were composed, they are, however, believed to originate in the pre-Christian period.

These aspects of old thought patterns were preserved or modified through syncretism with new Christian and Latin ideas (Amory, 1990, pp. 263-265). And thus, the strongholds (Ásgarðr), halls (Valhöll) and rooms (Fensalir) of the Norse gods just replaced their inhabitants and masters: as in *himnagarðr* – heaven's stronghold, *himna salr* – heaven's room, *himna höll* – heaven's hall, *goðs höll* – God's hall, *engla höll* – angel's hall.

However, we may still wonder at the frequent absence of the Old Norse cosmology, as this has been preserved in the writings of Snorri Sturluson, in the conceptual world of the medieval Icelanders. The transcendental creation of the world by the *Æsir*, especially by Óðinn, seems to be scarce, if not almost entirely non-existent, in the metaphorical stratum of their language.

The creation myth, as we now know it, was preserved in the quasi-poetological and grammatical writings of Snorri Sturluson, who in his almost ethnographic investigation of the heroic and mythical past of heathen Scandinavia wrote down not only the monumental history of the kings of Norway, but also collected the Scandinavian myths in his *Edda*, primarily a poetological handbook for Icelandic poets and readers to help them understand the meaning veiled behind the mythological metaphors and poetic synonyms, kennings and heiti, which constituted a core element of Old Icelandic poetry (Wanner, 2008, pp. 26-29). In prologue to *Edda*, Snorri gives an account of Scandinavian history from the point of view of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century



Christian intellectual. He hybridizes Latin culture, Christian and Old Norse – where in the beginning, God creates heaven and earth:

In the beginning Almighty God created heaven and earth and everything that goes with them and, last of all, two human beings, Adam and Eve, from whom have come families. Their progeny multiplied and spread over all the world.

Almáttigr guð skapaði í upphafi himin ok jörð ok alla þá hluti, er þeim fylgja, og síðast menn tvá, er ættir eru frá komnar, Adam ok Evu, ok fjölgaðist þeira kynslóð ok dreifðist um heim allan.

(Snorri Sturluson: *The Prose Edda*, p. 23; Snorri Sturluson: *Prologus*, 1, p. 3)

Further, Snorri reinterprets Scandinavian mythology using the intellectual tools of his time: theology, euhemerism and etymology. He presents the theory of the Trojan origin of the Nordic gods. According to Snorri, the Æsir were supposedly Trojan royalty, who during the Trojan War took flight to the remote North, where they were recognized as gods and taken as kings by the indigeneous Scandinavian people and thus gave the beginning to the Scandinavian aristocratic families.

Snorri presents the pagan Nordic cosmogony in *Gylfaginning*, a dialogue on Nordic mythology, the creation and destruction of the world, gods and their deeds. King Gylfi addresses the gods:

Gylfi began his questioning: 'Who is the foremost or oldest of all the gods?' High One replied: 'He is called All-father in our tongue, but in ancient Asgard he had twelve names: one is All-father; the second, Herran or Herjan [Lord or Raider - G.B]; the third, Nikar or Hnikar [(Spear-)thruster - G.B]; the fourth, Nikuz or Hnikuð [(Spear-) thruster - G.B]; the fifth, Fjölnir [Much-knowing - G.B]; the sixth, Óski [Fulfiller-of-desire - G.B.]; the seventh, Ómi [One-whose-speech-resounds - G.B]; the eighth, Bifliði or Biflindi [Spear-shaker - G.B.]; the ninth, Sviðar; the tenth, Sviðrir [the burner, destroyer - G.B.]; the eleventh, Viðrir [Ruler-of-weather - G.B.]; the twelfth, Jálg or Jálk [Gelding - G.B.]' Then Gangleri asked: 'Where is that god? What power has he? What great deeds has he done?' High One said: 'He lives for ever and ever, and rules over the whole of his kingdom and governs all things great and small.' Then Just-as-high said: 'He created heaven and earth and the sky and all that in them is.' Then Third said: 'His greatest achievement, however, is the making of man and giving him a soul which will live and never die, although his body may decay to dust or burn to ashes. All righteous men shall live and be with him



where it is called Gimlé or Vingólf, but wicked men will go to Hel and thence to Niflhel that is down in the ninth world.' Then Gangleri said: 'What was he doing before heaven and earth were made?' High One replied: 'At that time he was with the frost ogres'.

Gangleri hóf svá mál sitt: "Hverr er æðstr eða elztr allra goða?" Hárr segir: "Sá heitir Alföðr at váru máli, en í Ásgarði inum forna átti hann tólf nöfn. Eitt er Alföðr, annat er Herran eða Herjan, þriðja er Nikarr eða Hnikarr, fjórða er Nikuðr eða Hnikuðr, fimmta Fjölnir, séttá Óski, sjanda Ómi, átta Bifliði eða Biflindi, níunda Sviðurr, tíunda Sviðrir, elliffta Viðrir, tólfta Jálg eða Jálk." Þá spyrr Gangleri: "Hvar er sá guð, eða hvat má hann, eða hvat hefir hann unnit framaverka?" Hárr segir: "Lifir hann of allar aldir ok stjórnar öllu ríki sínu ok ræðr öllum hlutum, stórum ok smám." Þá mælir Jafnhárr: "Hann smíðaði himin ok jörð ok loftin ok alla eign þeira". Þá mælti Þriði: 'Hitt er mest er hann gerði manninn ok gaf honum önd þá er lifa skal ok aldri tynask, þótt líkaminn fúni at moldu eða brenni at ösku. Ok skulu allir menn lifa þeir er rétt eru síðaðir ok vera með honum sjálfum þar sem heitir Gimlé eða Vingólf, en vándir menn fara til Heljar ok þaðan í Niflhel, þat er niðr í inn níunda heim.' Þá mælir Gangleri: 'Hvat hafðisk hann áðr at en himinn ok jörð væri gör?' Þá svarar Hárr: 'Þá var hann með hrímpursum'.

(Snorri Sturluson: *The Prose Edda*, pp. 31-32, Snorri Sturluson: *Gylfaginning*, 3, p. 8)

Drawing on the Poetic Edda (*Völuspá*, 3–4; *Vafþrúðnismál*, 20–21, 28; *Grímnismál*, 40–41), Snorri continues about the ancient abyss called *Ginnungagap* and the two worlds located above it, the fiery *Múspellsheim* and cold *Niflheim* which gives rise to the ice-cold rivers that flow right into the abyss. It was the place where *Ymir* and his kin were born, where *Auðhumla* the cow licked the first god named *Buri* from the frosted rocks. *Buri*'s grandsons, *Óðinn*, *Vili* and *Ve*, were the ones to kill *Ymir* and shape the world, heaven and earth, out of his flesh and bones (Snorri Sturluson: *Gylfaginning*, 3–9, 20, pp. 8–13, 21–22; Turville—Petre, 1975, pp. 275–285; Clunies Ross, 1994, pp. 144–198).

The killing of the giant *Ymir* as a 'creative' rite of sacrifice is attested in the Eddic and skaldic poetry. In *Skáldskaparmál* (31-33), among kennings for heaven is - Skull of *Ymir* = *Ymis haus*, kennings for the earth - Flesh of *Ymir* = *Ymis hold*, kennings for the sea - *Ymir*'s Blood = *Ymis blóð*), along with a few citations of their uses in the Skaldic poetry, however, which are not to be found outside *Snorra Edda* (Guðrún Nordal, 2001, pp. 281-282). The kennings associated with *Ymir*'s body were used by *Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson* (*Magnússdrápa*, 19), *Ormr Barreyjarskáld* (*Fragments*, 2), and *Friðþjófr Þorsteinsson* (*Lausavísur*, 32).



However, traces of the notion of Óðinn as a creator deity in this cosmogony are hardly found in the conceptual universe of the medieval Icelanders, as it has been preserved in language of their literature. There are no *kenningar* nor *heiti* (a poetic synonym) in the Old Icelandic literary corpus that would refer to Óðinn through the source domains of CREATOR, HEAVEN and their derivatives (Meissner, 1921, pp. 104–108, 252–253: Himmel, Odin; Sveinbjörn Egilsson & Finnur Jónsson, 1931, pp. 250–251, 442, 521: himinn, Óðinn, smíða, smiðr; Snorri Sturluson: *Skáldskaparmál*, 2, 23–24, 52–53, 56–57, vol. 1, pp. 6–11, 33–36, 76–79, 85–87). There are no surviving records to indicate the idea of Óðinn as the creator of the world. He was praised as *galga farmr* = the burden of the gallows, *hanga dróttinn* = lord of the gallows, *hanga guð* = the hanged god, *alföðr* = allfather, *aldaföðr* = father of men, *bági ulfs* = enemy of the wolf, *draugadróttinn* = lord of the dead, *farmaguð* = god of cargoes, *hrafnaguð* = god of ravens, *sigföðr* = god of victory, *vegtam* = wanderer, *völundr rómu* = blacksmith of the battle, *vinr skatna* = friend of the warriors, *beiðir hapta* = lord of the gods, *dróttinn geirs* = lord of spears, *galdrs faðir* = father of spells (Meissner, 1921, pp. 252–253: Odin; Sveinbjörn Egilsson & Finnur Jónsson, 1931, p. 442: Óðinn). Even in the Eddic poetry, in the cosmogonic poems *Völuspá*, *Vafðrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál* to which Snorri's *Edda* serves as a companion or commentary, there is no explicit mention of Óðinn's part in the creation of the world (*Völuspá*, 3–4; *Vafðrúðnismál*, 20–21, 28; *Grímnismál*, 40–41; cf. Abram, 2019, p. 49-62; Guðrún Nordal, 2001, pp. 277-283; Wellendorf, 2018, p. 85-87, 91-100).

Furthermore, the fact the metaphor of deity as the CREATOR of HEAVEN mostly appears in texts of rather late origin, that is from after the conversion to Christianity, and which are principally derived from foreign traditions, as has been shown here, could likewise point to the fact that the conception of a transcendent creator deity was a conceptual borrowing from Latin into Old Norse.

It was therefore either Snorri who attempted to reconstruct Nordic beliefs through the Christian model of a creator deity, consciously or not shaping its cosmogony and eschatology after the Bible, and the Nordic gods, especially Óðinn and Þórr, after Christ; or, which is less likely, it were the medieval monks copying and composing the manuscripts in the Icelandic scriptoria who consigned Óðinn's creation of the world to *damnatio memoriae* with lacunae and conjectures.

The first Christian missionaries and neophytes in Iceland, Þorvaldr Koðráns­son, Stefnir Þórgilsson and Bishop Friðrekr, the priests Þangbrandr, Síðu-Hallr Þorsteinsson, Gissurr *hvíti*, Hjalti Skeggjason, and Skapti Þóroddsson, and later generations of clergymen and Christians, particularly poets and writers (Markús Skeggjason, Arnórr *jarlaskáld* Þórðarson, Einarr Skúlason, Gamli *kanóki* and many more) shaped the Icelandic language and its metaphorical structures, mediating between Christian and Old Norse cultures. Here, we look at the encounter of *interpretatio christiana* of paganism and *interpretatio norraena* of Christianity. In the era of Christianization in Iceland the missionaries were searching for similarities between Nordic mythology and the Bible in order to make use of them in their mission. Christian and Nordic myths were hybridized: the making of the world and of man, the Biblical flood and the flood of Ymir's blood; Óðinn's hanging on the tree of Yggdrasil might have been influenced – or inspired – by Christ's death on the cross, and the death of Baldr, his journey to the underworld, and resurrection after Ragnarøkkr by the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension to heaven. Images of St. George killing the dragon were superimposed upon the imagery of Sigurðr Fafnisbani fighting the dragon Fafnir and Þórr's fight with Miðgarðsormr, the World Serpent (Byock, 1990, pp. 619–628; Ashman Rowe, 2006, pp. 167–200; Fidjestøl, 1993, pp. 100-120; Dronke, 1993, pp. 121-127; Dronke, 1992, pp. 3-23; Dronke, 1977, pp. 153-176; Abram, 2011, pp. 142–157; Wellendorf, 2018, p. 85-108).

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