

8 Darkness and Light: Miracles, Saints' Lives, and Exempla

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw how Jews were used in narratives to exemplify and prove certain doctrines, such as the real presence of Christ's body in the consecrated host, Mary's perpetual virginity, and the intervention of saints. In addition to proving doctrinal points of faith, these tales provide us with descriptions of Jewish behaviour that reflect Christian beliefs that Jews had a close association with devil, used sorcery, were involved in moneylending, and were willing to convert to Christianity. Although these elements are not the main didactic point of the miracle, they are essential to its taking place, and accepting them as fundamental Jewish qualities and behaviours is a prerequisite for the tale's teaching to be effective. This chapter discusses the imagined Jewish lives portrayed in miracle tales. It shows that although there were a great many negative qualities associated with Jews, there were also good things to say about these non-Christians. Indeed, the image of the Jew in these tales is less one-dimensional than we might imagine.

The devil

In Judaism, a religion that does not dwell on the diabolical, the devil or Satan (Heb. שָׂטָן, *śaṭan* [adversary, opponent]) is regarded not so much as a being but rather as the evil impulse (יֵצֶר הָרָע, *yezer hara'*) that prevents people from submitting to God's will and repairing the world (תִּיקוֹן עוֹלָם, *tikun 'olam*). Only twice does Satan appear in the Hebrew Bible: in the Book of Zechariah (3:1–2) where he stands accusing the high priest Joshua, and in the Book of Job (from 1:6) where he urges God to test the upright man Job. Although Satan does appear in the Talmud and kabbalistic sources, he plays a far more prominent role in Christianity. Here, he is the enemy of God and his son Jesus (Matthew 13:39), who tempts and tries believers (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:2), and is personified as the physical Satan, the rebellious angel that fell from the sky (Luke 10:8). Satan fell because “He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth; because no truth is not in him” (John 8:44). He represented all the forces of rebellion and heresy, and it is this figure of Satan that we come across in connection with Jews and miracle texts.¹

¹ On Jews and the (Christian) devil, see Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, intro. Marc Saperstein (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993); Robert Bonfil, “The Devil and

The Torah forbids Jews from associating with the devil and practising sorcery. In accordance with Deuteronomy 18:9–13, Jews are forbidden to engage in any form of occult practices. As we read in the Old Danish Bible translation:

Nær thw jngangær landith hwilkith som herræn thin gwth skal gifue thik wakte ath thw ey skalt æftærfylghe the hednyngens forbannælsæ / **Ok** han skal ey fynnæs j thik ællær blant thik hwilkin som skal rensæ sin søn ællær dottær ladændhe jgønæm eldin ællær hwilkin som ath spør thæn thær øwær trøldom hoos afgwdenes alteræ / **Ok** then thær gømær drøme ok far meth spodom af fwgle snak / **Han** skal ey wære wndgiærnynges man ok ey trolman pakallændæ diæflen ok han skal ey wpwækæ dødhe / **Ok** ey spomæn hwilke som sighe tilkommænde thingh / **Ok** han skal ey spøre samnyngen af dødhe forthy herræn forbannær allæ thæsse ok for sadan syndhe skal han af flættæ^(a) them j thin jngangh / Thw skalt wordhe fwlkommæn ok wthen smittæ meth herræn thin gwth²

Notes: **a.** af flættæ] Possibly af slættæ [*wipe out*], MS.

[(9) When you enter the land which the Lord your God shall give you, take care not to copy the pagans' abomination. (10) And there shall not be found in you or among you anyone who shall cleanse his son or daughter by passing them through the fire or anyone who consults anyone practising sorcery at the altar of idols, and anyone who divines dreams or uses divination of bird-speech. (11) He shall not be a man of evil deeds and not a wizard summoning the devil and he shall not raise the dead and not (be) a sorcerer who tells of things to come and he shall not ask the truth of the dead, (12) because the Lord curses all of these and for such a sin he shall turn them away upon your entry. (13) You shall be complete and without blemish with the Lord your God.] (Deuteronomy 18:9–13)

Jewish disdain for sorcery and the devil is also recorded – or, rather, exploited – in the Gospels where Jews levelled charges of magic and devilry against Jesus. In a mid-fifteenth-century ODa. sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Quadragesima, John 8:51–53 is referenced, and we read:

Sidhen sagdhe jhesus hwilken som myn kænedom gømer han skal æy see æller kænne æwerdhelik dødth Tha swarædhæ jødhænæ nw vnderstandom wj at thu haffwer diæffu-elskap forthy abraham ær dødther ok prophetenæ ære dødhe **Ok** thu sigher hwilken myn kænedom gømer han skal æy smakæ dødhen æwerdhelighe / met hwat dyrffuæ gør thu thech theligen at thu reknæ thech meræ æn war forfadher abraham ok prophetænæ som dødhe ære³

[(51) Then Jesus said, "Whoever keeps my teaching, he shall not see or know eternal death."

(52) Then the Jews answered, "Now we understand that you have a devil because Abraham is

the Jews in the Christian Consciousness of the Middle Ages," in *Antisemitism through the Ages*, ed. Shmuel Almog and trans. Nathan H. Reisner, Studies in Antisemitism (Oxford: Pergamon Press · Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, University of Jerusalem, 1988), 91–98.

² DKB Thott 8 2^o, f. 152va–b; *GldBib* M 423.

³ DKB GKS 1390 4^o, f. 126r; *SMP* VIII 158.

dead and the prophets are dead, and you say that whoever keeps my teaching will not taste eternal death. (53) With what presumption do you do so, that you consider yourself greater than our forefather Abraham and the prophets who are dead?”] (John 8:51–53)

The same argument against Jesus is found in another ODa. sermon for Passion Sunday (the Fifth Sunday in Lent) in Christiørn Pedersen's *Alle Epistler oc Euangelia* (1515):

Uor herre ihesus taledede obenbarlige till iøderne i Iherusalem oc til de ypperste prester som vor i iøde kircken oc sagde Er der nogen aff eder som haffuer aarsage til at straffe mig for nogen || synd da sige sig det nw her obenbarlighe Men iegh siger eder sandingen hwi ville i icke tro mig Hwo som er gwd fryctendiss och effter følger hannem han hører gerne gudz ord oc lerdøm Men i ære icke aff gwd der faare høre i icke gerne hanss ord Iøderne swarede hannem igen oc sagde Uii sige dog sandingen at du est en samaritanus oc at du haffuer dieffuelskaff met dig Ihesus swarede ieg haffuer inthet dieffuelskaff met mig men ieg hedrer oc ærer min hiemmeliske fader oc kundgør hanss mact oc i vanhedre oc forsmaa mig leg begærer icke loff eller priss aff eder paa mine vegne Men den er till som der spør effter oc dømme skal offuer dem som mig forsmaa Sandelige sandelige siger ieg ether at hwo som gemer mine ord han skal icke fonge den ewindelige død Iøderne swarede nw vide wi til visse at du haffuer dieffuelskaff hoss dig Abraham ær død oc propheterne och dw siger hwo der gemer mine ord hand skall icke dø ewindeligh Icke est dw yppermere en wor fader abraham wor han er død oc propheterne ære oc døde⁴

4 *AlleEpocEu*, f. 108r–v [cii.r–v]; ChrPed Skr I 318. See also ChrPed Skr I 244 and 320. Cf. John 8:6–53. Among other examples of this accusation, we find DAS AM 787 4^o, f. 39rb (OSw., fifteenth century): “Framledhis visar læstin os ath ihesus hafde fæm god ting moth iudhana vredhis gialdh Førsth var at han gømde sant tolamodh them som obrygdelica taladhe thil hans sighiande han wara diæwls man oc annat tolikit” [Furthermore, the reading shows us that Jesus had five good things (remedies) against the Jews’ gall of anger. The first thing was that he preserved true patience toward those who spoke abusively to him saying that he was a man of the devil and other such things], *SermSac* 189 and *SMP* I 106; DKB GKS 1390 4^o, f. 128v (ODa., c. 1450): “Fframledhes wisær læsten os at jhesus haffdhe fæm godh thyng mot jødhænæ wredhes gæld Fførst war at han gømde sant tholæmodh mot the hønlighe ordhen the talædhe til hannem ok sagdhe at han war een diæffuels man / ok annat thelighe lige” [Furthermore, the reading shows us that Jesus had five good things (remedies) against the Jews’ gall of anger. The first thing was that he preserved true patience toward the mocking words that they spoke against him and said that he was a man of the devil and other such things], *SMP* VIII 161; and SKB A 29, f. 218v (ODa., 1500–50): “Oc ther kærðhe the øfuer hannom falskeligh som øfuer een thiyf Oc ther kallethe the hannom forrædhære Oc sagdhe ath han foor meth diæfwlskap Oc monge andre smæligh oordh Oc ath han hafde vænt alt folketh fran Galylee land Oc til Jherusalem til sigh meth diæfwlskap Oc troldom” [And they made false accusations about him as if about a thief. And there they called him a swindler and said that he used devilry and many other disparaging words, and that he had converted (i. e., won over, turned) to him the people from Galilee to Jerusalem by devilry and sorcery]. Other examples can be found in a fifteenth-century sermon collection from Bäckaskog in Skåne: *Post* 108, 134, and 136. The word *djavelskap*/*diæwlskap* [lit. devilry] means ‘sorcery,’ ‘diabolical machinations’

[Our Lord spoke publicly to the Jews in Jerusalem and to the high priests who were in the Temple and said, "If any one of you has a reason to punish me for any sin, then say so now here in public! But I am telling you the truth. Why will you not believe me? Whoever fears God and follows him, he willingly listens to God's words and teaching. But you are not of God. That's why you do not willingly listen to his words." The Jews answered him back and said, "But we're telling the truth, that you are a Samaritan, and you have devilry within you!" Jesus replied, "I have no devilry within me, but I praise and honour my heavenly father and make his power known. And you deride and mock me. I do not seek your praise and glory for my own behalf, rather it is for the one who will investigate and judge those who deride me. Verily, verily I say to you, that whoever keeps my words will not know eternal death." The Jews replied, "Now we know for sure that you have devilry within you. Abraham is dead and the prophets too and you say, whoever keeps my words will not die for eternity. You are not greater than our father Abraham was. He is dead and the prophets are also dead."]

In the Middle Ages, Christians considered Jews to be close allies of the devil. The association and concept of collaboration between Jews and the devil in the Christian mind also has its roots in the New Testament: "You are of your father the devil," says Jesus to his Jewish opponents in the Temple in Jerusalem during the festival of Sukkot (John 8:44).⁵ Thus, the connection between Jews and the devil and the concepts of Jews as the devil's spawn and of the Temple/Synagogue as a house of demons were made by none other than the Son of God and cemented for all time in Christian Scripture and consequently in the Christian imagination. This relationship between Jews and the devil became a strong thread that ran through the works of the Church Fathers and later theologians. In the late fourth century, the highly influential John Chrysostom wrote in his *Katὰ Iουδαίων/Adversus Judaeos* [*Against the Jews*]: "For it [the synagogue] is not in fact the dwelling place of thieves nor simply petty tradesmen, but of demons; nay indeed, not only the synagogue, but the very souls of Jews are the dwelling places of demons."⁶ Other writers of *adversus Judaeos* literature reiterated Chrysostom's allegations. For example, Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310–67) wrote, "Before the Law was given the Jews were possessed of an unclean devil, which the Law for a time drove out, but which returned immediately upon their rejection of Christ," while in the sermons of Eusebius of Alexandria (fifth century?) the devil refers to "his old friends, the

(Lat. *diabolicae machinationes*), and 'dealings with the devil,' in other words magic that is made possible through the workings of the devil, or simply a 'devil' or 'evil spirit.'

⁵ Similarly, Apocalypse (Revelation) 2:9 and 3:9 calls Jews "synagoga Satanae" [the synagogue of Satan], that is a Church of Satan as opposed to the true Church.

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Katὰ Iουδαίων/Adversus Judaeos*, 1.4: "Οὐ γὰρ ληστῶν οὐδὲ καπήλων ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ δαιμόνων ἐστὶ καταγωγίον, μᾶλλον δὲ οὐχ αἱ συναγωγαὶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων" / "Non enim latronum, neque cauponum simpliciter, sed daemonum est habitatio. Imo non Synagogæ solum, sed ipsæ etiam Judæorum animæ," *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 48, col. 849.

Jews.”⁷ By the Middle Ages, the union between the two arch-opponents of Christ had become an indelible truth in the Christian mind, and they were believed to be engaged in a campaign of destruction against all Christendom and its material and spiritual goods.⁸ A good example of this is found in the fourteenth-century OSw. *Fornsvenska legendariet*. In the legend about St Justina, she is pursued by Cyprian who invokes a devil to help him win over the virgin. During their conversation, the devil tells him about how he used Jews as his tools to kill Christ:

Wm thæn tima war en diæfwls man fulkomin j diæfla willo ok diæfla giordho allan hans wilia han het ciprianus^(a) Han bran allir innan at synda · meþ iustina ok bødþ enom diæfle vændha hænn^(b) hugh til^(c) sik en han gathe ¶ Diæfwlin swara · Jak gat wt kastat mannin aff paradiis iak kom cayn til at dræpa sin brodher Jak styrkte iudha · at korsfæsta *christum* ok skall iak ey gita ena mō modh wænt tha ware thet mik mæsta skam / ok ther nest fik han hanum ennehanda smørisle at smøria hænn^(b) hws wæggia vtan / han sagdhe sik^(d) wilia tænda henna hiæрта innan meþ oloflikom lusta⁹

Notes: a. han het ciprianus] |han het ciprianus| MS. b. hænn^(b)] |hænn^(b)| MS. c. til] til [sik] MS. d. sik] |sik/ MS.

[At that time, there was a sorcerer (lit.: ‘devil’s man’; Lat.: *magus*), completely in the devil’s delusion, and devils carried out his every desire. He was called Cyprian.¹⁰ He was burning within to sin with Justina and commanded a devil to turn her mind towards him if he could. The devil answered, “I was able to throw man out of Paradise! I made Cain kill his brother! I empowered the Jews to crucify Christ! And if I cannot change a maiden’s mind, then it will be a great shame for me!” And then he gave him a kind of ointment to smear outside on the walls of her house. He said that this would ignite her heart with forbidden lust.]

This relationship between the enemies of God plays out in several ways in the East Norse material but the texts all reveal intimacy between the devil and Jews. In Text 52: *Theophilus and the Devil*, the fallen archdeacon turns directly to a Jew to introduce him to the devil. The Jew and the devil are in close union in this legend. A similar case of a Jew summoning the devil at will is found in Text 3: *A Pregnant Jewish Woman’s Father Converts*. Here, a Jew consults the devil to find out the truth about his daughter’s pregnancy. The Jewish woman in Text 32: *The Hermit and the Jewess* is driven by the devil to seduce the holy man and cause the holy spirit to desert him. In Text 23: *The Converted Jew and the Devil* (discussed in Chapter 7: *Witnesses of Truth and Doctrine*) and Text 36: *The Jew at the Devil’s Council*, the association between the devil and the stories’ protagonists is differ-

7 On this, see Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 21.

8 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 1–31.

9 UUB C 528, f. 84v–85r; *FsvLeg* I 445–46; *FsvLeg* PAW III 22.

10 The name Cyprianus came to be used in Scandinavia to refer to any book of spells, medical tips, methods of divination, and so on. Cf. *Ordbog over det danske Sprog*, s. v. “Cyprianus.”

ent. In these tales, the Jewish characters are haunted by their connection with the devil. They are unwillingly confronted by the devil but with the assistance of the Christian faith and its trappings are able to deflect him. Rather peculiarly, in Text 39: *The Jew, the Host, the Devil, and the Sieve*, the devil confronts a disbelieving Jew and explains the truth of the real presence in the eucharist. The devil explaining “truth” – and especially Christian truths – to a Jew is thus a theme found in several miracle stories (*The Converted Jew and the Devil*; *A Pregnant Jewish Woman's Father Converts*). The devil as advocate for Christianity strikes us as odd today, but it demonstrates how Jews are even further from Christ in their delusion than the devil is, and it also confirms the close relationship between the devil and Jews, who trust his words more than anyone else's. Ultimately, the Jewish characters in these tales all willingly convert to Christianity, but their Jewishness enables them nonetheless to perceive and converse with demons as equals.

The close link between Jews and the devil was, of course, not expressed textually alone, but also through visual means.¹¹ For example, a fifteenth-century predella painting from the altarpiece in Randlev Church (Jutland; now in the National Museum, Copenhagen), depicts Christ with the wise virgins on his right hand and the foolish ones on his left (Matthew 25:1–13).¹² Closest to Christ are *Ecclesia* (the Church, on his right) and *Synagoga* (Judaism, on his left). *Synagoga*, her crown tumbling, is identifiable by the goat's head she carries in her right hand and the broken rod in her left. The goat's head is in place of the empty oil lamp found in the parable and refers both to ritual sacrifice (קורבן, *korban*) in the Temple and to the parable later in the same chapter of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31–46), in which the goats represent those who have rejected Christ and to whom he says: “Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).¹³ Atop the virgin's broken rod is a flag or ensign bearing the image of a black devil armed with an axe and a shield: he is a warrior ready to do battle with Christendom. This virgin, *Synagoga*, is in league with Satan himself, carries his banner, and presumably is to be interpreted as one of his soldiers. A similar image from the altarpiece in Boeslunde Church (Sjælland), that dates to c. 1430 and possibly originates from the Carmelite Church in Skælskør (Sjælland), shows a blindfolded *Synagoga*, again as the closest foolish virgin to Christ, clutching something indistinguishable

¹¹ On the meaning of Jews' reddish hue and of Moses' horns, see Chapter 5: *The Jewish Body*, pp. 131–218.

¹² Kjeld de Fine Licht, *Danmarks Kirker*, vol. 16: *Aarhus Amt*, no. 5 (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseets Forlag, 1983–87), 2476–77.

¹³ Furthermore, it may be a reminder of the goaty smell associated with Jews, the *foetor judaicus*. See Chapter 5: *The Jewish Body*, pp. 193–96.

ble in her left hand (a goat's head?) and holding a broken rod in her right with an ensign depicting a black devil (or possibly a dragon).¹⁴

Theophilus and the Devil

One of the most popular miracle stories in Europe, *Theophilus and the Devil*, is found in three of the OSw. *Fornsvenska legendariet* manuscripts: SKB A 34 (c. 1350), UUB C 528 (1400–50), and SRA E 8900 (1450–70).¹⁵ In this tale, The-

14 Francis Beckett, *Altartavler i Danmark fra den senere Middelalder* (Copenhagen: J. Jørgensen, 1895), plate 5. The dragon is, of course, a symbol of the devil. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:9: “And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

15 The story of Theophilus is included in the *Legenda aurea* under the Feast of the Virgin's Nativity, and this is the source of the Swedish version. See *LegAur* 912–13. For an English translation, see Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, 157. On this tale, see Sven Bjerstedt, “Theophilus – medeltidens Faust,” *Tidskrift för litteraturvetenskap* 22, no. 1 (1993): 23–33; Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 42–103; Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Middle English* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2015), 17–32; Dwayne E. Carpenter, “Social Perception and Literary Portrayal: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spanish Literature,” in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*, ed. Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerilynn D. Dodds (New York: George Braziller, 1992), 64–65; Paul Carus, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Chicago: Open Court, 1900), 415–17; Caroline Heidi Ebertshäuser et al., *Mary: Art, Culture and Religion through the Ages*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 74–78; Ernest Faligan, *Histoire de la légende de Faust* (Paris: Hachette, 1888), vi–xv; Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 170–71, 204–05; Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 216; Ihnat, *Mother of Mercy, Bane of the Jews*, 143–48; Moshe Lazar, “Theophilus: Servant of Two Masters. The Pre-Faustian Theme of Despair and Revolt,” *Modern Language Notes* 87, no. 6 (1972): 31–50; Iona McCleery, “The Virgin and the Devil: The Role of the Virgin Mary in the Theophilus Legend and its Spanish and Portuguese Variants,” in *The Church and Mary*, ed. Robert N. Swanson, *Studies in Church History*, vol. 39 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), 147–56; Michael O'Carroll, *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, rev. edn (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 341–42; Philip M. Palmer and Robert Pattison More, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition from Simon Magus to Lessing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), 58–77; Karl Plenzat, *Die Theophiluslegende in den Dichtungen des Mittelalters*, Germanische Studien, vol. 43 (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1926); Ludwig Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage*, Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, vol. 206, no. 4 (Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927), 41–54; Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Prince-

ophilus,¹⁶ an archdeacon in Sicily ("Cicilia"),¹⁷ is unanimously elected bishop but through humility turns the position down. Another man is then chosen instead, who, on becoming bishop, removes Theophilus from his position. Deposed of his office, the defrocked archdeacon seeks out a Jew to help him contact the devil in order to take revenge upon the bishop and regain his former position. Theophilus renounces Christ and the Virgin Mary and signs a bond with the devil to regain his position. The following day, however, he is reinstated by the new bishop and immediately regrets his diabolical pact. He calls upon the Virgin who forces the devil to revoke the pact and saves Theophilus's soul. In an act of contrition, Theophilus reads the letter he signed with the devil aloud to the bishop and many others, and then he dies peacefully three days later.

The tale is one of the oldest Marian miracles in Christian literature and, like many others, it has its origins in Byzantium. The original version was a now lost sixth-century Greek text attributed to Eutychianus of Adana. He claimed to have witnessed the events described in the tale himself.¹⁸ Translated into Latin around the ninth century by Paul the Deacon of Naples, the story of Theophilus [loved by or lover of God] spread throughout Europe.¹⁹ Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim (c. 935–c. 1002) composed a poem about the legend and Fulbert of Chartres (d. 1028) included a version of the tale in a sermon that became standard reading on the

ton University Press, 2003), 122–26; George Webbe Dasent, *Theophilus in Icelandic, Low German and Other Tongues from M.S.S in the Royal Library Stockholm* (London: William Pickering, 1845).

16 Theophilus (Gk. Θεόφιλος) means 'friend of God' or 'loved by God'; cf. Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1.

17 Cicilia, i. e., Sicily, is used in the OSw. versions instead of the original placename, Cilicia, now in modern-day south-easternmost Turkey (Kilikya). This change of place may simply be due to a scribal error at some point during the transmission of the text, but it may also be an attempt to make the location of the events more familiar to the reader by moving it from the south coastal region of Asia Minor to Catholic Europe (but also a multicultural country). However, it is noteworthy that "Cicilia" (Sicily) is far from unique to the OSw. versions of the story; it is in fact widely attested. For example, this placename is also found in some Italian manuscripts of the legend: Mary Vincentine Gripkey, "Mary Legends in Italian Manuscripts in the Major Libraries of Italy: Groups I–III," *Mediaeval Studies* 14, no. 1 (1952): 19 (no. 79). Demonstrating an even more widespread confusion between the placenames *Cilicia* (Kilikya) and *Cicilia* (Sicily), the Latin "Cilicium" [Kilikya] is translated with "Sikiley" [Sicily] in *Páls saga postula* in Codex Scardensis (Skarðsbók postulasagna), Reykjavík, SÁM 1 fol., f. 29vb: "Ok for þa pall postuli vm syrland ok sikiley" [and then Paul the Apostle travelled around Syria and Sicily(!)] for "Perambulabat autem Syriam et Cilicium" [And he went through Syria and Cilicia], Acts 15:41.

18 For a more detailed summary of the origins and dissemination of the legend, see Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 42–44.

19 Note that this Paul is not to be confused with his eighth-century Lombard namesake from Cividale del Friuli. The Theophilus legend is found in at least 111 medieval manuscripts from Europe; Weber, "Maria die is juden veind", 74.

Feast of the Virgin's Nativity (8 September).²⁰ Evolving into an element of Marian devotion, Theophilus's pleadings to the Virgin became the basis for independently circulated prayers.²¹ The story is also found in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* by Alfonso X (1252–84) and the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* by Gonzalo de Berceo (d. c. 1264).²² In c. 1261, the *trouvère*, Rutebeuf, turned it into a miracle play, *Le miracle de Théophile*, one of the earliest extant pieces of French drama, although Rutebeuf's magician, Salatin, is a Muslim, rather than a Jew.²³ Indeed, not all versions of the Theophilus tale invoke a Jew as intermediary, but this anti-Judaic element is commonplace in English, French, German, and Icelandic manuscripts, and representations in art from churches and cathedrals across Europe.²⁴

Theophilus and the Devil is a proto-Faustian legend and the first such tale of a pact with the devil. Moreover, with its emphasis on the power of Marian prayer, it played a significant role in the development of Marian legends involving the intercession of the Virgin: her advocacy for sinners and ability to save them from hell as well as her legal influence.²⁵ As the theological importance of Mary increased,

20 Hrotsvitha's "Lapsus et conversio Theophili vicedomini," in *Hrotsvitae opera*, ed. Paul de Winterfeld, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902), 63–75, and Fulbert's *Sermo IV* ("De nativitate beatissime Mariae Virginis") of his *Sermones ad populum*; see *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 141, col. 324.

21 Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 533 n. 39.

22 Afonso X, *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, vol. 1, 9–10 (no. 3); Gonzalo Berceo, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, ed. Antonio García Solalinde (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1958), 162–92 (no. 24).

23 Rutebeuf, *Le miracle de Théophile: Miracle du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Grace Frank, *Les classiques français du Moyen Âge*, vol. 49, 2nd rev. edn (Paris: Champion, 1967).

24 Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 216. On the Theophilus legend in art, see Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews*, 122–26; Nigel Morgan, *The Medieval Painted Glass of Lincoln Cathedral* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 10 (1a, 3a) and plates 2b, 7c, 7d, and 8a; Weber, "'Maria die is juden veind'", 74–77, plates 2, 4, 7–8, and 10. Illustrations of the legend of Theophilus that include representations of the Jew, can, for example, be found in L-BL Royal 10.E.IV, f. 164v (*Dectretals*); and L-LPL MS 434 (*Lambeth Apocalypse*), and P-BNF MS nouvelle acquisition fr. 24541, f. 8v (the *Miracles de Notre Dame*). On the West Norse story of Theophilus, see Dasent, *Theophilus in Icelandic, Low German and Other Tongues*, 1–28 (extracts only); Peter A. Jorgensen, "Four Literary Styles in Three Centuries: The Old Icelandic Theophilus Legend," *Samtíðarsögur* 1 (1994): 395–402.

25 There has been a tendency to consider the text from a Faustian perspective rather than as a Marian miracle; see McCleery, "The Virgin and the Devil," 147. Cf. also Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage*, 41–54; Faligan, *Histoire de la légende de Faust*, vi–xv; Palmer and More, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition*, 58–77; Charles Dédéyan, *Le thème de Faust dans la littérature européenne*, 6 vols (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1954–67); John W. Smeed, *Faust in Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 7; André Dabiez, *Le Mythe de Faust* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), 307–11.

so did the tale's popularity as it contributed to the establishment of Mary as *mater misericordiae*, the mother of mercy, and as the devil's nemesis. In Christian art, she is sometimes depicted eschatologically as crushing the devil's head under her heel (in typological fulfilment of Genesis 3:15) or punching him.²⁶ Indeed, this tale has Mary achieving many successes: she defeats the devil, wins back a condemned soul, and undoes a bad contract.

In the OSw. version, the Jew is described as an intermediary, a tool of the devil ("diæwls anbuþ"), who arranges and attends the meeting between Theophilus and the devil. The Jew's sorcery is thus implied, and he is not explicitly referred to as a wizard, *trolkarl*, or *magus* (in his version, Jacobus de Voragine calls the Jew a *iudeus maleficus* [Jewish sorcerer]).²⁷ After Theophilus signs the pact with the devil "mæþ sino bloþe" [with his blood], the Jew disappears from the story and his fate is unknown.²⁸ Mary also acts as an intermediary between Theophilus and Christ, which mirrors the Jew's role as a middleman between the protagonist and the devil. The aim of the legend is to demonstrate the power of repentance and the superiority of Mary over the devil as well as to corroborate arguments for the Virgin's intercessory power. Whereas the Christian requires the services of a Jewish sorcerer in order to summon and meet the devil, Mary appears immediately as soon as Theophilus calls upon her. As Kati Ihnat has pointed out, the legend provides a good counterexample: Christians have allegiance to Christ and Mary and they receive rewards through prayer, whereas Jews are allies of the devil and achieve their ends through necromancy.²⁹ In contrast to *The Jewish Boy in the Oven*, the Jew's punishment for being Mary's antagonist is not the focus here, although in some other European versions, he does receive divine and/or secular retribution.³⁰

²⁶ For example, the well-known illustration in the de Brailes Book of Hours (c. 1240), L-BL Add. MS 49999, f. 40v.

²⁷ *LegAur* 912.

²⁸ There are incidentally two handwritten pacts with the devil among the manuscript holdings of Uppsala University Library (X 240 Salthenius). They were both written in 1718 by the student Daniel Lorenz Salthenius (b. 1701), who upon their discovery was sentenced to death for being in league with the devil. However, thanks to the intervention of his professors, he received a pardon, and after serving a prison sentence, moved to Germany where he died in 1750 as professor of theology in Königsberg (Kaliningrad, Prussia).

²⁹ Ihnat, *Mother of Mercy, Bane of the Jews*, 148.

³⁰ For example, he is beheaded in William of Malmesbury's *De laudibus et miraculis Sanctae Mariae* (c. 1125–40); see *El libro "De laudibus et miraculis Sanctae Mariae" de Guillermo de Malmesbury, OSB (c. 1143): Estudio y texto*, ed. José Maria Canal, 2nd edn (Rome: Alma Roma Libreria Editrice, 1968), 66.

Theophilus and the Devil is thus another miracle tale that presents Mary as protector and mother of mercy, but also as the conqueror of the devil.³¹ Jews, predictably enough, are cast in a far less flattering light. They are magicians with a close connection to the devil who can harness the forces of evil. Indeed, Jews have direct access to the devil that is not available to Christians, and they can ask (or even command) the devil to intercede in the world – a reversal of the usual roles where the devil prods Jews to commit evil acts. The dangers of Jewish knowledge to Christian society and the Church are clearly portrayed as too are the failings of ambitious clerics and the sin of pride. The existence of vernacular versions of the tale in OIce. and OSw. demonstrates its popularity with its universal message and its easily decoded participants in the narrative.³² The Jews' association with the devil and their ability to conjure him up, communicate with him, and facilitate the signing of pacts with him were not alien ideas to audiences in the North.

The Jew at the Devils' Council

The Jew at the Devils' Council (Texts 36.1–2) can be found in two OSw. works: *Fornsvenska legendariet* (UUB C 528 and SRA E 8900) and *Själens tröst* (SKB A 108).³³ The story tells how a Jew arrives in Rome at night and takes shelter in the ruins of a pagan temple. Afraid of evil spirits, he makes the sign of the Cross over himself. Around midnight he is awoken by the arrival of a crowned devil, Lucifer, and a horde of other demons who hold a council. In turn, Lucifer's minions step forward

31 In the ODa. *Expositio pulcherrima super rosario beate Marie Virginis* from 1515, the author Michael describes Mary's qualities in combatting the devil thus: "Swo lægggher maria dieffuelen ødhæ: | the, syndhen haffuer dræpt, resær hwn aff død hæ, | han maa alt for hennæ wighæ. | Hwn er allæ mennisckes hielp og hop, | som twinges effther wærlødzens lov, | en drodning aff himmerighæ" [Thus, Mary defeats the devil: | those, (whom) sin has killed, she raises from the dead, | he [the devil or death] must give way to her. | She is the help and hope of all people, | who are afflicted by the law of the world, | a queen of heaven], *HrMich* 13.

32 In the two OIce. versions of the tale from SKB (Perg. 4^o no. 1 and no. 11), which are both longer than the OSw. version, the role played by the Jew is also narrated in more detail: "hinn gudræki gydingr" [the impious Jew] who describes the devil as "minn herra" [my lord] convinces Theophilus to enter the pact and leads him by the hand to meet the devil. See the edition in Dasent, *Theophilus in Icelandic, Low German and Other Tongues*.

33 On this tale, see Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 172, 206–11; Joseph Harris and Thomas D. Hill, "Gestrs's 'Prime Sign': Source and Signification in *Norna-Gests Þátr*," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 104 (1989): 113–17; Alwine Slenczka, *Mittelhochdeutsche Verserzählungen mit Gästen aus Himmel und Hölle*, Studien und Texte zum Mittelalter und zur frühen Neuzeit, vol. 5 (Münster: Waxmann, 2004), 90–111.

to tell him about the evil events they have caused to occur. If Lucifer thinks that they have achieved too little in the time it has taken, then he has them scourged with a whip. He is, however, pleased by reports of holy men being tempted into sin with women. Upon noticing the Jew sheltering in the temple, the crowned devil sends his followers to find out who it is. Recognizing that he is “sealed” with the sign of the cross, all the demons flee.³⁴ The Jew converts and relates the events to a bishop. The version in *Själens tröst* with its use of direct speech is the more elaborate and, it must be said, the more entertaining take on the story. There are minor differences in the detail, e. g., the Jew in *Själens tröst* only converts after having spoken to the bishop.

The tale of *The Jew at the Devils' Council* was included in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great (c. 540–604).³⁵ With regard to the Jews, Gregory was more moderate than many of his contemporaries, and in this tale a Jew converts after personally experiencing being saved from demons by the power of the sign of the Cross. In contrast to so many other miracle tales, there is no violence or coercion here. The Jew is merely an empty vessel and his making the sign of the cross marks him and creates an impenetrable defence against the demons: “Thetta fatit æ tomtpt Oc ær tho mærkt medh thes hælgha kors tekn” [This vessel is empty and yet it is marked with the sign of the Cross].³⁶ The Jew in this tale is being employed to provide evidence for protection under the Cross and, in a very concrete fashion, to prove salvation through Christianity. The fact that he is a Jew – and as such incapable of being saved – demonstrates clearly that it is solely thanks to the apotropaic qualities of the sign of the Cross that he was spared by the evil spirits.³⁷ And having thus been saved from these demonic forces of evil, he converts. The

34 There are several possible ideas behind the word “insiglat” [sealed] here: 1) the Jew is marked and thus protected by the sign of the Cross; 2) the Jew is sealed like a document with God’s *insighel* [seal]; 3) protected by a divine mark on his skin (cf. Apocalypse [Revelation] 7:3). On the meaning of “sealed” here, see Karen A. Kay, “Jews and Miracles in Tales from the *Legenda Aurea*” (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2006), 147–50.

35 *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 77, cols 229b–131c (“De Andrea Fundanae civitatus episcopo”), and Grégoire le Grand [Gregory the Great], *Dialogues*, vol. 2, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, trans. Paul Antin, Sources chrétiennes, vol. 260 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 276–79 (Latin and French translation). For an English translation, see St Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, trans. Odo John Zimmerman (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1959), 121–22. In Gregory’s version, the Jew is travelling along the Appian Way and spends the night in a temple of Apollo (OSw. “eth afgudha mōnster”; cf. *LegAur*: “templo Apollinis”).

36 SKB A 108, p. 191.

37 Similarly, the pagan temple itself becomes a meeting-place for the malign spirits and is unable to offer protection against them. The scenario evokes the triumph of Christianity over the pagans and Jews.

tale was included in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1230–98) and can be found in various other exemplum collections.³⁸

It is intriguing that the Jew made the sign of the Cross. It suggests that he knew, or at least suspected, that Christianity was more effective than Judaism in combatting evil and protecting the soul, and it furthermore reveals the Jew's lack of loyalty to his own religion. When filled with fear, he turns as a reflex to the Christian truth as if Church doctrine was the natural, innate, and human order of the world. Indeed, in several of these miracle tales, Jews are shown as knowing Christianity to be true, even if they refuse to accept it: praying to Mary during childbirth and belief in the Virgin Birth (the wife in *The Converted Jew and the Devil*) and extracting blood from crucifixes (*The Jews Who Found and Attacked an Image of Christ*), hosts (*The Host Desecration*), and icons (*The Jew Who Stabbed the Icon*).³⁹ Sometimes, a Jew can just begin thinking about the Virgin as a means of escaping distress and Mary appears (*The Virgin Mary Releases and Converts a Jewish Prisoner*). The strange spiritual status of the Jew as an empty vessel and yet sealed ("eth thomt kaar ok tho insiglat")⁴⁰ is commented upon by the demons before they are forced to flee. His ambiguous state allows him to witness the devils' council, but it also enables him to escape them. It will be remembered from both the Theophilus legend and the stories of the Jew who became a Carmelite and the Jew whose daughter was pregnant (Texts 52, 23, and 3 respectively), that Jews, just like King Solomon, can see and communicate with demons; sometimes, they can even summon the devil at will – a mocking simulacrum of Christians summoning the Virgin and the saints. Through the sign of the Cross and being sealed, the Jew dies in the presence of demons and is reborn a Christian in their absence, just as Christ died on the Cross (in the presence of evil Jews?) and was resurrected (in their absence). It will have been noted by now that this Jewish death–Christian rebirth is a recurring theme in these miracle tales about conversion. At the end of the tale in *Själens tröst*, the Jew warns the bishop about his sinful contact with a woman, and he does so before he converts.⁴¹ This demonstrates that even Jews (or

³⁸ *LegAur* 936–38. For an English translation, see Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, 172–73. See also Jacques de Vitry's version in *The Exempla, or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas Frederick Crane, Burt Franklin Research and Source Works Series, no. 742 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971 [repr. of 1890 edn]), 59, 189–90.

³⁹ An exception to this can be found in OSw. Text 34: *The Jew and the Lightning Strike* (SKB A 110, c. 1385), where a Jew mocks his Christian neighbours for making the sign of the Cross to protect themselves during a thunderstorm and is instantaneously struck and burnt to death by a lightning strike.

⁴⁰ UUB C 528, f. 132r.

⁴¹ The bishop brought into temptation is named Andreas [Andrew] in Gregory's version.

at least those saved by the sign of the Cross) are capable of moral behaviour and can advise Christians – even bishops – on matters of morality.

Summary

These two tales as well as *The Converted Jew and the Devil* and *A Pregnant Jewish Woman's Father Converts* demonstrate Jews' ability to communicate with the devil. Their spiritual status as empty vessels causes them to live in a shady borderland: at once on earth but also among diabolical beings. Curiously, some miracle stories have the devil explain the Christian faith to the Jew and both prove its truth and convince the Jew to become Christian as in *The Jew, the Host, the Devil, and the Sieve*, or to remain a convert to Christianity as in *The Converted Jew and the Devil*. The devil can thus prompt the Jew to both good and evil. However, the Jew, too, can summon the devil and persuade him to carry out his will as in the Theophilus tale and the story of the pregnant daughter. Ultimately, of course, the devil – and the Jew – must submit to the divine will.

Sorcery

Ideas about Jewish sorcery have their origins in the legendary material about King Solomon as a magician who had dominion over demons, and the association between Jews and demons remained a strong belief among Christians during the Middle Ages:⁴² we have already seen how the Jews in the Theophilus legend

⁴² The tradition of Solomon's role as a *magus* and great exorcist stems from 3 Kings 4:29–34. The literature on his magic and role as antiquity's greatest sorcerer in the Christian tradition is vast; see, e. g., C. C. McCown, "The Christian Tradition as to the Magical Wisdom of Solomon," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 2 (1922): 1–8; Dennis C. Duling, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David," *The Harvard Theological Review* 68 (1975): 235–52; Dennis C. Duling, "The Legend of Solomon the Magician in Antiquity: Problems and Perspectives," *Proceedings: Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society*, vol. 4 (Westerville: Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society, 1984), 1–23; Dennis C. Duling, "The Eleazar Miracle and Solomon's Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.42–49," *The Harvard Theological Review* 78 (1985): 1–25; Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon, The Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, vol. 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), 75–124 (especially 113–14). On Jewish magic and how it was viewed by Christian contemporaries, see the seminal Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1939). On the

and the tale of the pregnant daughter are able to conjure up the devil. Guibert of Nogent (d. 1124) was one of the first medieval authors to accuse the Jews of witchcraft. In book 1 chapter 26 of his memoirs, he tells the story of a monk tempted by the devil who was conjured up by a Jew.⁴³ Indeed, worshipping the devil and anti-Christian activity were the principal occupations of sorcerers.⁴⁴ Innocent Jewish practices (such as hand-washing at certain times, kashering of ovens, and slaughtering meat) and Jewish objects (such as *mezuzot*) were strange to the Christian majority who viewed them with suspicion and imbued them with sinister meaning and purpose.⁴⁵ Consequently, Christians would assume that all Jews, *en masse*, were engaging in diabolical acts of sorcery against them.⁴⁶

Language had magical properties and could be used to summon demons, to ensure protection, and to reveal divine truths. The Hebrew language with its unfamiliar letters and its venerated status as the language of Creation (see Chapter 4: *The Language of the Jews*) also had a role to play in Scandinavian magic and spells. In Chapter 2: *Jews in Medieval Denmark and Sweden*, the formula AGLA (a *noṭriḱon* derived from אתה גיבור לעולם אדני, *atah gibor le-'olam adonai* [You are mighty forever Lord]) was discussed.⁴⁷ Its occurrence in no fewer than thirty runic inscriptions points to a tradition that connected supernatural protection and the Hebrew language. It is a small step from this to a link between magic and Jews generally. The power of language to uncover divine truths was revealed to a Jew by the devil in Text 23: *The Converted Jew and the Devil*. Here, the Jew learns that the word *clemens* [merciful] is used to describe the pure, “white” Virgin Mary because when read backwards, it contains the words *sne* [snow] and *melc* [milk].

Disease and illness were often attributed to the work of the devil, so various cures often took the form of charms and potions and treating illness was the realm of sorcery. “Doctors” would have relied on various concoctions and prayers, and successful treatment was often as much down to sheer luck as to medicine. Jewish (and Muslim) doctors were possibly better at curing their patients than their Chris-

role of magic in Jewish-Christian relations specifically, see Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn, *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 282–83, s.v. “Magic.”

⁴³ See John F. Benton, *Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, vol. 15 (Toronto: Medieval Academy of America, 1984), 115.

⁴⁴ Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 9.

⁴⁵ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Antisemitism: A World History of Prejudice*, 3rd edn (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2022), 110.

⁴⁶ Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 2–4.

⁴⁷ See, vol. 1, pp. 37–38.

tian counterparts were.⁴⁸ Their very success both contributed to the popularity of Jewish doctors but simultaneously enhanced Jews' notoriety for sorcery. Despite various dicta of the Church prohibiting the use of Jewish doctors, Christian patients – in those lands with Jewish populations – continued to consult them. Nonetheless, the connection between sorcery and doing harm, between Jewish physicians and exotic drugs, between medicines and poisons led to accusations against Jewish doctors of poisoning their Christian patients, and ultimately, against all Jews – in a great international conspiracy – of poisoning Christians. In spite of this, Jewish doctors, no doubt because of their greater success in healing the sick, remained popular, not least among the ruling classes throughout Europe.

Jewish magic in two of the tales below (demon-taming in Text 15: *St James the Great and the Sorcerer Hermogenes* and medicinal charms in Text 11: *Petronia and the Ring*) is shown to be ineffectual when confronted with the divine power of a saint. The third tale (Text 18: *St Macarius and the Talking Skull*) is not about Jewish magic: the sorcery that causes a skull to speak is not explained here; indeed, by consulting the dead, the Christian hermit Macarius can be said to be breaking the commandment in Deuteronomy 18:11.

St James the Great and the Sorcerer Hermogenes

James the Great, son of Zebedee, was one of the first disciples to follow Jesus.⁴⁹ The Gospels offer little detail about the man but according to the Acts of the Apostles, Herod the King (traditionally identified as Herod Agrippa) had him executed by sword (d. 44 CE).⁵⁰ In spite of the paucity of information about James – or more likely because of it – a number of legends and traditions grew up around the saint, including the translation of his relics to Spain where they were buried in Compostela.⁵¹

48 For example, Joshua Trachtenberg wrote: "Jewish physicians, although by no means free from the general superstitious attitude, were among the foremost representatives of a scientific medicine in the Germanic lands. Their wide knowledge of languages, the availability of Arabic-Greek medical works in Hebrew translation, their propensity for travel and study abroad, their freedom from the Church-fostered superstition of miraculous cures, relics, and the like, these often conspired to make them even more effective practitioners than their non-Jewish competitors." Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 4.

49 Matthew 4:21–22; Mark 1:19–20.

50 Acts 12:1–2. Death by beheading is also the outcome in the OSw. tale: "ok finga baþe ens lifs ænda vndi suærþe" [and they both met the end of their lives under the sword].

51 See, for example, *LegAur* 650–62; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, 3–10 (English translation).

The miracle tale of St James and the sorcerer Hermogenes is found in the *Legenda aurea*, from which it was translated into OSw. for the *Fornsvenska legendariet* (UUB C 528 and SRA E 8900) and describes an episode in the life of the saint.⁵² Having returned to Judea from Spain, James is confronted by the sorcerer Hermogenes' acolyte Philetus.⁵³ In front of a crowd of Jews, Philetus tries to debate with James and convince him that Christian teaching is false. However, James manages to prove the truth of Christianity to Philetus who returns to his master Hermogenes and advises him to accept Christianity. This infuriates Hermogenes and using magic he binds Philetus making him immobile. When James receives word of Philetus's plight, he sends him a kerchief and instructs him to recite a prayer. Upon receiving the gift and praying, Philetus's shackles are loosened, and he is free. He rebukes Hermogenes and leaves him to join James. The sorcerer then summons his demons and orders them to capture both Philetus and James and bring them to him. However, Hermogenes is betrayed. Howling like wolves ("thutu som vlua"), his demons beg James for help: "We are burning before our time has come!" James asks God's angel to free the demons and sends them to capture Hermogenes and bring their former master to him, which they do. James tells the demons and Philetus to free Hermogenes and repay evil with good ("væl løna illum," cf. Romans 12:17–21). Although free, Hermogenes is afraid that the demons will avenge themselves on him, so James gives him his staff as protection. On James's instructions, the sorcerer sinks his books to the bottom of the sea; he is not to burn them as the smoke will pollute the air ("gøra vædhrít siukt af therá røk"). Hermogenes subsequently becomes a good and holy follower of James and goes on to perform divine miracles ("gudhlik jærtekne"), rather than devilish magic.

52 In places, the OSw. version seems to paint Jews in a worse light than the Lat. original, for example: "cum phariseis" > "medh judhum" [with *Pharisees* (specific) > with *Jews* (general)]; "magica" > "diæfwlsskap" [magic > devilry]; "ululare" > "thutu som vlua" [howl > howl *like wolves*]. The tale of St James the Great and Hermogenes is beautifully recreated in one of the stained-glass windows in Chartres Cathedral; see Yves Delaporte and Étienne Houvet, *Les Vitraux de la cathédrale de Chartres* (Chartres: Houvet, 1926), 307–13 (no. 37: *Histoire de saint Jacques le Majeur*).

53 The name Hermogenes ("born of Hermes") appears in 2 Timothy 1:15 as a Christian from Asia Minor who, along with Phigellus, turned away from Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome. The name Philetus ("beloved") is that of an early Christian: in 2 Timothy 2:17–18, Paul warns Timothy of Philetus's and his associate Hymenaeus's error (their preaching is like canker as they do not believe that there will be a bodily resurrection). The names of the sorcerer and his apprentice may thus have been chosen because of their connotations with being outside of and opposed to true Christianity; Paul and James were, of course, contemporaries.

In this miracle tale, the *magus* Hermogenes acts as a cruel parody of King Solomon: he summons demons to do his evil work, but they rebel and seek salvation in Christianity.⁵⁴ Unlike Solomon, Hermogenes does not excel in wisdom and even his acolyte Philetus deserts him. The diabolical punishments Hermogenes inflicts upon his helpers can easily be undone through divine power and both St James and the angels are shown to be far more powerful than the sorcerer. Indeed, Jewish magic – just like all Jewish threats – is contained and neutralized by Christianity. Hermogenes is never explicitly called a Jew, but this can be assumed as the text locates him in Judea or ‘the land of the Jews’ (“j judha lande”) and he has a keen interest in making sure that the Jews of Judea do not become Christians. In some versions of the tale, Hermogenes has been hired by Jews (or Pharisees, “cum phariseis” as it says in the *Legenda aurea*) to derail James’s mission. After his own conversion, the former mighty sorcerer is shown to be a coward, afraid of vengeful punishment at the hands of his former minions. The saint gives him his staff as protection thereby demonstrating, again, the power of the saint and objects (relics) associated with him in vanquishing evil.⁵⁵

Hermogenes has a library of books about the black arts. The magical potency of books – words and language – is a danger and they must be destroyed. Burning them would create a miasma and pollute the air, so they are to be sunk to the bottom of the sea – once again, the evidence of a Jew’s crime is disposed of in the depths.⁵⁶ That Hermogenes’ “wisdom” resided in written texts is of itself little surprise, but a reader of the story in the Middle Ages might have seen a parallel to the dangerous and mysterious Jewish books, the *juthebøker/iupa bøker*, such as the Talmud. From the thirteenth century on, Christians were becoming aware of Jewish post-biblical literature and the fact that many customs, beliefs, and practices were prescribed or more clearly set out in these works rather than in the Tanakh. Jewish books were considered dangerous to Christians and were supposedly the depositories of anti-Christian passages and lies about Jesus. However, unlike in this tale, where Hermogenes’ books were sunk into the sea, medieval (and modern-era) Christians were happy to commit Jewish books to the flames beginning in 1242 with the burning of tens of volumes of the Talmud in Paris.

The Swedes reading this text or hearing it read aloud already had the necessary knowledge of a link between magic and Judaism to decode the sorcerer

54 Cf. the use of the term *magus* [sorcerer] in Acts 13:6.

55 The conversion of Hermogenes is the first of a series of events that culminate in the arrest of James. See Text 16: *St James the Great Converts Josiah the Jew*: “Sidhan judha sagho at hermogenes war cristin · Tha komo the til jacobum · ok disputeradhe medh hanum” [After the Jews saw that Hermogenes was a Christian, they came to James and disputed with him].

56 Compare, e. g., the disposal of the icon in a well in Text 41: *The Jew Who Stabbed the Icon*.

Hermogenes as a Jew skilled at dabbling in the diabolical arts. Nevertheless, they would have been comforted in the knowledge that Christianity can neutralize the dangers of Jewish magic and, given the absence of any Jews in Sweden, were safe: until, that is, they became the victims of an international plots of mass murder in 1350 through poisons and potions created by Jews in the German Lands to the south – but more on that later in Chapter 10: *The Jewish Plot to Destroy All Christendom*.

Petronia and the Ring

In Text 11: *Petronia and the Ring*, found in both ODa. (*Alle Epistler oc Euangelia*) and OSw. (*Fornsvenska legendariet*: UUB C 528 and SRA E 8900), an ailing woman, Petronia, who is suffering from an unnamed illness, offers to pay a Jew for help to regain her health. He tells her to place a stone in a ring and tie it around her waist against her skin with a cord. She does so and then goes to the Church of St Stephen where she prays for help and immediately the ring falls to her feet – the cord and knot are still intact. With that, Petronia feels well again.

The miracle is taken from St Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (22.8),⁵⁷ and it is also found in the *Legenda aurea*.⁵⁸ It demonstrates Augustine's interest in St Stephen's association with Jewish "blindness."⁵⁹ Stephen, the first martyr of Christianity, was found guilty of blasphemy by the Jewish authorities and sentenced to death by stoning.⁶⁰ The Jew in the story believes he can cure Petronia – the name is a play on Lat. *petrus* [stone], hinting both at the stone in her belt and those used to kill St Stephen – through a "carnal" remedy, but the real cure is to be found through prayer and the intercession of St Stephen. As such, the tale is a metaphor for the carnality/spirituality disputation in which Jews were accused of blindness, literalism, and as being essentially different to Christians. It also illustrates the efficacy of sincere prayer and how merciful God is to all who turn to him for help. Furthermore, the tale mirrors the Virgin birth of Christ: Jesus was born from Mary's virginal womb just like the ring fell at Petronia's feet without

⁵⁷ For an English translation, see Saint Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dodds (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009), 747.

⁵⁸ *LegAur* 84; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 48–49.

⁵⁹ Kara Ann Morrow, "Disputation in Stone: Jews Imagined on the St. Stephen Portal of Paris Cathedral," in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Merback, Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, vol. 37 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 74.

⁶⁰ Acts 6:8–7:60. See also Text 49: *The Stoning of St Stephen*.

breaking her knotted cord. We are not told what stone was used, but Scandinavian interest in the power of stones is documented in one of the earliest extant works in ODa., viz. Henrik Harpestræng's *Lapidarium* [*Book of Stones*] in DKB NKS 66 8^o (c. 1300) and SKB K 4 (c. 1450). It is noteworthy that according to the preface in NKS 66 8^o, this book describing the medicinal use of various stones originated in the East, viz. in Arabia at the court of a certain King Evax.⁶¹

About the Jew we learn little. He appears to be a physician of sorts who uses magic or sorcery, but apparently not to cure Petronia.⁶² Is his medicine merely ineffectual or did it have another purpose? Could he be using dark arts to cast a spell on Petronia, and for what carnal purposes? Why is the stone to be worn against her naked body (ODa. "nest sin bare krop"; OSw. "widh hænnā bara licama")? Is he just interested in her money or was he trying to gain control of her body or soul?⁶³ The power afforded to the Jewish physician in the medieval world was more often than not believed to come from the devil. For the first time, at the Council of Béziers in 1246, Christians were forbidden on pain of excommunication from seeking medical help from Jews. This prohibition was reiterated by the Councils of Albi (1254) and Vienne (1267), by a decree of the University of Paris (1301), and at further councils in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶⁴ Refusing to be cared for by a non-Christian was not only a pious act of piety but a prudent one, for it was believed that Jewish physicians did not aim to heal their Christian patients but rather to make them even more ill, most usually through the use of poisons.⁶⁵ Indeed, the two professions most associated with Jews in the Middle

61 "Byriær formal af en book thær hetær stenbok gøρθ af en kunugh af arabia til nero keysær Evax konugh af arabieland skref til nero keyser hwilkkæ ærlikæ stenæ æræ · oc af therræ dugh hwær særlæst · oc af therræ lyt oc therræ nafn · oc horæ the mughæ hittæs oc hware" [Here begins the preface to a book called *Lapidarium* composed by a King in Arabia for Emperor Nero. Evax, king of Arabia, wrote to the emperor Nero (saying) which stones are precious and of each one's special power and their colour and their names, and how and where they can be found], DKB NKS 66 8^o, ff. 114v, 116r; Henrik Harpestræng, *Harpestræng*, ed. Marius Kristensen (Copenhagen: Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund, 1908–20), 174.

62 The Jewish doctor does not even appear in C, the SRA E 8900 version of the tale.

63 The use of a belt in Jewish magic is also found related in the surviving documents concerning the Gotland well-poisoning episode (see Text 53: *Well Poisoning*), where those conspiring with Jews wore a silver belt inscribed with a Greek or Hebrew letter to shield them from the plague. A belt that unlike Petronia's does break is found in Text 24: *The Disputation and the Miracle*.

64 Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, vol. 1: *From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*, trans. Richard Howard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 149.

65 In 1610, the Vienna Faculty of Medicine confirmed that Jewish physicians were obliged by their own law to kill one in ten Christian patients by poisoning. See Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 97; Cohn-Sherbok, *Antisemitism*, 116. Cf. the sermon in vol. 2, p. 627.

Ages – physicians and usurers – were thought to be attacking Christendom on two fronts: health and wealth. In Scandinavia, there were of course no Jewish physicians (although as we saw in Chapter 2: *Jews in Medieval Denmark and Sweden*, the first recorded Jew in Sweden – “den juden” [that Jew] – was none other than one of King Gustav Vasa’s doctors),⁶⁶ but the topos of the Jewish physician doing the work of the devil was so embedded in the discourse of the Church and the universities as well as secular law and beliefs, that even in the periphery of Christendom it could ring true and be an effective didactic tool.

St Macarius and the Talking Skull

Macarius the Egyptian (c. 300–90) was born in Jijber in the Nile Delta, and through the influence of St Anthony (251–356) became an ascetic at the age of thirty.⁶⁷ He later became ordained as a priest and founded Scetis, one of the main monastic settlements in Lower Egypt.⁶⁸ He spent much of his life living in the desert and made frequent visits to Anthony. There are numerous sayings and stories connected to him,⁶⁹ and the tale of Macarius and the talking skull can be found in several collections, such as the *Vitae Patrum* and the *Legenda aurea*.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ See, vol. 1, p. 38.

⁶⁷ The name Macarius (Μακάριος) means “blessed” in Greek. On this legend, see Edward Cuthbert Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius: A Critical Discussion Together with Notes on Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Port Chester, NY: Elibron, 2004 [repr. of 1898 edn]), 142n1; Tim Vivian, *St Macarius the Spirit Bearer: Coptic Texts Relating to Saint Macarius the Great* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary, 2004), 72–74; Clara Erskine Clement Waters, *A Handbook of Legendary and Mythological Art* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1871), 184.

⁶⁸ Scetis (Wadi Natrun) is now the site of the Monastery of St Macarius the Great. For an account of Macarius’ life as described in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, see William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 194–96.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 46–49, 142.

⁷⁰ See *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 73, col. 1013 for the tale in Book VI, part II, chapter 16 of the *Vitae Patrum* text. The *Golden Legend* version is in *LegAur* 150–51. For an English translation, see Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 90. In Islamic tradition, it developed into a legend involving Jesus. In his *Stories of the Prophets*, al-Kisa’i (c. 1100) relates the tale about the prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) who interrogates and resurrects a skull, that subsequently tells him about hell and the different kinds of sinners who are punished there. See David Sidersky, *Les origines des légendes musulmanes dans le Coran et dans les vies des prophètes* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933), 148; Gustav Weil, *Biblische Legenden der Muselmänner: Aus arabischen Quellen zusammengetragen und mit jüdischen Sagen verglichen* (Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt, 1845), 286–91; Jan Knappert, *Islamic Legends; Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 174–76.

The tale of *St Macarius and the Talking Skull* is found in no fewer than three versions in OSw.: a legend in *Fornsvenska legendariet* (UUB C 528, 1400–50; SRA E 8900, 1450–70); part of a sermon for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity (UUB C 35, late fifteenth century), and a miracle under the second commandment in *Själens tröst* (SKB A 108, 1400–50). In the tale, the hermit Macarius comes across the skull of a dead man lying on the ground.⁷¹ In the sermon – the longest version – we learn that the skull is lying on a former battleground where Christians and pagans fought. In all versions, the skull tells Macarius that he was a pagan and is now being punished in hell. In the legend and *Själens tröst*, we learn that in the depths below him are the Jews, and below them false and bad Christians. The sermon does not mention Jews in hell, but it claims that false Christians – those who leave the world without contrition, confession, and penance – are being punished so strictly because God has chosen Christians above pagans and Jews, and he loves and punishes them as a husband would his children. The text does not conflate pagans and Jews into one category. Indeed, the miracle in UUB C 35 is followed by an explanation why in God's eyes bad Christians are worse than pagans and Jews.⁷² The magic in this story is not performed by a Jew – the skull appears just to start speaking – but magic enables Macarius to hear from an “eye-witness” what the fate of Jews is in the afterlife: they are made visible through necromancy.⁷³

71 In UUB C 528, the scribe has changed “a ødhe mark” [in a desert] to “a ene mark” [in a field], which is possibly an attempt to make the landscape of the text less exotic. The substitution has not been made in SRA E 8900.

72 We read, for example: “Ok fore thænna ærona ok nade som gudh haffuer oss giffuit ok vtwalt oss til sin ælskilikin barn ok bewiser oss daghelika sin hælga kærlek mædh the hælga scrift ok mædh sinom nadafulla jærteknom fram fore judom ok androm hedningom Thy tilbør war rætswisa mera wara ok skæliga j allom warom gærningom æn thera epter thy war hærra jhesus sagde ok manade oss til mædh första ordomen j thænna læstena æn thy wær manga æro the cristne som fulare ok anstygiare æro j gudz asyn æn nagra hedninga fore thera fula synda sidwænia skul som the bliffua jlhærda vtj [...] Rædelikin ær the bidiande wænta aff gudz dome ok tæs brænnande eldzins grather ok sorgh som vþnøta skal ok pina wars hærra jhesu christi owinj ok fiande” [And for this honour and grace that God has given us and chosen us, ahead of Jews and other pagans, as his beloved children, and every day (he) shows us his holy love through the Holy Scriptures and his merciful miracles. It is therefore appropriate to be more just and rational in all our deeds than they (are), as Our Lord Jesus said and exhorted us with the first words in this reading (Matthew 5:20), because many are those Christians who are uglier and more disgusting in God's view than some pagans on account of their sinful ways which they stubbornly pursue (...)] Terrified, they await God's judgement and the weeping and sorrow of its burning fire that will consume and torment the enemies and foes of Jesus Christ], UUB C 35 187–188; SMP IV 132–33.

73 Another story in which a Christian holy man communes with the dead to hear about the fate of Jews after death can be found in Text 1: *A Jew Converts and Speaks to his Sons from Heaven*.

As it spread, the legend acquired different meanings and focuses. In the Eastern Church, the story came to be about praying for the deceased, and in these versions the skull tells Macarius that the prayers of the faithful bring respite to the suffering of the departed. The consolation provided by prayers for the dead is also mentioned in the *Vitae Patrum*.⁷⁴ In the *Legenda aurea* and OSw. versions, the story acts as a cautionary tale to Christians who – despite knowing about the redeeming sacrifice made by Jesus – behave as though it were of little consequence: they live their lives as though damnation were not real: “Profundiores omnibus sunt falsi christiani qui Christi sanguine redempti tantum pretium parui-pendunt” [Deepest of all are false Christians who, having been redeemed by the blood of Christ, think little of such a reward].⁷⁵ They deserve and receive greater punishment in hell than both the heathens who have never known Christ and the Jews who crucified him. This theme and the use of Jews as stooges or a gauge for Christian sinfulness occur over and again in medieval works, for example, in St Birgitta’s revelations.⁷⁶ The argument runs that heathens had no opportunity to become Christians, and Jews, when they crucified Christ, had acted out of ignorance and envy. Jews killed Christ’s body and humanity just that one time, whereas Christians, who should know better but choose to reject God, are much worse than Jews because they kill Christ’s spirit every single day.⁷⁷ This expostulation was intended to induce sincere soul-searching in the reader or listener. As baptism alone was not enough to cleanse their souls for eternity, the Christian audience should reassess their behaviour lest they too meet the same fate as the false Christians described by the skull.

The tale of Macarius is also an expression of the growing interest in the structure of hell. Although hell is mentioned in the Old and New Testaments and its existence was endorsed by the Church Fathers, the precise details of the place and nature of eternal punishment were somewhat hazy, leaving it to writers, sermonists, and other clergy to imagine or deduce the terrors awaiting the sinful and to relate them to questioning audiences. The OSw. *Tungulus*, the tale of an Irish knight who visits the underworld (purgatory and hell) for three days and nights

⁷⁴ *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 73, col. 1013

⁷⁵ *LegAur* 151

⁷⁶ See, for example, *Liber Caelestis* 1.37, 41, 53. OSw. text published in *BU I* 111–15, 122–30, and 181–86; Lat. in Carl-Gustaf Undhagen, ed., *Sancta Birgitta: Revelaciones Book I*, SSFS ser 2, vol. 7, no. 1 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1978), 347–52, 360–68, and 409–14; English translation in Denis Searby and Bridget Morris, trans. and ed., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 1: *Liber Caelestis Books I–III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 114–16, 120–24, and 146–49.

⁷⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 63.4 in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 36, cols 762–63, and Anselm, *Cur Deus homo*, 1.9 in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 158, cols 370–73.

exists in OSw. in three manuscripts.⁷⁸ In purgatory, various tortures for different sins are revealed to the knight and he also gets a peek into the pits of hell where he sees many of his acquaintances and friends – but no Jews. The trend of writing about visiting the realm of the dead reached its literary apex in the Middle Ages with Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia* (c. 1307–21), a work that also contains no pejorative or insulting references to Jews. According to the East Norse sources, not all Jews were bad, some were even good. For example, according to a sermon for Christmas Day (LSB T 181, fifteenth century), derived from the Latin *Evangelium Nicodemi*, all the righteous Jews who lived before the coming of Christ did not go to hell but spent their time after death in a darkness (limbo) awaiting the coming of Christ:

*Thet andra folkit som gudhi til hordhe ok j thenna thimanom glæddis / Thet waro helghe patriarcha ok propheta / Som war adham abraham moyses sanctus iohannes baptista / medh flerom vtalikom helghom syælom som j heluitis mörkir waro / ffor thy hymerikit war atlirykt j flerom tusandha aar / ffore adhams forsta syndh skuld Æn the ther gudhz viner waro / The haffdho ther ey andra pino en ena mörka wærlðh / ok stora længthan hwar dagh æptir synne atirlösin / som them war jættat aff gudhi / Thetta folkit j tessu mörko wærlðhime / the fingho stora glædhi daagh ok ther wærlðh^(a) wardh mykit lyusarin som prophetin ysaia haffde spaat sighiande *populus gentium qui ambulabat in tenebris vidit lucem magnam habitantibus in regione vmbra mortis lux orta est eis* ffolkit som gingo j mörkreno sagho eth storth lyus / Ok the ther biggiande waro j rykeno dōdzsins skuggha / them ran vp eth lyus / Therne spadomyn fulkompnadhis j dagh / medh wars herra ihesu christi fōdzlotyma⁷⁹*

Notes: a. wærlðh] wær dh MS.

[The second people who belonged to God and who rejoiced at this moment are the holy patriarchs and prophets who were Adam, Abraham, Moses, St John the Baptist with many countless holy souls who were in the darkness of hell because heaven was closed again for several thousand years on account of Adam's first sin. But those who were God's friends received no other punishment than a dark world and every day a great yearning for their salvation that had been promised them by God. These people in this dark world received a great day of joy and their world became much lighter, as the prophet Isaiah (9:2) had prophesied, saying: "Populus (gentium) qui ambulabat in tenebris, vidit lucem magnam; habitantibus in regione umbrae mortis, lux orta est eis." The people who were walking in the darkness saw a great light, and a light dawned on those who were living in the kingdom of the shadow of death. This prophecy was fulfilled today with the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.]

⁷⁸ SKB A 58, ff. 67r–85v (c. 1487–91); SKB D 3, pp. 542–572 (c. 1488); SKB D 4 a, pp. 474–490 (c. 1488–63).

⁷⁹ LSB T 181, pp. 64–65; SMP V 49–50; SvJPost 95.

Similarly, in the late fourteenth-century OSw. *Nichodemi Evangelium*, the patriarchs and prophets are in limbo awaiting deliverance and they rejoice when Jesus comes to raise their bodies and baptize them in the River Jordan:

Tha kombir owir iordhrike aldra kæraste gudz son *christus* · at opresa adams krop ok hælgha manna licamma ok han kombir dōpascolandis i iordans vatne · ok sidhan han wtgaar af iordans vatne · tha skal han smōria *medh sinne* miskunna olio · alla the som a han tro · ok skal the miskunna olia bliua i slækt som fōdhascolande ær af vatn ok thōm hælgha anda til æuærdhelikit liiff · tha skal gudz son nidhīr fara til hæluitis oc wtledha thædhan thin fadhīr adam til miskunna træ · Thæntidh patriarche ok prophete hōrdho alt thætta gladdos the *medh* store frygdh⁸⁰

[Then shall the most beloved Son of God, Christ, come upon the earth to raise up the body of Adam and the bodies of the holy men, and he shall come being baptized in the waters of the Jordan. And then he walks out of the water of the Jordan, then he shall anoint with his oil of mercy all who believe in him, and that oil of mercy shall be unto the generations of those to be born of water and of the Holy Ghost for eternal life. Then the Son of God shall descend into hell and lead out from there your father Adam to the tree of mercy. When the patriarchs and prophets heard all this, they rejoiced with great joy.] (Cf. *Acta Pilati* 19 ["Descensus Christi ad Inferos," 3])

Righteous Jews from before the time of Christ are saved, whereas those born during and after his time on earth and who still refuse to accept him as the Son of God will be sent to the fires of hell.⁸¹ However, this clear-cut division into "Old Testament good Jews" and "New Testament and post-New Testament bad Jews" appears to be blurred in some of the revelations of St Birgitta from the 1340s, where she refers to good Jews who are secretly Christian and the friends of Christ and who do good works, although it is unclear precisely whom she is writing about.⁸²

⁸⁰ See SKB A 110, f. 294r; *Kläs* 407.

⁸¹ In Text 1: *A Jew Converts and Speaks to his Sons from Heaven*, we hear from the mouth of a Jewish convert how he avoided the flames of hell by becoming a Christian.

⁸² *Revelations* 1.41.7 (SKB A 33, f. 63ra [= col. 253]: "Æn af thik iude vndantakir iak alla iuda hulke som lōnlika æru *cristne* ok thiæna mik lōnlika *medh* renom kærlek ok rætte tro ok fulkompne gerning" [With regard to you, Jew, I make an exception for all the Jews who are secretly Christians and secretly serve me in pure love and correct faith and perfect works]) and *Revelations* 2.3.40–41 (SKB A 33, f. 103ra (= col. 413): "hærdzskofulle iudane" [obstinate Jews]); *Revelations* 2.3.47–54 (SKB A 33, f. 103va (= col. 415): "iuda [...] the som gerna warin *cristne*" [Jews (...) who would like to be Christians]). OSw. text published in BU I 123 and BU II 226–27; Lat. in Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta: Revelaciones Book I*, 361 and Carl-Gustaf Undhagen and Birger Bergh, ed., *Sancta Birgitta: Revelaciones Book II*, SSFS ser. 2, vol. 7, no. 2 (Uppsala: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2001), 37; English translation in Searby and Morris, trans. and ed., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 1, 120–24 and 180–84.

Summary

In miracle tales involving Jewish sorcery, Jews are initially presented as dangerous characters with evil intent who use their black arts to harm Christians. Hermodenes plots to destroy James and put a stop to his missionary work and the conversion of Jews to Christianity in *Iupa land*, whereas the Jew's ambitions in the story of Petronia are more indeterminate and modest: his magic is either ineffectual as a remedy or it was not intended to help Petronia at all, but rather to gain some sort of power of her body. In fact, in both stories, Jewish magic is shown to be inferior to the powers of the saints (James and Stephen). Although they may appear frightening at first glance, Christians need not therefore fear the menacing Jews if they just turn to the holy men (and women?) of the Church for protection. In this way, the Jewish menace is shown to be manageable and ultimately inconsequential. Christian "magic", or rather the sort of necromancy practised by the men of the Church (Macarius),⁸³ reveals the fate after death of those Jews who refuse to convert to Christianity: hell and damnation.

Moneylending

Usury, or the lending of money at interest, between "brothers" (*fratri*) was forbidden in the Bible although it was permissible to charge a "foreigner" interest.⁸⁴ As Jews and Christians were estranged from one another, and Jews and Christians were not "brothers," they were permitted to make them loans to one another. Although early rabbinical statements on the subject of lending money to non-Jews were rather restrictive, the potential for making money and the growing demand for borrowing money resulted in moneylending becoming widespread among Jews. Indeed, it became one of the occupations permitted to Jews by the authorities – but far from the only one.⁸⁵ While moneylending became a busi-

⁸³ See also Text 1: *A Jew Converts and Speaks to his Sons from Heaven*.

⁸⁴ For the Biblical laws governing moneylending, see Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35–37; Deuteronomy 23:20–21.

⁸⁵ On the growth of Jewish moneylending in Europe and its consequences for Jewish–Christian relations, see James Parkes, *The Jew in the Medieval Community: A Study of his Political and Economic Situation* (London: The Soncino Press, 1938); Ronnie P.-C. Hsia, "The Usurious Jew: Economic Structure and Religious Representations in an Anti-Semitic Discourse," in *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*, ed. Ronnie P.-C. Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann, Publications of the German Historical Institute, Washington D. C. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 161–76; Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes*

ness activity of Jews elsewhere in Europe, there were of course no Jews resident in Scandinavia. For this reason, texts that mention moneylending tend to involve Christians; indeed, the Christian campaign against usury was largely an internal matter for much of the Middle Ages in Western Europe and it did not come to be projected onto the Jews until a later stage. Usury was a sin that is mentioned in several Danish religious texts. Here, for example, under “avaricia” [greed] in the list of sins in the ODa. *Modus confitendi* [*The Way to Confess*] from 1475–1500:

Auaricia · ffemthæ synd See om tw haffuer syndhet i gyrighet eller Vidzskaff, Om tw haffuer meth meghe attraa sammenlagth verdens godz, Om tw haffuer giort aagær / [...] Om tw haffuer noghet køpth paa thet at tw skulle seliæ thet dyræræ⁸⁶
[Greed: The fifth sin. See whether you have sinned through greed or on purpose, whether you have with much craving collected worldly goods, whether you have practised usury, (...) whether you have bought something with the intention of selling in on at a higher price

The punishment after death for the sin of usury is described in an ODa. text about Paul’s descent into hell found in the late fifteenth-century work *Visio Pauli* [*St Paul’s Vision*]:

Syden soa han en annen stath, ful bothe af karlæ oc quinne / oc atæ alle theræ eghn tungæ ·
Tha sagdæ engellen til hamnum : thet ær okærkarle oc alle met okær faræ ok engen miskund
hafdhæ yuer hin fatuk, forti tha haue the teligh pinæ⁸⁷

and *Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), *passim*; Robert Chazan, “The Role of Medieval Northern Europe in Generating Virulent Anti-Jewish Imagery” and Giacomo Todeschini, “Jewish Usurers, Blood Libel, and the Second-Hand Economy: The Medieval Origins of a Stereotype (from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century),” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (New York: Routledge, 2018), 97–106 and 341–51 respectively. Recent studies have shown that the Christian campaign against usury was largely an internal issue that only came to be projected onto Jews at a later stage. Indeed, Jews were employed within a whole range of occupations in the Middle Ages. On this, see Michael Toch, *The Economic History of European Jews: Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages*, *Études sur le Judaïsme Médiéval*, vol. 56 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Giacomo Todeschini, “Usury in Christian Middle Ages: A Reconsideration of the Historiographical Tradition (1949–2010),” in *Religione e Istituzioni Religiose nell’Economia Europea: 1000–1800; Religion and Religious Institutions in the European Economy; Atti Della “Quarantatreesima Settimana Di Studi”, 8–12 Maggio 2011*, ed. Francesco Ammannati, Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica “F. Datini”, Prato Serie 2, Atti delle “settimane di studi” e altri convegni, vol. 43 (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2012), 119–30; Julie L. Mell, *The Myth of the Medieval Jewish Moneylender*, 2 vols, Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
⁸⁶ DKB NKS 129 4^o, f. 5v; *DePassDom* 6.

⁸⁷ SKB K 4, f. 39v; *HellKv* 25. On *Visio Pauli*, see Dario Bullitta, “Sources, Context, and English Provenance of the Old Danish *Visio Pauli*,” *The Journal of English and German Philology* 116, no. 1 (2017): 1–23.

[Then he saw another place, full of both men and women, and they were all eating their own tongues. Then the angel said to him, "These are usurers and those people who practised usury and had no mercy towards the poor, for this reason they are now being punished in this way."]

The OSw. work *Själens tröst* [*Consolation of the Soul*] from the first half of the fifteenth century contains many warnings about usury and the dire consequences of lending and borrowing at interest. Using the ninth commandment, the work makes it clear that such business practices are unchristian:

*Thet nionda budhordhit ær Mænniskia thu skalt ekki astunda ellir gernas thins jæmcristins godz thet wari hws ellir akir ellir nokot annat aff allo thy honom til høre J thesso forbyudhir gudh alla handa giri / Roof / styld / okir / oc alla orætta oc falska winning medh hwilke een mænniskia astundar nokot thet androm til hørir til orætta j hwat matto ellir hwat list thet kan wara*⁸⁸

[The ninth commandment is: Human, you shall not covet or desire your fellow Christian's assets, be it a house or field or something else of all that belongs to him. With this God forbids all kinds of greed, theft, burglary, usury, and all unjust and false profit with which a person covets something that belongs to another person unjustly in whatever way or with whatever cunning it may be.]

Själens tröst contains several miracle tales that in an entertaining fashion demonstrate how those who make money from charging interest are rejected by God and cannot find salvation:

*Thet war een okir karll han hafðhe eet sølfkors til pant aff enom / Han wardh syukir oc nalkadhis fast dōdhonóm / Tha toko hans wini eet kors j kyrkionne oc hiolo for honom oc badho at han skulde kœnnas widh sin gudh oc skapara oc see oppa korsit / oc skodha hans hardha pyno oc dōdh som waar herra ledh a thy hælgha korse for hans skuld / Han swaradhe thetta korsit kœnnir ekki iak / Æn thet korsit kœnnir iak wel som mik staar til pant oc iak hafwir j mine kisto oc medh them ordhum gaff vp sin anda*⁸⁹

⁸⁸ SKB A 108, p. 296; *SjāTrö* K 479. Cf. "Thu skalt enga batan ellir okir taka aff thy godze thu androm borghar Thu skalt thinom iæmcristne thit godz borgha rætfærdhelika oc eenkannelika for gudz skuld || wilt thu ekki göra \thet/ tha borgha honom enkte" [You shall take no profit or interest on the assets that you lend to others. You shall lend your fellow Christian justly and simply for the sake of God. If you do not want to do so, then do not lend him it], SKB A 108, pp. 300–301; *SjāTrö* K 488; "Thik bør iæmwel atirgifwa alla the fruct oc nyt som thu hafwir ther aff fangit / hafðhe thu een pæning wunnit medh okir / Oc wunne thu sidhan thusanda mark medh them pæningenom / thik bordhe thet alt saman atirgifwa om thu wilde thina siel bewara" [You ought equally to return the fruits and income that you have received from it. If you made a penny through usury, and then you made a (further) thousand marks with this penny, then you ought to return all of it if you wish to keep your soul], SKB A 108, p. 303; *SjāTrö* K 493.

⁸⁹ SKB A 108, p. 297; *SjāTrö* K 482.

[There was a usurer. He had (received) a silver cross in pawn from someone. He became ill and was very close to death. So, his friends took a cross from the church⁹⁰ and held it before him and prayed that he would recognize his God and creator and look upon the cross and see the harsh torment and death that Our Lord suffered on the cross for his sake. He answered, “I don’t know that cross, but I know very well the cross that I have in pawn and am keeping in my chest!” And with those words, he died.]

Thet war een rikir man / han hafðhe latit ena kyrkio byggia aff sino godze / Thentidh biscopin kom oc skulde kyrkiona wighia / Tha stodh een diæwl bak widh altarit oc saghdhe / Herra biscop j skulin thenna kyrkiona engaledh wighia / hon ær miin oc høre mik til medh rætto / Biscopin spordhe hwi høre hon thik til / Diæfwlin swaradhe hon ær bygd aff okir oc orætto godze thy ær hon miin Swa bleff kyrkian owigdh oc thet forstyrde diæfwlin⁹¹
 [There was a wealthy man. He had had a church built using his assets. When the bishop arrived and was to consecrate the church, a devil was standing behind the altar and said, “Lord bishop, you should absolutely not consecrate this church. It’s mine and belongs to me by rights!” The bishop asked, “Why does it belong to you?” The devil answered, “It’s built from usury and unjust assets! That’s why it’s mine!” So, the church remained unconsecrated and the devil prevented it.]

Thet war een rikir okirkarl / han laa j sinom ytirsta tyma oc skulde døð / tha læt han bæra infor sik all siin silffkar / gul oc pæninga oc rika hafwor / oc saghdhe til sinna siel / O min siel bliff medh mik / alt thetta godzsit wil iak thik gifwa / Oc æn mera wil iak thik ther til afla oc winna / Thæntidh dø||dhin gik ath honom saghdhe han O siel mædhan thu wilt engalund medh mik blifwa / tha antwardhar iak thik diæflenom j hælfwite / ther medh gaff han vp sin anda⁹²
 [There was a wealthy usurer. He was at the end of his life and was dying. He had all his silver dishes, gold and money, and expensive belongings brought before him, and he said to his soul, “O, my soul! Stay with me, I’ll give you all these treasures and in addition I’ll earn and make you even more!” When death approached him, he said, “O soul! As you don’t want to stay with me at all, I commend you to the devil in hell!” And with that he died.]

There is only one place in the work, where Jews are mentioned directly in connection with usury. Christians who lend money to Jews may not receive interest payments on these loans:

*Kære fadhir maa iak taka okir aff enom iudha^(a) ellir hedhninga /
 Min kære son thu skalt enkte okir taka aff engom man / hafwir thu takit okir aff iudha ellir
 hedhninga / oc west thu nokra cristna mænniskio / som the hafwa thet godzsit orættelika*

⁹⁰ The OSw. is ambiguous here: “toko [...] eet kors j kyrkionne” [took (...) a cross in the church]. However, the MLG parallel text is clearer: “brochten dat bilde des hilgen cruces vte der kerken” [brought the image (icon) of the Holy Cross out of the church], *SelTro* 240.

⁹¹ SKB A 108, p. 305; *SjäTrö* K 496.

⁹² SKB A 108, pp. 306–307; *SjäTrö* K 499.

aff swikit / hæne mat thu *thet* tilwænda / ellir gifwa them *thet* sielfwom j geen / thu mat *thet* ekki behalda⁹³

Notes: a. iudha] i[o>u]dha MS.

[(Question:) "Dear father, may I take interest from a Jew or pagan?"

(Answer:) "My dear son, you may not take interest from anyone. If you have taken interest from a Jew or pagan, and you know of some Christian whose goods they have unjustly tricked from him, then you may transfer or give it [i. e., the interest] back to him. You may not keep it"]

The same text is found in the ODa. version of the work, *Sjælens Trøst*.⁹⁴ It is similar to the wording in a sermon by Christiern Pedersen in his *Alle Epistler oc Euangelia*:

I Anden maade om han fonger noget gotz aff nogen som før haffuer fonget det vretferdige Det skeer naar nogen tager gaffuer aff iøder eller obenbare aager karle Saadanne gaffuer bør huer at giffue fattige folk Item de som anamme gaffuer aff tyffue røffuere eller doblere Eller aff nogre andre som de vide at saadant gotz fonget haffue vretferdige Det skwlle de fonge dem igen eller giffue det fattige folk⁹⁵

[Secondly, if he receives goods from someone who has in turn obtained them unfairly (this occurs when someone takes gifts from Jews or blatant usurers), then each person should give such gifts to the poor. Moreover, those who receive gifts from thieves, robbers, or gamblers or from some other person who they know has obtained the goods unfairly, they should return them or give them to the poor.]

It is difficult to imagine the circumstances under which a Dane would make a loan to a Jew, so this tale is most likely to have been reworked from the MLG original. Regardless, readers are here being advised that they may not charge interest on loans to anyone. In accordance with Deuteronomy 23:20–21, moneylending was technically permitted between Jews and Christians, so the idea that it was forbidden for Christians to practise moneylending at interest to everyone, not just Christians, would have strengthened the idea that usury, lending at interest, was a "Jewish activity" that was forbidden to the followers of Christ. Doubtlessly, this provoked hatred, as it was an activity described as a grave sin

⁹³ SKB A 108, p. 302; *SjæTrø* K 491.

⁹⁴ "**Ma iac taga ogir af en jødha. ælla hedhninga.** Min kiære son thw skal inkte ogir taga af nogrom man ·/ Hafvir thw tagit ogir af en jødha · oc vestu nogra cristna mærnisko som the hafva thæt gozit orætteliga af swigit · [hæn]ne ma thw thæt gifva · æn thæt ma thw ey sælfvir behalda" [(Question:) "May I take interest from a Jew or a pagan?" (Reply:) "My dear son, you may not take interest from anyone. If you have taken interest from a Jew, and you know of some Christian whose goods they (the Jews) have deceitfully tricked from him, then you may give it (i. e., the interest) to him, but you may not keep it yourself"], SKB A 109, f. 66v (= p. 132); *SjæTrø* 102.

⁹⁵ *AlleEpocEu*, f. 156r [cl]; *ChrPed Skr* II 110.

by the Church.⁹⁶ However, the need to be able to raise capital quickly as the basis of a society capable of expanding its economy, waging war, and developing its urban centres was sorely noted particularly by the secular authorities and ruling classes. An agreement allowing Jews to lend to Christians suited both these Christians, who were able to acquire credit, and Jews, who had to make a living in the few occupations allowed them (viz. currency dealing and loans). One of the consequences, however, was the Jews' growing dependency on the goodwill of the secular leaders whom they provided with capital.

The Jew and the Staff Filled with Gold

In Text 35: *The Jew and the Staff Filled with Gold*, a Jew asks a Christian man, who has borrowed a sum of money and gold from him and who insists that he has repaid the sum, to swear an oath on the altar of St Nicholas that he has paid off the loan. The man brings with him a hollow staff, which he has filled with the money and gold, and asks the Jew to hold it, while he swears upon oath that he has already given more money than he borrowed back to the Jewish moneylender. Thus, he has tricked the Jew who is indeed holding the staff that contains the money and, for the duration of the oath at least, has been returned more money than he originally lent.⁹⁷ Later, the debtor falls asleep on the roadside and is crushed to death under the wheels of a wagon. The staff breaks open, the money and gold spill out, and his deceit is revealed. However, the Jew declares that he will not accept the money unless St Nicholas raises the man from the dead. Miraculously, the man arises, and the Jew is baptized.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ See Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism*, 36–37; Chazan, “The Role of Medieval Northern Europe”; Todeschini, “Jewish Usurers, Blood Libel, and the Second-Hand Economy.”

⁹⁷ This scenario is reminiscent of Augustine's view of Jews as “guardians of the books”: they carry the Scriptures but do not understand what they contain. See under “Jews in medieval Christian thought” in Chapter 1: *Introduction*, pp. 5–9.

⁹⁸ The story is illustrated in three panels in a stained-glass window, one of three dedicated to St Nicholas, in Chartres Cathedral and dating from c. 1205–25. It also appears in a window in York (c. 1190), Beverley (c. 1230), and Auxerre (before 1250). See Meredith Parsons Lillich, *Rainbow Like an Emerald: Stained Glass in Lorraine in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, Monographs on the Fine Arts, vol. 47 (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 85–86; Anne F. Harris, “The Performative Terms of Jewish Iconoclasm and Conversion in Two Saint Nicholas Windows at Chartres Cathedral,” in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Merback (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 119–41.

The tale of *The Jew and the Staff Filled with Gold*, one of the oldest miracles connected to St Nicholas, is found in OSw. in two works: *Fornsvenska legendariet* (UUB C 528, 1400–50; SRA E 8900, 1450–70) and *Själens tröst* (SKB A 108, 1400–50). The *Fornsvenska legendariet* version, taken from the *Legenda aurea*,⁹⁹ is told in a very condensed fashion; in fact, as is sometimes the case in the *Fornsvenska legendariet*, the reader must almost know the story in advance to make sense of the text. The version in *Själens tröst*, however, is longer, more entertaining, and, as so often in the work's tales, contains direct speech.

The Jew and the Staff Filled with Gold is the story of a saint's miracle. The immoral character is a greedy, treacherous Christian who attempts to cheat a Jewish moneylender out of a sum of money. However, when the crime is revealed through a very earthly and fatal "accident," the Jew feels pity for the man and refuses to collect his debt. Instead, in the manner of a bargain, he calls upon St Nicholas to raise the Christian from the dead, adding that if the saint does so, he will convert to Christianity. By refusing to accept the money unless the Christian is given life, the Jewish moneylender is acting in a manner contrary to the stereotype of the usurious Jew. So, in addition to demonstrating the efficacy of asking St Nicholas for help and revealing the urge to convert among Jews, the tale acts as a warning against those borrowing money from Jews – indeed, how can we be sure that the borrower's death was just an accident and not some divinely ordained rough justice? Nonetheless it is the death of the "bad Christian" that allows for his resurrection: he is reborn as a "good" Christian. It is similarly his death and resurrection that triggers the moneylender's own spiritual transformation from Jew to good Christian. The Jew in this tale, as in *The Jew at the Devils' Council*, is not attacking Christianity. He is, in fact, engaging with it in a benign manner by striking a deal with St Nicholas. In this way, he occupies an ambiguous grey zone: both resistant to the Christian message and yet open to its assistance; he is both ignorant and knowledgeable, and he is a Jew who behaves like a good Christian. This unsettled and unsettling status is resolved by the moneylender's conversion.

The Jew behaves here in a more Christian manner than the Christian himself. This use of another religion to criticize the behaviour of Christians is a recurrent element in miracle tales (e. g., *The Jew at the Devils' Council*; *St Macarius and the Talking Skull*), but it is also found in other sorts of texts (e. g., in some of St Birgitta's revelations mentioned above). In the ODa. *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (SKB M 307) from 1459, the sultan of Cairo receives the famous traveller and during

⁹⁹ *LegAur* 44–45. For an English translation, see Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 25.

their many meetings criticizes the behaviour of Christians in Europe:¹⁰⁰ priests live in an untoward manner, dress worldly, drink to excess, are not chaste, do not perform their duties, and are poor advisers to their rulers. Meanwhile, the laity trade, go to the inn, and eat and drink to excess instead of going to church. They engage in gossip, fight, live more filthily than dumb beasts, practise usury, steal, rob, cheat, and break oaths. Quite a list of “achievements”! What is astonishing about the text is not so much the sultan’s criticisms but the fact that Mandeville does nothing to refute his claims:

Ter iek Iohannes tessæ ordh meth manghæ fleræ aff hannum hørth hadhæ tha stodh iech
 oc vestæ ey megit at suaræ mod sennen Jech vndrædæ oppa at iech saa dannæ ord aff een
 vantro saracener høræ skuldæ toch sadhæ iek saa til hannum Hærræ meth edher orloff huor-
 lund kundæ j nu vidæ thettæ saa fullæligæ som j nu sagt hafuæ¹⁰¹

[When I, John, had heard these and many more words, I stood and just did not know how to respond to the truth. I was amazed that I should hear such words from an infidel Saracen; however, I said to him: “Lord, with your permission, how can you know so fully about what you have now said?”]

Thus, the non-Christian voice criticizing Christian behaviour or being used as a mirror in which Christendom can see itself is not just a Jewish one. Muslims, too, could behave more morally and piously than Christians, and they could legitimately comment on the discipline and morality of the Christian clergy and laity. Such a non-Christian voice is meant as a prick of conscience: it was certainly an uncomfortable experience to have one’s behaviour compared unfavourably to that of a Jew or Muslim.

Another tale about St Nicholas and a Jew can be found in the Text 37: *The Jew, the Axe, and St Nicholas* (SKB A 110, c. 1385). Here, a Jew lends an axe to a Christian neighbour who subsequently refuses to return it maintaining that it his axe and not the Jew’s. They end up in court where St Nicholas is prayed to and asked to reveal the truth. With that, the axe jumps up and says, “jak ær judhans · hulkin sannelika lænte mik thæssom sama kristna manninom” [I belong to the Jew who truly lent me to this very Christian!] Again, we have an honest Jew and a dishonest Christian, the truth about whom is revealed by St Nicholas. Although no spiritual transformation is mentioned, nor any punishment of the Christian man, we once

¹⁰⁰ SKB M 307, p. 58a–b; *Mandev* 72–76. On the use of Muslims in East Norse texts to reflect upon the behaviour of Christians, see Jonathan Adams, “The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad in East Norse,” in *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 203–37.

¹⁰¹ *Mandev* 74.

more have an example of “Christian” heaven supporting a Jew against a Christian. The divine will always support truth and honesty, no matter who is involved.

The Merchant's Surety

This well-known legend tells the story of a Christian merchant who, thanks to divine intervention, was able to return the money that he had borrowed from a Jew under the guarantee or surety of the image of the Virgin holding the Christ Child.¹⁰² It is found in the OSw. sermon manuscript LSB T 180 (c. 1450) as an exemplum for the sermon for Christmas Day (“*Exiit edictum a sesare augusto etc.*,” Luke 2:1). The tale probably originates from the political centre of Christianity – Constantinople – at the time of the Byzantine iconoclasm (eighth to first half of the ninth centuries) and became very popular in the Middle Ages.¹⁰³ It is found in numerous Latin and vernacular versions, including Arabic and Russian, and is incorporated in the collections of William of Malmesbury (c. 1095–c. 1143), Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180–c. 1240), Vincent of Beauvais (c. 1184/1194–c. 1264), and Johann Herolt (d. 1468) among others.¹⁰⁴

102 In some European versions, e.g., in William of Malmesbury's miracles of the Virgin, the merchant is called Theodorus [God-given], the Jewish moneylender is called Abraham; the events take place in Constantinople, and the merchant sails to Alexandria. On this miracle, see Hilding Kjellman, *La deuxième collection anglo-normande des Miracles de la Sainte Vierge et son original latin*, Arbeten utgifna med understöd af Vilhelm Ekmans Universitetsfond, Uppsala, vol. 27 (Uppsala: Akademiska bokhandeln, 1922), lxiii–lxv (no. xlviii); Erik Boman, ed., *Deux miracles de Gautier de Coinci, publiés d'après tous les manuscrits connus, avec introduction, notes et glossaire* (Paris: Droz, 1935), vii–lvii; Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 29–32; Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Middle English*, 80–84; Kathleen Kameron, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England, 1350–1500* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 60.

103 Kjellman, *La deuxième collection anglo-normande*, lxv; Boman, *Deux miracles de Gautier de Coinci*, vii–lvii.

104 Of the many western European versions of this tale, the earliest seems to be that found in William of Malmesbury's (d. 1143) *Liber de laudibus et miraculis Sanctae Mariae*, which has been published as *El Libro “de laudibus et miraculis sanctae mariae” de Guillermo de Malmesbury*, ed. Jose M. Canal (Rome: Alma Roma Libreria Editrice, 1968), pp. 132–36 (no. 32). A version of it can also be found in Hugo von Trimberg's thirteenth-century *Das Solsequium*, which has been published as *Das “Solsequium” des Hugo von Trimberg: Eine Kritische Edition*, ed. Angelika Strauss (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag Publishing, 2002), 169–70 (no. 5). In Hugo's version, it is an icon of Jesus, rather than the Virgin, and the statue is pawned because a man has gone broke due to his sins and is in desperate need of money, but the core elements remain the same. Caesarius of Heisterbach (d. 1240) also includes a version of the story in his wildly popular *Dia-*

In the tale, a poor Christian asks to borrow a considerable sum of money from a Jew in order to start trading and make a living for himself. Being so poor, he has nothing he can offer as a guarantee for the loan, so the Jew takes him to a church and before an image of the Christ Child in his mother Mary's arms he makes the Christian swear that he will return the loan with interest upon a certain day agreed upon by them both.¹⁰⁵ With money in hand, the Christian subsequently sails abroad and becomes a wealthy man through trading. As the day approaches when he is to return the loan, the Christian finds himself a long way from home and stuck in port due to adverse weather conditions. Unable to return home, he fills a chest with the money he owes and upon the agreed day throws it into the sea while invoking God's help, so that the chest may be carried across the water to the Jewish moneylender and that he be spared God's punishment for breaking the oath. In accordance with God's will, the Jew, walking along the shoreline and waiting for the merchant to return, finds the chest of money floating in the water. He takes it home, hides it under his bed, and wonders where it came from.¹⁰⁶ When the Christian merchant returns, the Jew is quick to demand his money from him. The Christian replies that as far as he knows, the Jew has already received his money. The Jew denies this and so the two go to the church where the pledge was originally made, and the Christian asks the image of Christ for help. The image comes to life and tells the Jew that he has already receive his money in the chest that he found and his under his bed. The Jew then admits the truth and is baptized.

The Jewish moneylender is never referred to by his profession. Even though the Christian man ("crisne mannen") is also referred to as 'the merchant' ("køp-mannin"), the moneylender is always merely 'the Jew' ("iuden"). Moneylending is here so strongly associated with Jews, that it is not even necessary to describe the Jew as a moneylender: the two are synonymous. Similarly, the terms Jew and pagan also appear to be synonyms as the Jewish character is described as "einom

logus Miraculorum, published as *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange, vol. 2 (Brussels: H. Lempertz and Company, 1851), 70, 194–95. Its latest appearance is in the vernacular in the fourteenth-century French collection of exempla *Ci nous dit*, published as *Ci nous dit: Recueil d'exemples moraux*, vol. 2, ed. Gérard Blangez (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1979–88), 199 (no. 694).

105 In this version of the tale, it is Christ, not Mary, who both guarantees the contract and resolves the dispute. In most versions, it is Mary who intercedes.

106 In some versions of the tale, the merchant included a record of their transaction in the chest that included both his and the Jew's names. See Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 31.

heidnom iuda.”¹⁰⁷ This blurring of characteristics creates a much broader “other” than can encompass a larger number of non-Christian qualities. However, the Jew in this tale is not painted in a poor light: he demands no “worldly” pledge or surety from the Christian but trusts that the man’s faith in Christ will ensure repayment; his moneylending enables the Christian to succeed in trading and become rich; he only demands his money back as agreed with the Christian; he is not aware that the money in the chest is from the Christian until Christ tells him (upon which he immediately converts). Indeed, his only questionable behaviour is taking the chest of money that he finds and then hiding it at home: finding goods washed ashore (*strandvrak/stranda vrak*) was governed by laws that did not allow anyone – Christian and non-Christian alike – to simply take it home. Such goods usually belonged to the crown and the Jewish moneylender is motivated to break the law through greed. From a religious, rather than a juridical, view of taking shipwrecked goods, the OSw. *Själens tröst* has the following to say about *stranda vrak*:

Ma iak taka thet godz skipbrota wardhír j hafwino oc flytir til mit land /
Min kære son thet mat thu engalund göra / Allan thæn ræt wærlz herra hafwa ther oppa sat
ma thik enkte hielp / Hafwír thu nokot ther aff nutit / thet skalt thu gifwa j geen vtan thet
ware swa at ther waro røfwara ellir andre som landeno wildo skadha / hwilkin mænniskia
som j andre matto skipbruta goodz takir hittir ellir kōpir han skal fara ther medh som her
staar før scifwit aff stolno godze¹⁰⁸

[(Question:) “May I take goods that have been shipwrecked in the sea and floated to my land?”
(Answer:) “My dear son, you may absolutely not do so! All the right, that the lords of the world have placed upon this, cannot help you (i.e., you cannot benefit from the rights that others have to shipwrecked goods). If you have profited from this, then you must return it, unless it is the case that there were pirates or others who wanted to damage the country. Whoever takes, finds, or buys shipwrecked goods¹⁰⁹ in other ways, his fate will be the same as written above about stolen goods.]

Although the Jew in *The Merchant’s Surety* is not as “good” (i.e., Christian-like) a Jew as in *The Jew and the Staff Filled with Gold*, he is not a markedly malicious figure. The greatest character difference in the two tales is, in fact, the figure of the Christian. The author in *The Merchant’s Surety* has created a sympathetic characterization of both the Jewish moneylender and the Christian merchant.

¹⁰⁷ See also Text 42.1–2: *The Jewish Boy in the Oven*; Text 1: *A Jew Converts and Speaks to his Sons from Heaven*; Text 32: *The Hermit and the Jewess*; Text 45: *The Little Jewish Girl Rachel Who Joined a Nunnery*.

¹⁰⁸ SKB A 108, p. 300; *SjälTrö* K 486.

¹⁰⁹ Although clear, the OSw. is a bit different to the MLG original: “de dat gud koft edder vindet edder gerouet gud koft” [whoever buys or finds the goods or buys stolen goods], *SelTro* 243.

Summary

In both tales, the Jewish moneylenders are not portrayed as dishonest or profiting excessively through usury. That is not the aim of these tales. Rather they are a necessary means for the Christian men to trade and profit themselves. Nor do the Jews demand a “concrete” guarantee for the loan. In both cases, the moneylender demands that the borrower swear an oath before a holy figure as surety for the loan. The only questionable act on the part of the Jews here is the moneylender in *The Merchant’s Surety* who takes and hides the chest of money. However, he did not know whose it was, or that it had been sent by his debtor. Nonetheless, the portrayal of the Jewish moneylenders in these two miracle tales is not isolated. In his book *Shylock Reconsidered*, Joseph Shatzmiller attempts to take a fresh look at the question of moneylending between Jews and Christians by moving beyond stereotypes and looking at the realities of everyday life, and he showed that, “people very much appreciated moneylenders who displayed qualities that made one an honest and righteous man.”¹¹⁰

The difference between the tales lies in how the Christians behave: with God-fearing honesty (*The Merchant’s Surety*) or with impious dishonesty (*The Jew and the Staff Filled with Gold*). In both cases, however, it requires the intervention of the holy figure in front of whom the pledge was made in order for the truth to come out; and in both cases, the Jewish moneylender finally sees that the Christian holy figures and divine intervention and power are real, and he converts to Christianity.

The image of the usurious Jew exploiting Christians and living extravagantly is not what is being shown here and nor is it a prerequisite for decoding and understanding the miracle. This stands in stark contrast to the very few other references to Jewish moneylenders in East Norse. For example, Christiern Pedersen (c. 1480–1554) describes Jewish and Christian moneylending in *Alle Epistler oc Euangelia* [*The Book of Miracle Sermons*] from 1515:

110 Joseph Shatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered: Jews, Moneylending, and Medieval Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 118. However, in his review of the book, William Chester Jordan expresses his concerns about Shatzmiller’s focus on amicable relations between Jews and Christians: “But the real problem is not in the book itself, it is in the impression which many readers will take away from it – of the pervasiveness and primacy of friendship in Christians’ relations with Jews, even when lending and borrowing money were involved.” William Chester Jordan, “[Review:] Shatzmiller’s *Shylock Reconsidered*,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 82, nos 1–2 (1991): 222.

Her met merckiss besynderlige iøderne som waare offuer maade gerige i det gamble testamente oc ære en nw saa paa denne tiid Thii brwge dhe obenbarlige oger De haffue och mange stalbrødre i blant cristne menniske nw diss vær som bruge oger. gøre de det icke saa obenbarlige som de da gøre De det alligeuel hiemmelige oc forkaste deriss sielæ der meth thi det er i stor dødelig synd¹¹¹

[This means in particular the Jews, who were extremely greedy in the Old Testament and who are still so now at the current time, since they blatantly practise usury. Unfortunately, they nowadays also have many companions among Christians who engage in usury. Even if they do not do so as blatantly as they (i. e., the Jews), they nevertheless do so secretly and thus condemn their souls as it is a great mortal sin.]

This short passage demonstrates that just because Jews did not live in Scandinavia, that did not mean that their purported greedy and deceitful characteristics should not be presented and described to parishioners. Although not part of this study, it is worth noting that there are also many accusations of usury against the Jews in Poul Ræff's *Nouiter in lucem data: iudeorum secreta*, a Danish translation of Johannes Pfefferkorn's *Libellus de Judaica Confessione*, that was published in Copenhagen just one year after Pedersen's sermon collection in 1516.¹¹²

Conversion

As we have seen, miracle tales verify certain aspects of Church dogma in real, everyday situations, they often also point to the future when all Jews will convert and usher in the time when world events will reach their climax. In stories of conversion, one or more Jews become Christians and by so doing prove Christian

¹¹¹ *AlleEpocEu*, f. 78r [lxxii]; ChrPed *Skr* I 243.

¹¹² For example: "Tractheræ paa manghe atskillighe falscke fwnd / som er met aagher / met falsck køpmanscaff oc manghe andræ vsighelighe vbehørlighæ syndher oc falscke fwnd" [They engage in many deceitful activities such as usury, fraudulent commerce, and many other unmentionable shameful sins and deceitful activities], *Nouiter in lucem data: iudeorum secreta*, f. b3v [p. 18]; "the studeræ dag oc nat ther paa at the kunnæ gøre them sckadhe paa theris tymelighe godtz / met aagher oc al andhen falskhet i huat modhe the kunnæ met altsomstørst subtilighet / hwilkit dieffuelen icke gør / endog at han er alsomstørst fighendæ" [they study day and night so that they can cause damage to their worldly goods by means of usury and all other kinds of trickery in whatever way they can with the greatest subtlety, which the devil does not do even though he is the greatest enemy of all], *Nouiter in lucem data: iudeorum secreta*, f. b6r [p. 23]; "the fwlæ oc slemme hwn dhæ faa oc afftwinghæ ethers egnæ fattughe vndherdaner cristnæ menniske / met aagher oc andræ manghæ at skillighe falsckæ fwnd [These unclean and evil dogs obtain and extort this money from your own poor Christian subjects by means of usury and many other deceitful tricks], *Nouiter in lucem data: iudeorum secreta*, f. c1v [p. 26].

truth, fulfil their role in eschatology, and prepare the way for the Final Days and the Second Coming. The role assigned to Jews by Augustine provides them with a special place in the Christian history of redemption and hope, and those who recognize Christ as the Messiah and convert can be considered as paving the way for the Final Days and the Second Coming. Thus, these tales lift Jewish converts to eschatological heights. Their complex otherness is at first an attack on Christianity but ultimately becomes the source of its success.

Jews converting was not an uncommon phenomenon in the Middle Ages and there were both forced conversions in which individuals or entire groups were coerced into baptism and there were willing conversions in which individuals or families chose to convert for their own personal reasons such as religious conviction or the desire for greater mobility in the broader society.¹¹³ Sometimes conversion was a means of avoiding expulsion or it offered a way out of a punishment for a crime (either within the Jewish community itself or at the hands of the Christian authorities). Jews who converted for such tactical reasons were not always seen as “real” converts to Christianity by their new co-religionists who even suspected them of being motivated by monetary reward and travelling from city to city to “re-convert” in each place with the aim of receiving a new baptismal gift each time. There were also converts who later renounced their baptism and re-joined Jewish communities. Poul Ræff’s *Nouiter in lucem data: iudeorum secreta* from 1516 lays out these allegations:

Paa thet siisthæ skal man widhæ. At manghæ iødhær æræ til som holdhæ sig for cristnæ menniskæ och æræ dog icke godhæ cristnæ / thet kommer sigh swo til. Manghæ sculle findhes blant iødhernæ som offuergiffue theris slecht oc wænner / sameledis theris fæderne land oc faræ langht hædhen oc ladhæ sig dobæ. Icke forti at the willæ bliffue godhæ cristnæ / men at the kunnæ dess beddræ forsamlæ penninghæ oc leffuæ dess kræseligheræ. Och at the kunnæ dess beddræ faa lempæ ther til at brwghæ theris kunsther om the kunnæ nogræ. Nar the æræ tha kedhæ aff en stæd suo faræ the ther aff oc til en anden stæd / ther ladhæ the sigh døbæ aff nyg / mod then hellighe cristnæ reghel / oc sameledis atther ther forsamlæ penninghe oc brwghæ hwes the kunnæ. Sidhen paa thet siisthæ giffue the sig til iødhernæ igen / then enæ effther then andhen oc sighæ swo hwer wed sig. Ieg wil ickæ lengher waræ cristthen / theris tro er inthet vthen kettherij / met manghe andræ vbeqwemæ stycker huad the kunnæ paa findæ Er thet swo at the end bliffue hooss the cristnæ oc holdhæ sigh for cristnæ menniskæ / allighewel er theris hemmelighæ forhandling met iødhernæ. Fornemmæ the tha noghen som wil wendhe sig om til then hellighæ

113 On this subject, see Joseph Shatzmiller, “Jewish Converts to Christianity in Medieval Europe, 1200–1500,” in *Cross-Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period: Essays Presented to Aryeh Grabois on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Goodich, Sophia Menache, and Sylvia Schein (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 297–318.

cristnæ troo / tha staa the ther i modh aff al theris macht. Her foræ er thet nyttheligt at see sig wel foræ hwem man giffuer thet werdughæ sacramenthæ som er dob oc cristhendom.¹¹⁴ [Finally, you should know that there are many Jews who pretend to be Christians, but who are not good Christians. This happens in this way: There are many among the Jews who leave their family and friends and likewise their country of birth, and travel from here and have themselves baptized – not because they want to become good Christians, but because by doing so they will be better able to accumulate money and live in greater luxury. And so, they can have greater opportunity to use their skills, if they have any. When they tire of one place, then they leave and go to another town. There they have themselves baptized anew against holy Christian rules and likewise accumulate money again and use what they can. Then, in the end, they return to the Jews, one after the other, each saying to himself, “I don’t want to be Christian anymore. Their religion is nothing but heresy,” along with many other improper phrases, whatever they can come up with. If it happens that they stay with the Christians and pretend to be Christians, they still have secret dealings with the Jews. If they learn of someone who wishes to convert to the holy Christian faith, then they oppose this with all their might. Therefore, it is useful to be wary about whom one gives the worthy sacrament that baptism and Christianity are.]

These relapses tended to strengthen suspicions of a particular Jewish stubbornness and obstinacy and undermined the belief that Jews could be spiritually transformed.¹¹⁵ In order to convince Jews of the truth of Christianity, they were forced to listen to Christian sermons in churches and public squares and to attend disputations where Jewish scholars were (involuntarily) pitted against Christian theologians to debate points of faith in carefully staged spectacles.¹¹⁶

The preacher had to demonstrate the sincerity and authenticity of Jewish conversion. Therefore, conversions in exempla often came about through divine intervention, rather than solely through human agency. These Jewish converts who had experienced the supernatural and seen the hand of God (or, more frequently, Mary) with their own eyes could presumably be considered “model converts” who were beyond suspicion; indeed, perhaps having seen (or provoked) a miracle that verified Christian dogma, they could even be revered as witnesses of Christian truth, the ultimate authority for the authenticity of Christian doctrines, symbols, and relics.

114 Jonathan Adams, *Lessons in Contempt: Poul Ræff's Translation and Publication in 1516 of Johannes Pfefferkorn's The Confession of the Jews*, Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund 581 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2013), 258–59, includes Latin original from Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Libellus de Iudaica confessione siue sabbato afflictionis* (Cologne: Johannes Landen, 1508), f. c5v.

115 See Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 42–45.

116 On conversionary preaching aimed at Jews, see Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 59–62.

The extant East Norse legendary and exemplum material as well as *Conso-lation of the Soul* all show clearly that Danes and Swedes knew that Jews were – or should be – potential converts. Even though they would not have witnessed this at home, the popular stories that were read privately or aloud and related in sermons contained many tales of Jewish conversion. In these works, conversion comes about through various means:

- **A miracle triggered by an act of violence against Christianity**
In these tales of Jewish violence, the perpetrator (a male Jew) tries to subvert Christianity and commit a crime against God, such as host desecration or iconoclasm, that unleashes a miracle that hinders or reverses the crime. The Jew is vanquished, and the threat is neutralized. The perpetrator is transformed and converts to Christianity (or occasionally the act is avenged, and he is killed). The concrete evidence of the crime and of the subsequent miracle (for example, blood from an icon) becomes a permanent physical reminder and proof that subsequently becomes an object of veneration. See, for example: Text 33: *The Host Desecration*; Text 41: *The Jew Who Stabbed the Icon*; Text 42: *The Jewish Boy in the Oven*; Text 43: *The Jews Who Found and Attacked an Image of Christ*.
- **A miracle triggered by Jewish disbelief**
Despite attempts at persuasion, Jews in these tales remain stubborn and resistant to rational arguments. Their disbelief can only be shaken off through an act of divine intervention, such as a statue, painting, or dead person coming to life. Heaven communicates through these objects to refute the Jew's statements. Upon witnessing the miracle, the Jew converts. See, for example: Text 1: *A Jew Converts and Speaks to his Sons from Heaven*; Text 24: *The Disputation and the Miracle*; Text 46: *The Merchant's Surety*.
- **A miraculous act of healing**
According to the New Testament, Jesus persuaded many Jews to follow him by performing miracles, particularly healing the sick (the blind, lepers, paralytics, bleeding women, and so on), conducting exorcisms, and resurrecting the dead. In later Christian legends, the model of Christ healing the sick is replicated, and miraculous acts of healing and resurrection also convert the Jews who witness or benefit from them directly. See, for example: Text 2: *A Jew Predicts St Basil's Death*; Text 16: *St James the Great Converts Josiah the Jew*; Text 35: *The Jew and the Staff Filled with Gold*; Text 40: *The Jew Who Attacked Mary's Bier*.
- **A feeling of anguish or desperation**
Sometimes in these tales, Jews facing some terrifying event turn to Christianity for succour and salvation. In desperation they make the sign of the Cross or call upon the saints for assistance. Sometimes heaven itself torments a Jew to cajole him into converting or the repercussions of a divine event are so shocking that a Jew converts. These tales demonstrate that Jews have a natural, inner impulse or reflex to turn to the Christian god and find solace. See, for example: the Jewish women giving birth in Text 23: *The Converted Jew and the Devil*; Text 30: *The Flying Host*; Text 32: *The Hermit and the Jewess*; Text 36: *The Jew at the Devils' Council*; Text 51: *The Virgin Mary Releases and Converts a Jewish Prisoner*.

– Persuasion through argumentation or disputation

When the Christian faith is explained clearly to Jews, then there is the possibility that they will be willing to convert. It was important for the Church to show that argumentation, for example at forced sermons or disputations, was an effective tool. As the miracle stories show, sometimes the persuasion still required a helping hand from heaven. As the Jews' closest confidant, it is sometimes the devil himself who expounds Christian teachings and reluctantly draws (or nudges) the Jews towards Christianity. See, for example: Text 3: *A Pregnant Jewish Woman's Father Converts*; Text 16: *St James the Great Converts Josiah the Jew*; Text 39: *The Jew, the Host, the Devil, and the Sieve*; Text 49: *The Stoning of St Stephen*.

– A gentle spiritual awakening

The impulse to convert did not always come from without. A curiosity about Mary could rapidly develop into a love for the Virgin and a burning desire to become Christian. These miracle tales are rare in East Norse, but nonetheless demonstrate that Jews could sometimes be considered as embryonic Christians who, under the right circumstances (typically exposure to Christianity), would seek baptism. See, for example, the husband in Text 23: *The Converted Jew and the Devil*; Text 45: *The Little Jewish Girl Rachel Who Joined a Nunnery*.

As the vast majority of miracle tales already discussed in this and the preceding chapter end with conversion, they will not be taken up again here. Instead, I shall focus upon three tales from sermon manuscripts and exemplum collections (Text 49: *The Stoning of St Stephen*; Text 1: *A Jew Converts and Speaks to his Sons from Heaven*; Text 51: *The Virgin Mary Releases and Converts a Jewish Prisoner*) and four from legendaries (Text 16: *St James the Great Converts Josiah the Jew*; Text 19: *St Sylvester and the Disputation with the Twelve Jewish Scholars*; Text 2: *A Jew Predicts St Basil's Death*; Text 45: *The Little Jewish Girl Rachel Who Joined a Nunnery*). It will be seen that tales of conversion vary a great deal in their complexity.

The Stoning of St Stephen

One of the ways in which the Church aimed to convert Jews was through disputation, a formalized method of debate that aimed to arrive at theological truths through the use of written authorities.¹¹⁷ The use of disputations to convert Jews

¹¹⁷ On Jewish-Christian disputations, see Oliver S. Rankin, ed., *Jewish Religious Polemic* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1956); Hans Joachim Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument: A History of Theologies in Conflict* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963); Martin A. Cohen, "Reflections on the Text and Context of the Disputation of Barcelona," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 35 (1964): 157–92; Wolfgang S. Seiferth, *Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages: Two Symbols in Literature and Art* (New York: Ungar, 1970), 35–38; Frank E. Talmage, ed., *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish-Christian Encounter* (New York: Ktav 1975); David Berger, ed., *The*

has its roots in the New Testament story of the twelve-year-old Christ “among the doctors” (Luke 2:41–50), where the young Jesus discusses faith with the learned men in the Temple and impresses them with his knowledge. From antiquity, the best-known (fictional) report we have of a disputation is Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (155–70 CE).¹¹⁸ There are detailed accounts of three disputations from the Middle Ages: the Paris Disputation (1240), the Barcelona Disputation (1263), and the Tortosa Disputation (1413–14).¹¹⁹ Of these, the Barcelona Disputation seems to have been quite fair and the Jewish participant, Rabbi Nahmanides (1194–1270), was allowed to develop his arguments freely. The Paris Disputation was essentially a trial of the Talmud and a harsh interrogation of the Jewish representatives led by Rabbi Yehiel (d. c. 1268), while the Disputation of Tortosa, although allowing arguments to be more developed than in Paris, involved the intimidation of the Jewish participants who were kept in fear for their families.¹²⁰

The East Norse material does not abound with examples of disputations between Christians and Jews; indeed, a disputation is the crux of just two texts: Text 24: *The Disputation and the Miracle*, where it is not an effective means of conversion, and Text 19: *St Sylvester and the Disputation with the Twelve Jewish Scholars*, where the disputation ends with Sylvester performing a miracle and the subsequent mass conversion of Jews and Emperor Constantine’s mother Helena. Disputations are mentioned in passing several times, for example in Text 16: *St James the Great Converts Josiah the Jew*, whereby using Scripture and arguments, James is able to prove the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension and he converts many Jews with his words: “Mange iudha toko væl vidh hans ordhom.” However, to judge from other texts in the East Norse corpus, it often takes more than good arguments and reasoned debate to convert Jews: they remain obstinate until an act of divine revelation or a miracle changes their minds (e. g., Text 24:

Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary, *Judaica*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979); Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and the Jewish Response* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Anna Sapir Abulafia, “Jewish-Christian Disputations and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance,” *Journal of Medieval History* 15, no. 2 (1989): 105–25; Daniel J. Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics against Christianity in the Middle Ages*. 2nd edn (Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007).

118 Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho,” in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. George Reith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885).

119 For a full treatment of these three disputations, see Hyam Maccoby, ed., *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (Portland, Oregon: Liverpool University Press, 1993).

120 Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 11–12.

The Disputation and the Miracle and Text 19: *St Sylvester and the Disputation with the Twelve Jewish Scholars*).

A further example of the failure of arguments to convert Jews is found in the story of the stoning of St Stephen found in Christiern Pedersen's *Alle Epistler oc Euangelia* (1515) and in UUB C 56, a fifteenth-century sermon collection from the Premonstratensian monastery in Bäckaskog (Bækkeskov) near Kristianstad in Skåne that contains nearly a hundred sermons covering most of the liturgical calendar. Both texts retell the story from Acts 6–7 that describes the ministry and martyrdom of St Stephen, and of the two, Pedersen's account is by far the most detailed.¹²¹ The Hellenistic Jews felt that their widows were being slighted when food was distributed by the Hebraic Jews, so the Apostles chose seven deacons whose responsibility became the distribution of food. The first of these deacons to be elected was Stephen. Filled by the Holy Spirit, Stephen preached the word of God and ended up debating with the Jews of the synagogues of the Libertines (*λιβερτῖνον* [freed men]), of the Alexandrians, and of Cilicia and Asia. When they realized that they could not beat him fairly, they plotted his downfall and death and accused him of blasphemy. At his trial, Stephen's face miraculously shone like an angel's – reminiscent perhaps of Moses' radiant appearance upon his descent from Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29–30)¹²² – but this miracle had no effect on the Jews who by this point were just hell-bent on killing him. When Stephen castigated them for going against God's will, they became even more furious and sentenced him to death by stoning. While they carried out the punishment, Stephen commended his soul to God and asked him to forgive the Jews because, he said, they did not know what they were doing (cf. the words of Christ recorded in Luke 23:34). According to the ODa, *Pilgrims' Guide to the Holy Land* (DAS AM 792 4^o), the site of the stoning of St Stephen is also where Matthew was chosen as a disciple, Judas was a traitor, and James the Just made Bishop of Jerusalem.¹²³

121 For an overview of the ancient material and modern research on the hagiography of St Stephen, see François Bovon, "The Dossier on Stephen, the First Martyr," *The Harvard Theological Review* 96, no. 3 (2003): 279–315.

122 Cf. also the portrayal of the glorified Christ in Apocalypse (Revelation) 1:16: "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." In these early Christian martyr stories, the saint emulates the life of Christ. On the parallels between St Stephen and Jesus, see Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: Inside the Vatican Who Become Saints, Who Do Not, and Why* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991), 53.

123 DAS AM 792 4^o, f. 191ra–b; *VejlPilgr* 215: "Item fremdeles i then same wey til østern ense til xl fiæd ær then stedh som sanctus mathias war vd wold apostele i then stedh som iudas faredheræ før war ogh vij messe diegne af hwilkæ syw sancte staffn war steend i hæl ogh iacobus then mindræ war skikketh biscop ower ierusalem" [Moreover, about forty feet further along the same road to the east is the place where St Matthew was chosen as the apostle in the place where Judas

The burial of Stephen, the finding of his bones, and their translation sparked their own tradition.¹²⁴ In a series of visions recorded in the OSw. *Fornsvenska legendariet*, the priest Lucian is visited by Gamaliel the Elder who tells him where St Stephen's bones lie buried.¹²⁵ The text (14: *St Gamaliel the Elder Speaks to Lucian the Priest*) repeats that Stephen was stoned to death by "iudhane" [the Jews],¹²⁶ but adds that they threw his body out to be devoured by birds and beasts. However, their plan was thwarted by God on account of Stephen's pure faith and Gamaliel buried the martyr's bones in his own tomb – as Joseph of Arimathea had done with Christ's body. Lucian later travels to Jerusalem and reveals the resting place of Stephen's bones. They are dug up and translated to the Church of Zion.



Figure 8.1: A rare extant image in Sweden of a Christian-Jewish debate. Wall painting (1200s) in St Mary's Church, Åhus. St Stephen debates with Jewish scholars. The only partially preserved face shows a gaping mouth and facial features in profile. The Jews, wearing pointed hats, clutch their Scriptures as the hand of God points to St Stephen. Photo: David Castor. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

the betrayer had been previously and seven deacons for mass (were chosen), of which seven St Stephen was stoned to death, and James the Less was made bishop of Jerusalem.]

124 See *FsvLeg* I 281–87; *FsvLeg* PAW II 399–411.

125 Gamaliel had once been the owner of the crucifix that is attacked by Jews in Text 43.2: *The Jews Who Found and Attacked an Image of Christ*.

126 In the same text, Gamaliel reveals the resting place of Nicodemus who "iudha" [Jews] wanted to kill. In the original Latin text, the *Legenda aurea*, it is the chief priests (*principes sacerdotum*) rather than Jews *en masse* who want to kill Nicodemus.

The two sermons in Text 49.1: *Alle Epistler oc Euangelia* (1515) and text 49.2: *Den skånske Postil fra Bekkaskogh* (fifteenth century) include several descriptions of the appearance, behaviour, and thoughts of the Jewish opponents:

Treachery

- they are unfaithful: thee wtro jøde (Text 49.2:12)
[the unfaithful Jews]
- they harbour a great envy: stor awind (Text 49.1:24)
[great envy]
- they use tricky questions:¹²⁷ dybe spørssmaal (Text 49.1:26)
[profound questions]
mange sware artickle och puncte (Text 49.1:28–29)
[many difficult articles and points]
treske och ny fund mod den hellighe tro (Text 49.1:31)
[cunning and new fabrications against the Holy Faith]
- they bear false witness: falske vidende (Text 49.1:26, 34)
[false witness]
- they wish to torture and kill him: swar pine oc død (Text 49.1:26)
[harsh torture and death]
pine hannwm til døde (Text 49.1:52–53)
[torture him to death]
de ville stene hannum der i hiell (Text 49.1:73)
[they want to stone him to death]
- they follow “their law”: effter iøde lowen (Text 49.1:74)
[according to the Jewish law (lit. Jew-law)]

Emotions (and their expression)

- clenching teeth (in mockery): bede deriss tender til hobe (Text 49.1:64–65)
[clenched their teeth together]
- gnashing teeth (in mockery): gnidslede med dem (Text 49.1:65)
[gnashed (their teeth)]
- hateful and angry: de bleffue mer hadskere och vrede paa hannum (Text 49.1:64)
[they became more hateful and angry towards him]
tha worde iødhær wredhæ meer æn før (Text 49.2:21)
[then the Jews became angrier than before]

¹²⁷ Cf. also the use of the term “ett jøde spørssmaal” [a Jew-question] in a letter dated 17 July 1552, *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, vol. 5, 844 (no. 1129) discussed in Chapter 7: *Witnesses of Truth and Doctrine*, pp. 303–04.

The appearance, behaviour, and intentions of these Jews are reminiscent of those we find in anti-Jewish descriptions and depictions of the Crucifixion of Christ. Stephen's opponents are shown to harbour a great hatred and fury towards Christianity expressed through animal-like grimacing and flashing of teeth. In trying to defeat Stephen they make use of intricate arguments (which ultimately fail): "Nw de formercthe at de icke kunde offuer vinde hannem" [Now they realized that they were not able to defeat him]. This use of slippery language and argumentation is also described in detail in Poul Ræff's 1516 *Nouiter in lucem data: iudeorum secreta* (ff. b5r–6r). He writes that Jews are brought up from a young age to argue with and trick Christians:

Huat scal ieg tha sighæ om them som altijd haffuer omgengelsæ met them / huar mōghet ondt oc stor faræ mwnæ them vpaa henghæ. Effther thi at iødernes mesthæ studium er / at the kunne forstøræ then hellighæ cristnæ troo aff all theris macht met subtilighæ argument mod simplæ cristnæ menniskæ / eller i hues andræ modhæ the kwnnæ. Ieg troer fulkommelighen at hwar som iøder the boo vti nogræ cristnæ købstæder eller stæder / tha sculle the meræ faræ / skadæ / oc frestelser indføræ paa cristne menniske end dieffuelen sculle gøre / thi ath dieffuelsens festtelsæ hun kan aldriḡ varæ suo idelig som iødernes. Er hun end suo idelig / tha kan man snarligen bort elthæ hennæ met thet hellighe korsis teghen / met hwilkit man icke kan bort elthæ theris indbondhenæ skalkhet The ladæ sig varæ mōghet hellighe / oc met suodan løgnafftig hellighet haffue the huer dag theris omgengelsæ met the cristnæ oc eræ dog øgnæ scalkæ The haffue manghe samtalæ met them om troen oc om eth gudeligt leffnet Fornemme the tha noghen cristthen som wil bindæ sig til ordet met them oc er icke fornwfftig oc klog / eller oc then som icke vil oc the dog kunne drage ther til met subtilig snack / suo taghe the manghe stycker aff biblien i thet gamble testamentæ oc settæ fram for hannum / hwilke ther neest liwdæ paa theris log. Oc paa suodanæ manghe article eræ the mōghet ferdughæ / heltz forti at af førstæ begyndilsæ oc barndom tha læræ the theris børn i swo dane articlæ / at the sculle widhe at disputeræ met cristnæ. Thi skeer thet tijt oc ofte at manghe cristnæ som icke wel eræ lerdæ the offuerwindes lettelighen aff suodane iødernes argument oc faldæ i ketherij mod troen / suo at mangæ aff them tracteræ hemelighen met iødernæ / endog at the tordæ icke openbarlighen for liiffs faræ skyld Men er thet suo at the komme i disputatz met noghen cristthen som wel er lærdt oc wed biblien som thet sig bør / tha sighe iødernæ suo. Uij ville icke disputeræ / wij ville ladhe huer bliffue vti then troo som gud skiwdher hannum i hiarthe. O huar mōghet ketterij oc huar mōghel vildfarelse gøre the scalkæ i blant thet cristnæ folk. O huar manghæ sielæ forraadhæ the til helffuedis affgrwnd. The æræ verræ end dieffuelen / thi at han forstører icke menniscken met then hellighæ skriffit oc ickæ gør falsck forclaring paa hennæ / men thet gøre iødernæ. Dieffuelen han kommer icke mennischen i fald / frestelsæ / eller vildfarelsæ i thet han tagher sig noghen menniskes røst til vthen thet skeer sieldhen / thi troer ieg fwlkommelighen i blandt manghe andræ stycker som ieg troer / at dieffuelen kan icke fuldelligen faa macht offuer eth cristthen menniske vthen han haffuer noghen iødes hielp ther til / besynderlighen i suodanæ modhæ. Thw kant wel tenkæ huar mōghet ondt oc huar mōghet got leffuendhæ røst oc daglig omgengelsæ the kwnne gøre. Item. Iødernæ them nøges icke ther met allenisthæ / at the kunnæ forkastæ cristnæ menniskis siæl / men the studeræ dag oc nat ther paa at the kunnæ gøre them sckadhæ paa theris tymelighe godtz / met aagher oc al andhen falskhet i huat

modhe the kunnæ *met* altsomstørsth subtilighet / hwilkit dieffuelen icke gør / endog at han er alsomstørst fighendæ. Han leggher sig alleniste effther at fortabæ sielen / *men* i huat modhe han yderst kan tha hielper han at formeræ oc forøghe penninghæ / rigdom / gwld oc godtz.¹²⁸ [What then shall I say about those (Christians) who always have dealings with them? So much evil and danger hangs over them, as Jews study for the most part so that they can confuse the holy Christian faith with all their might using fancy arguments against simple Christian people or in whatever other way they can. I am completely convinced that wherever Jews live in Christian cities or towns, they cause more danger, harm, and temptations for Christians than the devil does, because the devil's hold can never be as complete as the that of the Jews. If it is ever that strong, then it can quickly be driven away with the sign of the Holy Cross, with which one cannot drive away their sly malicious behaviour. They pretend to be very holy and using this deceitful holiness they associate every day with Christians, and yet they are blatant scoundrels. They have many discussions with them (i. e., the Christians) about faith and a godly life. If they sense that some Christian wants to engage in conversation with them and he is not sensible or clever, or even someone who does not want to but whom they can draw into conversation using fancy talk, then they take many passages from the Bible (in the Old Testament) and expound them in accordance with their law. And they are prepared in these many passages since they teach these passages to their children from earliest childhood, so that they will be able to dispute with Christians. So, it very often happens that many Christians who are not very learned are easily defeated by these Jews' arguments and fall into heresy against the faith; many of them secretly do deals with the Jews even though they would not dare do so publicly as they hold their lives dear. But should it happen that they start a dispute with a Christian who is very learned and is familiar with the Bible as is proper, then the Jews say, "We do not want to argue. We want each man to remain in the faith that God has shot into his heart." Oh, how much heresy and how much delusion do these villains cause among the Christians! Oh, how many souls do they betray to the abyss of hell! They are worse than the devil, because he does not corrupt people using the Holy Scriptures and does not expound them deceitfully, but this is what the Jews do. The devil does not lead people into committing sin, into temptation or error by using a human's voice – that happens but rarely. Therefore, along with many other articles which I believe, I am convinced of this: that the devil cannot acquire full power over a Christian unless he has the help of some Jew to do so, especially in these ways. You can well imagine how much evil and how much good a living voice and daily contact can do. Likewise, the Jews are not satisfied with just damning Christians' souls, but they study day and night so that they can cause damage to their worldly goods by means of usury and all other kinds of trickery in whatever way they can with the greatest subtlety, which the devil does not do even though he is the greatest enemy of all. He seeks only to damn souls, but in whatever way he can he helps to augment and increase money, wealth, gold, and goods.]

The allegation is clear: Jews – who are worse than the devil – study prooftexts from the Old Testament and they employ fancy language and cunning ingenuity

¹²⁸ Adams, *Lessons in Contempt*, 242–47, includes Latin original from Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Libellus de Iudaica confessione siue sabbato afflictionis* (Cologne: Johannes Landen, 1508), ff. c2v–3v.

(*subtilighhet*) with the sole aim of disputing with Christians and drawing them into heretical thoughts and behaviour, thus destroying the Christian faith. Christians should avoid such conversations and debates at all costs.¹²⁹

Whereas the earliest tale of a disputation with learned Jews – that of Christ among the doctors in the Temple (Luke 2:41–50) – describes them as being amazed by their opponent’s words and learning, subsequent stories are more ambiguous. While James manages to convert some Jews using arguments (see below), Stephen is far less fortunate. In his legend, Jews are shown to be stiff-necked (cf. Acts 7:51) and unwilling to listen, so that even the words of a martyr-in-the-making cannot reach them. They are not just deaf to the truth, but also blind: not even the miracle of his face shining brightly seems to have touched them. These stories reflect a genuine concern in the Middle Ages that discussing Scripture with Jews could be a dangerous path to tread.

St James the Great Converts Josiah the Jew

In Text 16: *St James the Great Converts Josiah the Jew* from *Fornsvenska legendariet*, James is victorious in a disputation with Jews about the incarnation and death of God the Son.¹³⁰ This results in the conversion of many Jews, but also in his arrest and sentencing to death under Herod Agrippa, who, according to Church tradition, was the first political leader to persecute Christians. On his way to be beheaded he heals a paralyzed man (“·i· samu stund varþ han væl før”). Upon witnessing this, Josiah, the official leading him to his death, begs James to baptize him, for which Josiah is beaten, arrested by the Jews, and sentenced to death alongside James.¹³¹ After James baptizes Josiah, the two are beheaded.

The story of James converting Josiah – the man leading him to his death – goes back to the mid-fourth century and is found in Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Eccle-*

129 In his *Judenbüchlein: Hyerinne wuert gelesen, wie Her Victor von Carben, welcher ein Rabi der Juden gewest ist, zu christlichem glauben kommen* (Cologne: s. n., 1508), Victor von Carben, another medieval convert from Judaism who wrote anti-Jewish polemical works, also asserted that it was unwise to enter into religious debate with Jews as they were taught from childhood how to defend their faith. See Isidore Singer and Cyrus Adler, et al., eds, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–06), 570, s. v. “Carben, Victor of.”

130 On St James and Josiah the Jew, see Béla Zsolt Szakács, *The Visual World of the Hungarian Angevin Legendary*, Central European Cultural Heritage, vol. 1 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 77.

131 According to the *Legenda aurea*, Josiah was a *scriba* [scribe], a high-standing religious official.

siastical History (1.2.9; a retelling from Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposes*).¹³² There are several interesting points in this short tale that demonstrate the way that Jews were used to underline points of doctrine. The point of doctrinal contention in James's disputation revolved around the idea that there are three divine persons of the Trinity and that one of them, God the Son, was joined to humanity through Mary in an incarnated physical body and was killed. These concepts of the Incarnation and the Trinity, important points of Church doctrine, were at complete odds with Judaism's conception of monotheism and the indivisible nature of God. In the story, however, many Jews convert upon having this particular point of Christian faith proved to them at a public disputation, which reflects the belief that Jews can be converted *en masse* if only they are shown the irrefutable truth of Christianity. This became the idea behind the staging of public disputations and the forced attendance by Jews at Christian sermons. James's healing of a paralyzed man echoes one of Jesus' miracles in the Gospels, viz. the healing of the paralyzed man in Capernaum (Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12, and Luke 5:17–26).¹³³ The fact that James performs this miracle on the road to his death may also be a nod to Jesus' "miracle," viz. the *sudarium* or veil of Veronica, performed on the *via dolorosa* to his crucifixion.¹³⁴

132 Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 1.2.9: “κατ’ ἐκεῖνον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν, δῆλον δ’ ὅτι τὸν ἐπὶ Κλαυδίου, ἐπέβαλεν Ἡρώδης ὁ βασιλεὺς τὰς χεῖρας κακῶσαι τινος τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ἀνεῦλεν δὲ Ἰακώβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰωάννου μαχαίρα· περὶ τούτου δ’ ὁ Κλήμης τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ ἱστορίαν μνήμης ἀξίαν ἐν τῇ τῶν Ὑποτυπώσεων ἐβδόμῃ παρατίθεται ὡς ἂν ἐκ παραδόσεως τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ, φάσκων ὅτι δι’ ὃ εἰσαγαγὼν αὐτὸν εἰς δικαστήριον, μαρτυρήσαντα αὐτὸν ἰδὼν κινήσεις, ὡμολόγησεν εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν Χριστιανόν. ‘συναπῆχθησαν οὖν ἄμφω,’ φησὶν, ‘καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἤξιωσεν ἀφεθῆναι αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἰακώβου· ὁ δὲ ὀλίγον σκεψάμενος, ‘εἰρήνη σοι,’ εἶπεν καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν. καὶ οὕτως ἀμφοτέροι ὁμοῦ ἐκατατομήθησαν.” [“Now at that time,” – obviously, that of Claudius, – “Herod the King put forth his hand to vex certain of the church and killed James the brother of John with the sword.” (Acts 12:1–2) Concerning this James, Clement adds in the seventh book of the *Hypotyposes* a story worth mentioning, apparently from the tradition of his predecessors, to the effect that he who brought him to the court was so moved at seeing him testify as to confess that he also was himself a Christian. “So they were both led away together,” he says, “and on the way he asked for forgiveness for himself from James. And James looked at him for a moment and said, ‘Peace be to you,’ and kissed him. So both were beheaded at the same time”], Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Library, 1965), 126–27.

133 The paralyzed man and Josiah are James's only recorded conversions in Judea.

134 Strictly speaking, Jesus' final miracle before the Resurrection was healing Malchus's ear (Luke 22:50–51; cf. Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; John 18:10–11). The veil of Veronica has no foundation in Scripture, but the story evolved in the Middle Ages and was popularized in Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes vitae Christi* from the fourteenth century.

St Sylvester and the Disputation with the Twelve Jewish Scholars

Text 19: *St Sylvester and the Disputation with the Twelve Jewish Scholars* from *Fornsvenska legendariet* is the most detailed narrative account of a disputation between Jews and Christians in East Norse.¹³⁵ The tale takes place in the fourth century CE after Helena (c. 246/248–c. 330), mother of the Roman emperor Constantine I (r. 306–37), has converted from paganism to Judaism. While near Jerusalem, she receives news that her son has become a Christian, and she writes to him applauding his conversion from paganism but expressing regret that he has chosen to follow the Christian God rather than the Jewish one. Constantine writes back to invite his mother and an entourage of Jews to Rome to debate with a Christian to determine who is the true God: the Jewish or the Christian one. Helena arrives in Rome with 140 Jews and the twelve most learned ones among them are chosen to dispute with Sylvester, the bishop of Rome (r. 314–35). Two pagans, Craton and Zenophilus, “rætuise mæn ok wisaste filosofi” [righteous men and exceedingly wise philosophers], are chosen to act as impartial judges, and each of the twelve Jewish scholars takes his turn to argue against Christianity.¹³⁶ However, one after another each of them is defeated by the arguments of Sylvester:¹³⁷

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. Abiathar: | a) There is only one God, so why do Christians insist there are three?
b) Why did Jesus claim he was God because he performed miracles, when many prophets have wrought wonders without claiming to be God? |
| Sylvester: | a) Jewish Scripture reveals the Father and the Son (Psalm 2:7) and the Holy Spirit (Psalm 32:6 <i>Vulg.</i> , <i>DRB</i> ; 33:6 <i>KJV</i>). Sylvester demonstrates the Trinity by laying out a single piece of cloth that is folded three times. |

135 Tessa Canella has treated the story of Sylvester’s disputation with the twelve Jews most thoroughly: Tessa Canella, *Gli Actus Silvestri: Genesi di una leggenda su Costantino imperatore, Uomini e mondi medievali*, Collana del Centro italiano di studi sul basso medioevo – Accademia Tudertina, vol. 7 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo, 2006), 179–260; Tessa Canella, “Gli Actus Silvestri tra Oriente e Occidente: Storia e diffusione di una leggenda costantiniana,” in *Costantino I: Enciclopedia costantiniana sulla figura e l’immagine dell’imperatore del cosiddetto editto di Milano 313–2013*, vol. 2, ed. Alberto Melloni (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 2013), 241–58.

136 In the *Actus Silvestri*, the twelve Jews are drawn from six groups: Abiathar and Jonas are rabbis; Godolias and Annas are scribes; Doch and Chusi are teachers (*magistri*) at the synagogue; Benjamin and Aroel are interpreters of the Law; Jubal and Thara are Pharisees; Sileon and Zambri are elders (*presbyteri*). Sylvester is thus challenged by every type of learned Jew. See Canella, *Gli Actus Silvestri*, 191.

137 For a thorough treatment of each of these arguments, see Canella, *Gli Actus Silvestri*, 191–254.

- b) No prophet claimed to be God because if he did, he would have been lying and God would have removed his power to perform miracles. Jesus was still able to raise the dead after saying he was God, so therefore he could not have been lying.
2. Jonas: God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself in order to be righteous. Christians are not circumcised and are therefore not righteous and their faith not true.
 Sylvester: As it says in the Jewish Scriptures, Abraham was God's friend and therefore righteous before he was circumcised. Circumcision did not make Abraham righteous and is not needed to be God's friend.
 3. Godolias: God is immutable and immortal, so how could he have been born, tempted, betrayed, tortured, and killed?
 Sylvester: The answers are in the Jewish Scriptures where his birth is described (Isaiah 7:14), his temptation (Zechariah 3:1), his betrayal (Psalm 40:10 *Vulg.*, *DRB*; 41:9 *KJV*), and his death (Hosea 13:14).
 4. Annas: Without using any arguments, Annas claims that the Scripture that Sylvester is quoting is not about Jesus.
 Sylvester: He asks Annas to name someone other than Jesus who fulfils the biblical prophecies, which Annas is unable to do.
 5. Doch: If Christ was the Son of God and born holy, why did he need to cleanse himself of sin through baptism in the River Jordan?¹³⁸
 Sylvester: Christ put an end to circumcision and instituted baptism. He was baptized in the Jordan to imbue the water with divine power that it might thereafter cleanse others of their sin.
 6. Chusi: What was the reason for the Virgin Birth?
 Sylvester: The earth from which Adam was formed was virginal, so it was fitting that the "new Adam" be born of a virgin.¹³⁹
 7. Benjamin: Why did Jesus starve himself in the desert and not make loaves of bread out of the stones?

138 This question about purity is reminiscent of the one posed by the converted Jew in Text 23: *The Converted Jew and the Devil*: if Mary was a pure Virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus, why did she need to purify herself?

139 Here, the question of the Virgin Birth makes no mention of the usual debate about the translation of the Heb. עלמה, *'almah* [young woman] as Gk. παρθένος, *parthénos* [virgin] in Isaiah 7:14. See under "Mary and the Virgin Birth" in Chapter 7: *Witnesses of Truth and Doctrine*, pp. 349–52.

- Sylvester: Because Adam sinned through eating the forbidden fruit, so Christ wanted to be tempted through hunger – but it was only his human form as a man, not his divinity as God, that was tempted. (Thus, by resisting the temptation of eating, the “new Adam” defeated the devil that had won over the “old Adam”).
8. Aroel: If God is perfect and omnipotent, why did he need to be born again? Could he not have saved humanity in some other way?
- Sylvester: He was not reborn for his own sake, but in order to save humans – for it must be a person that atones for what a person has broken.
9. Jubal: How did God suffer death? (That is, how can God suffer and die?)
- Sylvester: He only suffered as a man, not as God. Sylvester demonstrates this by comparing cloth to Jesus: the thread that is twisted and spun is his human form while the dye’s colour that permeates the cloth but is not twisted is God.
10. Thara: He objects and says that the colour and the thread are twisted at the same time.
- Sylvester: He demonstrates God’s suffering on the Cross with another simile and compares it to the sunlight in a tree: when the tree is chopped down, the sunlight does not suffer with each blow of the axe.
11. Sileon: Why did God need to suffer torments?
- Sylvester: The answer can be found in Jewish Scriptures. Sylvester adds that Jesus acted as an example to us of patience and yearning for heaven.
12. Zambri: He accuses Sylvester of word games and challenges him to a contest of deeds instead. Zambri whispers the ineffable name of God in the ear of a bull and instantly it collapses and dies.
- Sylvester: He does not believe that Zambri used the name of God (for how could he have learnt it without dying himself?) and accuses him of using a devil’s name, i. e., black magic, to kill the bull. Sylvester then raises the bull from the dead by calling upon it to rise in the name of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁰

Upon the bull being revived, all the non-Christians present at the disputation fall to their knees and ask to become Christian.

The tale belongs to the group of texts known as *The Acts of Sylvester* (*Actus Silvestri*) that comprises a series of legends about Pope Sylvester I. These legends have a complicated and disputed transmission history, although all agree that there are three main versions – A, B, and C. The OSw. text (along with the *Legenda aurea*) is closest to B.¹⁴¹ However, even though the OSw. text was most likely trans-

¹⁴⁰ This is perhaps an echo of Jesus raising the dead in Sylvester’s reply in 1b.

¹⁴¹ See the table in Canella, *Gli Actus Silvestri*, 241–42.

lated from the *Legenda aurea*, the Jews' questions and statements and Sylvester's counterarguments are often formulated differently and more concisely in the OSw. version than in the *Legenda aurea*. Indeed, sometimes Sylvester's explanations are so condensed in the OSw. version that it can be difficult to understand precisely what he means. For example, the meaning behind the image of the cloth, thread, and dye is not clear:

Jhesus tholde · dōdh a sinom mandom / vtan gudhdoms men ok thet ær mōghelikt medh
exemplo ¶ Litat klædhe ær · wl · eller liin før æn thet litadis sidhan thet snodis ok spanz j
thradh tha tholde wl æller liin vmskipte ok litrin enkte¹⁴²

[Jesus suffered death in his human form without damage to his divinity, and it is possible (to provide) an example: dyed cloth is wool or linen before it is dyed then it was twisted and spun into thread. However, the wool and linen underwent the change, and the colour didn't.]

Compare:

[...] moritur ut mortis imperium subiugaret. Dei quoque filius unus in Christo est qui sicut est uere dei filius inuisibilis, ita uisibilis est Christus; est ergo inuisibile hoc quod deus est et est uisibile hoc quod homo est. Pati uero posse hominem assumptum sine passione eius qui assumpsit, exemplo doceri potest. Nam ut presentis purpure regis utamur exemplo, lana fuit et huic lane sanguis accedens colorem purpureum prebuit; cum ergo teneretur digitis et torqueretur in filo, quid torquebatur? Hoc quod regie dignitatis color est an hoc quod lana extiterat antequam purpura fieret? Lane ergo assimilatur homo, colori purpure deus qui simul in passione fuit dum pateretur in cruce, sed passioni in nullo subiacuit."¹⁴³

[...] he died to subjugate the kingdom of death. In Christ there is the one and only Son of God who is truly the invisible Son of God, as he is the visible Christ. Therefore, what is invisible in him is God and what is visible is man. We may show that by means of an example: the man assumed can suffer while the (God) assuming does not suffer. Let us use the king's purple cloak as an example: it was wool, and blood was added to this wool making the colour purple. When it was held in the finger and twisted into thread, what was twisted? The colour that signifies the dignity of royalty or the wool that was wool before it was dyed purple? So, the wool stands for the man, the colour purple for God who was present in the Passion when (Christ) suffered on the Cross but was not subjected to any suffering in any way.]¹⁴⁴

Similarly, the biblical passages that Sylvester quotes in the *Legenda aurea* and *Fornsvenska legendariet* are sometimes different or lacking altogether in the OSw. version. For example, in the third debate in the OSw. version, Sylvester quotes Hosea 13:14 when referring to the prophecy concerning Christ's death. In *Legenda aurea*, however, Sylvester makes no mention of the prophet Hosea, but instead

¹⁴² UUB C 528, f. 110r–v; *FsvLeg* I 84; *FsvLeg* PAW III 224.

¹⁴³ *LegAur* 116–17.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 69.

quotes Psalm 21:19 *Vulg., DRB* (22:18 *KJV*) on lots being cast for Jesus' clothes and Psalm 68:22 *Vulg., DRB* (69:21 *KJV*) on his being given gall and vinegar.

The disputation in the legend does not, of course, record an actual event.¹⁴⁵ It is a polemical text, but its principal aim is to exalt the Christian faith and prove the truth of the religion and the divinity of Christ in particular. Furthermore, by pitting Pope Sylvester against the twelve most learned Jews from the Holy Land, his holiness and wisdom are made even more remarkable. We might also consider the text to be a vanquishing or christianization of the Jewish homeland. The Jews who inhabit the land no longer follow and worship the true God; they have been superseded and replaced by the followers of Jesus and the true God. The arguments used against Jesus by the Jewish scholars do not carry much theological weight but rather act as set-up lines for Sylvester to confirm the truth of Christianity; in this way, the disputation is more reminiscent of the pupil–teacher dialogues found in works such as *Lucidarius* and *Sydrak*, than a sharp attack on the tenets of the Christian faith and Christology. However, even though their arguments are somewhat bland, they are of the type found in late classical written apologetic and polemical works, such as Pseudo-Evagrius's *Altercatio legis inter Simonem Judaeum et Theophilum Christianum* [*A Bitter Fight between Simon the Jew and Theophilus the Christian*; c. 440],¹⁴⁶ while the use of pagan judges, Zambri's magic trick, and Sylvester's miracle all have analogies in the work *De Gestis in Perside* [*The Religious Discussion at the Court of the Sassanids*; fifth–sixth centuries].¹⁴⁷

Sylvester frequently replies to the Jews' questions by telling them that the answers they seek can be found in their own Hebrew Bible. He is thus accusing them of not knowing their own scriptures properly: Jews may be the “bearers of the books,” as Augustine would have it, but they are unable to understand the meaning and truths found in what they are carrying. Their refusal to accept Jesus as God would, however, seem to be more down to stubbornness than misunderstanding Scripture. Even when Sylvester has countered their arguments by expounding Scripture correctly and quoting the prophets, and even though they are unable to answer his demand to name one other person who fulfils the biblical

¹⁴⁵ See Canella, *Gli Actus Silvestri*, 181–89.

¹⁴⁶ *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 20, cols 1165–82; Canella, *Gli Actus Silvestri*, 183, following Wilhelm Levison, “Konstantinische Schenkung und Silvester-legende,” in *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle: Scritti di storia e paleografia pubblicati sotto gli auspici di S. S. Pio XI in occasione dell'ottantesimo natalizio dell' e.mo cardinale Francesco Ehrle*, vol. 2: *Per la storia di Roma*, ed. Franz Ehrle, Studi e testi: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, vol. 38 (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1924), 159–247.

¹⁴⁷ Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches Umfeld (1–11. Jh.)*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, ser. 23: Theologie, vol. 172 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982), 390.

prophecies better than Jesus, the Jews still refuse to agree that Christ is God and Christianity is the true faith. They remain defiant until the very end of the tale. It is, of course, the climactic miracle that converts the Jews to Christianity. As Sylvester remarks, there is no way that Zambri could have heard and learnt the ineffable name of God and survived, so his killing of the bull is a trick reliant on devilish magic. The pope is able to demonstrate that, like the real ineffable name of God, Jesus' name is all-powerful. The dramatic display of divine intervention in raising a creature from the dead brings all the non-Christians – pagans as well as Jews – to their knees. Without compulsion, they request to be baptized into the Christian faith. The miracle has succeeded where Sylvester's rational arguments failed.

A Jew Predicts St Basil's Death

St Basil the Great of Caesarea (330–79) was the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia and an active opponent of the heresies of the Early Church (e.g., Arianism). He was an influential theologian who established rules and guidelines for monastic life. He is also known for his work with the poor. The OSw. *Fornsvenska legendariet* (Text 2) includes accounts of some events from his time as a bishop as well as two miracle stories. In the two manuscripts UUB C 528 (1400–50) and SRA E 8900 (1450–70), there is a wise doctor, Joseph the Jew (“Joseph iudhe viis læke”), whose medical know-how is nonetheless questionable.¹⁴⁸ In no uncertain terms he tells Basil, suffering from a terrible illness (possibly caused by excessive ascetic practices), that he will be dead by the end of the day. Basil asks him what he will do if he is still alive in time for morning mass (“vm mæsso thima,” presumably referring to the morning Lauds prayers). Joseph replies that he will become a Christian, so certain is he that Basil will die. But, of course, Basil does survive until the next morning (and only then dies), and upon witnessing this, the Jewish doctor accepts Christianity and is baptized.¹⁴⁹

The story originates from the early centuries of Christianity and expresses a milder attitude to Jews. Although it is short, it draws into focus several points about Jews and conversion. Jewish doctors – and Jewish medicine – cannot replace Christian faith. Even though Joseph predicts that Basil will die due to his terrible illness, Basil's faith enables him to survive through the night. When the Jew witnesses this miraculous event, he – like all Jews in these miracle stories –

¹⁴⁸ *FsvLeg* I 605; *FsvLeg* PAW III 276–77. See also Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 203–04.

¹⁴⁹ In the Latin version, Basil himself baptizes the Jew: “et ecclesiam ingrediens eum suis propriis manibus baptizauit” [and entering the church, he baptized him with his own hands].

converts. He realizes that his disbelief, his Jewish faith, leads only to death, whereas Christianity is the religion of life.

How Basil came into contact with Joseph is unclear: did he consult him as a physician or was he approached by him unsolicited? The Jew appears self-assured and prepared to wager his soul on the medical assessment of Basil's illness. Whether he lost because his diagnosis was simply incorrect or because the saint's survival was miraculous is unclear as we cannot see from the text whether or not the final hours of Basil's life were considered a miracle. The episode appears just after a miracle tale about a sinful woman, next to which in the margin is penned "mira" – the remainder of the word has been excised. Should this be one "miraculum" or two "miracula"? Regardless, the Jew is suitably impressed by Basil's survival and true to his word, forsakes his own religion, and becomes a Christian. The way to his soul has gone through his professional pride, and the tale shows that Jews can be reached in different ways, each according to his or her disposition.

A Jew Converts and Speaks to his Sons from Heaven

In LSB T 181 (fifteenth century), a sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Advent on the vanity of the world includes the miraculous tale of a Jewish man who had amassed great wealth through usury. He heard a sermon in a cathedral by a holy bishop who told the congregation that whoever gave up his wealth and possessions in this life would receive a hundred-fold reward in the next. The Jewish man asked the bishop, whom he considered to be "en stoor herre ok mærkelikin man" [a great lord and an outstanding man], whether this could really be true. Reassured by the bishop, the Jew returned what he had received through usury, donated the remainder to the monastery, the church, and the poor, and received baptism. Shortly afterwards he died. Subsequently, two of the Jewish man's sons arrived from another town to claim their inheritance. On discovering that their father had given away his wealth – and their inheritance – they sought out the bishop and castigated him for having advised him so poorly. The bishop led them to their father's grave where he summoned ("manadhe") the Jew from the dead. The father sat up in his grave and told his sons that the bishop had saved him from damnation and that he now enjoyed not just a hundred-fold, but a thousand-fold return on everything that he had given to God while he was alive. His sons, along with many other Jews, then converted and surrendered all their ill-gotten wealth and possessions ("alt thet the haffdho orættelika okrath ok fanghit").

All three Jews in this miracle tale are figures of worldliness, materiality, and greed. The concept of the materialistic Jew bound to the world and the flesh was first introduced by St Paul. He reinterpreted the Bible using the Platonic opposi-

tion of cosmological duality between the material, i. e., the flesh (σάρξ) and the ideal, i. e., the spirit (πνεῦμα) – an opposition between the outer and the inner.¹⁵⁰ While Jews saw were only of the flesh and saw only the material, Christians were of the spirit and understood the ideal. Although Paul never mentioned the economic activities of Jews, his allegorizing of Jews as ‘according to the flesh’ (κατὰ σάρκα) and as engaging in material practices laid the foundation for the stereotype of the materialistic Jew.¹⁵¹ Later Christian authors echoed Paul and associated Jews with the flesh, the letter, and the world, but it was not until the development of trade and the opening of moneylending in northern Europe in the twelfth century that Paul’s “difference” was used to make a potent new element in the already negative imagery of Jews.¹⁵² Jews came to be characterized as greedy and living off immorally acquired wealth taken from poor Christians. They were economic parasites taking advantage of the Christian faithful.¹⁵³

The “othering” of the Jewish father in this tale is explicit from the start when he is introduced: he is rich, he is pagan and Jewish (that coalescing of terms again), and he is a great usurer (“en staddir rikir hedhin jude / en stoor okirkarl” [a present rich, pagan Jew, a great usurer]); most worryingly of all (or perhaps

150 For a comprehensive study of Paul’s writings in relation to Judaism, see Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Contraversions: Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Paul’s rather negative uses of “flesh” can be found in Romans 7:14, 8:5, 8:13 (“For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live”); 1 Corinthians 1:26, 3:1, 3:3; 2 Corinthians 1:12, 10:2–4; 11:18; Galatians 4:23, 29. For further examples, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 65–66.

151 The supposed opposition between Christian and Jewish concepts of wealth can be traced further back to the Gospels and the time of Jesus. The claim was repeated in preaching, for example, in an OSw. sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent where the Pharisees of the Gospel have been replaced by the more general term “the Jews”: “Judhane som waro nidzke oc girughe hørdho huru ihesus predicadhe mot værildz giri oc gabbadho han” [The Jews (*DRB*: Pharisees) who were tight-fisted and greedy heard how Jesus preached against worldly greed and mocked him], *DAS AM* 787 4^o, f. 39ra; *SermSac* 188; cf. Luke 16:14.

152 Robert Chazan, “The Role of Medieval Northern Europe in Generating Virulent Anti-Jewish Imagery,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (New York: Routledge, 2018), 97–106, esp. 103–06.

153 On this topic, see Giacomo Todeschini, “The Origin of a Medieval Jewish Stereotype: The Jews as Receivers of Stolen Goods (Twelfth to Thirteenth Centuries),” in *The Jewish-Christian Encounter in Medieval Preaching*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Jussi Hanska (New York: Routledge, 2015), 240–52; Giacomo Todeschini, “Jewish usurers, Blood Libel, and the Second-Hand Economy: The Medieval Origins of a Stereotype (from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century),” *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*, 341–51.

reassuring?) for the audience, he is present in the cathedral. His motivation for conversion is being able to receive “*enne store baathan*” [a great profit] and “*stoorth okir*” [great rate of interest]. His understanding of heaven’s bounty is entirely in the pecuniary terms of finance and moneylending, and he seems more driven to conversion by greed than seeking spiritual nourishment. Indeed, his language is limited to terms of business, and not once does he mention his soul. His sons, too, enter the tale looking for money and they attack the bishop when they discover there is none left for them. It is only when the dead father speaks that a new “non-pecuniary” argument for following the bishop’s advice is articulated: he was saved “*fran dyæffwolenom ok heluiteno*” [from the devil and hell].

The bishop’s summoning of the dead man to speak to his sons is similar to the necromancy in the tale about Macarius and the talking skull. Conjuring the bones of the dead was forbidden (Deuteronomy 18:9–12), but this type of resurrection with the assistance of God seems to have been more than acceptable. Just as Jesus has raised the dead, so too did St Peter and St Paul.¹⁵⁴ Following their example, saints-in-the-making are often reported to have raised the dead and in these miracle tales the act is certainly intended as a marker of holiness.¹⁵⁵

The Virgin Mary Releases and Converts a Jewish Prisoner

This short Marian miracle in *Järteckensbok* (SKB A 110) from c. 1385 describes how the Virgin Mary appears to a tortured and starving Jewish prisoner and releases him from his chains. After revealing what tortures await him in hell, the Virgin explains Scripture to him and tells him about the promise of eternal life. Upon hearing Mary’s explanations and revelations, the Jew converts.

In this story, the prisoner has no “Jewish” qualities or characteristics beyond his unbelief. We hear nothing of his appearance, crime, or activities, just that he has heard of Mary. As in *The Converted Jew and the Devil* (Text 23), the text suggests that Jews have knowledge of Mary and the assistance that she provides to those in trouble. He begins to think about Mary, and, full of mercy, she appears – he does not even need to pray to her. When the Virgin explains Scripture to him so that he understands it properly and furthermore reveals the horrors of hell, it

154 Jesus raised the son of a widow in Nain (Luke 7:11–17); the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:21–43; Matthew 9:18–26; Luke 8:40–56); Lazarus (John 11:1–44). Peter raised Dorcas/Tabitha (Acts 9:37–42) and Paul Eutychus (Acts 20:7–12).

155 See Albert J. Hebert, *Saints Who Raised the Dead: True Stories of 400 Resurrection Miracles* (Rockville: Tan Books, 2004).

is enough to persuade him to convert. On the one hand, we learn about Mary's mercy towards all, her intervention in the events of the world; on the other, we are shown that if even an unbelieving Jew can understand that a Christian life is the correct path, then so too should all believers accept the teachings of the Church. In this brief story, Mary, again, plays a central role in the conversion of Jews.

The Little Jewish Girl Rachel Who Joined a Nunnery

Jewish children do not occur frequently in the East Norse material. In Text 42: *The Jewish Boy in the Oven*, we saw a young Jewish child who had not been hardened (like his father) and who was open to receiving God's mercy and becoming Christian. He was a pure, as yet uncorrupted, soul whose faith was awakened by the Virgin and the Christ Child. Not only did they save him from the flames, but also from a life of error and sin as a Jew and from the tyranny of his violent father. This "saving" of children, innocent souls as yet unspoiled by the poison of their parents, became a motif in legends and exempla, that in turn were sometimes based on actual cases where Jewish children converted to Christianity. In some cases, it appears that the child in question had been kidnapped and forcibly converted (this version of events is, of course, not related in the legends and exempla), but sometimes it would appear that the conversion of the child is not so clear-cut.

One of the most celebrated cases is that of the young girl Rachel, a tale from the first quarter of the thirteenth century which is recounted at length in *Fornsvenska legendariet* (LSB B 70 a; c. 1525).¹⁵⁶ The OSw. work is translated from Thomas de Cantimpré's (1201–72) *Miraculorum et exemplorum memorabilium sui temporis*.¹⁵⁷ The story begins in Cologne with the nearly five-year-old Jewish girl Rachel

¹⁵⁶ The manuscript's dating places it just outside of the corpus. However, I have chosen to include it because the original story dates back to the thirteenth century, and the version in B 70 a is the most detailed description of a Jewish child in OSw.

¹⁵⁷ On this and similar cases, see Aviad M. Kleinberg, "Depriving Parents of the Consolation of Children: Two Legal *Consilia* on the Baptism of Jewish Children," in *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. Yitzhak Hen, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 129–44; Alfred Haverkamp, "Baptised Jews in German Lands during the Twelfth Century," in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Michael A. Signer and John Van Engen, Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies, vol. 10 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 255–310; Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew: Autobiography, History, and Fiction in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Alex J. Novikoff (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 151–52; Irvén M. Resnick, "Race, Anti-Jewish Polemic, Arnulf of Séz, and the Contested Papal Election of Anaclet II (A.D. 1130)," in *Jews in*

who, even at such a young age, has somewhat philosophical thoughts about religion and humanity: she becomes aware that although people are divided into Christians and Jews, they look the same and speak the same language – a surprisingly universalist view. She is drawn to Christianity and Christians, and secretly begins to give alms to the poor just so that she can hear them say the name “Mary” in their thanks and blessings: “haffuen maria lön” [Be rewarded by Mary!], “maria fergelle idher idhan kærlek” [May Mary repay you for your love!]. The family moves to Leuven and Rachel, along with other young children (both Christians and Jews), begins lessons in reading at the home of a priest, Reynerus. She is an avid pupil and when Reynerus draws her aside to ask why she does not want to become a Christian, she begs him to convert her. The priest teaches her the basics of Christianity and again, Rachel, now six and a half years old, proves to be a fast and inquisitive learner. Her parents, sensing that something is amiss with their daughter, become concerned and plan to send her across the Rhine to become engaged. Rachel discovers her parents’ plot and goes to the priest, saying “wtan iak i tæsse tilstwndandhe nat wardher cristnat tha bliffwer iak æwerdhe-lika førtappat [Unless I become a Christian this very night, then I shall be lost for all eternity!] Reynerus instructs her to return early the next morning and he will take her to safety. That night, however, Rachel oversleeps but is woken by a dream in which the Mother of God calls her by a new Christian name: Catherine. Rachel, now Catherine, rushes to the priest who takes her to the nearby Cistercian convent, Parc-des-Dames where she is baptized and inducted into the convent.

However, her family are none too impressed. They accuse Reynerus of converting a minor against her family’s will and bring the case to the Duke of Brabant (Henry I) and the bishop of Liège (Hugh de Pierrepont), whom according to the writer the Jews paid off: “giffuandes them mykyt gull / oppa thet at the matto faa sina dotter hem i sin hws til thæs hon wordhe lagha aara gammwl / thet ær xij aar æpther jwdha sidhwænio” [giving them much gold so that they might get their daughter home to their house until she was of legal age, that is twelve years according to Jewish custom]. Even the pope (Honorius III) intercedes and instructs the bishop to make a ruling. At the same time, the Virgin Mary tells Catherine by means of an ‘impulse’ (“iomffru maria jnskyutlism”) that Reynerus must appear and stand trial. This he does and is supported by Catherine who

Medieval Christendom: “Slay Them Not”, ed. Kristine T. Utterback and Merrall Llewelyn Price (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 46; Paola Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision, and Ritual Murder in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 130–31. The tale also appears in the *Dialogus miraculorum* (ch. 25) by Caesarius of Heisterbach (d. 1240); *Caesarii Heisterbacensis monachi Ordinis cisterciensis Dialogus miraculorum*, vol. 1: *Textus*, ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne: H. Lempertz & Co., 1851), 95–98.

speaks before the court, praising Christianity and repelling the Jews' arguments with Holy Scripture. Catherine wins the case, leaving the Jews crying and howling to the sky like a pack of wolves ("gratandhes oc tywtandhes i hymellen som en wargha hoper") – so loudly that they could be heard from miles away.

A couple of years later, Catherine's family try to remove her from the convent by deceit: they pay a young man to go to the convent, pretend to be a relative, and abduct her. However, Catherine refuses to see him, and he fails in his mission. The tale ends with Catherine praying to Mary and asking her to become her comforter and new family as she no longer has a family and because Mary, just like Rachel, was born of Jewish stock: "som skinandes roos / aff hwasso tørne / som wænasta lilia aff strangom tiistil" [like a shining rose among sharp thorns, an exceptionally beautiful lily among unyielding thistles].

This is an extraordinary tale of the baptism of a Jewish girl without her parents' permission and the child's subsequent absorption into Christian religious life. Whether or not this tale of Rachel who became Catherine is true, it is a powerful narrative that alludes to important legal aspects of Jewish-Christian relations and outlines the key traits in conversion tales of young Jews. The baptism of children without their parents' permission raised several legal problems.¹⁵⁸ As children were considered under the age of discretion, their choices were devoid of any legal power. Furthermore, any baptism would be seen as an infringement upon the rights of the parents, the *patria potestas*. However, the sacrament of baptism, especially when executed by a priest, was binding and it imprinted a *character indelibilis* [indelible character] upon the recipient – it was an irrevocable act. Where, then, does this leave those Jewish children like Rachel who were baptized without their parents' knowledge? Does baptism annul the rights of the parents? Medieval canonists largely agreed that their baptism remained valid, and the child could be returned to the parents upon the condition that they did not pressure her to become a Jew again. However, the prohibition against Jews and Christians cohabiting also led to further legal problems that needed to be resolved. In the case of Rachel, events took a quite different turn when she herself – spurred on by the Virgin Mary – convinced the court that her conversion was sincere and without coercion. The parents' rights were disregarded, and the child was returned to the convent.

The story of Rachel includes traits that are common to many stories of conversion of young Jews:¹⁵⁹ a spontaneous impulse or urge from within that pushes Rachel towards visiting the priest and mixing with Christian children; her parents'

158 See Kleinberg, "Depriving Parents of the Consolation of Children."

159 See Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew*, 152.

opposition to her interest in Christianity and attempts to obstruct her plans (e. g., by sending her across the Rhine to get engaged); Rachel's solitude and loss of her "natural family," which is mitigated by a new spiritual family comprising her monastic community and the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, it illustrates the greater conflicting powers and interests in medieval society: secular, religious, and financial. Ultimately, spiritual truth transcends all in this tale, but just how events played out in the real lives of Jewish families whose children were baptized without the parents' permission is not known.¹⁶⁰

The Jews in the story are represented both as individuals and as a crowd. Rachel, the "good Jew," is described as a "barn" [child] or "persone" [person] who is "klen" [young, delicate]. After she becomes "Syser katerina," she is no longer a child, but "enne klene iomfru" [a young virgin (maiden)] and "hælgæ iomffruna" [the holy virgin (maiden)]. Her childhood has been erased and she has been elevated to being unblemished young woman. Throughout the tale Rachel/Catherine is praised for her intellect and the speed with which she can grasp complicated ideas. Towards the end, we hear Catherine describe herself unflatteringly and humbly, and her self-image is thus quite different to how she is depicted elsewhere by the author: "Iak fatik ær en owerdogh jwdhinna / oc kommen aff jwdha slækt / oc tho ey wtan syndh" [Poor me, I am an unworthy Jewess and come from a Jewish family and not even without sin]. This, of course, only further illustrates her devotion. Another feature of Rachel's behaviour is that she acts and feels in secret ("lønlika," "hemeleka"): the model child-conversion requires children to hide their pure actions and thoughts from their polluted parents.¹⁶¹

To her parents Rachel is an aberration who behaves "un-Jewishly," and her mother is worried by what she considers to be her daughter's "fræmmandha oc siælsyna tanka" [strange and unusual thoughts]. Rachel's parents only appear as individual figures before she leaves for the convent when they are portrayed as strict and lawbound. The father seeks the advice of their companions, other Jews ("radh medh sinom sambrødhrom androm jwdhom") and from this point on their actions are at first in conjunction with other Jews ("medh andhrom jwdhom") and then entirely subsumed by the Jewish crowd ("en storan mogha medh jwdhom," "jwdhane"). Jews are thus shown as acting *en masse* against Christianity, as a unified community or pack of wolves ("en wargha hoper"). Little attention is paid to the feelings of Rachel's parents. Instead, her conversion is framed as an affront

¹⁶⁰ Kleinberg, "Depriving Parents of the Consolation of Children," 138.

¹⁶¹ It will be remembered that in *The Converted Jew and the Devil*, the wife and many other Jewish as well as pagan women also prayed in secret to the Virgin Mary for assistance during difficult childbirths.

to all Jews in the city who are all then obliged to fight it. Although they are compared to wolves, the city's Jews do not use violence to try to bring the affair to a satisfactory conclusion: they use gold and deceit. However, they fail on both counts because of Catherine's sharp Christian intellect.

The Jewish parents are finally erased in the tale when Catherine asks Mary to become her new mother. A point of interest here is that in her poetic appeal to Mary, Catherine draws attention to Mary's Jewish background: "thu millasta modher oc iomffru maria æst oc afflat oc fōdh aff samma slæktet / som skinandes roos / aff hwasso tōrne / som wænasta lilia aff strangom tiistil / wtan alzskona syndelika smitto" [You, Mother most mild and Virgin Mary, are also bred and born of this same family, like a shining rose among sharp thorns, like a very beautiful lily among unyielding thistles, without any sort of sinful blemish]. As a Jewish woman and the mother of the Christian messiah, Mary was an important, foundational link between Judaism and Christianity. Mary's Jewishness is an important reason why Catherine turns to her for succour, but in other East Norse texts this aspect of Mary's ancestry is not usually developed; indeed, it is her difference from and opposition to Jews that tends to take centre stage. Although it is not explicit in the same way, the Jewish father is replaced by the "particularly good, righteous, and virtuous priest" Reynerus in the tale. He, unlike Rachel's biological father, acts in her interest, helps to develop her intellectually and spiritually, and ultimately provides her with a path to salvation to save her from the damnation awaiting all Jews.

Summary

Tales of conversion fulfilled two aims: the authentication of Christian belief and the demonstration of a progression in God's plan for humanity towards redemption and the End of Days. The Jews in these tales are varied and their reasons for conversion equally so. Whether violent hate-driven men or young "holy" girls, there is always a lingering sense that even before the occurrence of a miracle, these Jews knew the truth about Christianity – even if they did not like it. Their stubbornness could be removed in different ways – a dramatic miracle, a helping hand in a crisis, a debate, or just by supporting those showing a willingness to convert. Often Mary or one of the other saints (St Nicholas is particularly prominent in this role in the OSw. material) brought about the conversion. The goal of the miracle tale was not to convert even more Jews, but rather to demonstrate the truth of Christian doctrine and convert the Christian reader/listener from a "bad" to a "good" Christian.

Conclusion

Miracle tales generally centre upon a point of doctrine, using figures seen as living that doctrine and exemplifying the challenges it poses. By humanizing and dramatizing doctrinal points in this way, the various characters are assigned various prescribed attributes, characteristics, and behaviours that do not need expounding – they are predefined, universally understood stereotypes. Concerning Jews, we find, for example: the innocent child; the compliant and proto-Christian wife; the violent male; the intimate association with the devil; the use of sorcery and black magic, and working as (bad) doctors and moneylenders. For the narrative to have the desired effect, viz. strengthening the listeners' faith and quelling any doubts about Christian truth, the audience has both to accept this fictitious world of miracles as real and to understand and share the same interpretative system for decoding the stories' teaching correctly. The tales were thus always read and heard by audiences who had a shared set of preconceived expectations about the narratives' persons, places, actions, objects, and outcomes.

One of these stereotypes concerns the association between Jews and the devil. In the New Testament, Jews are cast as the children of the devil (John 8:44) and the Middle Ages provided them with the vile features and noxious odour to manifest their ancestry and with evil behaviour to substantiate their origin. In the East Norse miracle tales, Jews undertake the devil's work and act as his agents in attempting to destroy Christendom. This points to a subordinate position for Jews as the devil's minions. However, Jews are able to summon the devil at will, to command him to tell the truth about worldly events, and even to order him to explain Christian doctrine and confirm the invincibility of the Virgin Mary and his own inferior position. They can exert some control over him, and so Jews and the devil have a more complex and evenly matched relationship than we might have assumed.

Jews as sorcerers also appear as an accepted premise for the correct interpretation of some of the miracles. Hermogenes is introduced as a powerful magician in *Iupa land* who tries to destroy James and prevent more Jews from being proselytized. Why he hates James so much and why he has diabolical powers need not be explained: he is a Jew and that is explanation enough. He is by his very nature opposed to the work of God. Similarly, it would somehow have rung true for a Swede that Petronia visited a Jewish doctor to make use of his skills in magic. Even in medieval Sweden, both the attraction and the possible dangers of consulting a Jewish doctor were known. In the tale, there is no explanation whatsoever of what the Jewish doctor intended to do with her. Today we can only guess, but for the medieval audience the answer may have been more straightforward: like all Jewish doctors, he intended to kill the Christian woman. The audience could take

comfort in the knowledge that the saints were able to put a stop to fatal attacks by Jews using magic.

The miracle stories present many different ways in which Jews come to be baptized into the Christian faith: the young are converted by a love for Mother Mary or by her life-saving intervention; women by the sight of the Holy Infant; married couples by a yearning for and curiosity about the Virgin; the distressed turned to the Cross or to Mary for protection, and violent males by being washed, quite literally, in the blood of Christ. It is not always the occurrence of a miracle that triggers the conversion in these tales. Some conversions of Jews demonstrate that there is an innate urge to become Christian within everyone: Christianity is the natural state of affairs to which every living human feels drawn. Meanwhile, those Jews who fail to convert, who remain "stiff necked" and blind, such as the father in *The Jewish Boy in the Oven* or the Jewish city residents in *The Host Desecration*, are killed by local Christians. This is important: these exemplary moral tales have Christians killing Jews. Although divine power can save "good" characters in these stories, human agency is required to rid the world of the "bad" ones: God does not smite them, so it remains the work of good Christians to put them to the flames or the sword.¹⁶²

With regard to the construction and portrayal of Jews, the fictitious world of the miracle tales stood in stark contrast to conditions in the real world. Throughout the Middle Ages, Jews often faced persecution that was sanctioned by the Church and State; popular violence that was often instigated by local leaders or members of the clergy; social, political, and economic stigmatization and segregation, as well as expulsions, forced conversions, and murder. In the world of the miracle tales, however, it is Jews who strive to control or destroy all Christendom; it is Jews who perpetrate violence against the holy women, men, and objects; it is Jews who wish to harm every single Christian person; it is Jews who have the economic upper hand; it is Jews who kill innocent young Christian children in the most barbaric, torturous manner imaginable, and it is Jews who are sexually licentious. By allying the devil and Jews and uniting them in a cosmic struggle against Christianity, it was the Christian community that came to be presented and understood as under attack from Jews who were an omnipresent evil force in the world. In a twisted and monumental inversion of victimhood, Jews became the perpetrators and Christians the victims. If we bear in mind that many miracles address Christian doubts and sinful behaviours, we see that Christians were the

¹⁶² I have found just one miracle tale in which a Jew is smitten by God, viz. Text 34: *The Jew and the Lightning Strike*, where a Jew mocks Christians for taking precautions against being struck by lightning, only himself to be killed by a flash.

ones in the “real world” committing many of the false accusations that they were claiming to be victims of in the realm of these fictitious stories. This construction of the omnipotent, Christian-hating, menacing Jew was of course not restricted to miracle tales but lay at the core of Christianity’s view and understanding of itself and its relation to Judaism. The East Norse material is important as it shows how the powerful trope of Christian victim–Jewish perpetrator inversion had become established as an effective tool of instruction in an area with no past or present resident Jews. Thinking with Jews had truly reached every corner of Christian Europe.