

45 The Little Jewish Girl Rachel Who Joined a Nunnery

Headnotes

- Source:** A LSB B 70 a, ff. 26rb–29ra (c. 1525).
Parallel texts: ~
Original text: MEMST 236–40 (lib. II, cap. 29). Thomas de Cantimpré’s work is sometimes known as *Bonum universale de apibus*. The OSw. text diverges somewhat from the original making a direct comparison difficult. For this reason, de Cantimpré’s version is provided in full after the English translation.
Editions: A Johan Ernst Rietz, ed., *Helgona-sagor: Efter 2:ne pergament-shandskrifter från Vadstena-kloster första gången utgifna*, *Scrip-tores suecici medii aevi cultum culturamque respicientes*, vol. 2 (Lund: Typis Berlingianis, 1845), 12–19; *FsvLeg* I 433–42.

Edition (A LSB B 70 a)

Hær æpther

skriffuas aff the hælge iomffrunne sancte

- 3 raket / huilke iomffru gudz modher siælf
wændhe henna namn oc kalladhe henne
EN wærdogher oc katerinam
6 mykyt myndogher doctor i the
hælge skriff / sigher sik haffua
seet ena closter iomffru i brabancia aff sancti
9 bernardi ordon / huilken omwændh war
fran jwdhomen oc til cristna tro / oc sy-
nes thet giorth wara medh iomffru maria til
12 hiælp oc store miskundh / Tæsser iomffrun
rachel / war æn hedhen / oc war ey æn
fulkomlika v aara gamwl / oc war i sinna
15 fœrældhra hws / begynnadhe hon mæ-
kia lœnleka i sith hiæta / at folket

1 Written in top margin: **Sancta rachel A.**

- sik i mællan haffdho en aat skelnat
 18 swa matto at somlike kalladhos
 cristne / oc somlike jwdha / her wndra-
 dhe litla pikan oppa mykyt / æpther
 21 thet hon kwnne mærkia / at sadhana
 ænlethe haffde then cristne som jwdhen
 oc saadana mal then ene som then
 24 andhre / Saadana lønlika tanka
 haffdhe thet barnet jme medh sik siæloe
 i hiærtat / oc enghom thet oppenbaradhe
 27 før æn hon aldrough war / tha oppenba
 radhe hon thetta oc alt annat hær æp-
 ther følger sinom skriffa fadher / **Oc**
 30 han ær thæn samme som thetta första sin
 skreff / **Oc** ær thetta eth wndherliket
 ærandhe / at swa klent eth barn skul-
 33 le swadana ærandhe røra i
 sit hiærta / oc som hon siælf
 oppenbaradhe / tykte henne
 36 altidh hwgnelekare wara / høre
 oc næmpna cristit næmpn æn jwdha
 oc enkannelika / lwstades hon høre ma-
 39 rie næmpn / oc tok hon førtænskuld / løn
 lika ofta brødh oc maat / oc pæning
 ga / fadhrenom oc modhrenne owetan-
 42 des / oc gaff lønlika fatiko folke / som
 plægadho næmpna maria / tha the
 takkadho før almosona / swa sighian
 45 dis haffuen maria løn / maria før-
 gelle idher idhan kærlæk / oc war thet
 stor snille / at swa wnght barn kwnne
 48 her medh swa hemeleka fara / at enghen
 wart thæs warsse / æpther thet at wng
 barn plægga ekki dölía / hwat i hiær
 51 tat ær / hælst før fadher oc modher /
 hær æpther foro fadher oc modher aff

33 le] A hole in MS before these letters, A. 34 sit] A hole in MS before this word, A. 35 oppen-
 baradhe] A small hole in MS before this word, A. 45 dis] A small hole in MS after these letters, A.

- kolne / oc til brabanciam / til en stadh som
 54 kallas lowania / oc rachel foldhe them
I them stadhenom lowania bodhe en
 enkanneliken godher rætvis / oc wæl
 57 leffwandes præster han kalladhes rey-
 nerus han haffde oc ena rætwise /
 oc gudelika føresio / som kwnne læra
 60 wngnom barnom book / som sidhwænia
 ær i stædherna / Til thæs præstens hws
 kommo daghlika mangh wngn barn
 63 bæggia køns badhe cristne oc jwdha /
Tha rachel hørde sakena / før huilka
 the tith gingho / tha bedhes hon loff aff
 66 sinne modher / at hon matte følia flerom /
 thy at førælrannas hws war ther ey
 lankt fraa / hon fik loff / oc war ganz-
 69 ska wælwiliogh / at søkia then presten
Oc then godhe før næmpndhe klærken
 reynerus / tha han mærkte at rachel
 72 war swa idhen / oc wakandhe i sin æ-
 ærandhe / kalladhe han henne en dagh
 lønlika affsidhes i eth rwm si-
 75 ghiandes til henna / **O** mith kæra
 barn jomffru rachel / hwat ey wilt thu
 wardha cristen mænniskia / rachel swa-
 78 radhe / **O** kære herra / aff alt mith
 hiæarta / astwndhar iak wardha cristen /
 oc haffde iak then mik wndherwisa
 81 kwnne alt thet som til høre / wardha oc
 wara en san cristen mænniskia tha pres
 ten thetta hørdhe / wart han gladher
 84 aff alle siæl oc hiæarta / oc før thy at
 han war en gudeliken oc hællogher man
 kændhe han i sinne siæl en wndherleken
 87 rørilse aff then hælga anda / aff huilko
 han førnam / at gudz nadh war i the
 pighonne / oc nakot gudeliket skulle

74 eth] A small hole in the ms after this word, A. 81 Written in top margin: **Sancta rachel** A.

- 90 framledis i *henne* oppenbaras / æn tho
 at han wiste ekki huat *thet* wara skul
 le / **Oc** begynnadhe presten strax opptæl
 93 ia *cristna* tro før *rachel* / aff wærlde[n]nas
 opphoff / alla the hælga skriff[t] / som tek
 nadho ihesu cristi tilqwæmdh / hans pino
 96 oc død[h] / opstandilse / oc opfærdh til hym
 bla / oc annor stykke / som røra oppa the
 hælga tro grwndh oc stadhfæstilse / **Oc**
 99 *rachel* aff gudz nadh wndherstodh snar-
 lika / alla wt tydhning i the hælge skriff[t]
 swa at presten haffde ey behoff offtha
 102 *sighia thet samma* / huilket siælsynt tyk-
 tes wara / i ene klene persone / som ey al-
 droghare war æn vij aar / **Thenna** lær-
 105 dom giordhe klærken reynerus / halfft
 annat aar / lønlika / **Oc** ær thet stort widh
 wndher / at *rachel* kwnne aldrigh mæt
 108 tas aff gudz ordha hørslø / swa oc før
 thy at ey at enast presten siælfuer / wtan
 iæmwæl hans gudelika tiænirska /
 111 som kalladhes martha / lærdhe *henne* id-
 kelika / oc hon kwnne ekki wardha trøt
 nath ællar dagh / hwat kan man meer
 114 *sighia* / **Thetta** kwnne ekki nw længher
 bliffua dolt / **Thy** at førældrane / fadher
 oc modher / kwnno gørlika mærkia at
 117 *rachel* haffde faat fræmmandha oc
 siælsyna tanka / **Oc** giordhe her om
 radh *medh* sinom sambrødhrom androm jw
 120 dhom / hwat wardha skulle *medh* *rachel*
 oc wordho the alle samdræktoghe
 at fadhren skulle sændha sina dotter
 123 til en stadh ower ryneth liggiandis
 oc skepa *henne* brudgomma ællar ri-
 kan fæste man / huilken *henne* bewa-
 126 ra skulle / æn thy at hon war wng[h] /

93 wærlde[n]nas] s (*added later*) A. 100 tydhning] tydhnig A; skriff[t] ifft (*added later*) A.

- ther til likkawæl / før wadha skuldh
 at swa wngþ mænniskia skulle ekki
 129 wardha swiken aff cristno folke / som
 jwdthane troo / **Thetta** radhet fik rach-
 el lønlika wndhersta / oc kom sik lønle
 132 ka til presten / kwngørandhes honom *medh*
 gratandhe tharom / hwat *hennas* fadher
medh andhrom jwdhom haffde owerlakt / oc
 135 sagdhe ythermer til præsten / wtan iak
 i tæsse tilstwndandhe nat wardher *crist-*
nat tha bliffwer iak æwerdhelika før-
 138 tappat / **Tha** presten *thet* hørðhe / bødh
 han pighonne / at *hon* æpther sinne sidh-
 wænio / skulle bitidha ællar ganz-
 141 ska arla ather til honom komma / huil-
 kit *hon* otwækelika loffuadhe sik
 gøra skola / **Om** qwællen nar rachel
 144 war hema stadh i hwset / sagdhe *hon*
 til sinna modher / kærasta modher wn-
 nen mik / at iak i tæsse nath maa lig-
 147 gia alena ællar ensam / modhren ne-
 kadhe *henne* *thet* / tha badh rachel annan-
 tidh mykyt ødhmywklika oc jñnerle
 150 ka / om samma sakena / tha hørðhe modhren
hennas bøn / togh swa / at *hon* redha skul
 le sina sængh *medh* eth ørnegat widh
 153 modhrenna føther / **Tha** lagdhe litla
 pikan sik til sømpn / æpther modhrennas
 wilia / oc soff søtelika maxsan alla
 156 nattena / forglømandes allaledhes
 hwat *hon* prestenom loffwadhe / **Tha** kom
 æroffulla ihesu *cristi* modher maria til
 159 sænghenna / haffuandhes hwitastan
 klædhebonat / hwitare æn snyon /
 oc en wænastan skinande wandh i
 162 handenne / oc taladhe til pighonna /
 sighiandis / katerina stat opp oc

131–32 lønleka] lønkeka A. 151 Written in top margin: **sancta rachel** A.

- 165 gher staar tik føre / Tha pighan thetta
 saa / tykte henne at hon tok æpther wan-
 dhen / oc fiøl siælf f nidher oppa gulff
 168 wet aff sænghenne / oc gaff opp eth
 stoort roop swa at modhren wakna-
 dhe / oc spøriandes hwi hon swa ro-
 171 padhe / dottren swaradhe enkte w-
 than hwiskadhe sakta før mwnnen
 widher sik siælf fwa / **Oc** æpther gudz
 174 wilia bleff modhren strax soffwan-
 dhe / oc dottren skyndadhe sik snar
 lika til presten oc fan honom i førelag-
 177 dhom stadh / **Oc** presten anamadhe
 henne medh glædhi / førandhes henne ena
 halffua milo fran stadhen / lowaniam
 180 til eth *sancti* bernardi ordinis iomffrw
 closter / kwngørandes abbatissam oc conuen-
 tonne sakena / hwi han ther kommen war
 183 medh iomffrwne / aff hwilko the my-
 kyt gladha wordho / **Oc** døppte han
 ællar cristnadhe ther jomffrwna rachel
 186 widh thet nampnet som siælf iomffrw
 maria henne gaff / som ær katerina / oc
 klædhe henne iæmskøt i *sancti* bernardi
 189 ordinis hælga klædhebonat / tilfø-
 giandhis henne / systrannas samqwæmdh
 Æn the soffwo ekki som snarlika fadh
 192 renom / oc andhrom i the slækterne / kwn-
 giordho / hwat giort war / oc wordho
 fadhren medh jwdhomen mykyt før-
 195 færadha / oc maxsan sywke aff
 hiærtans sorgh aff thetta ærandet
 klagandhes sik før landz herran / som
 198 war en mækta hærtoghe / oc før
 biskoppen aff leodio / giffuandes
 them mykyt gull / oppa thet at the
 201 matto faa sina dotter hem i sin hws
 til thæs hon wordhe lagha aara
 gammwl / thet ær xij aar æpther jwdha

- 204 *sidhwænio / menandhes wæl kwnna*
omwændha hennas wilia fran cristne
tro i them fæm aren / manghe waro
- 207 *the som styrkto her til før gaffwor*
skuld ¶ Them prestenom som cristnadhe
katerinam / giordho jwdthane stoor
- 210 *drøffuilse / æn han flydhe jmerlika*
i sinom gudelika bōnom til ihesum cristum
oc hans millasta modher mariam /
- 213 *huilken honom kom oppa tæssa sake-*
na / jwdthane kærdho oppa thenna før-
næmpndha præsten reynerum / før hæl-
- 216 *ga fadher pawan onorius / sighiandis*
presten haffwa brutit theas priuilegia
lokkandes theas barn aff theas hw-
- 219 *som oc cristnat / før lagliken aldher / pa*
wen skreff biskoppen til aff leodio at
han skulle aff pawans dom göra ræt-
- 222 *wisan dom them i mællom ¶ Syster kate-*
rinam fik wetha hwat drøffuilse prestenom
fōrestodh / badh hon jnnerlika iomffru
- 225 *maria / at hon wili wærdoghas komma her*
til medh sinne nadh / oc sændhe strax bodh
til presten æpther iomffru maria jnskyu-
- 228 *tilsom / som troandhes ær / oc badh han*
haffua sik medh / før alla doma / ther han
stæmdher wardher / oc war thetta eth siæl-
- 231 *synt widhwnnder aff enne klene iomfru*
æn medh thet snarasta sakt / reynerus giordhe
som syster katerina honom radhe / oc kommo ba-
- 234 *dhen til stæmpno stadhen leodium / hwar bis-*
koppen haffdhe samman kallat ena mæ-
kelika samqwæmdh / prelatha / doctores
- 237 *oc laghakloka mæn / badhe andelika*
oc wærlðzlika / oc en storan mogha medh jw-
dhom / tha fram ropadhes præsten / reynerus

221 *Written in top margin: sancta rachel A.* 227 *presten]* *A small hole in MS after this word,*
A. 229 *doma]* *A small hole in MS between o and m, A.*

- 240 før rætten / han gik fram før domen / oc sys-
 ter katerina gik hart nær klærken / oc
 begynnadhe først tala / oc taladhe gudhe-
 243 lika om the hælga tro / *medh* san skæl / oc
 bewisnigh aff the hælge skriff / swa be-
 skedhelika oc sammelika oc wisleka / at
 246 enghen dirffdes driffwa *hennas* ordh til
 ryggia / oc dreff *hon* jwdhana tilbaka
medh the *was* wantro / gørandhes them
 249 stora blygdh / *Alla* cristne ther nær
 warandhes / opplyffto sin ænlite i hy-
 melen / loffuandes gudh / oc sagdho
 252 alle *medh* en mwn / wisseleka talar then
 hælge ande i the systrenne / haa kan
 wiislekare tala æn *hon* nw talat haffuer
 255 *Æn* jwdhane konno *henne* enkte swara /
 wtan stodho gratandhes oc tywtan-
 dhes i hymellen *som* en wargha hoper
 258 oc war the *was* roop oc toth swa høkt
 at the hørdhos til *sancti* lamberti kirkio
 hwilken ganzska lankt ligher fran dom-
 261 kyrkionne i leodio / her æpther waro jw-
 dhane fridhsamme i thu aar / rædhan-
 des at om katerina skulle nakot yther
 264 mera komma til disputeran / tha wor-
 dho manghe wisselika aff jwdhomen
 fran wændhe the *was* willo / *Oc* betænk
 267 to sik om eth lønliket swek ællar før
 rædilse / i swadana matto her æpther føl-
 gher ¶ *I* them thimanom war i blandh jw-
 270 dhana en wænaste wngher man / hwil-
 kom jwdhane gaffuo ena stora swmmo
 gull at *han* skulle swika hælga iomffru-
 273 na syster katerinam / *Thenne* wnghe man
 nen kom sik til clostrit / hwar iomffrun
 war / sighiandis sik *henne* wara nær skyl-
 276 dher / ællar *henna* næsta frændhe / oc sag-

265 aff] *A small hole in MS after this word, A.*

dhe sik wara mykyt gladhan aff thy
 at hon haffde widhertakit cristne troo
 279 oc wnfanghit cristelik dōpilsē / oc bedhes
 thy ødhmywklika i ihesu nampn at war-
 dha cristen / oc dōpas medh cristnom æn han
 282 giordhe alt thetta skrømtelika / oc ekki
 rætffærdelika / **Sidhan** bedhes han
 nakon then som honom kwnne læra grwn-
 285 dhen i the hælge cristne troo / honom
 tilskepadhes godha gudelike mæn
 oc han lærdhe aff them mykyt goth
 288 oc tho alt fafænglika / thy at hans
 akt war ey rætffærdhog / **Tha** badh
 han ødhmyuklika / at hans kæra fræn-
 291 ka katerina / matte til honom komma / han
 sagdhe sik henne kwnna bæst wndhersta
Tha katerina fik wetha hans begæ
 294 rilse / nekadhe hon allaledhes wilia
 til honom gaa / henne wart budhit wn-
 dher gudz lydhno / oc sagdhe hon æn
 297 tha ne / skrefftefadhren hennas straff
 fadhe henne før olydhnona / **Tha** kwn-
 giordhe hon i sin skrifftemal / at henne
 300 wart oppenbarat aff them hælga
 anda lōnlika / at then wnghe man
 nen tok dōpelsen skrømtelika oc
 303 ekki rætffærdelika / oc thy lydde hon
 ekki sinom fōrmanne wetandhes gudhz
 wilia / **Tha** jwdhane hōrdho then wn-
 306 gha mannen haffua enghen framgang
 medh sith swik / wændho the igæn aff sinne
 wranghe akt / enkte meer hælga
 309 iomffrwna omakandis / oc wnghe
 mannen bleff i sinne willo / som iomffrunne
 oppenbaradhes aff gudhi / **Æn** hwru
 312 *sancta* katerina sik ther æpther øwadhe
 i hælgom oc dygdhelikom gærnighom

301 lōnlika] A small hole in MS between n and l, A.

- thet kan man aldhregh allaledhes
 315 fulkomlika sighia ællar skriffua / thy
 at i allas henna aathæffwom syntes ey
 annat æn hæloghet / i allo godho war
 318 hon framhallog / gudz kærleker bleff
 i henne altidh brinnandhes wtan slio-
 het / ødhmyukten otrøth / twlomodhet
 321 liffuandes oc redhoboeth / lydhnan
 wakandes wtan førswmilse / hon
 war som en krydda gardher / i sik haff
 324 wandes alzskona blomster oc yrther
 swa haffde hon sannelika alla dygdher
 i sik ¶ Nar tæssen hælga iomffrun / syster
 327 katerina / saa at wælborna qwinnor
 kommo til clostrit søkiandis sina fræn-
 kor ællar døtter / them hoxswalandes
 330 medh hwgnelikom ordhom / ællar medh
 likamlikom gaffwom / aff hwilko hon saa
 systrana mykyt wardha gladha / tænk-
 333 te hon medh sik / til hwem skalt thu gaa
 thet thu matte hogxswalas **O**c swara
 dhe sik siælfue sighiandis / Sannelika
 336 iak weth wæl hwar iak faar hogxswa
 lilse / oc gik strax til eth wænasta
 iomffru maria belæte ther i clostreno /
 339 oc saa til belætet / medh blidho ænlite
 sighiandis / heel maria ful medh nadh
O aldra millasta modher maria / iak
 342 bidher tik jñnerlika at thu wærdoghas
 miskwñna mik / iak seer hwru mina
 samsystra wardha søkta oc margh
 345 fallelika hogxswaladha aff sinom før-
 ældrom / wenom oc frændhom / æn iak
 fatik haffuer enghen til hugnat i wærz-
 348 like matto / oc thy flyr iak til tik / wær-
 dogasta modher / swa som til mina frw / oc
 millasta frænko / medh trofast hiæta /
 351 oc trygdh hopp / war thy thu min enas
 ta oc lyoffuasta hwgxswalirska / oc
 beskærmerska / o hægasta frw / thine

- 354 hōxste wærdoghet hōffuis ekki fōr-
 sma tith egit kōth oc blodh / Iak fa-
 tik ær en owerdogh jwdhinna / oc kommen
- 357 aff jwdha slækt / oc tho ey wtan syndh
 æn thu millasta modher oc iomffru ma-
 ria æst oc afflat oc fōdh aff samma slæ
- 360 ktet / som skinandes roos / aff hwasso
 tōrne / som wænasta lilia aff strangom
 tiistil / wtan alzskona syndelika smitto
- 363 Thy bidher iak tik at thu wærdoghas
 wara min hugnadher i tæsse wærldh /
 huat andeliken sōtme æptherfōlgdhe i
- 366 iomffrunnas siæl / aat swadana widhertaal
 medh iomffru marie / thet kan enghen begripa /
 enkte porta taal kan liknas widher thet
- 369 talet / som katerina haffde medh hymeri
 kis drotnigh marie / henne wari loff oc
 hedher oc æra æwerdelika

Translation

Below is written about the holy maid¹ Saint Rachel, whose name the Virgin Mother of God changed and called her Catherine. A worthy and very authoritative scholar in Holy Scripture says that he himself saw a young nun in Brabant of the Order of St Bernard who was a convert from Judaism to the Christian faith and appeared to have done so [i. e., converted] with the help and mercy of the Virgin Mary.

This maid, Rachel, was a pagan and had not yet had her fifth birthday and was in her parents' house when she began to feel secretly² in her heart that there was a difference between people, so that some were called Christians and some Jews. The small girl was much bemused by this as she could see that the Christian had the same face as the Jew, that the one had the same language as the other. The child had such secrets thoughts within herself in her heart and she did not dis-

365 Written in top margin: *sancta elyzabeth A.*

1 OSw. *jungfru*: 'young lady'; 'young, unmarried woman'; 'girl,' 'maiden,' 'maid'; 'virgin,' 'chaste woman.'

2 The adjective *lōnliker* and adverb *lōnika* occur some nine times and underscore how much of the story takes place "in secret."

close them to anyone until she had reached maturity, after which she revealed this and everything else that follows to her father confessor – he is the same man who first wrote this down. And it is a wonderful thing that so small a child should have such things moving in her heart. And, as she herself disclosed, it always seemed more joyful to her to hear and say a Christian name than a Jewish one, and she particularly enjoyed hearing Mary's name. And for this reason, she would often secretly take bread and food and money without her father and mother knowing and secretly give it to poor folk who would usually name Mary when they said thanks for the alms, saying "Be rewarded by Mary! May Mary repay you for your love!" And it was a great art that such a young child could keep this so secret that no-one suspected it, because young children do not usually conceal what is in their hearts, especially from their father and mother.

Then the father and mother left Cologne and went to Brabant to a city called Leuven [Louvain] and Rachel accompanied them. In the city of Leuven there lived a particularly good, righteous, and virtuous priest. He was called Reynerus. He also had a righteous and godly foresight that was to teach young children literacy as is custom in the cities. Many young children – of both sexes, both Christian and Jewish – came to the priest's house every day. When Rachel heard why they were going there, she asked for her mother's permission to accompany several others as her parents' house was not far away. She was given permission and quite voluntarily visited the priest. And when the good aforementioned cleric, Reynerus, noticed that Rachel was so keen and attentive in her cause, he one day called her secretly to one side into a room, saying to her, "Oh, my dear child! Young maid Rachel! Why do you not want to be a Christian?" Rachel replied, "Oh, dear lord! With all my heart I long to become Christian and if only I could learn all that is needed to become and be a true Christian person!" When the priest heard this, he was overjoyed in his soul and heart, and because he was a godly and holy man, he felt a wonderful movement of the Holy Spirit in his soul, by which he knew that the grace of God was in the girl and that something godly would henceforth be revealed within her although he did not know what it might be. And the priest immediately began to enumerate the [points of the] Christian faith to Rachel: the beginning of the world, all the Holy Scriptures that pointed to the coming of Jesus Christ, his passion and death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, and other points that concern the foundation and confirmation of the Holy Faith. And by the mercy of God, Rachel quickly understood the entire exposition of the Holy Faith so that the priest did not often have to repeat the same thing which was thought to be unusual in a small person who was no older than six and a half years.

The cleric Reynerus undertook this teaching in secret for a year and a half and it is a great wonder that Rachel could never be satiated by hearing the word of God, so that not only the priest himself, but also his godly servant-woman, who was

called Martha, taught her enthusiastically – and she could never grow tired, night or day. What more can we say? This could not be kept hidden any longer because the parents – father and mother – could clearly see that Rachel had acquired strange and unusual thoughts and they conferred with their companions – other Jews – about what should be done with Rachel, and they were all in agreement that the father should send his daughter to a city located across the Rhine and arrange a bridegroom or rich fiancé for her who would keep her even though she was young for this all the same, because of the danger that such a young person should be tricked by Christians as the Jews believe. Rachel secretly got wind of this counsel and went in secret to the priest and, crying tears, informed him of what her father together with the other Jews had decided, and moreover she said to the priest, “Unless I become Christian this very night, then I shall be lost for all eternity!” When the priest heard this, he ordered the girl to return to him in good time or quite early as was usually her habit which she promised to do without any doubt.

In the evening, when Rachel was at home, she said to her mother, “Dearest mother! Allow me to be alone or by myself this evening.” The mother refused. Then, for a second time, Rachel asked very humbly and fervently for the same thing. When the mother heard her request, she said that she was to make her bed with a pillow at her mother’s feet. Then the little girl lay down to sleep in accordance with her mother’s wishes and slept sweetly almost the entire night, completely forgetting what she had promised the priest. Then the honourable mother of Jesus Christ, Mary, came to her bed wearing an incredibly white dress, whiter than snow; and [holding] a beautiful, shining wand in her hand, and she spoke to the girl, saying, “Catherine, get up and start walking along your road, because there is a long road ahead of you!” When the girl saw this, it seemed as though she reached out for the wand, and she fell down onto the floor next to the bed and shouted so loudly that her mother woke up and asked her why she had shouted. The daughter replied saying nothing but whispered quietly to herself. And in accordance with God’s will the mother immediately fell back asleep, and the daughter quickly hurried to the priest and found him at the prearranged place. And the priest received her with joy and led her half a mile from the city of Leuven to a nunnery of the Order of St Bernard informing the abbess and convent about the matter – why he had come there with the virgin – which pleased them greatly. And he baptized or christened the virgin Rachel there with the name that the Virgin Mary herself had provided, that is Catherine, and immediately dressed her in the habit of the Order of St Bernard and joined her to the sisters’ convent.

And they no sooner slept than the father and others in the family found out what had happened. And the father and Jews were horrified and almost ill with heartache by what had happened, and they complained to the lord of the land

who was a mighty duke, and to the bishop of Liège, 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. They were of the opinion that they could turn her desire away from the Christian faith during those five years. There were many who supported this with gifts.

The Jews caused the priest who had christened Catherine much grief, and in his divine prayers he fervently sought refuge with Jesus Christ and his most mild mother Mary who had led him to this case. The Jews complained to the Holy Father, Pope Honorius, about this aforementioned priest, Reynerus, saying that the priest had broken their privileges by luring their children from their houses and christening them before the legal age. The pope wrote to the bishop of Liège saying that he should make a just judgement in the pope's name between them.

Sister Catherine heard what grief the priest found himself in. She prayed fervently to the Virgin Mary that she would deign to come with her grace, and, inspired by the Virgin Mary (which is believable), she immediately sent a message to the priest, and asked him to address all the charges where he was summoned, and this was a rare wonder for a small virgin, but as soon as it was said, Reynerus did as Sister Catherine advised him and they both went to Liège, the city where they had been summoned, where the bishop had called a special gathering of prelates, theologians, and legal experts, both religious and secular, and a great crowd of Jews. Then the priest Reynerus was called before the court. He went before the judges and Sister Catherine walked right next to the cleric and she began to speak first. And she spoke godly about the Holy Faith with true clarity and demonstration from the Holy Scriptures, so humbly and truly and wisely that no-one dared throw her words back at her. And she repelled the Jews with their delusion, making them greatly embarrassed. All those Christians who were present lifted their faces heavenwards, praising God, and all said with one voice, "The Holy Spirit is definitely speaking within this sister. Who can speak more wisely than she has now spoken?" And the Jews were unable to reply to her but stood crying and howling at the sky like a pack of wolves, and their crying and howling was so loud that they could be heard in the Church of St Lambert which is quite a long way away from the cathedral in Liège.

After this the Jews were peaceful for two years, afraid that if Catherine was again to come to dispute, then many of the Jews would certainly be turned from their delusion, and they thought of a secret betrayal or treachery as follows. At that time there was among the Jews an extremely handsome young man to whom the Jews gave a large amount of gold that he should deceive the holy virgin, Sister Catherine. This young man arrived at the nunnery where the virgin was and said that he was closely related to her close family and said that he was very happy that she had taken the Christian faith and embraced Christian baptism

and humbly asked in the name of Jesus to become a Christian and be baptized a Christian, but he did all this pretending and not righteously. Then he asked that someone might be able to teach him the foundation of the Christian faith. Good godly men were brought to him, and he learnt much good from them, though all in vain, because his intention was not righteous. Then he humbly asked that his dear relative Catherine might come to him. He said that he could best understand her. When Catherine got to hear of his wish, she outright refused to go to him. She had been commanded to obey God and still refused even if her father confessor would punish her for disobedience. Then she disclosed in her confession that the Holy Spirit had secretly revealed to her that the young man had taken baptism as a pretence and not righteously, and so, knowing God's will, she did not obey her guardian. When the Jews heard that the young man had not been successful in his deception, they were again repelled from their evil intention, no longer troubling the holy virgin, and the young man remained in his delusion just as had been revealed to the virgin by God.

And it will never be possible to say or write entirely in full how Saint Catherine practised her holy and virtuous deeds after this, because there appeared nothing but holiness in all her actions. She was persevering in all goodness. God's love was always burning within her without lethargy, her humility tireless, her patience and readiness alive, observing obedience without neglect. She was like a herb garden that contained all kinds of flowers and herbs; so, she truly contained all virtues within her.

When this holy virgin, Saint Catherine, saw that noble women came to the nunnery seeking their relatives or daughters, consoling them with words of comfort or with material gifts, from which she saw that the sisters were very pleased, she thought to herself, "To whom shall you go when you need comforting?" And she answered herself, saying, "Truly, I know well where I receive comfort!" and she went straight to a very beautiful image of the Virgin Mary there in the nunnery and looked at the image and said with a blissful face, "Hail Mary, full of grace! O Mother Mary most mild, I pray fervently to you that you will deign to have mercy upon me. I see how my sisters are sought and, in many cases, comforted by their parents, friends, and relatives. And poor me, I have no-one in this world for joy, and so I seek refuge with you, most worthy mother, as if to my lady and most mild relative with a faithful heart and secure hope, as if you were my only and most beloved consoler and protector! O holy lady! Your very high position does not befit the contempt of your own flesh and blood. Poor me, I am an unworthy Jewess and come from a Jewish family and not even without sin, but 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. So, I ask you to deign to be my comfort in this world."

What spiritual comfort was to follow in the virgin's soul from such a conversation with the Virgin Mary no-one can grasp: no conversation at the nunnery gate can be compared with the conversation that Catherine had with Mary, the queen of heaven, may she be praised and respected and honoured for eternity!

Latin Version: *Miraculorum et exemplorum memorabilium sui temporis* [(A Book) of Miracles or Memorable Tales of his Age]

Source: MEMST 236–40.

De Rachele Judæa, facta moniali in Parco iuxta Louanium.

Vidi in Brabantiae partibus Cisterciensis ordinis monialem de Iudaismo conuersam in quo opus diuæ Mariæ matris Christi gloriositis excellebat. Annorum non plenè quinque, in domo parentum Iudeorum aduertere cœpit animo: cur distinctio nominum fieret Iudeorum pariter et Christianorum, cum vnus vultus atque loquelæ homines essent vniusque gentis. Mira talis puellæ discretio. Inhærebat tamen, vt postmodum mihi retulit, audius audienti, magis Christianum nomen, quàm Iudaicum. Et specialiter beatæ Mariæ nomen lætabatur audire, cum Christiani aliquid inuicem petere vel iurare solerent. Furabatur autem sub vtraque assella panem de mensa parentum, & pueris occulte mendicis partiebatur, vt regratiando sibi Mariæ nomen audiret. In his ergo de tempore in tempus mirè proficiens, ita sagaciter latitabat, vt neuter parentum aliquid super cogitatu filiæ aduertere posset vel audire. Contigit autem vt parentes eius à Colonia in Louanium Brabantiae opidum cum filia deuenirent. Vbi cum successu temporis in domum cuiusdam præclari presbyteri, magistri Reineri nomine, puella cum Christianis pueris aduenisset, & eam ex nomine nouisset presbyter, eamque venire libentius ad se frequentius aduertisset, interrogauit eam, dicens: Visne Rachel carissima Christiana fieri? Et illa, volo, inquit, dummodo erudias me quid sit fieri Christianam. Tunc presbyter, vt vir sanctus mirè gauisus, in spiritu sentiebat de puella futurum nescio quid diuinum, Et incipiens à constitutione mundi, cœpit illi scripturas exponere per quas fides Christi, vel ipse Christus significari poterat, vel ostendi. Quarum expositiones, vt mihi ipsamet dixit, ita integro sensu in illa ætate sex annorum tunc & dimidij discretione spiritus intellexit, vt raro oporteret presbyterum rationem aliquam iterare. Hæc eruditio ferè per annum dimidium per durauit, occulto aditu per quem furtiuè & oportunè raptam puellam edocebat. Et vide admirationis insigne prodigium, Nunquam Rachel auditu verbi Dei satiari poterat, vel lassari, cum tamen presbyter & Martha ministra eius, mulier religiosa & prudens valde, ambo frequenter lassari sibi inuicem succederent in docendo. Quid plura? Mox vt parentes in filia cœperunt aduertere cogitatum, conuenien-

tibus Iudæis pluribus conuenerunt in hoc, vt missam filiam de Louanio vltra Rhenum sponso traderent arctius conseruandam. Quod vbi puella cognouit, presbytero cum lacrymis indicauit, vt si illam eadem nocte non raperet, & Christianam efficeret, perdita esset in perpetuum & confusa. Quod audiens presbyter, puellæ præcipit, vt ad solitum aditum summo manè veniret. Quod cum incunctanter annueret, vespere matri suæ dixit. Sola mater hac nocte iacere volo, Quod cum simplex puellula dixisset: & diutius mater renuisset, consensit tandem, eidem super ceruical ad pedes suos lectulum præcipiens præparari. Iacente ergo puellula vsque ad mane, & obliuiscente penitus quod presbytero precedenti nocte promiserat, astitit illi gloriosissima mater Dei Maria in habitu candido super niuem: Et offerens illi virgam splendidam quam gestabat, dixit: Surge Catherina & iter accipe, grandis enim tibi restat via. Hæc illa dicente, Rachel credens virgam apprehendere, de lecto cecidit & exclamauit: cuius clamore mater excitata, & quærente clamoris causam, filiaque cautius dissimulante, mater protinus obdormiuit: & Rachel surgens, ad conductum locum presbyterum mox inuenit. Qui lætus assumpsit eam, & venit ad monasterium quod Parcus dominarum dicitur: quod erat ad leucam dimidiam dictæ villæ, & gaudentibus cunctis baptizauit illam, nomen Catherinæ imponens ei, quo vocata prius fuerat à matre Christi: statimque habitu ordinis induit baptizatam. Nec mora, vt audiuit pater & amici eius quod gestum est, consternati sunt, & per ducem ominum terræ, & per Episcopum Leodiensem, tandemque per Papam Honorium datis maximis pecunijs laborauerunt, vt infra ætatem legitimam filia ablata parentibus redderetur. Quæ si in domo parentum vsque ad duodennem ætatem perseueraret in fide suscepta: tunc iustè Christiano nomini reddi posset: cogitantes nequissimè medio tempore infantilem animum faciliter posse deflectere, vt ad natiua parentum vota rediret. Horum fraudulenta conanima, proh dolor, multi magni & litterati viri, pecunia suscepta fouebant, pro quo presbyter supradictus non modicè tribulatus, solum Christum & matrem eius, quæ auctrix fuerat facti huius, multis lachrymis inuocabat. Mira res, & vsque in præsens cunctis seculis inaudita. Petijt à presbytero ad onem citationem, & iudicem se puella deduci. Forsitan, inquit, iudices flectentur ætate, & ad mei piaculum mouebuntur. Et factum est vt petiuit & dixit. Vt enim die quadam apud Leodium venit coram Episcopo, clericis, & magnatibus, diuersos aduocatos & iudices, tam constanti, quàm veridica ratione confudit & mouit; vt voces vlulantium & clamantium cum lacrymis præ stupore in Ecclesia sancti Lamberti à locis distantissimis audirentur: ita vt omnes manifestè dicerent & viderent, in tam exili ætate diuini spiritus sapientiam præualere. Hinc post annos duos à lite iuris cessatum est, & aliud deceptionis tendiculum præparatur. Iuuenis elegantis formæ Iudæus, conductus ad hoc, venit ad monasterium supradictum, in quo puella erat, & stimulo animo baptisma suscepit. Qui cum se fingeret miro modo, quærebat vt puellæ, quasi cognatæ suæ, eruditionis gratia loqui posset:

dicebat enim; plus super omnium sermonibus mihi cognatæ verbum salubritis imprimetur: illa tamen, vt mihi retulit, interius discernebat fictum ad fidem iuuenem accessisse, & ideo nec prece, nec precio, nec vlla obedientia flecti potuit, vt solum verbum iuueni loqueretur. Hæc vt viderunt Iudæi, cessauerunt ab illa: iuuenis autem ad vomitum est reuersus. hanc postea tanta gratia potiri vidimus, vt nihil ea serenius videri posset. Cumque nobilium monialium parentes cum multa ambitione venirent videre filias, vel cognatas: hæc coram imagine beatę virginis veniebat, & gratioso vultu dicebat: Alię sorores nostræ moniales à matribus & amicis solatium habent, & gaudium: ego autem paupercula, pupilla, & indigena, ad te dominam, vt cognatam mean fidenter accedo: tu sola pro omnibus esto mihi refugium & solamen. Et hæc dicentem, quis dubitet eam à misericordissima pietatis matre solatio defraudari. Non te decet ô domina tuam carnem, tuum sanguinem spernere, de cuius genere, vt rosa de spinis orta es, lilium de tribulis generatum.