

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

PERMISSION DE REPRODUIRE ET DE DISTRIBUER LA THÈSE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISTRIBUTE THE THESIS

NOM DE L'AUTEUR / NAME OF AUTHOR:	Cynthia Smurthwaite
ADRESSE POSTALE / MAILING ADDRESS:	45 Mann Ave, apt. 208 Ottawa, ON K1N 6Y7
GRADE / DEGREE: Ph.D.(English)	ANNÉE D'OBTENTION / YEAR GRANTED 2003
TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS: The Depiction of Jews in Middle English Crucifixion Literature	

L'auteur permet, par la présente, la consultation et le prêt de cette thèse en conformité avec les règlements établis par le bibliothécaire en chef de l'Université d'Ottawa. L'auteur autorise aussi l'Université d'Ottawa, ses successeurs et cessionnaires, à reproduire cet exemplaire par photographie ou photocopie pour fins de prêt ou de vente au prix coûtant aux bibliothèques ou aux chercheurs qui en feront la demande.

Les droits de publication par tout autre moyen et pour vente au public demeureront la propriété de l'auteur de la thèse sous réserve des règlements de l'Université d'Ottawa en matière de publication de thèses.

The author hereby permits the consultation and the lending of this thesis pursuant to the regulations established by the Chief Librarian of the University of Ottawa. The author also authorizes the University of Ottawa, its successors and assignees, to make reproductions of this copy by photographic means or by photocopying and to lend or sell such reproductions at cost to libraries and to scholars requesting them.

The right to publish the thesis by other means and to sell it to the public is reserved to the author, subject to the regulations of the University of Ottawa governing the publication of theses.

N.B. LE MASCULIN COMPREND ÉGALEMENT LE FÉMININ

Jan. 13/03

DATE

C. Smurthwaite

(AUTEUR) SIGNATURE (AUTHOR)



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
ET POSTDOCTORALES

FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

SMURTHWAITE, Cynthia L.

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE - AUTHOR OF THESIS

Ph.D. (English Literature)

GRADE - DEGREE

English

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT - FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

TITRE DE LA THÈSE - TITLE OF THE THESIS

The Depiction of Jews in Middle English Crucifixion Literature

David Carlson

DIRECTEUR DE LA THÈSE - THESIS SUPERVISOR

EXAMINATEURS DE LA THÈSE - THESIS EXAMINERS

R. St-Jacques

A. Taylor

N. Von Maltzahn

G. Clark

J.-M. De Koninck, Ph.D.

LE DOYEN DE LA FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES
SUPÉRIEURES ET POSTDOCTORALES

SIGNATURE

DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE
AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

**The Depiction of Jews
in Middle English Crucifixion Literature**

By

Cynthia L. Smurthwaite, B.A., M.A.

**Thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Ph.D. degree in English Literature**

**University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Canada**

© Cynthia L. Smurthwaite, Ottawa, Canada, 2003



**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

**395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

**395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-76500-8

Canada

Acknowledgements

First I'd like to thank my supervisor, Dr. David Carlson, as much for his kindness and encouragement as for his help in directing this thesis. Next I'd like to thank Dr. Truda Rosenberg for financial assistance in the form of the 2001 Truda Rosenberg Scholarship. For their friendship and hospitality, many thanks also to: Rosemary, Steve, Vicky, and Alex Daniels; Colleen Franklin; Irene Gaspar; Marc and Kirsten Hewson; Tobi Kozakewich; Sandy and Allison MacDonald, and Karin Jasper; Linda Morra; Martha Perry; Carolyn Swanson; and Tina and Mike Trigg. Finally, much gratitude to my family for all their much appreciated help: Jack R. and Jack D. Smurthwaite in British Columbia; Jane and Amy Smurthwaite here in Ontario; Frances Smurthwaite in Newfoundland; and Smofie, wherever she may be.

Abstract

This thesis studies the relationship between the treatment of Jewish characters by Christian authors in Middle English Crucifixion literature and the treatment of Jews in medieval Europe by members of surrounding Christian majority cultures. The common medieval Christian belief that all Jews, of all periods and places, were responsible for Jesus' death led to the related beliefs that there was a singular Jewish character; that it was racially determined; and that it was evil. The exaggerated role Jews play in Middle English versions of the Crucifixion, and the authors' various derogatory references to Jews in general, were designed in part to reconcile medieval Christians to the uncharitable treatment endured by Jews in their midst.

Christian writers often attributed to Jews certain negative characteristics that determined their alienation both from God and from the rest of humanity. These characteristics were exemplified by unsuccessful figures from Hebrew scripture: sons of holy men who, far from fulfilling the promise of their fathers, failed to earn God's favour, and thus were excluded from election. Cain, for example, became a model of violence; Ishmael became a model of exile from the Holy Land; and Esau became a

model of love of the world over the spirit. This thesis organizes its study of Christian portrayals of gospel and post-gospel Jews according to the precedents set by these three early models of a common Christian stereotype of Jews.

Because these characters' failure is linked to the success of their younger siblings, this thesis also places their putative legacy to later Jews in the context of ultimogeniture, according to which, as many medieval Christians believed, God recalled his promise to the Jews and granted it instead to the new faith of Christianity. The texts studied herein portray Jews as members of a wayward faith, deprived of their ancient status on account of the Crucifixion.

Note on the Treatment of Texts

I have supplied the Middle English texts with my own punctuation, even in cases where the editors have already provided modern punctuation. I have spelled out words abbreviated in the earlier texts. Words broken into fragments at line-ends in "Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd" and "On Lofsong of ure Louerde" have been reproduced whole. I have not reproduced diacritics.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
i: The Middle English Texts	10
 Chapter One: Cain	 14
i: Cain's Legacy	19
ii: The Bestial Jew	31
iii: The Infernal Jew	39
iv: The Crucifixion: Cause or Effect?	48
v: "Se now þe maner of crucifyyng"	62
vi: Blood Crimes: Revivals of the Passion	82
 Chapter Two: Ishmael	 92
i: The Wandering Jew	108
ii: European Expulsions	111
iii: The Doctrine of Witness	116
iv: Seth and the Seeds of the Cross	120
v: The Tree of the Cross	133
vi: Jerusalem	142

Chapter Three: Esau	152
i: Esau and Earthly Matters	168
ii: Judas' Morsel	176
iii: Age and the Physical World	184
iv: "God Pat Sone Shal Passe"	187
v: Judas' Tithe	194
vi: Jews and the Medieval Money Trade	206
 Bibliography: Primary Sources	 220
 Bibliography: Secondary Sources	 223

Introduction

This thesis explores Christian authors' treatment of Jews in Middle English Crucifixion literature. More specifically, it investigates the relationship between the presentation of Jews in this literature and contemporary Christian sentiment and policy regarding them, both popular and learned. Jewish characters in Middle English renderings of the events surrounding Jesus' death reflect their authors' attitudes, not only toward the gospel Jews who support the Crucifixion, but toward all Jews, including those yet to be born. Much of the distrust and disdain that characterized the standard Christian response to the Jewish presence in medieval Christendom can be traced to three Christocentric premises which assumed divine rejection of Jews: that Jesus predates Creation, and is coeval with the God of Hebrew scripture; that "Israel" truly denotes the Christian faithful, a body believed to include all heroes, patriarchs, and prophets of Hebrew scripture; and that all Jews, regardless of provenance or era, share responsibility for the Crucifixion. All of these ideas have contributed greatly to the image of Jews appearing in, and encouraged by, the Middle English texts here studied.

Because the theory of Christian ascendancy over Judaism,

particularly as illustrated in the three Christian premises just cited, relies on an exegetical privileging of junior over senior, the organizing principle throughout this thesis is the concept of ultimogeniture, the system whereby a family's legacy passes to a younger rather than an elder child. The more usual hereditary practice of primogeniture, whereby the eldest child succeeds to a legacy, would favour Jewish claims to identification with Israel, but medieval Christian writers, guided by contemporary theology, and even political policy, defended their own younger faith's claims to be the people of God by citing instances of ultimogeniture in the Jews' own scriptures. Especially popular for this purpose were elder brothers Cain, Ishmael, and Esau, all of whom lost their claims to favour, both parental and divine, to younger brothers who thus became symbols of Christianity to Christian exegetes and Christendom at large. Abel, Isaac, and Jacob appear in the works studied here as early Christians rather than founders of the Jewish nation; their elder brothers -- Cain, Ishmael, and Esau, respectively -- are portrayed as early Jews, conceived by medieval Christian authors as failed aspirants to God's favour. Each of the three chapters of this thesis is named after one of these biblical elder brothers, and demonstrates how the negative attributes typically associated with the figure in question are applied to Jewish characters throughout the literature that is this thesis' primary focus.

In addition to its titular character, each chapter is also

assigned a governing concept determined by its thematic centre: Chapter One, on Cain, focuses chiefly on violence, the trait for which Cain earns God's curse; Chapter Two, on Ishmael, focuses on exile, which Ishmael suffers when he is banished from his father's house; and Chapter Three, on Esau, focuses on worldly desires, a basic form of which -- hunger -- leads Esau to sell his birthright to his younger twin. The chapters are chronologically ordered, with Cain coming first, and cumulative, so that "Ishmael" refers back to "Cain," and "Esau" refers back to both preceding chapters.

Chapter One, then, discusses Cain's specific role as an archetype of violence, the first human murderer, but also the Middle English depiction of Jews as inheritors of Cain's violence and habitual enactors of crimes of blood. Cain's victim was his own brother Abel, and, according to Christian belief, his crime was a type of the Crucifixion: Jesus' Jewish enemies brought about the death of a countryman, and, arguably, a coreligionist, by instigating the Crucifixion; their killing of the incarnate God was a fratricide.

More outrageously still, Jesus' death was a deicide, and in their efforts to understand how the Jews could have perpetrated so inconceivable a crime, Christian writers developed two explanations: either the Jews were sub-human beasts whose reason was insufficient to understand their sin, or they were demons who glorified in the evil act they knowingly committed. Both

explanations denied Jewish humanity, and, in fact, despite their seeming opposition, excited the same ferocity among Christians, for the bestial and the infernal Jews were depicted and treated essentially the same in Christian texts.

Having identified Cain's act of fratricide as a type of the Crucifixion, Christians sought similar forms of violence among post-gospel Jews, and imputed to them various fictive blood-crimes, supposedly tributes to the bloody death of a rival faith's God. Jews were accused of annually committing the ritual murder of a Christian child in mockery of Jesus' death; of using Christian blood for various evil purposes; and of stealing and profaning the Host in order to perpetuate Jesus' pain. Such charges encouraged the suspicion that the medieval Jew was as guilty of the Crucifixion as Jesus' contemporary enemies -- "the Christ killer in person," as Joshua Trachtenberg calls this Christian image of the Jew (167).

Believing contemporary Jews to be as deeply implicated in the Crucifixion as those who had agitated for it, many medieval Christians further believed they were equally deserving of punishment as well. Chapter Two discusses the Middle English portrayal of Jews as doomed by God to endless reprisals for their relation to Jesus' crucifiers -- reprisals in the form of Christian abuse, particularly the periodic expulsion that saw Jews uprooted from their homes in medieval Europe whenever a Christian monarch deemed their presence undesirable. The chapter

also considers the irony that binds these medieval European Jews with the much earlier exile Ishmael: having done nothing to warrant such exclusion, they all suffer unjustly.

The medieval Christian appraisal of Jewish misfortunes was different: inspired in part by Augustine's "Doctrine of Witness," which stated that Jews survive in Christendom as a testament despite themselves of Jesus' power, the Christian Middle Ages developed a personification of Jewish exile, not only from regions throughout Europe, but from their ancient capital of Jerusalem. Many Christians saw the second-century Roman expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem as a divine punishment for the Crucifixion, and the many later expulsions as a sign that the judgement still obtained. The Wandering Jew, an immortal figure doomed to wander until Jesus' return, represented for many the Jews in a permanent state of exile from their homeland, the scene of Jesus' death; he was, in Edgar Rosenberg's words, "a walking Moral, a perpetual embodiment of Sin in [the] process of being punished" (196).

Chapter Two is also concerned with images of sacred space, conceived by Christian writers as Christian space, inaccessible to Jews, an idea apparently supported by Rome's official expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem in 135. The notion that sacred space is Christian territory is also developed in the works here studied with respect to such sites as the Garden of Eden, the Temple of Jerusalem, and Mount Calvary, Christian claims to which

are likewise studied in this second chapter.

Finally, Chapter Three investigates Christian theories regarding the Jewish rejection of Jesus' message. Christian writers appeared to have established Jewish responsibility for the Crucifixion and God's continued vengeance still operating against Jews centuries after the fact, but to account for the Jews' supposed blindness was another matter. This final chapter discusses the Middle English conception of Jews as materialists too interested in worldly gain to appreciate spiritual matters. In preferring worldly to spiritual sustenance, they follow Esau's example of choosing the needs of the body over those of the soul.

Common Christian belief held that Jews as a race were given to gluttony and avarice, the deadly sins of greed. Gluttony is imputed to Jews, not only through Esau, but also through the gospel character who enacted the most personal treachery against Jesus: Judas, so often cited in the Christian Middle Ages as the archetypal Jew. His desire for money from the priests who seek Jesus in return for information about his whereabouts is coupled in Middle English Crucifixion writings with an eagerness for food during the Last Supper. Meanwhile, since his betrayal of Jesus involved the exchange of money, it was usually characterized as a crime of avarice as well as treason, and this avarice was likewise imputed to the entire Jewish race.

The stereotype of Jewish greed was encouraged by Christian misperceptions of Jewish dominance of the fast-growing medieval

money economy. Jewish involvement in money-lending was widely resented among Christians and led many Christian writers to describe Jews as grasping and, in a broader sense, concerned with material wealth to the exclusion of spiritual enlightenment. It is this second, more general form of materialism that leads Esau to trade his birthright for food, an act that links him symbolically, like Cain and Ishmael, to medieval Christian ideas about Jews of all times as presented in the Middle English literature appearing in this thesis.

All three chapters use the Middle English depiction of an elder child from Hebrew scripture, rejected in favour of a younger sibling, and artistically linked to Judaism, as a starting point for a study of the medieval Christian literary expression of the three Christian premises, noted earlier, that account for much Christian prejudice against the members of an elder, rival faith: Jesus' immanence in the pre-gospel world; his followers' status as the true Israel; and the Jews' enduring guilt for his death. As a reflection of such beliefs, the sentiments they engendered, and the many acts of persecution they inspired, the literature studied in this thesis represents an essential source of information about the development of racial and religious prejudice.

Although Gavin I. Langmuir's subject in "Historiographic Crucifixion" is not literature, he could well include literary with historical productions when he writes: "Not only is the

writing of history one consequence of past events and memory of them; it is itself a historical event, sometimes of considerable consequence" (1).¹ Thomas H. Bestul remarks on the power of literature to create as well as preserve the history of which it forms a part:

Devotional texts . . . are no different from other forms of written discourse, in that they are self-evidently located within social and cultural matrices which endow them with meaning and significance. They are products of historical communities, connected to dense networks of relationships and processes. . . . [I]t is important to recognize the power of texts to articulate an ideology, to form social perceptions and contribute to social formations. (72-73)

Crucifixion literature may have developed from an early Christian need to support "the new church's claim to have taken over the

1. Touching on a matter that is also a major concern of this thesis, Langmuir continues: "This is peculiarly true in the case of accusations of ritual murder against Jews, for such accusations have been as much a phenomenon of historiography as of history."

privilege of election," as Marcel Simon states (137), but the related need, noted by Bernard Glassman, to prove the younger faith "superior to Judaism and to justify its claims that it was the new Israel" meant that "Christian anti-Judaism continued to be a central and an essential element of the daughter religion's system of beliefs" (21). A theological stance became the basis of cultural and racial animosity; as the Middle Ages progressed and Christianity gained power, the Jews' political status, as well as that of their religion, increasingly diminished. The European Jew was excluded from so many facets of the majority culture in which he lived that he became, in Venetia Newall's words, the "prototype of the outsider in Europe" ("The Jew as a Witch Figure" 107).

The Crucifixion texts this thesis examines do not simply reproduce the Gospels in Middle English. By the later Middle Ages, much legendary material had accrued to the popular Christian version of Jesus' death, and Middle English renderings often incorporate non-biblical circumstances and stories. They also show greater hostility toward their Jewish characters, and Jews in general. From the Christian perspective, the curse on Jews and their offspring for Jesus' death has come to pass; the lot of contemporary European Jews is proof that God has judged them, and, in so doing, set a worthy example. The Christian character of the true Israel had long been established; God had withdrawn his favour from the elder faith, and bestowed it

instead upon the younger. Such is the heritage that informs Middle English Crucifixion literature.

The Middle English Texts

This thesis deals with literature that has been little studied. Eight books about the depiction of Jews in English literature have been consulted;² with a single exception, none deals with any of the texts examined here.³ One of the books

2. These eight are: David Philipson's 1889 *The Jew in English Fiction*; Edward N. Calisch's 1909 *The Jew in English Fiction, as Author and as Subject*; H. Michelson's 1924 *The Jew in Early English Literature*; Montagu Frank Modder's 1939 *The Jew in the Literature of England to the End of the Nineteenth Century*; Edgar Rosenberg's 1960 *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction*; Harold Fisch's 1971 *The Dual Image: The Figure of the Jew in English and American Literature*; Esther L. Panitz's 1981 *The Alien in Their Midst: Images of Jews in English Literature*; and Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller's 1990 collection, *Jewish Presences in English Literature*.

3. H. Michelson's *The Jew in Early English Literature* briefly discusses a passage from *Cursor Mundi* -- not one appearing in this thesis.

does not discuss medieval literature at all.⁴ Seven of the eight treat Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*, some at length; the next most popular topic is Middle English drama. Together, these books address histories, ballads, romance, Marian miracles, and drama, as well as Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*, William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. But the genre of Middle English Crucifixion literature is not represented, and it is the portrayal of Jews in this specific category that is the subject of this thesis, for the Crucifixion is the event to which the rejection of first-born sons in Genesis looks forward, and to which Christian claims to the status of election look back.

The Passion and Crucifixion are variously treated by the Middle English writings studied here. Eight of the fifteen primary sources offer a chronological narrative based on the Gospels but embellished with non-biblical and notably anti-Semitic material; these texts are: the *South English Ministry and Passion*, the *Southern Passion*, the *Evangelie*, and the "Passion of Our Lord," all of the thirteenth century; the *Northern Passion*, the *Prose Complaint of Our Lady*, and the English translation of part of a *Life of Christ* once attributed to Bonaventure, all of the fourteenth century; and *Cursor Mundi*, dating from about 1300. These texts in verse and prose have been

4. Philipson's *The Jew in English Fiction*.

chosen for inclusion in this thesis over selections from the Middle English drama cycles, also chronological depictions of the Passion and Crucifixion, for three reasons: generic similarity makes it easier to compare the medieval with the biblical presentation of events; narratorial intrusions highlight and enhance anti-Semitic content; and the early dates relative to the height of Middle English drama ensure that the study does not range beyond a century past the year of the Jews' expulsion from England: 1290. With the exception of the *Prose Complaint of Our Lady*, and possibly the *Stanzaic Life of Christ*, the texts addressed in this thesis do not date from much later than a generation or two after 1290; the study of later texts is complicated by the fact of their production in the official absence of Jews from England.

Four more works use the Crucifixion as the basis of a series of commentaries on Jesus' love for an undeserving humanity. Instead of narrating the circumstances of Jesus' death, these texts combine images of the Passion and Crucifixion with passages that praise his sacrifice, lament his pain, deplore humanity's weakness, and denounce Jesus' killers.⁵ They are the thirteenth-century "Wohunge of ure Lauerd" and "Lofsong of ure Louerde" and the fourteenth-century *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ* and *Stanzaic Life of Christ*.

5. "On Lofsong of ure Louerde" is actually more concerned with personal repentance and forgiveness than with the sins of others.

This thesis also makes use of three texts that do not deal directly with the Crucifixion, but contribute to other themes explored in this study: the twelfth-century *History of the Holy Rood-tree*; some homiletic material, also of the twelfth century; and the thirteenth-century *Harrowing of Hell*.

The readers and writers of the histories, ballads, and miracles mentioned in earlier studies of Jews in English literature take Jewish villainy for granted; the Jews' wicked character is so generally assumed that writers of these genres feel no need to explain or prove it, treating it rather as an established fact. Sometimes Middle English authors recreate the generic villains of earlier stories as Jews so as to enhance automatically their vicious tendencies and sinister possibilities. It is almost fair to say that the generic villain of later medieval English writing was a Jew. Crucifixion literature, however, while informed by the same prejudice, focuses on the moment believed to confirm the Jews' depravity, to determine their alienation from God, and to justify Christian mistreatment of them. The medieval Christian view of the Crucifixion as the official triumph of a new faith over a reprobate elder is this thesis' central concern.

Chapter One: Cain

In the Christian Middle Ages, Cain is more than the first human murderer, the envious giver of inferior tithes whose younger brother Abel pleases the Lord with a sacrificial lamb and falls victim to Cain's jealous wrath. His symbolic value extends beyond the blood-guilt he assumes when he murders his kin. Cain becomes a personification of congenital evil; his rejection by God in favour of Abel is divinely ordained, and his act of fratricide predestined. The great historical chronicle *Cursor Mundi*⁶ reflects medieval English Christian thought when it proclaims of the first human born into the world: "caym was be

6. Circa 1300; no. 2153 in the Index of Middle English Verse (hereafter referred to as IMEV). Horrall's edition is based on MS College of Arms Arundel 57, circa 1400. The poem gives a Christianized account of major episodes of Hebrew scripture, with much non-biblical material; a life of Jesus, similarly embellished; and a description of the Judgement Day and subsequent events. Each of this thesis' three chapters begins with a comparison of its titular character's story as told in the Bible and in *Cursor Mundi*.

fendes fode;/Was neuer worse of modir born;/þerfore was he aftir forlorn" (1.66.1056-58). In contrast to his brother Abel, "a blessed blode," Cain is "cursed ful of care," constitutionally incapable of pleasing God even prior to the fratricide, or the tithe that precedes it (1.66.1055, 1052). In this character, moreover, he appears in Middle English religious literature as a symbol of something more substantial than blood-guilt, evil, or cursedness; he represents also the people in whose holy scriptures he first appears, and whom many medieval Christians regard as elder yet unsuccessful siblings in a spiritual sense: the Jews. This study of Cain's currency in the Christian Middle Ages as a symbol of the Jewish people will begin with a comparison of two accounts of his infamous deed: the biblical, as recorded in the King James Bible,⁷ and the medieval revision as told in the Middle English *Cursor Mundi*.

Although it is the ultimate source for the world's first homicide, Genesis does not assign a motive to the killer. It establishes no basis for the pronouncement of I John 3.12 that "Cain, who was of that wicked one . . . slew his brother . . . because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous"; it states only that "Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (4.8). The implied proximity of this event to Cain's failed harvest offering, rejected by God for

7. The Vulgate is also consulted and occasionally cited.

reasons unknown, suggests he may still have been "very wroth" (4.5), and perhaps resentful toward Abel and his well-received blood sacrifice.⁸ Genesis itself, however, does not belabour this connection, leaving readers to decide whether such a dubious cause could lead to fratricide.⁹ *Cursor Mundi*, on the other hand, recording as fact medieval accretions to the terse biblical narrative, and in so doing lending its authority to supplementary legend informed by Christian beliefs, asserts that envy over God's favour, and the fact (if fact it was) that he "to his broþere yre bare" (1.67.1069), was motive enough for the reprobate Cain to slay his godly brother Abel.

Genesis, again, says nothing directly about either brother's moral character, Cain's depravity or Abel's blessedness. As E. Isaac-Edersheim remarks in "Ahasver: A Mythic Image of the Jews": "we do not read anything about these characteristics in the Bible; however, popular fantasy has fixed the characters in this and in no other way in our imagination" (202). Cain was

8. This presumption of Cain's hostility toward Abel is qualified because, as E. Isaac-Edersheim observes, the true object of Cain's wrath is not his brother, but God the father (202).

9. Admittedly, in the Vulgate passage, Cain apparently has murder in mind when he calls Abel outside: "Dixitque Cain ad Abel fratrem suum: Egrediamur foras. Cumque essent in agro, consurrexit Cain adversus fratrem suum Abel, et interfecit eum."

practically synonymous with evil in the Christian Middle Ages, an abomination to God *per se*, not merely as a giver of abominable tithes, and according to *Cursor Mundi*, his inauspicious standing both precedes and explains God's otherwise mysterious preference for Abel's slaughtered lamb over Cain's bloodless offering of grain. In the Middle English poem, Cain is the opposite of his younger brother Abel in more ways than Genesis gives reason to suppose:

þis abel was an herde of fee;
 Blessed and holy man was he;
 Ri3twis he was goddes frende,
 And trewely 3af to him his tende.
 For his offerynge was ri3twise,
 God payed was of his sacrificise.
 For caym 3af his wiþ euel wille,
 Oure lord loked not þertille. (1.66-67.1059-66)

The editor appends a note remarking that Genesis does not explain "why Abel's offering was more acceptable" (359, note to ll.1063-66). Ruth Mellinkoff likewise states in "Cain and the Jews": "there is nothing about the nature of Cain's offering in the Genesis text" (23). And while, in *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*, George K. Anderson interprets the fratricide as *Cursor Mundi* does, describing Cain as "obviously a short-tempered man," he

immediately goes on to surmise that God's "favoritism would be inexplicable were it not that Jehovah preferred animal sacrifices to vegetable ones" (3). This conjecture, however, relies no more on the actual text than *Cursor Mundi* does. Nor, indeed, does the speculation offered in Hebrews 11.4, to the effect that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

God's reasons for accepting Abel and refusing Cain may seem capricious, or opaque at best; he declines to explain them. He even briefly affects not to understand why Cain is upset, asking: "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" (4.6) *Cursor Mundi* has embellished the biblical account with apocryphal background that makes sense of Cain's (and God's) behaviour at the expense of accuracy. The contents of Genesis have been sacrificed to a Christian theory positing Cain as a spiritual founder of the Jewish race, a theory that assumes a Christian ascendancy over Judaism in theological as well as political terms. The younger brother Abel, who enjoys God's favour, becomes a model for Christians and their faith, while the elder brother Cain prefigures the Jews, followers of an elder faith whose forebears persecuted and ultimately killed the new faith's god. Essential to this view of religious history is the belief that God's grace has descended to the Christian faith as once it descended to Abel instead of the first-born Cain, according to a system of ultimogeniture.

Cain's Legacy

For many centuries before the composition of *Cursor Mundi*, official church policy throughout Europe had stated that while God had called Jews first, he had ultimately chosen Christians, and that the respective fates of these rival groups were prefigured in Cain and Abel. David Winston's essay on "Pagan and Early Christian Anti-Semitism" notes that, "in patristic literature," as compared with the Gospels, "there is a considerable escalation of the anti-Jewish polemic," and that the early Church fathers often quoted from the Hebrew Bible inaccurately and irresponsibly in order to elevate the Church at the Synagogue's expense:

All the negative statements of the Hebrew Scriptures are taken out of context and read as descriptive of the Jews, thus turning Jewish self-criticism into a remorseless invective. Cain symbolizes the Jews, while Abel, killed by the elder brother and replaced by the mysterious Seth, symbolizes the murdered and resurrected Christ. (23)

The acknowledgement of Jewish wrongdoing in Hebrew scripture is treated as proof of abiding Jewish criminality and malevolence. As Marcel Simon remarks in "Christian Anti-Semitism": "to a

people whom their own history, written by divinely inspired men, portrayed as criminals and sinners one may legitimately attribute, in the present, any crime and any deficiency" (139). Simon later describes the fraudulent scholarship whereby this facile conclusion regarding Jews, both biblical and post-biblical, was reached:

The portrait of the Jew was built up by pasting together verses of the Bible. The complaints the inspired writers had made were torn from their contexts of time and place and, combined into a single portrait, provided all the evidence that could be wished for of the utter depravity of the people of God. Thus was created the picture of the eternal Jew, a conventional figure, a literary fiction. (145)¹⁰

Edward A. Synan, in *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages*, also agrees that Jews had been "taught by the prophets to scrutinize their own failings," and that medieval Christendom ironically exploited the fact in order to blame contemporary Jews

10. See also Rosemary Radford Ruether's "The *Adversus Judaeos* Tradition in the Church Fathers: The Exegesis of Christian Anti-Judaism": "The Jewish Scriptures, which actually contain the record of Jewish self-criticism and repentance, are turned into a remorseless denunciation of the Jews" (179).

for the misdeeds recorded in the Gospels:

The notion of corporate responsibility, learned as it had been from the Jews, rendered all Jewish disasters easily intelligible: the whole nation, Christians thought, labored under the guilt assumed by High Priest and Sanhedrin on the night of Jesus' trial. (9)

Thus the guilt for Jesus' death was thought to have survived the generation of his enemies, adhering to post-biblical Jews throughout the centuries. The indestructibility of the guilt -- or, more accurately, the blame -- for the Crucifixion allowed the fourth-century Church father Ambrose to debase contemporary Jews by means of, in Mellinkoff's words, "a bold typological comparison of Cain and the Jews":

These two brothers, Cain and Abel, have furnished us with the prototype of the Synagogue and the Church. In Cain we perceive the parricidal people of the Jews, who were stained with the blood of their Lord, their Creator, and as a result of the child-bearing of the Virgin Mary, their Brother, also. By Abel we understand the Christian who cleaves to God.

(qtd. in Mellinkoff 16)¹¹

11. Mellinkoff cites a tract called "De Cain et Abel" and dates it

Since Cain, living long before Jesus' birth, is likewise blamed for the Crucifixion along with medieval Jews who were born long after Jesus' death, his aptness as a type for the Christian construction of Jews as a fratricidal race becomes especially clear in *Cursor Mundi* when Jesus himself delivers the condemnation of Abel's murder. The poem specifically attributes the Creation to Jesus as if to establish his presence and power in heaven and earth well before the Incarnation and the ensuing debate regarding his godhead. It is only Jesus' will that the crime be revealed that proves Cain's guilt; Adam and Eve suspect foul play only with reluctance, and against their own experience of familial love:

Hem pou3te kynde hym wolde forbede
 To haue done so cursed a dede;
 His dede hadde euer ben hid
 Ne hadde ihesu hymself hit kid.
 Hit to hide my3te he nou3t,
 For ihesu þat al wrou3t,
 He þat firste flemed adam
 For þat appel þat he nam,
 He nolde not hymself feyne,
 But caymes dede fully atteyne,

"about A.D. 375" (16). She quotes from John Savage's translation.

And he wole þat men bye þe outrage
 Þat murþereþ so his owne ymage.
 He wende to haue scaped wip al
 For any mannes clepe or cal,
 But þenne coom oure makere
 To speke wip þat traytour þere;
 Of þat morth and þat tresoun
 He dide þat traytour to aresoun. (1.68.1105-22)

For the *Cursor Mundi* poet, for the tradition informing his work and for his audience, it is Jesus "oure makere" who fashioned humans in "his owne ymage"; Cain is a "traytour" for striking that image, prefiguring what many Christians will call a traitorous race who struck, not merely the image, but the model himself. *Cursor Mundi*'s Jesus thus defends the lonely banishment that will in time descend as from an ancestor to Common Era Jews:

"For how shulde any expely flesshe
 Dwelle wip þe in sikernes
 Whenne felowshepe & broperhede
 My3te þe not kepe from foul dede?" (1.69.1157-60)

Cain is a dangerous, fearsome figure, the first human manifestation of evil. He is the Bible's first example of a

human who is physically violent toward another human;¹² he attacks his own kin; and he kills by shedding blood. His spilling of Abel's blood may even be interpreted as a symbolic refutation of his kinship: Cain turns against the blood tie, as against the image of God, that his younger brother embodies. A similar interpretation of Jesus' blood and its familial significance to his Jewish antagonists heightens the symbolic resonance of a passage in the *Southern Passion* and its immediate model, the *South English Ministry and Passion*:¹³ as Longinus pierces the heart of the dead Jesus, still hanging from the Cross, his spear draws forth the "water & blod" of John 19.34 (*SP* 60.1637), and its meaning is expounded thus:

12. Abel, of course, has already committed physical violence against at least one animal.

13. In "The *Southern Passion* and the *Ministry and Passion*: The Work of a Middle English Reviser," O. S. Pickering discusses the relationship between the two poems. Both date from the late thirteenth century. Pickering's edition of the *South English Ministry and Passion* is based on MS St. John's College, Cambridge, B.6, dating from the second quarter of the fifteenth century; Beatrice Daw Brown's edition of the *Southern Passion* is based on MS Pepys 2344, dating from the early fourteenth century. The *Southern Passion* is no. 483 in the IMEV.

What by-toknede water and blod þat of Ihesus syde com?
 Ðat blod by-toknede him-sulf, and þat water cristendom,
 Ðat wipoute þe swete blod þat he shadde on þe treo,
 And wipoute þe water of cristendom, ne may no man
 y-saued beo.

Swete Ihesu, strong was þi dep, and wel narwe þe gywes
 ham þou3te

Whanne hi þe rote of þi swete lif at þin heorte grounde
 sou3te.

Ðat is þe welle of mannes lif; ham was lop to by-leue
 ou3t;

Hi ne byleuede on þe a drope of blod þat nas al out
 ybrou3t.

(*SP* 60.1641-48; parallel passage in *SEMP*: 181.2575-82)

While the poem proposes a felicitous link between the water and baptism, its treatment of the blood seems less inspired. In the context of Jesus' figural relationship to Abel, however, a more specialized meaning emerges: his blood is his Jewish identity, his racial tie to Israel. Members of his blood-kin are responsible for delivering him to the blood-letting; their claim to Jesus and his peace bleeds away along with his blood. Instead a new spiritual bond develops between Jesus and his followers of all origins, supplanting the old racial bond, and physically manifested after his death in the commingling of his healing

blood with the cleansing water of baptism.

This reading stresses the Christian tradition of antagonism toward Jews in general, not just those Jews who were involved in Jesus' death; the reference to unspecified "gywes" underlines the belief that the entire race is to blame for Jesus' death. In "The Medieval Conception of the Jew: A New Interpretation," Cecil Roth identifies the central fear behind this recriminatory attitude:

The Jews were not blamed (as is generally believed) simply for the crime committed by their ancestors. They were blamed for a crime which was the inevitable outcome of their stubborn national temperament -- one which, had circumstances permitted, they themselves would certainly have condoned, and which they were prepared to repeat at any time, if they had the opportunity. (300)

Returning to Cain's legacy of blood-guilt, the presumed readiness of later Jews to affirm their own share of guilt by committing the same, or a similar, crime is especially fearsome for their kinship with the victim. This view is apparent in Middle English writings that emphasize the gospel Jews' relation to Jesus as much as their hostility toward him. In the *Stanzaic Life of*

Christ,¹⁴ a list of "ffyue causes . . . qvi Cristes sorowe more shuld be/then euer was any" features a protest against the gospel Jews' repudiation of the claims of kinship:

The thrid cause is sithen he was
dampnet of hom þat shuld haue bene
his frendes kyndlie in that cas,
And not sich sorowe on hym sene,

For las wonder had ben i-wys
3if he of enmys suffride hade,
.....
Or of aliens & straungers
that had not knowen hym bifore,
but of his frendes & verray feres
he tholet, that greuet mich þe more,

And of his frende als suffride he

14. IMEV no. 1755. The poem dates from the fourteenth century. Frances A. Foster's edition is based on MS Harley 3909, dating from the second half of the fifteenth century. This thesis is mostly concerned with the *Stanzaic Life's* treatment of the Crucifixion, which is not so much an account, chronological or otherwise, as a series of analyses, and embedded analyses, of various aspects of Jesus' death.

that of on rote comen wer

(182.5413-15; 186.5537-42; 5545-50)

Kinship, the poet insists, should imply friendship as well. In a similar vein, the love lyric "*De Wohunge of ure Lauerd*" begins by citing nine qualities that commonly inspire love, the last and most powerful of which is kinship:¹⁵ "And 3ette ouer al pis, kinde makes sibbe frend euchan to luuen oðer" (21.30-32). Having examined the other eight,¹⁶ and concluded that Jesus possesses them all, the Beloved returns to this ninth and most compelling

15. From W. Meredith Thompson's collection *De Wohunge of Ure Lauerd*. This prose work appears only in MS Cotton Titus D.18, in a section that dates from the first half of the thirteenth century, roughly the same period as the "Wooing" itself. Because it has been suggested that the writer may have been a woman (Introduction xv and xxiii), this thesis refers to the Beloved as such. Although the work does contain descriptions of the Passion and Crucifixion, it is primarily a celebration of Jesus' love for humankind, and of his worthiness to be loved in return.

16. These eight are: beauty, riches, generosity, wit and wisdom, strength, nobility, good manners, and gentleness (not to be confused with gentility).

recommendation, presenting Jesus with a question and a summary judgement that implicitly convict the Jews: "A, hwam mai he luue treweliche hwa ne luues his broðer? Þenne hwase þe ne luues, he is mon unwreastest" (26.238-41).

As if to suggest that Christian sensibilities are worthier than Jewish, better suited to meet divine love and compassion with affection, gratitude, and devotion, the voice that shares the *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*¹⁷ dispenses with the issue of family in favour of a more inclusive ideal of love when he concludes a paean of thanks to Jesus by posing a highly devout, and vaguely sinister, rhetorical question:

Alas, 3if I vnkynde be,
And loue no3t him þat loueþ me,
Wath peyne am I wordy be lawe
That hap Ihesu with loue y-slawe? (22.807-10)

The editor, who has added her own punctuation, opts to end this

17. Mid-fourteenth century; the only MS is British Museum Additional 11,307, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century. Like "Þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd," the *Meditations*, while describing the Passion and Crucifixion, spends more time extolling Jesus' virtue and love for humankind; it contains many prayers and apostrophes, and often addresses a personified Love as a pitiless master urging Jesus to his death. IMEV no. 1034.

passage with a period instead of a question mark, a reading that suggests that the Meditator's question is actually less a genuine query than a statement, a condemnation of anyone who does not return Jesus' love and accept him as God.

To establish further Jesus' peaceful, loving stance toward those who oppose him -- thus demonstrating in a different way love's independence of family -- the Meditator a few lines later pauses in his address to Jesus and instead apostrophizes Love as the merciless force prompting Jesus to submit to his Passion:

Loue, pou worchest alwey wrake;
 Bi loue hou my3t pou forsake?
 I trowe þat it be þi manere
 To brynge þin owne frend a-bere. (23.835-38)

References to Jews throughout the poem show that the Meditator is not identifying them with the pitiless figure of Love, yet he might just as well have directed this remonstrance at such Jews as he does depict. In fact, he has earlier complained -- though at greater length, and in more invidious terms -- to the Jews of a similar lack of pity:

Be lion, whan him hongreþ sore,
 He gynneþ for to crye and rore;
 But whan he haþ his preie founde,

And it falleth to þe grounde,
 He hath mercy þer-of also blyue,
 And let it gon away a-lyue.
 But þou¹⁸ haddest mercy non
 Of him þat stod stille as ston,
 But feller þan þe lioun wod
 Þou were to spillon þat lombes blod. (14-15.517-26)

Nonetheless, while the personified Love may sometimes be difficult to separate from the Jews, Jesus' beloved, the Meditator's conviction that the Jews were unworthy of Jesus' love distinguishes between them -- much to Love's advantage -- even when he applies to them similar images: when Love is "fers as a lyoun" (25.929), he is, as the comparison between Jews and lions just cited makes clear, still gentler toward his prey than the lamb's own family.

The Bestial Jew

Most of the Meditator's animal analogies apply to Jews

18. Although the Meditator here uses the singular pronoun, the following passage, especially ll. 533-36, suggests that he is addressing a plural audience.

alone. When Jesus is "brou3t at abay with hides cry," it is not Love, but "þe Iewes, þe hondes fell," who "gonnon to crye and 3elle" (13.450; 38.1431-32). When the Meditator shows "þat lomb so meke and mylde/To-drawe and rent with wolues wilde," his audience is meant to envision the Jews as ravening predators, remorselessly hunting the least offensive of beasts (30.1141-42). Much the same image appears in the *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord*,¹⁹ in which the poet calls Jews "houndes" at least eight times.²⁰ Twice the metaphor is imbued with greater pathos by the Virgin Mary, once when she concludes a pitiable prayer to God with the plea: "helpeþ my sone fro cursed houndes," and again when she yearns to approach him on the Via Dolorosa, but "my3t nat, so þese houndes hym hyed" (15.471; 19.590). By having the Virgin make of God the desperate and doleful request: "Y pray 3ow 3eldep hym a3en to me," the poet is encouraging outrage against the Jews who have just carried off her son; he enhances this response by adding: "þys preyd she with watyr wepyng"

19. Although characterized by editor J. Meadows Cowper as Robert Mannyng of Brunne's early fourteenth century translation of part of a longer work, *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, by Cardinal Bonaventure, this poem is regarded by most as the work of neither. This edition is based on MS Harley 1701. IMEV no. 248.

20. In addition to the instances quoted here, see: 14.425; 16.510; 17.530; 18.560; 19.597; and 23.730.

(15.468, 474). Later, when he leads her to the Via Dolorosa for her meeting with Jesus, he augments her poignancy, and the Jews' villainy, by remarking that "ful feyne she wulde hys peynes alyped," but that she was frustrated by her son's uncharitable captors (19.589).

Depicting Jews as dogs relentlessly pursuing "a meke lambe" (16.484) was both designed and guaranteed to stimulate wrath among the poet's Christian audience toward Jews; devising piteous circumstances to embellish that prejudicial trope only stresses the inhumanity that such animal metaphors suggest. Charges of inhumanity, even sub-humanity, answered for many medieval Christians the question of how anyone could behave so unkindly toward kin as certain Jews of the Gospels behaved toward Jesus. Writers who depicted Jews as dogs or wolves were denying Jewish kinship with Jesus, and indeed Jewish membership in the human race. Thus Jesus' Beloved in "Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd" likens Jews to wolves in order to emphasize the difference and enhance the distance between the human that Jesus became to save his followers, and those who, as the Beloved believes, refused to be saved. When she reports that, during the judgement scene, Jesus' accusers "crieden o wode wulues wise: 'Heng, heng þat treitur iesus on rode'" (30.383-85), she is trying to conjure a pack of senseless assailants who viciously descend upon the offered blood sacrifice without understanding it. By falsely asserting that this is the scene "as i þe godspel is writen" (30.382), she

invokes divine authority for her wolfish characterization. And her earlier praise of the Incarnation adds irony to her insistent repetition of the symbolically resonant "flesch":

Bote for þi þat sibbe frend kindeliche euchan luues
oðer, þu schruddes te wið ure flesch, nam of hire
flesch mon born of wummon, þi flesch nam of hire flesch
wiðuten meane of wepmon, nam wið þat ilke flesch
fullliche monnes cunde to polen al þat mon mai pole,
don al þat mon deð wiðuten sunne ane, for sunne &
unwitschipe ne hafdes tu nowðer. Þenne a3aines kinde
gað hwa þat swuche kinsemon ne luueð & leueð.

(26.217-31)

Anyone who fails, not only to love, but also to believe in, such a brother as Jesus became for humankind "a3aines kinde gað" -- to such an unnatural extreme that they might be deemed not to belong to Jesus' kind at all, to be inhuman rather, bestial.

Cecil Roth explains the implications of so viewing the Jews in terms that recall this medieval Christian characterization of Jews as predatory beasts: "They could be attacked and exterminated by the mob, with no more hesitation than a pack of wolves" ("Medieval Conception" 308). Thomas H. Bestul offers insight into the historical and literary contexts of this brand of anti-Semitism in *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional*

Literature and Medieval Society, when he relates of the Church from the mid-tenth to the mid-thirteenth centuries that,

in connection with the Jews, one of the central tasks . . . was the creation by the dominant ecclesiastical culture of new, and more exact definitions of what it meant to belong to the social organism, specifically, the Christian community Qualifications of membership were established and enforced; a whole series of excluded categories were instituted that had the result of marginalizing large groups of people, or resulted, at least in theory, in excluding them altogether from the human community. (74)

Bestul goes on to give a specific example by paraphrasing an argument advanced by Peter the Venerable, who

contributes to the degradation and marginalization of Jews in his *Tractatus adversus Judaeos* by placing them in the category of beasts, on the grounds that if they had the rational capacity of human beings, they would be persuaded by the logic of arguments for the incarnation of Christ. Since man is endowed with reason, and Jews fail to accept the rational arguments for the truths of Christianity, it follows that the

Jews must not be human. (76)

Peter's sentiments are noted also in Jeremy Cohen's *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Semitism* (24, 28), as well as in Lester K. Little's "The Jews in Christian Europe." Little quotes from the tract, recording Peter's doubts as to "'whether that person is human from whose flesh the heart of stone is not yet removed'" (286).²¹ His question recalls the Beloved's celebration of Jesus' adoption of human flesh, and condemnation of all who would dishonour that flesh. Both the poet and the theologian, though centuries apart, deny Jewish humanity. Yet Peter's image of the stone heart conjures a senseless people bereft of life itself, even more foreign to Jesus than the bestial creatures for whom he mistakes the Jews.

Peter's views were typical of a contemporary theological challenge launched by Christians against the human status of Jews. In "Twelfth-Century Renaissance Theology and the Jews," Anna Sapir Abulafia suggests that

many thinkers of the Twelfth-century Renaissance . . . were inspired by a genuine confidence that the proper use of reason . . . would necessarily lead not only to understanding but also to concurrence with Christian

21. Little cites the *Tractatus contra Judaeorum inveteratam duritiem*.

doctrine. But since they also thought that reason was the hallmark of human beings, separating humans from animals, they were led to conclude that those who could not accept their rational conclusions about Christianity were not really human. (131)

This doctrinal contribution to medieval Christian uncertainties regarding Jewish humanity seems to have influenced Middle English writers. However, when the latter depict the Jews of the Passion as animals, they seem to be challenging the Jewish capacity, not only for human reason, but also for human sensibilities: mercy and compassion. If the Jewish characters of Middle English Passion narratives behave irrationally, it is because their medieval creators have imagined them as preternaturally violent, typical members of a race of strife who seem instinctively to oppose peace. Such a bent might indeed impair these characters' reason, but it would not necessarily prevent them from believing in Jesus' divinity.

As a medieval Christian solution to the problem posed by Common Era Judaism and its incredulity regarding the younger faith of Christianity, Peter the Venerable's theory of Jewish sub-humanity found its obverse in an alternative theory, discussed in Joshua Trachtenberg's *The Devil and the Jews*, that challenges both Jewish constancy to the elder faith and even Jewish claims to worship the God of Creation:

Curious as this may seem, there is overwhelming evidence that the Catholic world believed that the Jew himself recognized the truth of Christian doctrine!

According to this view, the Jews knew that the coming of Jesus was foretold in Scripture, even though they stubbornly denied this. To the Christian the conventional interpretation of Scripture was the only possible and sensible one; the Jewish interpretation could not therefore fail to seem the product either of wilful misunderstanding or falsification. (15)

At this point it becomes necessary to try to reconcile Trachtenberg with an earlier study of the same phenomenon: Cecil Roth's "The Medieval Conception of the Jew: A New Interpretation." Trachtenberg has indicated two possible forms of suspected Jewish doctrinal dishonesty; the latter, falsification, he immediately advances as actually having been imputed to the Jews, remarking that "Jerome and other early Church Fathers frequently complained that the Jewish teachers consciously and deliberately perverted the meaning of the original text" (15). The former, wilful misunderstanding, he appears to dismiss as unlikely to have been a serious charge, at the same time citing Roth as having been wrongly persuaded of its currency: "Roth's too-ready acceptance of the usual view that Catholic Europe ascribed the bigotry of the Jew to sheer

perversity and stubbornness leaves something to be desired" (18). Yet Roth concludes his essay by crediting medieval Christians with having developed another, more systematic account of Jewish recalcitrance -- the same account that Trachtenberg will later ascribe to them, and one that provides an alternative to the notion of the bestial Jew.

The Infernal Jew

Roth offers the following detailed profile of the bestial Jew's diabolical obverse:

It was not . . . that the Jews did not believe in Christianity It was that they were constitutional antagonists of Jesus Christ -- of a Jesus whom they knew to have existed and to have been justified in his Divine claims, but whom they had crucified rather than admit to be their king.

The Jews, then, deliberately rejected Christianity, while realising to the full the implications of their attitude. Small wonder then, that their professions of religion were not always taken seriously. They were hardly considered to be, in fact, worshippers of the Most High. They were followers rather . . . of Beelzebub, on whose support

and favour they counted to save them from the Divine anger which was the natural consequence of their sins.

Conscious misbelievers such as these were plainly less than human. (307)

While Roth does not elaborate on how proponents of this view of the Jewish character might have responded to the question of Jewish reason, he leaves no doubt regarding their belief that Jesus' godhead was as much a fact for Jews as for themselves.²²

22. The question of whether Jews did or did not recognize Jesus as the Christ was so vexed as to draw from Augustine himself two mutually-exclusive hypotheses. Jeremy Cohen describes Augustine's *Tractatus Adversus Judaeos* as following "the repeatedly stated premise that the Jews reject Christianity because they fail to understand correctly the prophecies of their own Scripture" ("Jews as the Killers of Christ" 24). Mellinkoff, on the other hand, paraphrases Augustine in his *Tractatus Contra Faustum* as saying this about the Jews' knowledge of Jesus: "Cain's ignorance when questioned by the Lord was pretended; likewise, the Jews deceive in their refusal of Christ" (16-17).

Meanwhile, Paula Fredriksen says that Augustine voices both views in *Contra Faustum* (50-51).

Clearly the issue was highly divisive.

He also relates how they made sense of the perverse phenomenon whereby the Jews showed such contempt for their demonstrably almighty Creator. Whether for their obstinate refusal to confess the Christ, or, more simply, for their supposed devotion to the devil, they were branded, if not as demons, then at least as demonolaters, and certainly demoniac agents, "the declared enemies of God, of the Christian faith, and of the human kind" (308).

Although Trachtenberg seems to take issue with Roth, he likewise proposes a medieval Christian association between Jews and the devil, and composes a character sketch that complements Roth's profile. That Trachtenberg traces the emergence of the theoretical infernal Jew partly by quoting from Peter the Venerable, who subscribed to the notion of the bestial Jew, suggests that both these figures were contrived to resolve the same problem:

How was it that the psychology of the Jews should be contrary to all human experience? The answer was that the Jew was not human -- not in the sense that the Christian was. He was a creature of an altogether different nature, of whom normal human reactions could not be expected. "Really I doubt whether a Jew can be human for he will neither yield to human reasoning, nor find satisfaction in authoritative utterances, alike

divine and Jewish," protested Peter the Venerable of Cluny.²³ What then? He was the devil's creature! Not a human being but a demonic, a diabolic beast fighting the forces of truth and salvation with Satan's weapons, was the Jew as medieval Europe saw him. One might as soon expect the devil himself to submit of his own free will to Christ, as the Jew. (18)

The infernal and the bestial Jew co-existed in literary as well as in theological writing. The *Evangelie*²⁴ calls those Jews who arrested Jesus "þe deuyles lymes" (594.1133), while a twelfth-century Lenten homily²⁵ invokes the same image to solve the puzzle of "hu deofel æfre þa durstinesse hæfde þat he Cristes lichame ætrinæn durste, oðer forðen þat he him on neawste cumen moste":

23. Trachtenberg does not cite the specific source.

24. Thirteenth century; IMEV no. 3194. Gertrude H. Campbell edits two mss; the quotation here is from Bodley Additional C 38, dating from the early fifteenth century.

25. From A. O. Belfour's *Twelfth Century Homilies*, edited from MS Bodley 343.

Soðlice þa Iudeus wæren alle deofles limen þa ðæ ure
 Hælend to deape demdon. . . . Hwylc wunder wæs, þenne,
 þeah Crist ða durstinesse deofle sealde þat he his
 lichame rinæn moste, þa he walde þurh deofles lime, þat
 is, þurh sunfulle monnæ honden, lichamlice deap
 ðrowiæn? (100.23-25, 100.29-33, 102.1)

The devil's putative influence and primacy over Jews earn him a prominent place on a brief list of infamous Jews assembled by H. Michelson in *The Jew in Early English Literature*:

Before dealing with the other Jewish enemies of the Lord, enemies born of women, we must first mention one of nobler extraction, the fallen archangel, proud Lucifer, who tempted him sorely in the wilderness and is thus placed on a par with the Jews. (8)²⁶

26. Despite the many iniquities practiced upon Jews by Christians during the Middle Ages -- and beyond -- the fear of the other culture as satanic was apparently a one-way current, and especially ironic in light of this statement in Trachtenberg:

The devil has never played a very prominent role in Jewish thought as a distinct personality; during the Middle Ages in particular the figure of Satan "was little more than an allegory, whose moral was the

The Beloved of "Be Wohunge of ure Lauerd" appears to recognize the Jews' junior status in relation to Satan when she calls Judas' armed troop "helle bearnes" (32.465), although in an earlier metaphor she seems to establish an equivalence between Jews and Satan. To begin with, she allegorizes "be werld, mi flesch [and] be deouel" as "pre fan [who] fihten a3aines me" (27.274-75; 270-71) -- a standard medieval conception of the engines of temptation, which furnishes Satan with two personified colleagues who conspire with him to lead souls astray: the world, replete with sinful enticements, and the treacherous body, susceptible to the lure of sensual pleasure. Then the Beloved portrays these foes as ferocious wolves, just as she does the Jews: "Pai grennede for gladschipe euchan toward oðer as wode wulues pat fainen of hare praie" (28.288-91). The literary text recalls contemporary Christian theological challenges to Jewish human status: the animal comparisons and, alternatively, the notion that "as agents of the devil, Jews were not considered to be fully human" (Glassman 33).

The best authority for determining the fiendishness of Jews

prevalence of sin." (19)

The embedded quotation is from Trachtenberg's own 1939 *Jewish Magic and Superstition* 35.

was, naturally, Jesus. The *South English Ministry and Passion* paraphrases John 8.44, where Jesus refutes Jewish claims to a holy ancestry:

"Wel wost þou," seyde þese oðere, "Abraham oure fader
 is, þow3 we þe not telle";
 "I wot," seyde oure lord, "þat 3oure fader is þe deuel
 of helle,
 And his werkis alday 3e don, for he hap euere be with
 wow3
 Fals & also manquellere, þo he Adam slow3."
 (144.1635-38)

The allusion to Adam is actually the poet's addition, and it furthers the artistic end of linking Cain with the devil, and thus, to a medieval Christian audience, with the Jews as well. By characterizing the devil's crime against Adam and Eve as homicide, and attributing to his Jewish interlocutors similar "werkis," Jesus implies an equivalence of human to super-human killers. In an earlier speech he has made it clear that he counts Cain's murder of Abel as a Jewish crime; his opinion of Cain as a type of the later Jews, a kind of Ur-Jew, is equally clear in his apostrophe to Jerusalem as he enters the city. The *South English Ministry and Passion* here paraphrases Matthew 23.34-37:

"Ierusalem, þat dost to deþe my prophetys brynge,
 Gaderyn I wil to me þi childryn, as henne vnder hir
 wynges
 Hire chekenys gaderyth & þer noryschith, and so wil 3e
 nou3t;
 þe soþe I sey 3ow þat it schal vpon 3oureself ben
 brou3t,
 Al þat blood þat was schad fro Abelis dawes with wow3
 Fort þat Zacharye betwen þe temple and þe au3tter 3e
 slow3." (141.1583-88)²⁷

By implicating Jews in a murder that took place long before there were Jews, or any other race, Jesus seems to associate them with killing *per se*, and with violence as a typical response to envy. By drawing a parallel between the victims Abel and Zechariah, he associates Cain with later Jewish assassins.²⁸ Jesus' own imminent death, to be instigated by gospel Jews, invests Abel with the glory of a type of Christ, and Cain with the ignominy of a forebear of killers.

Lest readers lose sight of the original killing, and of Satan's importance as a model for Cain, the *Meditations on the*

27. Elements of Matthew 23.34-37 also appear in Luke 11.49-51 and 13.34.

28. For Zechariah's death, see 2 Chronicles 24.20-21.

Life and Passion of Christ pictures Jesus as the antitype of Adam as well as Abel, and, in order to further develop the theme of unprovoked fraternal violence, Joseph too. The Meditator first establishes Jesus' humanity, which he assumed when he became the new Adam; next, his uneasy ties to hostile family members as a metaphorical Joseph; and finally, his vulnerability to physical violence as a gospel Abel:

Now is for olde Adamis gylt
 Newe Adam with wrong y-spylt;
 Iosep is in a put by-loke;
 So ben his brederen on him y-wroke.
 Þey brengon his fader a reuful pyng:
 Þe bloody cote of his derlyng.
 Also, forsoþe, it nys non other
 But Caym hap slayn Abel, his brother.
 But þe ferste Abeles blod
 Cryep wreche as it be wod;
 Crystes blod dop al an oper:
 It cryep mercy for his brother. (33-34.1253-64)

By including here the biblical detail of Jesus' prayer for forgiveness on behalf of his executioners, the Meditator is calling attention to Jesus' godhead, his capacity for super-human love. But even if he differentiates between the victims Jesus

and Abel, he still identifies the deicides with the first human killer, Cain. Indeed, the comparison between the Jews of the Gospels and those of the Jewish Bible is at least as important as that between Jesus and prior victims. Although, like Jesus, Joseph forgives his brothers, his affliction is not the same, for while Jesus suffers crucifixion, Joseph suffers slavery; yet his enemies are like Jesus' betrayer Judas in that they sell one who loves them for a mere few silver coins. And while the New Adam is a reversal of the Old, dying to save the souls who were lost when the first Adam became liable to death, the killer of both is the devil, identified by the Jesus of the *South English Ministry and Passion* as the father of Jews, and by various other Crucifixion pieces, following Luke 22.3-4 and John 13.27, as the spirit who possesses Judas and leads him to seek out the priests.

The Crucifixion: Cause or Effect?

Despite the rhetorical parallels between Jesus and prior victims from Hebrew scripture, in his warning speech to Jerusalem, Jesus does not treat Abel and Zechariah simply as precursors of his own approaching death. He recognizes their independence of later events, and their claim to justice in their own right. This acknowledgement complicates somewhat the Christian view of the Crucifixion as the defining act of Jewry. That such a view was current finds confirmation in various

studies; for example, in the Introduction to *Jewish Presences in English Literature*, Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller say this about the persistence and omnipresence of the crucifying Jew as a type:

The image of the Jew in English literature, as in the Western imagination, has at its base the figure of the Christ-killer. All representations of the Jew in Christian culture are constructed in the light of this irreducible definition. It can be expanded and varied, deliberately negated, or overlooked. But the Christ-murderer -- sometimes presented as the devil or the devil in disguise -- inevitably hovers in the background. (4)

This same deicidal Jew appears in Frank Felsenstein's discussion of the "stereotype of the medieval Jew as a bloody ritual murderer, the betrayer of Christ and a crucifier, one who is intent upon the very destruction of Christian society and Christian values" (*Anti-Semitic Stereotypes* 29). The alleged ritual murders referred to here -- to be considered at greater length later -- were in the Middle Ages widely believed to be reconstructions of the Crucifixion, the quintessential Jewish crime. Edgar Rosenberg likewise alludes to the Crucifixion's archetypal significance when, after discussing various accusations levied against Jews during the Middle Ages -- both in

literature and in fact -- he concludes that

the religious stigma, no doubt, remains at the bottom of all other charges; the original superstition of the Christ-killer could easily give rise to the universal belief in other Jewish villainies, only less serious than the Ur-crime of the Crucifixion in proportion as the victims were less consequential. (*From Shylock to Svengali* 27)

These commentaries all indicate the primary importance of Jesus' death as a sign, for Christians, of Jewish violence and criminality: it is the epitome of their wrong-doing. Less clear is the importance of the Crucifixion's precedents in the same regard: as warnings of their perpetrators' waywardness. Collectively, these precedents have suggested to some the notion of a history of Jewish vice leading inexorably to the ultimate crime of deicide. As another means of connecting the gospel Jews with Cain, the steady series of felonies such a history implies deserves closer attention.

Having cited the fourth century as the time when Christian anti-Semitism emerged as a distinct phenomenon from pagan anti-Semitism, still rooted to some extent in the pagan past yet developing its own theoretical expressions of prejudice, Marcel Simon describes the responses of early Christian authorities to

the Jews' supposed heritage of lawlessness:

For some of these authors the death of Christ is the cause of Israel's rejection. For others it is not a cause but an indication. Many signs have demonstrated that the people have long been unworthy of their ancient election. But his sign shows more clearly than all the others how deep-rooted their perversion had become. The Jews had therefore killed their savior, not by the exercise of their own free will, but because God, seeing their incurable wickedness, had condemned them to perdition, as the prophets had foretold. (138)

Rosemary Radford Ruether discusses the same idea at greater length:

The reprobation of the Jews is based ultimately on the assertion that they rejected Jesus as the Christ. But, as in the New Testament, the Church Fathers project this act of apostasy backward so as to make it the culminating and final act of a history that is a trail of crimes and perfidies. This is not a recent forgivable misstep. The Jews have ever been apostate from God. The rejection and murder of Christ is the

foreordained conclusion of the evil history of a perfidious people. With the death of Christ the Jews are said to have "filled up the measure of their sins."

The basic form of this idea is to see Jewish history as a heritage of rejecting and killing the prophets, of which the rejection and killing of Christ, the final prophet, are the climax. The theme, begun in the New Testament and carried on in the patristic writings, paints a picture of the Jews as a people who never heard the prophets, always rejected the prophetic message and refused to repent, and finally killed the prophets. The prophets themselves are divorced from the Jewish people and are made the heritage of the Church.

The nature of the Jews is fixed as one of monstrous evil and rejection of God, logically culminating in the murder of God's Son and justifying God's final rejection of them. God's efforts on their behalf have always been futile. In his forbearance he sends prophets, whom they reject and murder. With the death of Christ the final "evidence is in" that the Jews are not suitable to be God's people. They are then unequivocally rejected for a second people who are the true heirs of the prophets, namely, the gentile Church, which does accept God's word. (176, 178)

Those who so summarized the contents of the Jewish Bible may even have wondered whether there really ever had been a time when God favoured the Jews as a people, and not just such Jews as foretold Jesus' coming -- proto-Christians, one might call them: the prophets and the patriarchs who enjoyed close relationships with God, and thus, as the medieval Church would claim, with Jesus too. The prophets of the Jewish Bible are so many reincarnations of Abel, the type of Christ, and their killers are guided by the spirit of Cain. They are stripped of their Jewish identity and declared early Christians instead. Once again, the medieval Church expresses its relationship to the Synagogue as a function of the ongoing threat that Cain poses to Abel.

As Trachtenberg and Winston both remark, gospel literature tends to obscure the extent of Gentile (i.e., Roman) involvement in Jesus' death, assigning the greater burden of guilt to the Jews (Trachtenberg 20; Winston 22). Bestul observes the practice still flourishing more than a millenium later as he traces its development in medieval Latin writings which would influence vernacular works throughout Western Europe:

The elaboration of the Jewish role in the sufferings of Christ resulted in part from a two-fold division of the events of the Passion current in the twelfth century in which Christ was tormented first by the Jews, then by the gentiles when the sentence of crucifixion was

pronounced. . . . The treatises of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries extend this "Jewish" part of the Passion, from the betrayal of Judas through the release of Barabbas, by expanding the gospel account through fuller and more detailed descriptions of these events and by throwing emphasis on the fact of Jewish participation in them In the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Jewish role in the Passion is extended to include the events surrounding the crucifixion itself, and much less is made in many of the later treatises of the joint responsibility of Jews and gentiles for the death of Christ. (70-71)

Many Middle English Passion narratives likewise pursue the practice of extending the Jewish role, exaggerating the duration of the judgement scene as described in the Gospels, and multiplying Pilate's efforts to placate an obstreperous mob. Jesus' accusers and their ill will must thus withstand more, and lengthier, demurrals from the medieval Pilate than from the biblical; accordingly, they must also display more endurance, greater stamina for evil, as they remain unmoved by Pilate's repeated appeals to justice, if not mercy.

Sometimes, following Luke 23.16 and 22, the Middle English Pilate proposes a beating instead of death, judging that such

nebulous crimes as the Jews allege deserve no greater punishment; thus, in the *Middle English Prose Complaint of Our Lady*²⁹, the Virgin recalls that Pilate commanded: "'Ariseþ, myne kni3ttes, & scourgeþ hym so þat he ne haue nomore will to do þe folk falle in erroure þorou3 his techinges'" (90.1-2). But he also commends Jesus' wisdom, as in *Cursor Mundi*, where he suggests a beating to appease the Jews' anger, yet admonishes them for refusing to hear Jesus' message:

"Þis good mon is of greet witt,
whoso hit vndirstood,
But for he hap 3ow wrapped
wip him 3e are so woode;
I rede 3e chastise him þus
& bete him to þe blode." (3.111.16,225-230)

Meanwhile, reacting to Pilate's suggestion in the *Southern Passion* and *South English Ministry and Passion* that Jesus go free without further violence (SP 48.1317, 49.1342; SEMP 171.2311, 2326), the poets mark the ironic contrast between the pagan's sympathy toward Jesus and the Jews' relentless hostility with a mournful address of commiseration that denounces the spite so zealously harboured by the harried saviour's family in the face

29. Both the work and the manuscript edited by C. William Marx and Jeanne F. Drennan date from the late fourteenth century.

of the Roman's equity:

Now, Ihesus, meche was þe schame þat þe Iewis to þe
wrou3t

Qwan þei delyuered a manquellere & þe to deþe brou3t!
Sippin Iewis of qwom þou come so harde vpon þe were,
& Pilat delyuere þe wolde, but he durst not for fere,
þo was it fulfellid þat Daudid seyde in þe Sau3tter þorw
þi sonde,
þat þi frend & þin next ken a3en þe schulde stonde.

(SEMP 172.2333-38; parallel lines in SP: 49.1349-54)³⁰

Exceptional among Middle English Passion narratives in its treatment of Pilate is the *Northern Passion* (extended version),³¹
30. A scribal error in line 1352 of the corresponding passage in the *Southern Passion* confuses Pilate with Barabbas, falsely characterizing the criminal as a pagan. However, despite the confusion this error occasions, it also enhances the medieval Christian portrait of Jews by suggesting further irony in Jewish hostility toward Jesus: their ferocity is such that they would prefer to save a pagan rather than Jesus the Jew; their cause is so dubious that even the pagan governor Pilate pleads Jesus' case.

31. There are two versions of this poem: the original, shorter

which implies a degree of duplicity in his defence of Jesus, reporting of his symbolic washing of hands and declaration of innocence that "all if he þis werk so wroght,/Ane other in his hert he thocht" (89.1505-6). Similarly, in response to the Jews' continued insistence that Jesus die, this Pilate only "lete als he war euell payd" (90.1520). But the *Northern Passion* neither explains nor develops this unaccountable malice, letting the blame finally devolve upon the Jews, as, following Matthew 27.25, they have themselves requested (NP 89.1515-18). Still, in imputing to Pilate any ill will toward Jesus at all, the *Northern Passion* differs from all other texts here studied that deal with the judgement scene.³²

work, and a later extension. The original dates from the early fourteenth century, and the extended version from before 1350. IMEV nos. 1907 and 170, respectively. The edition of the original used here is based on MS Cambridge Gg.1.1, from the first third of the fourteenth century; the edition of the later, on MS Rawlinson 175, from circa 1350.

Quotations from the *Northern Passion* are taken from the expanded work unless otherwise stated.

32. Similarly, when the *Northern Passion's* Jesus rides into Jerusalem, the city's inhabitants only pretend to welcome him:

þai keped him with processioune,

This poem's version of the Jews' acceptance of blame, however, deserves closer attention, for it modifies the biblical prayer to ask, not only that the guilt might adhere to all Jews, present and future, but that it might *observably* adhere:

"His blude," þai sayd, "on us be sene
 And on our childer all by-dene.
 We pray þat all þe peryll fall
 On us and on our childer all." (89.1515-18)

The public debasement of medieval Jews is here presented as not just the work but also the very idea of their crucifying ancestors. Their claim to responsibility for Jesus' blood anticipates their loss of claim to Jesus' peace, represented by the seeping away of that same blood. That debasement did occur is apparent in two further Middle English treatments of the Jews' ill-judged prayer. To the report of this biblical detail the *Southern Passion* and *Cursor Mundi* add editorial comments, addressing, however briefly and prejudicially, the post-gospel

And did vn-to him gret honoure
 Als þair souerayne and sauyoure,
 Bot in all wirschepe þat þai did
 Envy ay in þair hertes war hyd. (54.116-20)

Jewish experience, and assessing it in terms informed by medieval Christian culture.

Like the *Northern Passion*, *Cursor Mundi* emphasizes the public, visual aspect of the curse, but this poet's appreciation of its irony produces a kind of heartless joviality, a cavalier disinterest in what that curse has actually come to mean:

Alle þei cryed on hi3e: "pilate,
 þar þe no þing drede;
 On vs mot his blood falle,
 & on ouris þat we brede."
 And so hit dude, god hit woot;
 sene is on her sede,
 For nowe be þei þralles made
 vndir alle opere lede. (3.116.16,407-14)

Possibly this stanza seems more callous for its allusion to Jewish suffering as a spectacle, something that is "sene." The choice of verb reflects the poet's view of his society's persecution of Jews as a reckoning, sanctioned by God, for the acts of the gospel Jews: it does not merely seem, and is not merely thought, that God is punishing the Jews for advocating Jesus' death; it is "sene," an observable fact. Furthermore, by choosing a passive verb, the poet concentrates attention on that which is seen, while obscuring the role and responsibility of

those who see. He evokes an oppressed Diaspora Jewry, but not the oppressors, who thus ascribe the fate of contemporary Jews to the unwise prayer of gospel Jews demanding Jesus' death.

The *Southern Passion* is even harsher than *Cursor Mundi*, and very much harsher than its own model, for, as O. S. Pickering observes, the "six hostile lines" with which the *Southern Passion* passage ends "have no counterpart" in the *South English Ministry and Passion* ("Reviser" 45):

"3e, let þe wrecche," quap þe gywes, "of his blod beo
ydo,

Vpon vs-selue among vs, and vp oure children al-so" --

As who-so seip: "3if we mysdoþ, ne care nou3t of oure
dede,

Ak let vs and oure ofspr yng abygge oure shrewhede."

And hare bone is yhurð ffol wel, ffor to soþe ich wot
þis:

Þat an eorþe so mucche shame of no manere ffolk þer nys,
ffor hi beoþ y-harled her and þer as houndes ffoule
ynow;

Þey hare owene bone beo ycome, me þinkeþ þer nis no
wow. (50.1379-86)

The crucifying Jews presumed to speak for their descendants, and while the bloodline connecting the Jews to Jesus has been

ruptured, the bloodline connecting one Jewish generation to the next remains intact: each successive generation of Jews suffers opprobrium above all other races. The poet acknowledges, with a tone of satisfaction, the contempt with which other nations greet the Jews. He supports their separation from these other peoples with an animal simile, recalling Christian uncertainties regarding Jewish humanity. And he bolsters the idea that their outcast status is the Jews' own fault by calling it -- albeit ironically -- their boon, attributing to them the self-imposed judgement of "shrewhede," and, on a structural note, following his quotation of the prayer with a paraphrase that repeats and reinforces the curse.

Cursor Mundi and the *Southern Passion* have sketched in highly abbreviated terms Diaspora Jewry's vulnerable lot and presented it as divine retribution for Jesus' Passion. As Bernard Glassman observes in *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes Without Jews*:

Even in what appeared to be contemporary stories, the guilt of the Crucifixion often seemed to hover over the Jews, and there was the inference that this type of crime was something that they were capable of repeating if given the opportunity. (28)

Ironically, however, the literary Jesus suffers greater pain at

the hands of medieval authors. Unlike the Gospels, many Middle English accounts depict the Crucifixion in highly graphic terms; non-biblical episodes of the most gratuitous cruelty abound in excruciating detail, promoting a popular Crucifixion tale that deals more with the Jews than with Jesus. Part of the purpose of this apocryphal Crucifixion, almost surreal in its brutality, is to justify the reckoning to which Middle English poets have alluded, for even they perceive that the Gospels alone do not justify medieval Christianity's treatment of Jews. Mount Calvary in Middle English literature is a different place from what it was in the biblical accounts; it is thus a uniquely medieval Crucifixion that unfolds as the narratives' climax approaches.

"Se now þe maner of crucifyying"³³

Of all sources cited here, the *Northern Passion* and the *Middle English Prose Complaint of Our Lady* provide the most sensational reports of Jesus' death. The passages are lengthy, but because their contents, beyond the mere fact of crucifixion, are entirely non-biblical, their full quotation here will supply an indispensable insight into the abstract violence that Christian writers are willing to wreak on the literary Jesus. It may be helpful, in abstracting these substantial passages, to divide them and study them in sections. In the *Northern Passion*,

33. *Medytacyuns of þe Soper of oure Lorde Ihesu* 20.628.

two natural breaks mark three verse paragraphs dealing with the preliminary action, the fastening of Jesus to the Cross, and the raising of the Cross, respectively.

Thus the torture begins:

þai toke Ihesu þat naked stode,
 And layd him doune o-pon þe rode;
 Both his armes þai layd on brade
 Till bores þat þai bi-fore had made,
 And furth als-so þai laid his fete,
 Bot to þair merkes was he noght mete;
 þe bores war bored so fer fro
 His armes myght noght rech þam to;
 If þe taa hand at þe bore ware,
 þe tother fayled a fote and mare,
 And his fete fayld fer of þe bore,
 So wyde þan war þai made bi-fore.
 þe Iewes, when þai persayued þis thing,
 In þair hertes had þai gret hething. (121.2761-74)

The logistics of preparing a cross to receive a doomed prisoner play no role in the gospel Crucifixion, but they frequently engage the crucifying Jews of medieval literature. Their incompetence and stupidity intrude upon Jesus' distress and banish from the scene of death the solemnity of the death itself.

Their arbitrary positioning of the holes for the nails shows thoughtlessness; their baseless anger on seeing their mistake shows ferocity; and their refusal to make new holes shows wanton cruelty, especially since the extravagant distances involved will mean an equally extravagant excess of pain for Jesus when his tormentors find an alternative method of dealing with the discrepancies:

Euell thoght þam other bores to make;
 þarfor gret rapes gan þai take:
 þai did a rape at ayther hand;
 þe blode brast out at the band;
 On ayther syde þan gan þai draw
 Vn-tyll þai myght þe bores knaw.
 þe syns brast -- þat was no wonder --
 And lyth fro lyth all raue in sonder;
 Sonder went both syns and vayne --
 To fele þat was a ferly payne.
 Twa gret nayles þai toke þat tyde,
 And thurgh his handes þai gert þam glyde.
 þan for þe payns he feled so sare,
 His vayns and syns so schronken ware
 þat his fete war þan fro þe bore
 fferrer þan þai war bi-fore.
 þai toke a rape þat wald wele last,

And fest o-bout his fete full fast;
 þan all at anes on him þai drogh --
 þai wald noght wand to wirk him wogh --
 þat sonder went both flessch and syn,
 And noght held bot all-ane þe skyn.
 Bot þai wald noght fyne þarfore
 Vn-tyll his fette passed þe bore
 ffully þe space of a span.
 A gret nayle tyte tok þai þan;
 When he with þe bore was mete,
 þai draue it thurgh-out both his fete;
 þe blode brast out both bla and rede;
 Wers was neuer nane done to dede. (121-22.2775-
 2804)³⁴

Again, the gospels do not stress the physicality of crucifixion. Most of the violent imagery -- the brutal shock of blood, the persistent hammering and splintering of wood and bone, the outrageous rending of flesh -- must be supplied by the reader's imagination. Assuredly such images played an important part in Jesus' death. But the *Northern Passion* belabours the pain,

34. Bestul notes that the "vivid description of Christ's body being cruelly stretched to fit holes drilled into the cross at least a foot too far apart" is one of the "commonplaces of the Latin Passion tradition" (65-66).

describing in punishing detail, not only Jesus' nailing to the Cross, but also a gruesome and gratuitous operation with no biblical precedent.

The clinical assessment of the human Jesus' physiological response to such violence does not imply detachment on the poet's part; on the contrary, it exemplifies the growing desire among Christians of the later Middle Ages to understand Jesus' experience of pain. Bestul elucidates this concern as one consequence of "the growth of a Christo-centric piety with increased emphasis on the humanity of Christ" which "led to an intense hunger to know the details of his earthly life . . . especially his suffering and death," leading in turn to

increased attention paid to those who were perceived to be Christ's enemies during his life on earth, namely the Jews. The heightened devotion to the Passion[,] with its greater attention to the physical sufferings of Christ, had as its by-product an inevitable attention to the perpetrators of the torments, showing them to be exceptionally cruel or depraved as a means of increasing the emotional response of readers to their reality. (71)

It is impossible to tell the torment from the tormentor, or the cruel deed from the cruel intention, when these literary Jews,

viciously punishing Jesus for their own miscalculations, and not content with ripping apart his "syns and vayne" to compensate for a mismeasurement of "a fote and mare," further insist on pulling his feet "fffully þe space of a span" beyond the mark. The only organ left intact is the skin, which, however, does not fare so well in the original, shorter *Northern Passion*, where "þe sinewes borsten, þe hide al so" (39.1515). This earlier version even claims that "out of is heuid þe blod ron" (39.1531), an unexplained extravagance not shared with the later, longer poem.

Even after the torturous account of how the Jews fasten Jesus to the Cross, there is still more torture to come. The *Northern Passion's* description of the Crucifixion ends with a brief account of the raising of the Cross, which becomes for its Jewish characters a chance to commit further excesses:

On þis wise when þai had done,
 þe rode tre þai raysed sone,
 And sett it hegh vp-on þe hyll,
 ffor no man suld towch þer-tyll,
 And for þe fote þai made a pytt,
 ffor no man suld it þethen flytt.
 And when þe pytt was made wele depe,
 Ilk one tok tyll other kepe,
 And vp þai lyfted þe cross all,
 And sythen fast þai lete fall

In-to þe pitt, to eke his payns,
 þat sonder rafe both syns and vayns,
 And so þai shogged it till and fra
 On all manere to wirk him wa. (122-23.2805-18)

Creating Jewish characters who lose no opportunity to make the Crucifixion even harder to bear -- both for Jesus and for the poem's audience -- means creating the opportunities as well. The poet has this in common with his Jews: they both seek to enhance the pain of Jesus' ordeal. Their motives differ, but their methods do not.

With its concentration on Jesus' wounds, the *Northern Passion's* Crucifixion scene is a good example of a medieval artistic style discussed by Douglas Gray in his work on Middle English lyrics.³⁵ Noting a Renaissance reaction against the earlier style, Gray acknowledges that

the classicizing criticism of excessive attention to a multiplicity of details is certainly one that can be levelled against many popular religious images of the

35. See also Sarah Beckwith's *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* 42: "Late medieval crucifixion piety locates an extraordinary preoccupation with the wounds, an extensive medieval fantasy which Huizinga has called both 'ultra concrete' and 'ultra fantastic.'"

late Middle Ages, and against some of the elaborate literary meditations on the Passion of Christ, where the rehearsal of grim, naturalistic details of physical suffering can sometimes produce nothing but a sense of unreality. (28)

While Gray's topic is the lyric, his comment here applies equally well to Crucifixion passages in many of the works studied here. Bestul supports a reading of Gray as referring to a wider range of texts than the lyrics comprise. He also clarifies the irony that Gray observes with respect to its effect on medieval readers of Crucifixion writings:

Douglas Gray suggests that in describing the suffering of Christ the detail of the Passion narratives is so excessive as to produce an air of unreality. That is, the descriptive techniques may have the opposite effect from their intent by distancing us from the horror and desensitizing us to the suffering and violence of the narratives, and perhaps, through repeated representations, desensitizing society at large to suffering and violence in the material world. (160)³⁶

36. However, Bestul also modifies Gray:

. . . it seems to me, judging by what we know of how

If medieval society did in this way develop a greater tolerance for violence, the following passage from the same chapter indicates who the victims of this violence might have been:

According to the stated ideals of the Passion narratives, the graphic descriptions of violence are intended to arouse compassion and sorrow for Christ as victim and provoke our anger against those (the Jews) who perpetrated such ignominies against him. . . . The Passion narratives show that if such bodily suffering and degradation could be visited on Christ, who was God, should they not, *quanto magis*, be also visited on the Jew, the heretic, the criminal, the outcast? Why should, in fact, this trouble or concern us very much if this is so? These were conditions endured by the savior of mankind, the innocent lamb: those who suffer

the Passion texts were received, that the effect was not to desensitize their audiences to violence or anesthetize them to brutality, but rather to instruct them that this was not an unthinkable way to treat the flesh of a fellow human being. (160-61)

in a similar way are non-persons who deserve to be persecuted and excluded from society. (158-59)

Many Christians may have been all the more inclined to adopt this aggressive stance after hearing the harrowing story of Jesus' death from the Virgin in the *Middle English Prose Complaint of Our Lady*.³⁷ The mother's personal grief enhances the anguish and pathos suffered by Jesus and those who love him -- especially since her narrative, like the *Northern Passion*, contains technical descriptions of how her son was attached to the Cross, and of how the Cross was raised. Two consecutive paragraphs give us Mary's view of these appalling procedures. In the first she recounts what happened after the Crucifixion procession had reached Mount Calvary, and the knights had cast lots for Jesus' clothes:

"þan comen þe kni3ttes þat ordeynde þe pynes & token þe mesure of my swete sones body, þe brede and þe lengþe, wiþ whiche mesure hii maden þe bores þere þat þe nayles schulde ben dryuen þorou3 his honden & his fete, and laiden hym wide open opon þe croice. And þe ri3th

37. Bestul places this work "in the tradition of the Latin Marian lament on the Passion" (66).

honde wip a gret naile fastned it vnto þe croice. & whan hii comen to þe left honde þe ende of þe fynger ne com nou3th to þe bore. And þe wicked Iewes token & ti3eden a corde opon þe honde & wip a leuoure lifteden after þe body, & drow3en alway vnto þat þe honde com ouer þe bore, and þan wip a gret nayl nailed it to þe tre. And after whan hii comen to his fete hii sei3en þat his heles ne comen nou3t to þe bore by a coute & more, þat is half a 3erd. And wip a corde, as bifore is seide, hii ti3eden on his brest & anoper opon his fete & drow3en euer til þat his heles comen ouer þe bore, & þan token anoper gret naile & naileden his fete þat on opon þat oper to þe croice. And þerfore he hadde þe more pyne þan oiper hadde ben nayled by it one, for þe nailes were ragged & blunt bifore, for hii were of a wommans makeyng.³⁸ And þerfore þe nayles baren þorou3 boþe þe hide & þe flesche & þe bon þat hii weren sette on first; hii baren al þorou3 into þe tree wip hem, & þerfore it seiþ in þe sautere: 'Hii doluen myne honden & myne feet & noumbred myne bones.' & hii setten his body als streytt opon þe croice as a

38. See pg. 151, note to 100.2-3; see also *Northern Passion* 116-17.2547-2608.

parchemyn þat is glewed opon a borde."

(99-100.4-18; 1-9)

The first figures mentioned are the soldiers who "ordeynde þe pynes," possibly professional torturers, specifically designated "wicked Iewes." The image of Jesus' enemies in the character of torturers stooping over him with hammers stresses his vulnerability as well as their will to do harm. The nails they use are not only "gret," but "ragged & blunt" as well, as if designed on purpose to inflict the maximum possible pain -- which, from an artistic perspective, they are. Their coarseness carries the skin, flesh and bone before them through Jesus' body, and pushes them into the wood, so that rough assailants ravage the living tissue; when the iron of the nails invades it, it has nowhere to retreat but into the splintering Cross. Meanwhile, the simile comparing the crucified body to a piece of parchment suggests that Jesus' limbs are being stretched and pulled to their furthest possible extent, so that even the skin that remains unbroken is subject to torture.

As in the *Northern Passion*, further torment accompanies the raising of the Cross:

"And after hii liftedēn vp þe croice on hei3, & hii hadden sett a gret tre of cedre in þe erpe & hadden made þeron a mortays þat þe foote of þe croice schulde

stonde & wip engynes þat hii hadden made hii liftedē
 hei3e þe croice forto smyte hard doune in þe mortays.
 And hii faileden of þat mortays & rebounded þat o tre
 to þat oper þat his body hadde swich astonying þat he
 semed more ded þan quyk. And anoper tyme hii liftedē
 vp þe croice wip so gret wille & smyten þe fote in þe
 morteyns so hetilich þat þe croice braundischt & schoke
 as a swerd þat is brandischt. þe pyne was so hard and
 so horrible þat it was hidous & sorou3ful forto seen to
 any man. And his vaynes of his body tobrusten & his
 woundes oppened wider so þat þe blode ran adounne of
 his swete body as water out of ryuer. And at þat gret
 pyne my swete son seide doelfullich, 'Swete fader ne
 charge nou3th her synnes, for hii nyteþ neuer what hii
 done.'" (100-101.10-22; 1-2)

Here the soldiers do not seem to be purposefully manoeuvring the Cross so as to augment Jesus' distress, but the result is excruciating just the same, with the wounds already inflicted growing wider, and new ones appearing. The simile comparing the quivering Cross to a brandished sword recalls the earlier simile of the parchment in that the sensitivity to movement along the Cross's length reflects -- or rather, helps determine -- the rapid movement of every shock through every nerve of Jesus' elongated body. The repetition of the violent verb "smyte,"

especially as accompanied by the adverbs "hard" and "hetilich," stresses all the more the harsh vibrations of the Cross responding to the forceful motion. Yet it is at this climax of agony that Jesus offers to God his merciful prayer for forgiveness of his enemies.

This prayer supports the sentiment that "Christ's Passion is the supreme expression of his love . . . and demands a reciprocal love from the individual soul," as Gray observes:

The Passion of Christ is the true centre of medieval devotion The scene of the Passion is the Christian archetype of suffering, but because it is the expression of love and the supreme image of man's redemption it is "sweet." (122-23)

The Passion is thus a praiseworthy and salutary theme for earnest and frequent meditation. Again, although Gray's study primarily concerns the lyric, his comments here are relevant to Middle English Crucifixion narratives, as is the remark that closely follows, which questions the aesthetic seemliness of such meditations when they linger over grisly scenes:

When this intense devotion becomes the subject of art or literature it is necessary to maintain a delicate and difficult balance between extreme and conflicting

emotions. Failure to do so can easily result in offensive lapses of taste, or over-literal and ridiculous exaggerations, which often suggest a contorted or obsessive interest in suffering for its own sake. (123)

In *Poetry of the Passion*, J. A. W. Bennett detects an instance of such obsession in the English rendering of the Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord*, remarking, as he quotes the couplet of 567-68 (*Supper* 18):³⁹ "The translator seems almost to relish describing the contumely Christ suffers" (53). But immediately after this couplet there appears an example of yet another device whereby Crucifixion writers encouraged a corresponding obsession among the members of their audience: direct appeals to picture Jesus' torments as if witnessing them personally. The poet entreats his readers thus:

Beholde now, man, with wepyng herte,
And late nat þy þo3t ly3tly a sterte:
Cryst gob krokeþly þys heuy cros vndyr,
And feyntly hyt bereþ, hyt ys no wundyr.

39. "Þey punged hym furþe þurgh euery slogh,/As an hors ys prykked þat gob yn plogh."

þey hye hym, and ho gop withoutyn any stryfe,
 And bereþ hys owne dep, and bereþ þy lyfe. (18.569-74)

The audience is to imagine the dolorous procession to Mount Calvary and meditate on Jesus' travails in carrying the Cross that paradoxically represents life by providing the means of death; what they see, and otherwise experience, as they watch the Crucifixion emerge from the Passion must dominate their thoughts and tear at their hearts.

Similar calls to observe Jesus' misery, similarly evocative of bitter emotions on Jesus' behalf -- fear, anguish, grief, and outrage -- appear in many other works. In an envoy addressed to "mi leue suster," for example, the Beloved of "þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd" exhorts her to "þenc as tah he heng biside þe, blodi up o rode" (37.645-46; 38.653-55). Earlier, she used a variation of the direct appeal, a running commentary interspersed with apostrophe to the dying Jesus, to help her audience participate emotionally in his Passion and Crucifixion. Bennett adduces the "Wohunge" to show the occurrence in other genres of one of medieval drama's most powerful natural advantages, whereby "the Passion . . . becomes a contemporary, a recurrent event, the action a continuous present" (36). To demonstrate how "the regular use of the dramatic present early distinguishes the treatment of the tragic sequence even in prose works," he goes on to quote briefly from a passage that may profitably be examined

at greater length:

A nu is mi lefmon demd for to deien. A nu mon ledes him
forð to munte caluarie to þe cwalm stowe. A lo, he
beres his rode up on his bare schuldres . . . a lefmon,
hu mon folhes te, þine frend sariliche wið reming &
sorhe, þine fend hokerliche to schome & wundren up o
þe. A nu haue þai broht him þider. A nu raise þai up þe
rode, setis up þe warh treo. A nu naces mon mi lef. A
nu driuen ha him up wið swepes & wið schurges. A hu
liue i for reowðe þat seo nu mi lefmon up o rode, &
swa to drahen hise limes þat i mai in his bodi euch ban
tellen. A hu þai ha nu driuen irnene neiles þurh þine
feire hondes in to hard rode, þurh þine freoliche fet.
A nu of þa honden & of þa fet swa luueli streames te
blod swa rewli. (33-34.491-95; 498-517)⁴⁰

The frequent repetition of the exclamation "A nu" reinforces the immediacy of the events thus presented as if just now occurring, as do the Beloved's words of empathy addressed to the fated but yet-living Jesus. Empathy for Jesus is what she is trying to

40. I have emended line 508 as suggested by the editor on page 49 of the Notes.

inspire, and the models she provides are those who follow him "sariliche wið reming & sorhe," as well as the Beloved herself, wondering at her own strength to sustain the "reowðe" of the violent scene before her. To reinforce by way of contrast the virtue of these good models, she also supplies bad models -- the "fend," for example, who follows Jesus only to mock him, and the impersonal "mon" who represents those who strip him, scourge him, and nail him to the Cross, inflicting those wounds from which "streames te blod swa rewli."

Once again, an observation from Gray's study of the lyric pertains to Crucifixion works as well, particularly as he refers to one of them as the exemplar on which the present-tense Passion is based, remarking that

the *memoria* of the Passion, the later 'composition of place[,] is often done with striking detail and personal feeling, applying the insistent injunctions of the Pseudo-Bonaventura['s] *Meditations* (and other such works) to make oneself as if present at the scene, in the midst of every circumstance concerning the Passion, "with earnestness, zeal, love, and fixed intentness." . . . The effect of making the reader "really there" is achieved by the selection of visual and evocative details, sometimes strikingly vivid . . .

(126-27)⁴¹

41. In *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*, Rosemary Woolf makes a similar comment:

The main subjects of the medieval religious lyric are those central to medieval meditation, the Passion, and the Last Things, especially death, with the emotions proper to them, love and fear. In order that the reader of the poems may feel these emotions personally and keenly, he is persuaded by the lyric to imagine himself in a scene which will provoke them, and which is described often in minute visual detail. (19)

Yet she introduces her study with a seemingly contradictory statement about the paucity of images in Middle English lyrics:

From the fact that the medieval lyric makes very little use of intellectual ideas there follows the further point that it is very bare of imagery. . . . [T]o the medieval poet the chief function of imagery was to convey a truth, not to the heart or imagination, but to the intellect, and there is therefore little room for it in a poetry designed only to touch the emotions. From the modern point of view there would seem to be a further purpose for it in poetry that aims to present a

scene vividly to the imagination. But metaphors or similes that convey how people looked or moved are always rare in medieval poetry. . . .

Moreover, only images that make the scene more living to the eye would have been appropriate in meditative poetry. For medieval meditation is concerned with only one of the five senses, that of sight Therefore imagery designed to convey what is apprehended of the physical world through the senses of hearing, taste, or touch, would be out of keeping with both meditative and poetic convention.

(11-12)

Some of the pieces studied here are meditations, and the meditators make it plain that the Passion and Crucifixion abound in sensory experiences. Apparently Woolf is following Stephen Manning's lead as he states his intention to "restrict imagery . . . to include primarily simile, metaphor, allegory, and symbol" in his own earlier book, *Wisdom and Number: Toward a Critical Appraisal of the Middle English Religious Lyric* (106). Notwithstanding, among the lyrics as among the lengthier works studied here, there is no lack of images pertaining to all five senses.

Blood Crimes: Revivals of the Passion

In concert with such literary methods of bringing the tortured Jesus to life again, only to let him die once more, history has yielded an alternative, more sinister, method. It was widely believed throughout medieval Christian Europe, from the middle of the twelfth century to the end of the period and, indeed, well beyond, that Jewish communities regularly murdered Christian children at Easter in mockery of the Crucifixion.⁴²

42. Roth suggests that the ritual murder charge may have had roots in Christian misconceptions about the Jewish feast of Purim, and that later, after the ritual murder and blood accusations had more or less merged, they may both have been associated with the Passover instead of Easter ("Feast of Purim").

Simon supports Roth's comment about Christian suspicions that Jews baked their unleavened bread with blood; see Roth 525 and Simon 152-53. Regarding the date of this particular belief, Trachtenberg states that it "seems to be no older than the fourteenth century, and became a fixed element of the [blood libel] charge only in the fifteenth century" (134).

Langmuir responds sceptically to Roth's theory regarding Purim ("Historiographic" 14, 20). Trachtenberg, 128, is similarly dubious.

Allied with this belief, and often confused with it, was the notion that Jews imbibed, or otherwise used, Christian blood for various infamous purposes.⁴³ Roth gives the following account of the bloody custom attributed to Jews:

The terms "ritual murder" and "blood accusation" are today used interchangeably. They actually denote, however, two completely different conceptions. The Blood Accusation is the charge levied against the Jews of obtaining Christian blood (generally, but not invariably, as the result of homicide) for use in manufacturing their unleavened bread or other ritual requirements at the Passover period. The motive, according to Thomas of Cantimpré in his *Bonum Universale de Apibus*, was rational enough. Ever since the Jews had called out to Pilate, "His Blood be upon us and on our children," they had been afflicted with haemorrhoids. A sage had informed them that they could be cured *solo sanguine Christiano* -- that is, through

43. As many have remarked, the consumption of blood is forbidden Jews. Among the books of the Pentateuch, prohibitions occur in the following places: Genesis 9.4-6; Leviticus 3.17 and all of Chapter 17; and Deuteronomy 12.16 and 12.23-27.

the blood [of] the Messiah whom they had rejected.
Through wilful blindness, however . . . they preferred
to interpret this advice literally. (305)

In an earlier article, Roth had remarked of the blood accusation: "This is, of course, an old conception, consistently advanced against any unpopular person or section of humanity. We meet it in the vampire-legend" ("The Feast of Purim" 524). In the case of the Jews, however -- and to return to "The Medieval Conception of the Jew" -- he identifies what many Christians must have perceived as the crucial moment that each of the Jews' supposed sanguinary attacks on Christians reflected.⁴⁴ The unlikely infirmity which allegedly drove Jews to extract Christian blood for medicinal purposes is noted also by Newall (114), and supplemented in Felsenstein (35) and Glassman (33-34) with an additional and equally dubious complaint. Glassman explains:

According to legend, both Jewish men and women
menstruated, and they also suffered from hemorrhoids
and other similar ailments that required the

44. See Langmuir: "the ultimate inspiration for the first medieval ritual murder accusation was the role of Jews in the crucifixion of Jesus" ("Historiographic" 20).

therapeutic use of Christian blood. They bled abnormally because they were devil-like and also because their ancestors had promised Pilate that if he would allow Jesus to be killed, his blood would be upon them and their children.

Here a paradox appears, similar to one encountered earlier. Harking back to the old hypothesis that disbelief in Jesus was the sign of a lack of reason, Roth says this of the menses thought to be common to Jews of both sexes:

There were numerous natural signs which clearly indicated to the popular mind that the Jews were a race apart, cursed for all eternity. . . . They were distinguished from the rest of mankind by a bloody flux and a peculiar odour, which disappeared automatically on the administration of the waters of baptism! This was enough, surely, to make rational beings realise the error of Judaism. But the Jews were not rational beings, and it was preposterous to regard them as such. ("Medieval Conception" 301)

Yet two pages later, he discusses an alternative suspicion, harboured by Christians of the same period, that Jews did in fact believe, not only in Jesus, but also in transubstantiation, the

doctrine that held that the Eucharist was truly Jesus' body and blood, a mystery rather than a metaphor. Evidence for this belief came in the form of still further accusations of bloody deeds:⁴⁵

One of the most common, most tragic, and most widely believed of all charges brought against the Jews in the Middle Ages was that of desecrating the Host. . . . It was alleged that the consecrated elements were stolen and ritually outraged by torture, stabbing, or flagellation. This is, perhaps, the most preposterous of all accusations of the sort. It is perfectly obvious that such action in a Jew would be completely paradoxical. It pre-supposes a degree of belief in the supernatural qualities of the sacrament which he could not conceivably hold, if he retained his religious convictions. . . .

But the mediaeval point of view was quite different. Of course, the Jew believed in the supernatural qualities of the Host -- no rational being could do otherwise. Of course, he was perfectly aware

45. See also Miri Rubin's *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, 122-24, and Caroline Walker Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, 63-64.

that after consecration the Wafer became transformed into the very Body of Christ. It was for that very reason that he desired to get it into his possession and to torture it, making it know once again the sufferings of the Passion. (303)⁴⁶

It has earlier been remarked that, while the misbelieving Jew was seen as bestial, the believing Jew -- invariably masquerading as

46. Little notes the following advantages, from the accusers' point of view, of the accusation of Host desecration over earlier stigmas:

The charge of host profanation fulfilled two functions for Christians. First, it permitted them to project [onto] Jews their doubts about transubstantiation, a doctrine long in the making and finally declared dogma only as recently as the year 1215. There was never a period in which this doctrine enjoyed universal acceptance. . . . The second function fulfilled by the charge of host profanation was that it marked an improvement over the ritual murder charge, for it dispensed with the problem of finding a corpse and of identifying the victim. (287-88)

his misbelieving co-religionist -- was seen as infernal. Their creators, however, did not distinguish between these varieties, but rather treated them as one. Middle English authors rarely allude to specific charges leveled against the Jews of their own day -- who, in any event, were formally expelled from England in 1290 -- but they do speak of the bestial and the infernal Jews, who, however, were really one and the same Jew. Whether rejecting the Christ knowingly or blindly, the Jews of Middle English literature uniformly speak for their race as a whole. If Christian authors and commentators discerned the inconsistency in thinking that the Jews simultaneously did and did not believe in Jesus, they gave no sign of wanting to resolve it.

The idea that Jews schemed to capture and torture Hosts is illogical, but so too were the blood accusations and the charges of ritual murder, and yet many Christians believed them. As a tribute to the Crucifixion, and in association with the alleged ritual murders, rumours of Host desecration offered still more proof of a partnership between Jews and the devil (Felsenstein 32-33). The Crucifixion is the common source of all three imagined crimes: every act of Host profanation revives it; every killing of a Christian child pays a monstrous homage to it; and every extraction of Christian blood is a perverse and doomed attempt to alleviate the punishment God has ordained for it.⁴⁷

47. Trachtenberg contains several relevant passages; see, for example, these comments on contemporary stories of host

The Middle English works examined here may not contain
desecration:

Another notable feature of many of the accusations is that, like other such charges, they implicated not individual Jews but rather the community as a whole. Even when the crime was directly laid upon individuals, the entire group customarily suffered the consequence. But not unusually the criminals were represented as acting for the group, distributing pieces of a host far and wide, or inviting the leading Jews of the country to assemble and participate in the act of desecration. In a good many instances the proceedings are said to have taken place in a synagogue, as though they were a part of Jewish ritual; in at least two instances the host desecration supposedly occurred at wedding feasts, ostensibly the culminating ceremonial of the festivities. (113)

And, on blood accusations more generally, see p.167:

The superstitious crimes that so strongly influenced the medieval conception were considered to be the actions of "the Jews" and not of this or that Jew, and the entire community suffered the penalty for them.

direct accusations of these crimes, but they do contain a great deal of evidence of the kinds of thoughts and misconceptions about Jews that made the crimes seem plausible to many medieval Christians. The same ideas that governed much of medieval Christianity's treatment of Jews also informed much of its devotional writing, particularly works on the Passion and Crucifixion. The idea, for example, that Jews were once chosen by God but later rejected in favour of a newer, more promising body of worshippers is the basis of this literature. A natural correlative to this idea is a style of thinking about biblical events that privileges ultimogeniture, the passing of an inheritance to the younger rather than the elder child. Middle English writers say that God bestowed his blessing on Abel but not on Cain because Cain was evil and undeserving; here the pattern of ultimogeniture begins. They further say, through their portrayal of Jews, that from Cain these formerly chosen of God have inherited evil, and likewise cannot receive God's blessing. When they kill their blood-kin Jesus in a bloody way, they repeat Cain's crime, and earn his curse. Election passes to Seth, and the first-born child is lost to the devil, the founder of homicide.

Finally, there is a further sense in which Cain is regarded as a type of the gospel Jews. His crime prefigures the Jews' later killing of Jesus as a deicide as well as a fratricide; he has murdered God's image, and "in his brother Abel has struck God

himself," in the words of S. Hurwitz (219). The repercussions of both crimes are far-reaching and long-lasting, as the essays of Hyam Maccoby and E. Isaac-Edersheim show. Discussing the inconceivable punishment the first human murderer receives for the sake of his human victim, Maccoby states: "Instead of being condemned to death, Cain is condemned to life, and in order to ensure that his life should not be a short one, God 'set a mark on Cain, lest any finding him should kill him'" (241). But "if no one may kill Cain, he must live forever," as Isaac-Edersheim observes (201). The Crucifixion, the archetype of Jewish felony, must assuredly have earned the Jews a greater punishment than Cain received. Did God condemn the Jews to eternal life too? This question shall be considered in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: Ishmael

In both *Genesis* and *Cursor Mundi*, Ishmael is a mysterious figure, but not because either text presents him as such. Neither text presents him at all, in fact; he is barely described, and never quoted. Although he is the son of a holy man, Ishmael is driven from home and into the wilderness while still a child, early estranged from his younger brother -- and father's heir -- Isaac, whose full parentage he does not in any case share. From his Egyptian mother Hagar, who accompanies him into exile, Ishmael acquires foreign status within his own father's household; years later, after his expulsion, when Hagar presents her adult son with an Egyptian bride, he seems more foreign still (Gen.21.21). Disinherited of the promises God made to Abraham regarding his children, cast out into the wilderness beyond the periphery of the civilization into which he was born, paired with an Egyptian wife -- symbolic of the people who, in Moses' time, would be the scourge of God's chosen -- Ishmael in his own right represents alienation from God.

Regarded alongside Cain, however, Ishmael gains additional meaning: while Cain represents the violence that led to the Crucifixion, Ishmael represents the punishment Jews supposedly

suffered for it. His separation from Abraham, the man of God, his expulsion from home to the outskirts of civilization, and his foreign status, enhanced by estrangement from his brother, all have echoes in post-gospel Jewish experience. Christian faith implies belief that gospel Jews separated themselves from God by crucifying his human manifestation, and that those who share their doubt about Jesus' godhead are similarly estranged. The actual expulsion of Jews from their capital Jerusalem in the second century of the Common Era recalled the Ur-Jew Ishmael's banishment from his father's home. And the fact that late classical and medieval Jews in exile from the Holy Land lived as strangers wherever they went, often having to move from country to country and establish themselves anew, kept them on the periphery of what Western European Christendom regarded as civilization in the Middle Ages. Thus Ishmael, like Cain, sets precedents that medieval Jews were thought by contemporary Christians to be following. So similar, in fact, are Cain's and Ishmael's respective cases for Ur-Jew status that before proceeding to Ishmael's it is necessary to revisit Cain's, and especially to inquire what happens to Cain after God pronounces his curse.

To be precise, God pronounces two discrete curses upon Cain in retribution for Abel's death. Yet, appearing together in the same verse -- even the same sentence -- of Genesis, they seem to reflect a single act of will on the part of Cain's sentencer:

"When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (4.12). Responding only to the latter curse, Cain likewise seems to discern only a single punitive decree:

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. (4.14)⁴⁸

One might expect that Cain, "a tiller of the ground," would be more distraught at the prospect of a hostile earth, barren of grain but abounding in "porn & wede," as the *Cursor Mundi*'s Jesus declares (Gen.4.2; CM 1.69.1140). But in the Middle English poem as in the Bible, Cain laments only his banishment; he does not so much as mention Jesus' cursing of the earth, concentrating his entire response on the curse of alienation.

Unlike his biblical counterpart, however, *Cursor Mundi*'s Cain prays for immediate death that he might be spared the murder he fears at the hands of unknown human assailants:

48. The wording of the Vulgate passage translated in King James as "from thy face shall I be hid" is further suggestive of the actions of a "fugitive": "a facie tua abscondar" (Gen.4.14).

"I shal be flemed for my synne
 Vnkoupe londe to dwelle wipynne;
 In vnkoupe londe shal ende my wo;
 Whenne þei me fynde, þei wol me slo.
 So fer I woot I shal be flede --
 God wolde nowe I were dede." (1.70.1169-74)

Perhaps this later Cain suffers greater despair because he knows more precisely what his punishment entails: if he has children, the curse will outlive him, claiming his descendants as victims as well; so Jesus has just told him in the final lines of a twenty-one-line expansion of the single-verse Genesis judgement:

"To what cuntre so þow wende
 Shalt þou no man fynde þi frende;
 Among what folke þat þou abide
 Þow and þyne be knowen shal wyde;
 Wip alle shal þou be knowen vile
 Where þow wendes in exile." (1.69.1149-54)

Cursor Mundi's Jesus thus condemns Cain and his children to an indefinite term of exciting the hatred and scorn of all humankind. Whatever his inspiration for this pernicious and most durable curse might be, it is not the original story in Genesis, where God says nothing of Cain's descendants and the universal

contempt that awaits them. If this biblical God is planning a similarly drastic curse for Cain, he gives no prior warning; nor does he even enforce the sentence he does in fact pronounce, but rather allows Cain to establish a city and people it with his offspring, from whom arise the first artists and inventors (4.17-22). As Hurwitz argues, "Cain . . . has some positive features: as a farmer and a founder of cities, he is an actual carrier of culture" (219), a point which Maccoby likewise appreciates (241).⁴⁹

Has Cain escaped his punishment for murdering his brother? Not even *Cursor Mundi* actually depicts a chastened Cain, banished from human society, seeking refuge in the wilderness from enmity and rejection. It is true that his achievements, both good and bad, as well as the family he has fathered, are lost in the great flood many generations later, but in seizing Cain's kind, this scourge of God, far from alienating them, treats them as one with the rest of humankind, except for the small family led by Seth's descendant Noah. The great flood reintegrates Cain's tribe with the rest of their species, even if the basis of equivalence is human evil, for none but that scion of the good brother Seth survives. What has become of Cain's curse?

The curse lives on, for even if Cain's cultural and human legacies disappear beneath the deluge, his spiritual legacy does

49. Maccoby also observes that Adam and Eve, like Cain, appear to escape part of their punishment (242).

not. Cain has successors in the post-deluvian world who, while not violent themselves, still inherit the sentence that their violent forebear seems somehow to have eluded. The model for these unoffending yet fated heirs is Ishmael, Abraham's eldest son.

In *Cursor Mundi* as in the Bible, Ishmael never speaks. In terms of his role in Abraham's family, first as his father's heir, then later as an outcast, his voicelessness complements his lack of agency: the course of his life is more or less determined by his step-mother, the unlikely matriarch Sarah, who engineers his conception by urging a union between her husband and a servant "pat Agar hett Egipcian" (1.118.2594). Notwithstanding Paul's celebration of Sarah's faith in Hebrews 11.11, Sarah believes herself incapable of producing an heir for Abraham, and offers him Hagar for the purpose of procreation. Ishmael is the child thus conceived. Years later, however, when Sarah gives birth to her own son Isaac, Ishmael's status as Abraham's heir is threatened, and finally dismissed altogether when, later still, Sarah insists that Ishmael be banished from his father's household. Her demand appears to be a matter of caprice as well as ambition on her son's behalf, for the event that inspires it involves no wrongdoing on Ishmael's part:

On a day bitidde and fel
 pat pese brepere played same;

Sara bihelde & pou3te no game;
 She seide: "Abraham, þat bastard
 Do him away; he haue no part
 Wip my sone of oure heritage,
 Or elles þou doost greet outrage.
 I wol whatsoeuer men say
 His modir & he be done away." (1.132.3024-32)⁵⁰

As if to emphasize Ishmael's helplessness as well as his innocence, the Genesis account depicts the fourteen-year-old elder son of Abraham as an infant on the occasion of his banishment, entirely dependent on his mother (16.16; 21.5; 21.14-19). *Cursor Mundi* follows suit, though even less plausibly, as it has earlier said that Ishmael was already "of pritty 3eer" at the time of his circumcision (1.121.2697-98; 133.3048; 133.3055-58).⁵¹

50. Although King James has Ishmael "mocking," the Vulgate agrees with *Cursor Mundi* that the brothers were playing: "vidisset Sara filium Agar Aegyptiae ludentem cum Isaac filio suo" (Gen.21.9).

51. No doubt this is a mistake, as there are other inconsistencies in this section regarding age: while *Cursor Mundi*'s Abraham, like the Bible's, is eighty-six at the time of Ishmael's birth (1.119.2639-40; Gen.16.16), and nearly the same age as his biblical counterpart at the time of Isaac's birth (ninety-nine in

The Middle English poem likewise follows the Bible in acknowledging Abraham's sorrow at the prospect, not simply of losing his first-born child, but of actively driving him away to appease the mother of his younger son (CM 1.133.3033-35; Gen. 21.11). However, *Cursor Mundi* has neglected to report that, even before Isaac's birth, the biblical Abraham was an advocate for Ishmael's rights before God. Doubting the likelihood of Sarah's producing a son, despite God's promises to this effect, Abraham beseeches the Lord: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (17.18). His counterpart in *Cursor Mundi* makes no similar plea on his first son's behalf when he hears from the Lord of a second son to be born to Sarah:

"Suche a son she shal þe bere
 þat shal be kyng & caysere;
 He shal serue me to queme;
 þe lawe ful wel shal he þeme." (1.121.2687-90)

Later, when Sarah turns against the elder child -- whose existence she herself devised -- and Abraham hesitates to accede to her edict of banishment, "oon aungel" descends to comfort him with greater hopes for the second son:

CM, 1.121.2699; 100 in Gen., 21.5), between the births of these sons, he inexplicably reaches the age of 109 (CM 1.119.2643 ff).

"For ysaac shal bere þe name
 Of þi seed, sir abrahame;
 Of ysmael out of spousage
 Shal mony come kene & sauage." (1.133.3036; 3041-44)

This terse dismissal of Ishmael's birthright alludes to two separate passages in Genesis. When the biblical Abraham is ordered to dispossess his first-born son, the Lord consoles him with the promise that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called," but proceeds to further assure him: "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed" (21.12-13). Earlier, when Abraham entreated the Lord on Ishmael's behalf, he received in response, in somewhat greater detail, the same promise regarding Isaac, and assurance regarding Ishmael:

I will establish my covenant with [Isaac] for an
 everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.
 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I
 have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will
 multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he
 beget, and I will make him a great nation.
 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac . . .
 (17.19-21)

Neither Genesis passage predicts a "kene & sauage" progeny for

Ishmael; nor, despite a reference to his mother's servile status, do they attribute Ishmael's own diminished status to his having been born "out of spousage." Perhaps the *Cursor Mundi* poet's concern with Ishmael's illegitimacy arises from another attempt to make sense of a decision that might otherwise seem capricious -- not Sarah's, in forbidding him his own father's house, but God's, in declining to accept him as Abraham's heir, and insisting instead, even before Isaac's birth, that the second son inherit Abraham's blessing.⁵² The Middle English poet cannot explain God's preference for the younger son -- a preference predating Isaac's conception -- by calling the elder son "cursed ful of care," as he had the earlier elder son Cain, for Ishmael has done no wrong (1.66.1052). Instead he observes, on relating that Abraham "his lond to ysaac . . . bitau3t," that "for he firste born was in mariage/Bi ri3te he hadde his heritage" (1.145.3396-98).⁵³

However, if the poet cannot contrive an evil Ishmael to complement Cain, he can at least imply that the "wilde man"

52. To Isaac, too, Hebrews 11 ascribes a saving faith in God in a verse to be cited in Chapter Three.

53. In this context the poet is not even thinking of Ishmael as a possible heir; he is contrasting Isaac's claims with those of his brothers by Abraham's second wife Keturah ("cephura"; see *CM* 1.144.3387 ff).

Ishmael becomes grows out of more than just the circumstance of living "in wildernes" (1.134.3081, 3076). An angel has warned Abraham that Ishmael's children will be "kene & sauage" (1.133.3044); it is perhaps the same angel who told Hagar, on the occasion of her fleeing from Sarah:

"Wende a3eyn, I saye, for pi
 Of pi seed 3itt shal multepli
 Muchel folke, and I be warn
 Pou art wip a knave barn;
 Pou calle him Ismael, Agare;
 God wol couer be of pi care;
 He shal be fers & cruel bope;
 A3ein alle ledes wondir wrope:
 A3ein him alle, a3ein alle he --
 A wondir wi3te mon shal he be." (1.119.2625-34)

The event is biblical, and the speech mostly so, but the Middle English poet has embellished it by adding "fers & cruel" and "wondir wrope" to the scriptural description of the adult Ishmael. Thus perhaps the reader is meant to infer, when remembering the biblical angel's speech, that Ishmael's "hand will be against every man" because of a natural propensity for violence, and that in turn "every man's hand [will be] against him" in a defensive gesture only, not aggressively (16.12). The

Ishmael of Genesis does indeed become "a wild man"; he "dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer" (16.12; 21.20); but there is no reason to suppose that any inordinate inner turbulence estranges him any further from his family, or humankind, than his exile in the wilderness.

The figure of Ishmael thus revives Cain's most definitive traits: he is an elder child rejected in favour of a younger; he is banished from his home; and he comes to be regarded as dangerous and violent -- more so in *Cursor Mundi* than in Genesis. With respect to the forgotten first article of God's judgement of Cain, it might even be remarked that Ishmael is denied an agrarian livelihood, for, adjusting to his wild surroundings, he learns archery instead of agriculture. It may further be noted that Ishmael's life as a hunter, in addition to linking him more closely with Cain, who also kills by spilling blood, combines with *Cursor Mundi*'s statement that his children are as wild as he to show that Ishmael, unlike Cain, is banned, not just from his own family, but from the civilization to which it belongs. He thus fulfills the terms of Cain's curse more closely than Cain himself.

Nevertheless, God appends to his judgement on Cain one further article not associated with Ishmael -- not exactly part of the curse, but rather a condition: the mark that fends off potential assailants, but that also brands him as a murderer, thus ensuring that his life will be both long and lonely: safe,

but only at the cost of isolation, or at least of a strictly curtailed group of companions. In Genesis, God places a mark on Cain in direct response to Cain's misgivings about the consequences of the curse of exile:

And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. (4.13-15)

In contrast, *Cursor Mundi's* Jesus intends the mark to enhance the curse:

"Nay," seide oure lord, "bep hit not so;
 Al þat þe seep shal not þe slo,
 But I shal sette on þe my merke:
 Alle shul hit se to rede as clerke;
 Shal noon be so bolde þe to sloo,

But þi falsede to wite hem fro;
 In token of þi lastynge penaunce,
 Þe shal be lent a long meschaunce." (1.70.1175-82)

Jesus specifically states that the mark is meant to proclaim Cain's guilt, and that his guaranteed longevity is part of his punishment, an indefinite extension of near-universal ostracism. The mark traps Cain in his own notoriety, ensuring that his infamous act will determine all his future relations. Ishmael does not suffer this particular brand of ill-repute; nor should he, as he commits no offence.

On the other hand, God's plans for Ishmael involve a tense arrangement that does not apply to Cain: removed as he is from his family's midst, he is still not far, geographically at least, from its perimeter, or from contentious relations with those within, for the angel who sends the beleaguered Hagar of Genesis back to Sarah tells her that Ishmael will be separate from them, but not distant: "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (16.12). Cain founds a city, naming it after his son, and possibly living there too, amid his own descendants certainly, but hardly, given his sin, amid his brothers. Ishmael may be equally isolated, but he is not so well insulated. Thus, while bearing no mark, he is yet as identifiably different from others as his spiritual forebear; he

lives apart, yet close at hand, and is familiar if not friendly. Everyone knows who Ishmael is.

Both figures symbolize the Jews as misperceived by many medieval Christians. Despite their differences, they also both embody a trait which, like violence, was often regarded as a racial characteristic, one ordained by a wronged and vengeful God, and one for which, as Chapter Three will show, there was actually much evidence in the Christian Middle Ages. This trait is somewhat nebulous, but its effect is seen in what might have struck a society with little knowledge of Jews as a lack of ties to land or nation.⁵⁴ From that society's perspective, the Jew of medieval Western Europe, like the Ur-Jews Cain and Ishmael, is homeless, unsettlingly mobile, nomadic in a vaguely threatening way, suggestive perhaps of waywardness. This seeming rootlessness, combined with Cain's longevity and Ishmael's visibility, is typical of what many Gentile observers would have seen of Jewish communities in their midst. In fact, the three traits came to be personified in a medieval mythic figure, not scriptural, but stationed in the Christian imagination along the Via Dolorosa, and notoriously Jewish;⁵⁵ a closer look at this

54. At the same time, part of the Jew's "strict exclusiveness" which distinguished him so fatally from surrounding Christians consisted in his having "a national ideal," for "he regarded his present residence merely as a resting place in exile from the Holy Land" (Philipson 10).

figure will illuminate the challenges to Jewish settlement in the

55. Maccoby notes that the Wandering Jew actually began life in the thirteenth century as a Roman called Cartaphilus who

struck Jesus, on his way to his Crucifixion, and told him to hurry; Jesus answered, "I go, and you will wait for me until I return." By these words Jesus conferred on Cartaphilus the curse of immortality,

but not of ceaseless wandering. That addition developed in the fourteenth century when Cartaphilus became the Jew Johannes Buttadeus. Most of the sources for the Wandering Jew here studied call him by his seventeenth-century name, Ahasuerus (Maccoby 237).

The racial shift from Gentile to Jew meant a new interpretation of the extra-biblical event, for

as soon as the sinner became not a Roman but a Jew, the significance and seriousness of the story were transformed. The crime became a symbol of the deicide of which the whole Jewish people was held to be guilty. (Maccoby 241)

For a more detailed account of the Wandering Jew's history, see Rosenberg 190-93.

period's Christian Western Europe.

The Wandering Jew

Two manuscripts of the *Northern Passion* make brief mention of the Wandering Jew. The version of the passage in MS British Museum Additional 31,042 details his crime and the punishment Jesus devises for it:

3it lyues a mane -- it es ferlike --
 that Ihesu saughe bothe dede & qwike;
 Iohn putte dieu was his name;
 he did his lorde Mekill schame:
 he putt Ihesu with his hande
 & saide, "traytoure, ga forthe -- here sall pou not
 stande,"
 & Ihesu torned hym pane agayne
 & bad: "stand pou still in snawe and rayne,
 & in opir wedirs calde and harde,
 Till þat I come ogayne warde." (NP 1.174,176.1520 a-j)

The version in MS Rawlinson C 655 is more concerned with the Wandering Jew's credentials as an authority on Jesus' final hours:

3it liues a man, & þat is ferliche,
 Þat saw Ihesu bop dede & qwiked;
 His name is Ion potedeu;
 Wan god was ded, sore gan him rew;
 He saw wit ei3e & wip þo3t
 How Ihesu was to dede bro3t;
 He saiep wip his moupe & spekes --
 Euerich godman þer of recches --
 He saw þe crois hole & sonde,
 How it was laide on þe grond. (NP 2.142.1598 a-j)

The witness here described is especially compelling because he antagonized Jesus in his own time, considering him an impostor and calling him a "traytoure." He soon realized his mistake as the curse began to operate, and although he repented, he knew it was too late; "wan god was ded sore gan him rew," and he determined to share his hard-won knowledge with people of later times who would not have the chance to see Jesus. "By telling his story wherever he goes," says Maccoby of the Wandering Jew in his role as soothsayer, "he witnesses to the truth of Christianity, having been an eye-witness of the Crucifixion and personally assured by Christ of the Second Coming" (250).

Although Maccoby's essay chiefly deals with that variety of Wandering Jew who "has long ago repented of his sin, and become a converted Christian," he also acknowledges the recalcitrant

Wandering Jew, whose "sufferings . . . are seen merely as just punishment for his depravity. He is not a convert to Christianity, but an unregenerate Jew" (250; 252).⁵⁶ Roth cites this more callous manifestation of "an almost universal mediaeval legend" as an example of what many contemporary Christians considered the obdurate negation of reason whereby the Jews denied Jesus:

No person, assuredly, could have had more convincing proof than this eye-witness of the Messiahship and Divinity of Jesus. But, notwithstanding this fact, the Wandering Jew remains eternally a Jew. He does not profess repentance. He is dressed in characteristic Jewish garb; and he never accepts Baptism. ("Medieval Conception" 301)

The various avatars of the Wandering Jew do not all share a common response to Jesus and the mystical power with which, undeniably, he binds his Jewish antagonist to earthly immortality. Yet they do all represent their people of origin, and their symbolic value as a corporate personification of Diaspora Jewry makes it possible to treat the Wandering Jew as a single entity, the centre of a moral tale whose expressions may be many, but whose essence is one.

56. See also Trachtenberg 17.

European Expulsions

Historical circumstances helped foster, if not create, this character and his attributes, as Isaac-Edersheim suggests as he explains the parallel of mythic individual to race in part on the basis of their comparable sins and penalties:

The most widespread interpretation is that Ahasver is a symbol of the Jewish people, who have sinned against Christ and who since then wander about, scattered among nations, and cannot die. . . .

Without doubt, some have projected many features of the Jewish people onto the Wandering Jew. They have sought an explanation for this wandering, eternal people and have been content to have it in the just punishment and atonement for the crime committed against Christ. They have been satisfied with this testimony for Christianity which simultaneously triumphed over Judaism. (196-97)

Newall makes the link between history and myth more explicit by alluding to specific persecutions endured by medieval Jews:

The legend of the Wandering Jew, one of the most extensive and pervasive migratory legends, seems to

have first appeared during the thirteenth century, when mass expulsions of Jews from Western Europe were in progress. (98)

She has already posited the link between the Jews' rejection of Jesus and the Wandering Jew's curse, observing that his story

appears to be a folk narrative explanation of the Diaspora, arising from a misunderstanding of its historical and geographical significance. . . .

Traditionally it is said that the Dispersion of the Jews was the result of a curse, a divine punishment for the murder of Christ, an attitude encouraged by Christian theology, which has tended to teach the dating of the Diaspora from AD 70, the year when Titus captured Jerusalem and destroyed the second temple. (97)

Felsenstein shows how the periodic displacement of medieval Jews from the Christian states where they had settled revived and amplified the fate of a much earlier exile, and, in making this connection, helps elucidate the stigma of the Jews' itinerant lifestyle, a stigma whose libelous force is hardly diminished but rather enhanced by the fact that their wandering was not voluntary but enforced. His identification of the intermediary

event that binds the scriptural and medieval exiles explains the punitive nature of wandering:

Christian typologists descried no obstacle in forging parallels between Abel's treatment at the hand of Cain and the treatment of Christ by the Jews. Cain's subsequent punishment of eternal wandering could be transposed and deemed to be the fate of the Jews in general. During the Middle Ages, this accumulation of episodic biblical details had solidified into an accepted myth that was given further credence by the actual expulsion of the Jews out of many European countries, including England, from the thirteenth century on. (59)

Isaac-Edersheim, Anderson, Maccoby, Newall, and Hurwitz all concur in citing Cain specifically as a type of the Wandering Jew ("Mythic Image" 200; *Wandering Jew* 3; "Sacred Executioner" 241; "Witch Figure" 103-4; "Eternal Wanderer" 218-19). Numerous others discuss the allegedly punitive character of the wanderings of actual Jews in the Middle Ages. Maccoby remarks that an integral part of their punishment is its limitless duration:

The Wandering Jew . . . symbolizes the Jewish people as a whole, and his wanderings are nothing less than the

weary exile of the Jews The prolonged life of the Wandering Jew symbolizes also the miraculous survival of the Jews, ascribed by Christians not to the strength of Jewish identity and culture, but to the desire of God to prolong their agony until the time of the millennium. (250-51)⁵⁷

Paula Fredriksen and Rosemary Radford Ruether likewise note the indefinite extent -- "until the end of time" -- of the Jews' obligatory travels ("Divine Justice" 49-50; "Church Fathers" 183, 187). Fredriksen approaches this point by way of Cain: like Cain, medieval European Jews fear death at strangers' hands, but, again like Cain, are spared that particular form of violence that they might serve in full their endless term of wandering.⁵⁸

57. See also Fisch 24: ". . . the power of survival possessed by the Jew is seen not as a testimony to his own fortitude and spiritual integrity, but as a testimony to Christian truth."

58. See also Mellinkoff's paraphrase of a passage from Augustine's "Contra Faustum": "Cain was not punished with bodily death, so too the preservation of the Jews will be proof to believing Christians of the merited subjection of the Jews" (17).

Also see Synan's paraphrase of Pope Innocent III's 1207 letter to the Count of Nevers, in which he suggests that,

Inhospitable Christians did in fact kill many Jews, but the Jewish people remained; such was their immortality: to wander the earth like the Wandering Jew and linger in what Peter the Venerable, as paraphrased in Little, considered a well-deserved "life worse than death" (291).⁵⁹

Here, however, it must be recalled that the Wandering Jew was not inspired by one errant Ur-Jew alone. An essential

like the fugitive Cain, who bore a sign imposed upon him by the Lord -- a tremor of his head -- which served at once to mark his guilt and to protect him against merely human vengeance, so the Jews, dispersed over the earth[,] bear an appearance of ignominy which must protect them in their wanderings. They are not to be killed, for their role is to remind Christians of the divine law; but the princes, far from assisting the Jews to oppress Christians, ought to enforce their servitude, the just lot of men who laid violent hands on the Messiah who had come to bring them liberty.

(96)

59. See also Mellinkoff's quotation from this passage of Peter (in a letter to Louis VII of France in 1146), 18, and Bestul's paraphrase of the same source, 77.

correlative of his immortality is what might be called his accessibility, and this trait he inherited from Ishmael. The Wandering Jew and the race he represents must be *observably* immortal, *observably* enduring an unrelenting curse, and Ishmael, who lives "in the presence of all his brethren," fulfills this requirement (Gen.16.12). With respect to the actual Jews so often banished from their homes and otherwise persecuted, he sets another crucial precedent as well: he is innocent. Medieval Jews were blamed for crimes they did not commit: host profanation, deadly blood-letting, and ritual murders, as well as Jesus' own death. Ishmael, too, is condemned in the absence of crime: he is banished from his father's house. Generations later, the same would be true of the Jews in general.

The Doctrine of Witness

The theory that God had mandated Jewish immortality in order to ensure that there would always be someone to suffer the blame for Jesus' death had a theological warrant and correlative.⁶⁰ In *De civitate dei*, Augustine argued that the Jews must not be punished with death because, in their weakened and vulnerable

60. See Maccoby 244, 246, and 251 for a modern exploration of this ancient theory.

state, they testified to Jesus despite themselves.⁶¹ In "The Jews as the Killers of Christ in the Latin Tradition, from Augustine to the Friars," Jeremy Cohen explains the paradox thus:

According to the Bishop of Hippo, God had ordained the survival of the Jews and of Judaism in dispersion and captivity, because the Jews of Jesus' day and their descendants maintained in good faith the life of the Old Testament and thereby bore living witness to the biblical heritage of the Church. In other words, the Jews faithfully preserved the books which established the truth of Christianity, even though they themselves remained blind to their meaning. (22)

Simon is more specific regarding the visual aspect of the Jews' lot; they had to be seen to suffer, lest the message be lost:

Christian apologetic demanded that the Jews and Judaism should continue to exist. They were witnesses.

61. For more on Augustine's "Doctrine of Witness," see also Fredriksen 49; Bestul 77-78; Jeremy Cohen in *The Friars and the Jews* 14, 20-21; and Synan 98. For an additional Christian purpose served by the Jews' survival, see Anderson 17-18.

But it demanded that they should exist in misery, that they should enjoy a precarious status, a diminished existence that would mark them out as the people who were once chosen, but now condemned. (159)

Ideas such as these about the Jews' proper place in a Christian land, and inevitable conversion at the end of days, left their mark on contemporary English literature. Sometimes they inform straightforward dogmatic declarations, as in one lengthy passage in the *Southern Passion* that details the signs that will herald the Second Coming. Jesus' speech to his disciples is based on Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21; the explication that follows is based on the later theology studied here:

"ffor ich segge 3ow to soþe þat þis kynde þat now is
Ne shal neuere passy away ffor-to hit beo ydo al þis,
ffor heuene and eorþe passi shulleþ, and as ffor-olded
beo,

Ak þe wordes þat ich speke ne shulleþ neuere passy
ffram me,

þat me ne shal in dede, ri3t as ich ham sede, yseo.

Ak heuene and eorþe boþe shulleþ ymeoued beo,

And atte wordles ende beo ychaunged atte laste,⁶²

62. I have emended "As," 1.469, to "And."

Ak þe wordes þat ich speke shulleþ euere by-leue
ffaste."

þe kynde as þe gospel seyþ ne shal nouȝt away wende,
þat is þe kynde of gywes þat leue shal ffor-to þe laste
ende.

Hit shal byleue ffor-to domesday and þanne chaunge hare
lawe,

And þanne hi shulleþ to cristendom alle clanliche
drawe;

And ffor þis word of þe gospel þis heye men þat beoþ
Letep ham lybbe among vs, as 3e now yseop. (17.463-76)

The poet expounds the scripture according to the doctrine that a remnant of the Jews will finally be saved. He translates as "kynde" what Matthew, Mark and Luke call a "generation" when he renders the passage: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21.32; see also Matthew 24.34 and Mark 13.30). Only when those remnant Jews "chaunge hare lawe" will Christians know that judgement is nigh. Until then, as the poet appears to intimate through implied contrast to the "clanliche" manner in which the Jews will convert at last, they continue unholy and unclean -- intransigent too, as they refuse to turn to Jesus until the very "laste ende."

For the most part, Middle English writers do not allude so

directly to this diasporic limbo in which the Jews, unsettled and scattered throughout Europe, wandered in a hopeless quest for peace, intermittently living in the midst of this or that Christian majority, manifestly, from the Christian perspective, the victims of godly wrath. More often, Middle English authors describe the origin of the lot of contemporary Jews, implicitly suggesting that there is no difference between the Jews of Jesus' day -- such, at least, as contributed to the Crucifixion -- and the medieval Jews who suffer the consequences of that ancient crime. Many Middle English Crucifixion pieces refer to two legends -- once separate, later combined⁶³ -- which shed much light on medieval Christian belief in continued Jewish guilt for Jesus' death. These legends highlight three presumptions upon which this Christian blaming of Jews depends: Jesus' immanence in the pre-gospel world; the existence -- and identification -- of proto-Christians before Jesus, and Ur-Jews before Jacob; and the essential link between God's favour and control of sacred sites.

Seth and the Seeds of the Cross

The first of these legends deals with Seth's journey to the

63. Ernest G. Mardon gives a brief history of these two legends and how they came to be joined, 81-85.

Garden of Eden to plead with God on the ailing Adam's behalf for the mercy he promised when he banished Adam and Eve to the wilderness. The Archangel Michael, who is guarding the Garden, gives Seth three seeds from the Tree of Knowledge, explaining that from them mercy will one day come; here we see the second legend, that of the Cross. When Adam dies, Seth buries the seeds with him, and eventually they grow into three miraculous wands later found by Moses as he leads the twelve tribes of Israel through the desert. They later pass to David, who plants them and fosters their growth into a new tree, soon to be cut down, in Solomon's day, during the construction of the Temple. Perceiving its power, the Jews remove it from the Temple and consign it instead to lowly places, where later Jews, Jesus' enemies, find it and deem it suitable for Jesus' cross. Such is a standard Cross history as incorporated into many medieval Crucifixion tales.

The theological impulse for the later Middle Ages' use of the Seth and Cross legends is the theory that the Jews had never been specially chosen by God, that their leaders had no more been Jews than Adam and Eve, and that Christianity, in any case, anteceded Judaism. Ruether summarizes the thinking behind this theory:

The Patriarchs obeyed the universal natural Law from the heart. This was a Golden Age of Virtue. The

Patriarchs were not Jews, but like the Christians a universal race. Abraham was the father, not just of the Jews, but of "all nations." The universal, spiritual law of Christ is the restoration of this original spiritual religion of patriarchal mankind.
(185)

Trachtenberg observes a political motive behind the Church's portrayal of the patriarchs of Hebrew scripture as the earliest Christians rather than the earliest Jews:

The early Church established the Christian attitude toward the Jew by antedating "the rejection of the Jews and the emergence of the Church to the beginning of revealed history and by emphasizing the position of Abraham as the father of many nations, of whom only one, and that themselves, was chosen," so that the Jews at long last stood revealed as impostors and frauds, contumacious pretenders to an election that was never rightfully theirs. (162)⁶⁴

64. Trachtenberg does not provide a direct citation for the embedded quotation, but a note appended to the paragraph in question cites James Parkes' 1934 *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 97ff, 204.

Sure enough, the Abraham of *Cursor Mundi* is a proto-Christian:

Of Abraham now wol we drawe,
 Dat roote is of þe cristen lawe;
 I say þerfore he is þe roote
 For of hym sprong oure alper boote. (1.109.2315-18)

To prove that Abraham's Christianity does not derive simply from Jesus' inclusion among his distant descendants, the *Cursor Mundi* poet claims that he recognizes the three angelic visitors of Genesis 18.2 as the Trinity:

Toward him com childre þre
 In likenes of god in trinite,
 But as oon he honoured þo:
 As o god & no mo. (1.122.2707-10)

Abraham's prescience of later theology, while presuming somewhat beyond the contents of Genesis, is nonetheless in keeping with a medieval tradition that introduces the Trinity well before the patriarch's time. In the *Northern Passion*, even Seth is familiar with the concept. Knowing Seth's errand beforehand, Michael explains, before Seth has so much as spoken, that God will ultimately send his mercy to humans in the person of "his

son/Crist," who

"ffor mans synnes þan sall . . . dy,
 And so fra bale he sall þam by;
 Grauen he sall be in a stede,
 And ryse þe thred day right fra dede,
 And lyfe o-gayn in lym and lyth."
 (100.1939-40; 1941-45)

Adam, on sending Seth to the Garden, could not say what form God's mercy would take, yet Michael seems to assume that Seth knows who Jesus is, or at least that he will swiftly, easily, and almost incuriously accept the wonders that Michael is about to reveal. He grants Seth a vision of Jesus, "a litell child" atop the Tree of Knowledge, and expounds its prophetic significance:

"þe child þat þou saw in þe tre,
 þe son of God for-soth es he;
 His schewing here, noght els it ment
 Bot þat he sall to erth be sent.
 He sall for-do þi fader syn,
 And vn-to welth o-gayn him wyn;
 He es þe oyle of mercy ryght
 þe whilk was to þi fader hight . . ."
 (102.2008; 2027-34)

Finally, Michael takes "kyrnels pre/pat war tane of pat same tre/Of þe whilk our bale bi-gan," gives them to Seth, and instructs him to bury them with Adam, adding that "þa be-taken þe Trinite" (103.2041-43; 2056). At no point during these revelations does Seth express the least surprise; nor, beyond specifying which seed signifies which member of the Trinity, does Michael elaborate on the mysteries he has divulged.

Thus the *Northern Passion* places Jesus in the Garden of Eden, and traces the roots of his Cross to the same holy site, long before the advent of Jews. Since the expulsion from the Garden took place before Cain's birth, it has known neither Jew nor Ur-Jew; it is, in the poet's view, exclusively Christian territory. Yet in his judgement of Cain, God harks back to his earlier judgement of Adam and Eve, for "Adam, as a result of his crime, is thrust out from his true Home. The ground (as for Cain) becomes cursed for him" (Maccoby 242). Perhaps it is because Cain has only ever known a cursed earth that he seems so little moved by God's cursing it again. Adam and Eve, however, unlike Cain, according to such authorities as Augustine and Peter Abelard, are included in Jesus' salvation, for it is only those "who were guilty of crimes in addition to the sin of Adam that corrupts all men [who] were left to the tortures of the lower region" (Turner 175; see also 177, 179).

That Adam and Eve were presumed redeemed bespeaks the status of pre-gospel biblical figures among medieval Christians finding

Christian theology implicit in Hebrew scripture, the heroes of which could be taken for "Jewish 'Christians' before Christ" (Turner 182; see also 180-81, 189). Moses, for example, whose understanding of the Trinity, in the Middle English sources at least, obviates the need for any explication, is, like Abraham, presented as decidedly proto-Christian,⁶⁵ a characterization due partly, perhaps, to Paul's claim on Moses' behalf to explicit faith in Jesus (Hebrews 11.26). The medieval Moses is the next character after Seth to encounter the seeds from the Tree of Knowledge after they have been planted in Adam's grave; by Moses' time they have grown into "thre wandes," which, when Moses finds them, he wastes little time in identifying, not simply as "þe Trinite," nor even, somewhat more specifically, as "persones þre/And o godhede in vnite," but as the "fæder & sune & þone

65. Mardon cites Moses' recognition of the nascent Cross as an example of "a distinct kind of anachronism" which "permits the [*Cursor Mundi*] poet to refer to Christ in Old Testament contexts": "Moses, in keeping with the Medieval habit of making all history, in a sense, contemporary, knows all about the Trinity" (26, 99).

Mardon also notes the role of the Cross in *Cursor Mundi*'s histories of other figures from Hebrew scripture, including Adam and Abel (175).

hal3a gast" (NP 105.2126, 106.2162; CM 1.242.6341-42; *Holy Rood-tree* 2.17-18).⁶⁶ In the *Northern Passion*, the virtue of the rods is so evident that even those led by Moses -- most of them, as the event would show, Jews as opposed to that group here described as proto-Christians -- recognize and appreciate their holiness:

pa wandes þan thoght he for to take
 Wirschip to þam for to make,
 And fra þe erth when he drogh þam out,
 So noble smell was þam o-bout,
 And so gud sauore gan þai fele,
 þat his men wend wonder wele
 þat þai had bene comen ryght
 To þe land of Hest þat þam was hight.
 All his folk þai war full fayne,
 And loued god with myght and mayne. (106.2165-74)

Their faith, however, proves transient: throughout their desert journey toward the Promised Land, they complain repeatedly of the

66. *History of the Holy Rood-tree*, twelfth century; from the same late twelfth-century manuscript as *Twelfth Century Homilies*: Bodley 343.

lack of food and water, despite God's providence;⁶⁷ finally, in the Book of Numbers, within sight of the home God has chosen for them, they round off their doubts regarding his power by despairing of their chances of overpowering its current residents (13-14.10), whereupon God disencumbers the Israelites of such hardened sceptics by postponing the entry into the Promised Land until they are dead:

Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,
 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein . . .
 But your little ones . . . them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.
 But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.
 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be

67. In order to belabour the Jews' seeming insensibility to God's wonders, some Middle English poems replace the staff with which Moses coaxes water out of the rock with the three wands.

wasted in the wilderness. (Numbers 14.29-33)

In contrast to these biblical Jews whom God excludes from the Holy Land, the Middle English Moses is granted charge of a holy symbol of the Garden of Eden, also a sacred site, and of Jesus, who will hang from the Cross the rods will become. Although Moses himself is also excluded from the Promised Land, in Middle English literature as in the Bible, he enjoys the proto-Christian's privilege of controlling sacred space, if only metonymically.

David, who in *Cursor Mundi* and the *History of the Holy Rood-tree* is led to the three wands by God -- receiving them from Moses personally in the *History of the Holy Rood-tree* (4-14) -- becomes their new steward.⁶⁸ Although David does not share Moses' seemingly innate familiarity with the rods' specific significance, having to ask his heavenly guide in the *History of the Holy Rood-tree* to explain "hwæt heo bitacniæn," the mere

68. According to the *History of the Holy Rood-tree*, the exchange takes place in Thabor (4.33; also 37, note to 4.33); *Cursor Mundi* has David retrieve the rods from the unnamed site "where moyses hym doluen wase," 1.297.7998.

On his way home, David meets a variety of strangers who know all about the rods. See *Holy Rood-tree* 16-20 and *CM* 1.299-303.

mention of the Trinity seems to spark instant recognition:

"Dauid, heo tacniap þa hal3an ðrynnesse. . . . Ða ðe dauid þat ihyrde, Ða wearð he mucel iblissod" (16.11, 12, 14). David brings the rods home with him and plants them; within one year they merge into a single tree, and continue to grow for the next thirty years (*History* 22.5-11; *CM* 1.305.8249).⁶⁹ For nurturing the future Cross and respecting the space rendered sacred by its presence, and thus honouring the Trinity to whose name he showed such devotion, David joins Seth, Abraham, and Moses as a proto-Christian.

Michelson is thinking of such scriptural figures as these when he remarks of medieval English writing:

The Jew of the Old Testament is dealt with in a way entirely different from the one in which his lineal descendant the Jew of the New Testament is treated, or his later offspring the Jew of the diaspora, both uncouth aliens in the realm of literature down to modern times. (14)⁷⁰

69. For the tree's growth, see *Holy Rood-tree* 22.5-11; *CM* 1.305.8249.

The rods actually choose their own place: *Holy Rood-tree* 20.22-22.5; *CM* 1.304-5.8199-8240.

70. Michelson is talking specifically about Anglo-Saxon

In fact, he names most of them, as well as Seth's parents, regarded by tradition, as we have seen, as among those saved, when he cites the legend of Jesus' Harrowing of Hell as a further indication of the privileges and status accorded Jews of Hebrew scripture but not of the Gospels:

Adam and Eve, Abraham, David and Moses are saved and have become Christians to all intents and purposes, curious instances of conversion, a thing the Christians have ever strenuously striven after. The theme remained a much favoured one for quite a long time and logically follows from the fact that the Old Testament Jews have not only been praised, but even sainted and it would not do to leave such precious souls unsaved and in the power of Satan. (51)

The claims to Christianity that Middle English authors make on these characters' behalf involve parallel claims to sacred space. Adam and Eve were the only humans to inhabit the world's first sacred space, the Garden of Eden, and although they suffered

literature, but as the quotation itself indicates, his comments are true of later medieval English literature as well.

exile into the uncultivated territory without, three seeds from the Tree of Knowledge are buried in Adam's grave as a sign that salvation will yet spring from the same first humans who rendered it necessary. Moses' experience is somewhat similar to Adam and Eve's: his stewardship of the three wands imbues him with something of the Garden's sanctity, and his leadership of the Israelites on their trek to the Holy Land associates him with the bounty God has prepared for his people, but which Moses himself will not live to enjoy. David secures the holy rods in a place where they ultimately grow into the rood-tree, under whose boughs, in fact, David conceives the idea of building a temple to God (CM 1.306-7.8267-87), another sacred space destined to shelter the tree for a period that varies with the source.

As for Abraham, although he never possesses the wands, he also represents, and to a certain extent controls, sacred space, but not in a fostering role; he defines sacred space, however reluctantly, by expelling Ishmael from its bounds. God endows Abraham's household with a kind of sanctity when he chooses him as a patriarch; when he further chooses his younger son Isaac, and dismisses the elder son Ishmael's claim, he delimits that sanctity, and Ishmael's consequent banishment amounts to exile from sacred space -- not the exile of Adam and Eve, for whom there is hope, but rather that of Cain, for whom there is no prospect of return. For Middle English authors, Isaac, like his father, is a proto-Christian, an eventual inheritor of sacred

space; Ishmael is a wandering Ur-Jew whose exclusion from Abraham's house and legacy foreshadows medieval Jewry's exclusion from the land of its ancestors, also a holy site.

The Tree of the Cross

After David's death, the rood-tree's physical integrity begins to diminish. According to *Cursor Mundi*, it appears to wither and fade in the days of the construction of Solomon's Temple:

Whil he was tymberyng to þat þing,
 Þat while þe tre bigon to clyng;
 Þe tre þat I bifore of tolde
 Þo bigon to waxen olde;
 Vche man seide þat hit se3e
 Þat hit for elde bigon to de3e. (1.322.8763-68)

Possibly because of its impending death, though still with reluctance, Solomon allows his carpenters to fell the tree for use in the Temple (CM 1.323.8803-6).⁷¹ It proves unsuitable for

71. See also *Holy Rood-tree* 22.28-24.20, where he soon regrets his decision concerning a tree for which he feels "mucel e3e & lufe"; for the full story, see *Holy Rood-tree* 22.16-24.26; CM 1.322-24.8771-8829; NP 111-12.2357-2404.

building purposes, but is placed instead "in worshepe & in pees/In þat holy temple grip" (1.324.8828-29); in the *Northern Passion*, Solomon shows his proto-Christian instincts by instituting an official and obligatory period of worship for the tree:

þe haly tre on þis manere
 Lay in þe temple many a yhere
 Twa pilers of þe kyrk bitwene;
 þe kyng gert kepe it þare full clene,
 And made custom in þat contre,
 And bad þat ilk a man suld be
 In þat stede anes in ilk a yhere,
 And ilkane on þair best manere
 þat haly tre for to honoure,
 þat sythen bare our sauyoure. (112.2405-14)

Nevertheless, the tree falls victim to those who refuse, or otherwise fail, to read God's signs aright, and thus also, and even more perversely, refuse his providence. The *Northern Passion*, *Cursor Mundi* and *History of the Holy Rood-tree*, the last at considerable length, all tell the story of Maximilla, who involuntarily prophesies of Jesus on encountering the tree as it

lies in the Temple.⁷² The *Northern Passion* declares of her ensuing martyrdom that "scho was þe first þat sufferd shame/ffor þe neuenyng of Ihesu name" (113.2441-42); it is not clear whether *Cursor Mundi*'s corresponding statement says the same, or simply that she was the first female martyr: "Þis womman was þe first men knew/Martired for loue of crist ihesew" (1.327.8923-24). However, in both poems, the Jews unmistakably recognize Jesus' name, and already regard him as a rival to the God of their scripture: in *Cursor Mundi* they accuse Maximilla of blasphemy, for "þat nome to here hem was loop" (1.327.8911-14, 8922); in the *Northern Passion*, they protest: "Scho sklaunders our godes euen,/ffor a new god we here hir neuen"; that they know this particular god and do not simply confuse him with some idol is apparent in their already having developed a "custom" for dealing with those who "neuend þat name Ihesu" (113.2435-36, 2443-44). The poet's counter-charge of blasphemy in the form of idolatry is implicit in his reference to the plural "godes þat in þe Iewry ware" (113.2458, 2435).

These literary Jews do not stop at putting Jesus' human harbinger to death; in *Cursor Mundi* and the *Northern Passion* they violate the sacred space of the Temple and the tree, and, despite

72. For Maximilla's story, see NP 112-13.2419-46; CM 1.326-27.8889-8924; *Holy Rood-tree* 26.11-30.22.

Cursor Mundi's own claims, as well as those of the *History of the Holy Rood-tree*, that "pat hali3 treow innan þam tempel læ3 aa [sic] oð þeo tid com þe ure drihten þrowian wolde" (*Holy Rood-tree* 24.24-26; *CM* 1.325.8867-70), they remove the tree from its place of honour and consign it instead to lowly places, first in a pit, then over a stream as a bridge. Their attitude toward sacred space is the opposite of David's: they try to degrade the holy tree by reducing it to mundane surroundings conducive to wear and decay. To begin with, as the *Northern Passion* tells us, "In-to a dyke þai gan it kast" -- or, even less respectfully, as *Cursor Mundi* has it, "slong" -- "so to be wasted at þe last" (*NP* 114.2463-64; *CM* 1.327.8930); when the discarded tree displays miraculous healing powers,

Out of þe water þai gan it ta
 And ordaind it to be a bryg
 Ouer ane-other bek to lyg,
 ffor so þai trowed at mens fete
 And bestes þat went bi þe strete
 Suld com and ga all ouer þat tre,
 So þat it suld wasted be. (*NP* 114.2488-94)

Again *Cursor Mundi*'s Jews seem even more irreverent, speculating that the "vertu" might derive from "olyue wipynne þis tre," and specifically predicting that "synful mennes feet" will wear it

away (1.328.8949-51).

Middle English poets must have wondered about their own Jews' motivation in trying to suppress the potency of an object so obviously miraculous as the tree. It makes no sense simply to state, as the *Northern Passion* does, that "gret despyte in hert þam thoght/þat wonders thurgh it war wroght" (114.2495-96). How could the Jews have misinterpreted -- especially to such a fatal extent -- the heavenly sign of Jesus' incarnation, Crucifixion, and salvation of humankind? Medieval Christian writers seem to have been satisfied with the answer provided by contemporary Christian belief regarding Jewish lack of reason. Roth questions

the amazing mentality which contemporary literature, records, and chronicles appear to ascribe to the Jew. Close examination shows that according to these sources he does not seem either to think or to act like other human beings. His behaviour in matters of the utmost significance is completely irrational. He is proof, apparently, not only against logic and argument, but even against ocular demonstration. ("Medieval Conception" 298)

As noted in Chapter One, with reference to this same article, many Christians concluded from their mistaken ideas about Jews that they were subhuman. Also noted was the fact that many

turned to this ill-conceived belief for justification for cruel treatment of Jews; "they could hardly be considered human beings," it was claimed, "and human sentiments were out of place where they were concerned" ("Medieval Conception" 308). This attitude derived from the suspicion that Jewish disbelief in Jesus was a matter of choice; it violated the Augustinian principle of more or less humane acceptance of the Jews as genuinely ignorant of Jesus' true nature. But then "the principle that Jews and Judaism existed legitimately in Europe was never fully accepted in Christendom at large" (Langmuir, "Medieval Anti-Semitism" 29); Augustine's "Doctrine of Witness," which held that Jews, as witnesses, however unwitting, to the truth of scripture (as interpreted by Christians) deserved a safe place in Christian society, was subject to challenges, especially in the later centuries of the Middle Ages.

Jeremy Cohen writes that, in the twelfth century,

theologians began to reflect upon the substance of post-biblical Judaism, airing doubts as to the sincerity of its identification with the religion of the Hebrew Bible -- an equivalence which according to Augustinian teaching justified the very presence of Jews in Christendom. ("Jews as the Killers of Christ" 23)

He goes on to say that the following century, which saw the rise of the orders of friars, saw also their contention that

the Jewish leaders of the first century had indeed recognized Jesus as the messiah promised them by the prophets of the Old Testament. As they themselves understood, the Mosaic religion could no longer be maintained with honest intentions; either they had to accept Christianity, or they had to fabricate a qualitatively new religious system, removed from the biblical covenant. Concerned above all with their own power and stature, they chose the second alternative and maliciously engineered the murder of their real savior. (24)⁷³

73. Finally, Cohen tells us in *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Semitism*,

by the early fourteenth century . . . friars openly advocated that Latin Christendom rid itself of its Jewish population, whether through missionizing, forced expulsions, or physical harassment that would induce conversion or flight,

a "theological posture" that matched "contemporary political events, inasmuch as King Edward I of England ordered the first

Belief in Jesus as Christ on the part of his accusers could only make the crime of his death more egregious; corresponding belief on the part of medieval European Jews would eliminate their right, established by Augustine, to lead peaceful lives among Christians. Wherever this belief in Jesus' godhead was suspected of Jews, their vilification increased, for their rejection of Christianity under such circumstances amounted to a deliberate spurning of God, and "individuals whose whole life was a perpetual conflict against Jesus and his followers were capable of any crime, imaginable or unimaginable" (Roth, "Medieval Conception" 308). There was thus no wondering why Jews behaved in the nonsensical manner attributed to them in Middle English accounts of the Crucifixion. Anyone adopting the inexplicable stance of God's enemy must perforce behave in inexplicable ways.

To refute any Jewish protestations of adherence to the so-called Old Law, and denials of Jesus' Messiahship, Christians could turn to the Wandering Jew to prove that the rest of his race had ample reason to believe that Jesus was God:

The Jews . . . had actually witnessed the events attendant upon the Passion of Christ, and if they perversely denied what their own eyes had beheld, at least one of the eyewitnesses had been providentially

permanent expulsion of Jews from a medieval European kingdom in 1290" (14).

preserved to give them the lie direct with his living testimony of the correctness of the Christian tradition, and of the truth and power of the word of Christ. (Trachtenberg 15; see also Isaac-Edersheim 205)

The Wandering Jew's fate would soon be shared by the entire Jewish nation, and his symbolic relationship to the Jews of the medieval European Diaspora thus assured within the first century of the Common Era, for, as the *Southern Passion* relates, Rome conquered Judaea mere decades after Jesus' death. Jesus' speech in the Middle English poem is based on Luke 19.41-44; the poet's comment at the end gives the standard medieval Christian interpretation of the gospel warning:

As Ihesus him aprochede to Ierusalem ney,
 Vp þe toun he gan to wepe þo he hit ysey,
 And sede: "3if þat þou wýstest þou wost wepe also" --
 As who seyþ: "3if þou wýstest þe wo þat comeþ þe to,
 And þulke þing in þine daye þat to pes þe is" --
 "Now is hit ffaste yhud ffram þine eyen ywis,
 ffor þer shulleþ 3ut dayes come þat shulleþ by-sette þe
 ffaste,
 And þer ne shal nou3t a ston vp a ston by-leue atte
 laste.

And in eche half in anguisse þe shulle bringe swiþe
 ffaste,
 Þe and þine children and alle ri3t to grounde caste,
 ffor þou noldest nou3t þe tyme yknowe of þi sauynge" --
 As who seyb: "me shal þer-ffore þe to grounde brynge."
 By tytus and Vaspasyanus oure lord al þis sede
 Þat al to nou3t ham supþe brou3te ffor hare luper dede.
 (4.91-104)

Jerusalem

In the early decades of the next century the Jews would be expelled from Jerusalem by the Romans; after the Roman empire officially adopted Christianity, the new religion gained control of the city. Ora Limor provides the dates in "Christian Sacred Space and the Jew": "From the time of the suppression of the Bar-Kochba revolt (135) . . . the Jews were not allowed to live in Jerusalem" (62);⁷⁴ later, "in the fourth century, the

74. On the conquest of Jerusalem by "Tytus and Vaspasianus," see the *Southern Passion*: "Hare lond hi toke opere men and hare ffrut þer wiþoute/ffor þer ne moste neuereft no gyw wonye þer aboute" (12.318-20). See also the *South English Ministry and Passion* 135.1427-28.

Christians became the rulers of the Holy Land. Now they had in their possession the Promised Land, which was also, like the text of the Bible, a Jewish inheritance" (56). The Christian appropriation of Jewish religious heritage is a central theme of Middle English Crucifixion literature, but the Holy Land itself, and particularly its holy capital, may have proven to be a more difficult conquest than originally hoped, as Limor proceeds to remark: "The absence of the Jews from the city . . . did not negate their special status with it"; more precisely, "the country may have been in the hands of the Christians, but the knowledge of it was the inheritance of the Jews" (62; 76). Nevertheless, Middle English writers do not acknowledge the Holy Land's Jewish character outright. Sometimes, however, they describe the land in terms of cursed deeds Jews have done in it, or to it, thus suggesting that their irreverent presence has compromised Jerusalem's integrity.

If its new Christian tenants found Jerusalem mysterious, somehow inaccessible despite their political and physical possession of it, it was -- as some writers obliquely claimed -- because echoes of the cabalistic Jews remained. The *Cursor Mundi* poet alludes to the mystery of the whereabouts of the Cross following the Crucifixion as an example of clandestine Jewish activity, implying that in hiding the Cross the Jews took unlawful advantage of their -- in the Middle English poet's eyes -- purely *de facto* occupation of the city to thwart the

Christians, who in time would emerge as its rightful owners. He begins by stating that Joseph of Arimathea, who buried Jesus, wanted to secure the Cross as well:

Ioseph wolde haue had þe rode;
 þe iewis hit him forbed.
 Þat selue ny3t þei hit dude
 away for to be led
 Wip þo þeoues croyses two
 whenne men were in bed;
 Þei buryed hem fro cristen men
 in a priue sted;
 Þerfore þei hadde þe malisoun
 of him þat þeronne bled. (3.131.16,913-922)

The injustice of the Jews' having "forbed" the Cross so treasured by Jesus' followers is particularly evident in their furtive movements: they waited till "ny3t . . . whenne men were in bed," deliberately scheming to conceal the Cross "fro cristen men," those for whom it was meant. For this underhand deed if for nothing else, they have earned Jesus' own "malisoun."

In her analysis of the Christian legend of St. Helena's finding of the Cross during her son Constantine's reign⁷⁵ -- a
 75. For Helena's "Invention," see Limor 58-63.

victory won through the intimidation and torture of a knowing Jew -- Limor points out that, without Jewish assistance (no matter how brutally extracted), Christians would never have discovered this particular lot of Jerusalem's holy ground:

What emerges from the legend is the Christian acknowledgement that only the Jews knew the secrets of the place, whether above ground or below. They knew by virtue of their being Jewish, and their knowledge was ancient, congenital, non-acquired. (62)

And the Cross was only one of many signs alluded to in gospel scripture that the Gospels' own believers needed Jewish help to locate, even validate, for

the Jews were regarded as the authority not only with respect to the sites of the Old Testament, but also with respect to sites and relics of the New Testament -- that is to say, places and objects whose sanctity they themselves did not acknowledge. In other words, although they themselves did not accept the sanctity of the Christian tradition, they were nevertheless regarded as the ones who could identify them and confirm their authenticity. As the Christians saw it,

the Jews were the former owners of the land and of its sites, and although they had rightly been cast out of it, its keys remained in their hands and they alone retained the use of them. (Limor 57-58)

Still, just as what the Jews had done during their tenure of the Holy Land was regarded as wrong, so Jerusalem's continued Jewish attachments were deplored; "the Christians, who found they were dependent on the keys of knowledge held by the Jews, resented their dependence" (Limor 55). Jerusalem had been founded on God's word, but the Jews, from the Christian perspective, had never followed God's word. The supreme example of their lawlessness is the Crucifixion. The scene of this ultimate abjuration of God provides a further opportunity for Middle English Crucifixion writers to use Jewish interaction with the Holy Land as an indirect description of the traits that render them unworthy of their God-given home. The *Stanzaic Life of Christ*, for instance, in its list of five reasons why Jesus' death was "of sorow bitter" beyond any other (182.5406), cites as the fifth reason the fact that "his pyne was in vche place/from hede to hele, bihinde, bifore,/and alle his wittes he pynet was" (189.5610-12); proceeding to detail the pain of each sense, the poem cites smell as the third, and in this section gives a gruesome account of how Mount Calvary earned its name as a testament of Jewish criminality:

for on that mount of Caluarie
 wer men punyscht for hor syn,
 And stynkyng bodies mony by,
 And wiccut air that plas with-in,

ffor Caluarie is as mich to say
 As "balletship of hedes bar
 of men quen flesch is al away,"
 And sich wer mony lying thar

Of men gyrd of þe hede bifore,
 And lying þer al opunly;
 And therfore þat mount thur3e clerqus lore
 was callide mount of Caluary . . . (196.5805-16)

The very name of this appalling site indicts Jesus' killers: they have brought him to a place of deterioration, both physical and moral, where corpses -- unlike the Cross -- are not so much as buried. The disintegration of neglected human flesh, and, symbolically, of justice and, especially given his bodily presence, of regard for God and his laws, is palpable.⁷⁶ While

76. See Beckwith's description of "Calvary and its late medieval reproductions and imitations" as both "the very origin of sacrality" and "the place where divinity is systematically debased, humiliated and degraded," and of "the entrances to

Jesus' Jewish enemies insisted that the Romans preside over the actual execution, their importunate demands for Jesus' death, the more prominent and active role they were increasingly given in medieval versions of the event, and the fact that both versions of the *Northern Passion* confuse Calvary with Acheldemach all lend credence to the inference that many medieval Christians would have regarded Calvary as a site of Jewish rather than Roman rigour (*NP* original 21.801-4; *NP* extended version 80-81.1165-68). The grisly state of Calvary reflects the Jews' depravity, abandoned to the morality that Jesus taught. According to this view, Jerusalem was rescued from its own first inheritors when claimed by Christianity.

Nevertheless, Jewish influence remains, and its essential contribution to its younger rival faith makes it impossible to dismiss the Jews with a negative stereotype -- even if it does so in part by means of another, more positive stereotype:

On the one hand, the stubborn, obstinate, blind Jew who refuses to see the truth when revealed to him, the Christ-killer, the object of punishment and contempt.

Christ's body and the exits from it" as "both the most defiled and the most sacred aspects of the devotion to the cross and the passion," 56.

On the other hand, the old "carrier of books," learned in Hebrew, who bears witness to the antiquity of the Scriptures and the truth they contain. (Limor 55)

The latter Jew is the one protected by Augustine's "Doctrine of Witness," spared, in theory, from aggression for the service he renders the new faith by practicing the old. He is also the innocent Jew, the one whose exile has not been deserved. The former, the guilty Jew, is the one who, by medieval Christian accounts, committed the blood-crimes of which actual Jews were often accused. Bestul says that such accusations "permitted Christians to substantiate in the present the view that the Jews had been, and continued to be, the enemies of Christians, the murderers of Christ" (76); while the theory that contemporary Jews had inherited the guilt of the Crucifixion was wrong, the practical consequence of such an inheritance did nonetheless actually obtain: medieval Jews suffered persecution for the acts of gospel Jews. Cain's curse followed them to western Europe even though, like Ishmael, they were innocent.

In her analysis of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, Ruether observes in the doctrine of the early church the theory that, "even in the Old Testament, there existed, not one, but two people: an evil apostate people, the Jews, and a faithful people, represented by the heroes and prophets, whose lineage is fulfilled in the future Church" (179). Among the figures she

adduces from Hebrew scripture as having been advanced by theologians to illustrate this theory are Hagar and Sarah; directing us to Paul's writings in Galatians 4.21-31 and Romans 9.13, she explains the symbolic value of Ishmael's mother:

Hagar the bondswoman and her children are cast off. She is the type of the fallen, earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage together with her children -- bondage both in the sense of political bondage in exile under the nations (the gentile Church!) and also in the sense of moral bondage to material things. (180)⁷⁷

Thus the fate decreed as punishment for the sin of the "evil apostate" Cain was deemed to have been passed on, even across the Great Flood, first to the unoffending Ishmael, abandoned in favour of a younger sibling; to the Jews of second-century

77. See also Synan's paraphrase of Pope Innocent III's 1204 letter to the King of the Franks:

The Pauline analogy between the children of Abraham by his bondswoman, and those by Sarah, the Patriarch's lawful wife, served the Pope to account for the disparate inheritances of Jew and Gentile (Galatians 4:21-31). (93)

Jerusalem, expelled, as Christian theorists would have it, in retribution for the Crucifixion; and then, by direct descent, to the western European Diaspora. The Wandering Jew personifies their common lot as he travels in permanent exile from home, "the God-pusher but also the awaiter," as Anderson calls him (31), for he must remain until Jesus returns, just as the Jewish people must remain. Home for them was once the Holy Land, but their alien status with regard to sacred space was determined before the creation of Adam and Eve; Middle English Crucifixion writers confirm this belief by incorporating the legends of Seth and of the Cross into their narratives.

The political bondage Ruether speaks of was real, but the moral bondage was contrived through literary art. The specific moral weakness to which she refers, however -- the worldly concern for "material things" -- as yet remains unexamined. It is the central theme of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Esau

The medieval Esau is a symbol of worldly values. His younger brother Jacob, defying the record of large-scale fraud ascribed to him in the Bible, symbolizes spiritual values. In Hebrews 11.9, Paul anachronistically places Jacob in his grandfather's household as a co-inheritor with Isaac of the blessing of Abraham, who "by faith . . . sojourned in the land of promise . . . dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Yet, in Genesis, Jacob's claims to his elder brother Esau's birthright and blessing are far from compelling, resting entirely on the opportunistic and extortionate means whereby he seizes them. It would seem that God has once more surrendered to caprice in choosing Jacob over Esau as the next patriarch, for again, although he gives no explanation as to why he finds Jacob more suitable than Esau, it is he who chooses which brother will sire the tribes of Israel, and who, perhaps, is ultimately responsible for the success of Jacob's ill-thought schemes.

This speculation is not to suggest that Jacob's designs on his elder twin's priority are not independent; even in the act of birth "his hand took hold on Esau's heel," according to Genesis

(25.26),⁷⁸ and *Cursor Mundi* repeats this detail: "Þe lasse þe more took bi þe fote/In trauelynge & drou3e a3eyn" (1.148.3486-87). In fact, the Middle English poem embellishes the infant Jacob's prowess, and implies, if only vaguely, the possibility that his later efforts to deprive his elder brother of the right of primogeniture are founded on a rightful claim by creating doubt regarding the success or failure of this early act of hindrance. When *Cursor Mundi*'s adult Esau discovers that his twin has cheated him of their father Isaac's blessing as well as his birthright, he protests that Jacob has always tried to usurp his elder status: "'For I first born shulde ha be/Wip strengþe a3eyn drou3e he me'" (1.156.3745-46). In Genesis there is no "shulde ha be" about it; even *Cursor Mundi* suggests this revisionist view of the twins' rivalry only once, and obscurely.

Nevertheless, the Middle English poem's report of the brothers' continued strife is more biased than the Bible's. The babies' pre-natal conflict accounts for only two verses of Genesis -- only one, not counting God's response to Rebekah's question as to why "the children struggled together within her" (Gen. 25.22-23) -- but *Cursor Mundi* devotes forty-three lines to it, enhancing Rebekah's pain to the point at which "hir lyf was licly to be dede" (1.147.3452), and, assuming God's role,

78. In the Vulgate, this detail appears in Genesis 25.25.

"greatly multiply[ing her] sorrow and [her] conception" (Gen. 3.16)⁷⁹, so that "hir bredynd was ful sore/And hir childyng myche more" (1.147.3479-80).

Perhaps the poet is hoping that sympathy for the mother's difficult labour will soften the reader's attitude toward her later choosing a favourite son and taking greater pains over his safety than his brother's:

Iacob hett þe 3onger broþer;
 Þe modir him loued more þen þat oþer;
 Þerfore nowhere was he sent,
 But to þe hous took he tent
 To tente þe mete & hous to kepe;
 Þerto was he good & meke. (1.148.3493-98)

The comment on Jacob's temperament is extra-biblical, and certainly at odds with his combative relationship with his brother; however, it anticipates a later token of affection between the mother and younger son which, likewise extra-biblical, seems designed to rationalize Jacob's refusal to give

79. This Genesis passage actually describes part of Eve's punishment for eating the forbidden fruit and urging Adam to do the same.

his famished brother food without first extracting a fateful promise.

Like Ishmael, "Esau was a cunning hunter" (Gen. 25.27); Jacob, whose favoured status with Rebekah keeps him close to home, finds his brother in a particularly weakened state one day and takes ruthless advantage. The biblical passage shall first be examined, and then *Cursor Mundi*'s modifications:

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field,
and he was faint:

And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that
same red pottage; for I am faint

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and
what profit shall this birthright do to me?

And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto
him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and
he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way:
thus Esau despised his birthright. (Gen. 25.29-34)⁸⁰

80. The final clause of the Vulgate passage amounts to the same:
"parvipendens quod primogenita vendidisset."

Jacob immediately perceives his brother's urgent physical need as an opportunity. Not only does he barter the food for the birthright; he even withholds it until Esau, whose hunger has already compelled him to agree, formally swears to the new arrangement. Yet it is Esau whom the scripture condemns. This condemnation reappears in *Cursor Mundi*, but the Middle English poet seems to recognize its injustice, at least in the spare context of the biblical exchange, for he also seeks to promote Jacob's cause in other ways.

To begin with, *Cursor Mundi*'s Esau hunted in vain that day. The poet's reflections on his disappointing luck, and on bad luck in general, introduce the greater disappointment soon to follow:

Esau went forþ to hunte
 A day as he was ofte wonte;
 Fer & neer he had sou3te;
 Þat day gamen fonde he nou3te,
 For haue man neuer so myche nede,
 Vche day is not tyme of spede,
 But ofte þat day þat men faile
 Moost aboute hit þei trauaile. (1.149.3519-26)

By the time Esau reaches Jacob, he is suffering "so myche nede" that he fears for his life, but as with his unsuccessful hunting,

so, the poet obliquely suggests, with his hopes of fraternal compassion; "vche day is not tyme of spede," and this is not Esau's day. He couches his summary of Esau's fortunes in the form of an adage, thereby re-assigning Jacob's blame to the vagaries of chance. Jacob is merely fortune's instrument -- or perhaps it is providence that ensures that the hunting will be poor that day, and that Esau will thus be demoralized as well as hungry and faint when he meets his brother. Either way, allowing the poet's attitude toward Esau's failed hunting to set the tenor for Jacob's behaviour toward him in the following scene means qualifying somewhat the blame one might otherwise entirely place on the younger twin.

If, on the other hand, the theory of Esau's losing streak fails to convince, and his younger brother's agency in exploiting his bad luck and consequent weakness is acknowledged, there is at least forthcoming from the medieval Jacob something his biblical predecessor never offered: an explanation, albeit a very poor one, for the transaction he is about to propose. To confuse the issue, and thus to obfuscate to whatever extent possible the feebleness of Jacob's explanation, and also to counterbalance, and perhaps even distract attention away from, his lack of fraternal love, the poet introduces that mark of filial love between Jacob and Rebekah mentioned earlier. There is even a hint that the bond between the mother and younger son might supplement Jacob's rationale for the otherwise heartless

extortion he now practices on his brother. As Esau returns from hunting,

His broþer he fond þat toke tent
 To di3te a noble mete present;
 "Of þis mete, broþer," he seide,
 "3yue me sum þat here is greybede.
 Mete & drynke þou hast at wille,
 And longe is sip I eet my fille."
 Iacob seide, "nay, god hit wit,
 For þe haue I not di3t hit;
 Þis mete my modir me bitau3t.
 For þou and I are selden sau3t,
 Aboute oure forburþe are we wroop;
 3if þou wolt swere me an oop
 Þat þou shalt neuer fro þis ny3t
 Of þi forburþe cleyme no ri3t . . ." (1.149.3531-44)

At the corresponding juncture in Genesis, the biblical Jacob speaks to Esau only in the imperative mood; here there is recognition that Jacob has allowed his ambition to usurp his elder brother's place to define their relationship, and the biblical command becomes a conditional bargain. Could Jacob have relinquished his own mother's special gift of food for anything less? Admittedly the difference is a subtle one: in effect,

Esau has no choice but to agree. Or has he?

Genesis finds fault with Esau for having "despised his birthright" (25.34), and *Cursor Mundi*, as noted earlier, does the same, but in harsher terms, the better to justify the proto-Christian Jacob's treatment of Esau the Ur-Jew. However, as if to prove that Esau himself regards as fair the trade of birthright for food, the poet has him consent before Jacob has even completed his thought, so eager to seize the deal that he interrupts his brother in the midst of proposing it:

"3if þou wolt swere me an oop
 þat þou shalt neuer fro þis ny3t
 Of þi forburþe cleyme no ri3t . . ."
 "Forburþe," he seide, "what serueþ me?
 Broþer, at þi wille shal hit be."
 Wiþ þat forwarde he made a vow
 ("Almest for hongur I de3e now")
 And for his fille of þat potage
 As wrecche he solde his heritage.
 He eet & dronke & went his way
 And lost his blessyng fro þat day.
 No bote him was [þat] him forþou3t;
 God wolde hit were his þat hit bou3te.
 (1.149-50.3542-54)⁸¹

81. I have added the word "þat" to line 3553.

In contrast to Jacob, who, apart from alluding to their sibling rivalry, has not been speaking of Esau in familial terms, referring to Rebekah, purveyor of his dinner, in exclusive terms as "my modir" instead of "our mother," Esau is still willing to address his extortionate brother as "Broper," just as he did when greeting him a few lines earlier. Thinking ahead to the greater friction yet to come, the poet admits that Esau will come to regret his decision, but only indirectly, as part of a larger statement about the futility of such regrets. God himself, he declares, supports Jacob's designs. Yet amid all this rationalization, he still deems it necessary to undermine any possible sympathy for Esau by describing him, even if only by way of simile, as a "wrecche."

Both the biblical and the medieval Esaus are criticized for succumbing to physical imperatives rather than dying of hunger with their birthright intact. In a note to the poet's reflections on "the former efficacy of blessings," the editor explains that the passage "continues the theme of the present degeneracy of the world" (384, on lines 3509-16).⁸² That the

82. The whole passage reads:

Good was þe world in þat ceesoun;
 Miche availede benesoun
 Of fadris þat wel helde her fay
 On childre whenne þei wolde hit lay;

lines immediately preceding this passage address Esau's filial piety toward his father, and follow a companion passage about Jacob's toward his mother, the whole directly succeeding the lengthy description of Rebekah's troubled pregnancy, strongly implies that Esau represents the degeneracy that has infected a previously virtuous world: "Good was þe world in þat ceesoun;/Miche availede benesoun," the poet remarks, then goes on to introduce his account of

How þe 3onger of þe two
 Þe blessynge stale his broþer fro;
 But firste is to be tolde
 How esau his broþer hit solde.
 (1.148.3509-10; 148-49.3515-18)

Of blessyng may men ensauple take
 Bi þese childer of ysaake,
 How þe 3onger of þe two
 Þe blessynge stale his broþer fro;
 But firste is to be tolde
 How esau his broþer hit solde. (1.148-49.3509-18)

The remainder of the note suggests that the editor, like the poet, treats the birthright and the blessing as one.

Esau does not sell his blessing at all, but within this four-line passage the poet has confused the blessing with the birthright (as he does in line 3552, in a summary of the extortion scene), and offered two distinct and mutually exclusive synopses of how the blessing passed to the younger son: he stole it; he bought it. This equivocation appears to have infected the explanatory note which simply states: "Here the poet stresses the seriousness of Esau's crime in selling the blessing which should have been his," without addressing the poet's inaccuracies, or even explaining why Esau's so-called "crime" was considered so serious. An investigation of this question might properly precede the issue of the loss of the blessing itself.

As in the Bible, "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison" (Gen.25.28), but *Cursor Mundi* expands the spare biblical statement:

Be fadir loued esau for fode
 For he was an archer gode;
 Whenne he wolde, euer was he boun
 To gete his fadir venisoun,
 And as he was as formast born
 He dalt al wip tilpe & corn;
 Wip opere þingis delt he sere:
 Wip beestis wode, foule & ryuere;
 His fadir olde and vnfere

Ofte he fedde wip good dynere. (1.148.3499-3508)

Esau concerns himself with worldly matters, and Isaac favours him for worldly reasons, and no matter how essential such matters might be to physical life, they represent a lesser alternative to spiritual life. Esau's hunting skills feed his father, but the day they fail, he sells his birthright to feed himself. That the poet treats the birthright and the blessing as one makes Esau's error seem more dire, for the biblical Isaac means to give his elder son his *soul's* blessing, even though his request for a favour in return is for food (Gen. 27.3-4). In selling his birthright, in whatever extremity of earthly want, Esau has preferred bodily to spiritual sustenance, for the birthright and the blessing of Isaac's soul are inseparable. God himself, whose desire it was that Jacob should have the birthright -- yet under whose ultimate guidance Esau emerged the first-born -- supports Jacob's stealing the blessing as well; "his modir counsel was perto,/But god wolde hit shulde be so" (1.155.3717-18).

Thus Rebekah and Jacob's crude deception succeeds: Jacob announces to his father Isaac, blind with age, that he is Esau, returned from hunting to bring him a meal -- meat prepared by Rebekah, who knows that Isaac is expecting Esau to serve him venison, for which he will reward him with a blessing.⁸³ Even

83. The full story appears in Genesis 27 and in *Cursor Mundi* 1.151-57.3595-3772. An ironic detail appears in Genesis 27.20,

before Jacob embarks on this fraud, *Cursor Mundi's* Rebekah has already begun to speak of the blessing as properly his, and refer to her elder son in terms even harsher than the poet's; she is here addressing Jacob:

"Leue sone, loop me wore
 þat he þi benisoun fro þe bere;
 Vnhappy wrecche he haþ ben ay;
 Þi 3ele shal he not bere away." (1.152.3635-38)

She speaks as though it were Esau scheming to snatch something valuable from Jacob. And, in both the Middle English poem and the Bible, she gets her way: the unwitting Isaac, moved more by credulity than "by faith," despite Paul's claims in Hebrews 11.20, rewards the impostor with the coveted blessing, phrased thus in Genesis:

where Isaac is surprised to find "Esau" returned so soon: "And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." The scene is repeated in *Cursor Mundi* 1.154.3689-90: "'How was hit þou sped so soone?'/ 'Sir, god of my3te herde my bone.'"

God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:
Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. (27.28-29)

Jacob withdraws before Esau returns, but Isaac quickly realizes that he has been tricked, and, in response to Esau's request for a blessing, can only offer him in common with his younger brother those parts of the blessing that relate to material wealth:

Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;
And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck. (27.39-40)

Once again Esau is associated with earthly goods alone, a circumstance enhanced in *Cursor Mundi* by the poet's modification of these same blessings. The element of material wealth is omitted from Jacob's blessing, leaving only the promise of ascendancy over his brother and his enemies:

"Þi broþer be þyn vndirloute,
 And alle þat wonen here aboute;
 Alle þo sone þat blessen þe,
 Blessed shal hemseluen be,
 And alle þat bidde þe malisoun
 Shal bere hit on her owne croun." (1.155.3705-10)

Favoured by God, Jacob must be more spiritually pure than Esau -- despite cogent evidence to the contrary -- and thus above such mundane concerns as "corn and wine"; his blessing pertains to the privileges of precedence in the sight of God. Esau's spiritual deficiency, supposedly proven when he exchanged those same privileges of precedence for food, is reflected in the *Cursor Mundi* poet's treating his blessing in a manner opposite to that applied to Jacob's: he concentrates solely on the material aspect, dismissing the hope that Esau might eventually free himself from Jacob's mastery:

"In þe dew & gras also
 Shal be þi blessyng where þou go;
 Wip erþe trauaile so þou do,
 And preye god sende his dew þerto." (1.156.3757-60)

To quote *Cursor Mundi*'s Esau on his brother's unseemly enterprise, "'þis was no broþerhede'" (1.156.3750). Yet the

Church father Jerome characterizes Esau as more patently a felon than Cain, declaring that "the devil[,] who had formerly prefigured the fratricidal Jews in the person of Cain, completely unmasks them in the person of Esau" (16).⁸⁴ It is true that, in both the Bible and *Cursor Mundi*, Esau determines to kill Jacob (Gen. 27.41; *CM* 1.156.3762-64), but consider his case:

"Away he hap my blessyng born;
 So dude he als þe 3ondur morn.
 He hap me done mychel shome;
 Skilful is 'iacob' his nome --
 Þat is to say, in ri3t langage,
 'Putter out of heritage' --
 For I first born shulde ha be,
 Wip strengþe a3eyn drou3e he me,
 And done me als þis vnresoun
 To reue me þus my benisoun." (1.156.3739-48)

84. Jerome is quoted in Mellinkoff, who cites a letter "Ad Damasum"; she is using Jérôme Labourt's translation (16).

Gerson D. Cohen alludes to the same letter and traces Jerome's source for the idea just quoted to "an allegorical interpretation . . . of Hippolytus of Rome" (33-34).

As his Genesis counterpart indignantly observes, "he hath supplanted me these two times"; he is as yet unaware that Jacob will take his place yet a third time, when, on leaving home to frustrate Esau's murderous plans, he receives from Isaac no less a gift than the very "blessing of Abraham . . . that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham" (Gen. 27.36; 28.4). Later Christian commentators would agree that the land thus inherited by Jacob's "seed" would be the Holy Land named for that same Jacob whom God's angel first called Israel (Gen. 28.4; 32.28), but would further contend that the progeny here alluded to is Christian, not Jewish. Jacob the proto-Christian inherits the Promised Land, and Esau the Ur-Jew joins Cain and Ishmael as an unfavoured child on an otherwise glorious family tree.

Esau and Earthly Matters

When Ruether speaks of Hagar, Ishmael's mother, as symbolic of "moral bondage to material things," she means Esau too, whom she names along with Ishmael and others among "the cast-off line" which the Church assigned "to the Jews," having once reserved for itself "the authentic lines" represented by such figures as Isaac and Jacob (179-80). For a closer look at Esau's peculiar contribution to later Christianity's efforts to prove "the casting off of the Jews and the election of the gentile Church as

the true Israel" (Ruether 179), Gerson D. Cohen's "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought" shall now be considered.

Cohen provides a précis of Paul's exposition of "election" in Romans 9.6-13:

In arguing that not all born Jews were God's elect, Paul cited as evidence that only one of Abraham's sons was a child of God's promise. Moreover, of Isaac's two sons, Esau was hated by God and Jacob beloved; indeed, the former was doomed by divine decree to serve the younger. In other words, natural birth has nothing to do with whom God elects and whom He rejects. God had elected Israel. (31)

Augustine's notion, examined in Chapter Two, of the Jews as servants of the Church, paradoxically proving Jesus' godhead by preserving the books of the prophets who had foretold his coming, may be said to correspond to the biblical circumstance of Esau's subordinate relationship to Jacob: the elder son and the elder faith, here inextricably linked, both serve their juniors. But is it necessarily true that the order of birth is irrelevant? Cohen proceeds to expand the link between Judaism and Esau to include Ishmael: "Isaac = Jacob = the Church; Ishmael = Esau = the Jews" (32). Later, he cites seven pairs of figures from the Hebrew scripture whom early and medieval Christians "regularly

invoked as clear symbols of the old and the new covenants" -- that is, in Ruether's terms, symbols of "the denunciations of the prophets [which Christians applied] to the Jews" and "the future promises [which they applied] to the Church" (Ruether 179). All of the characters in these seven pairs who represent the "Old Law," superceded, according to Christian teaching, by the "New Law," either embody or otherwise invoke the state of an elder (Cohen 34).⁸⁵ Cohen also reviews the evidence adduced by early Christian commentators to support the Church's contention "that Jacob-Israel-Christendom had supplanted Esau-Jewry in birthright and blessing, the 'younger' destined to freedom and victory, the 'older' to eternal rejection and servitude" (33).

Considering Cohen's own examples of elected versus rejected siblings, perhaps one might conclude that, rather than dismissing the familial and societal significance of siblings' relative ages, early biblical tradition has insisted on birth order as a standard of preference, only according to a system of ultimogeniture rather than primogeniture. Such a theory would

85. The pairs cited are: "Cain and Abel, Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac, Leah and Rachel, Manasseh and Ephraim, Eli and Samuel, [and] Saul and David." Hagar's and Sarah's respective ages do not appear in Genesis, but Hagar represents the elder by bearing Abraham's elder son.

make God's choices regarding our three sets of brothers seem a little less capricious; his basis for selection, while still arbitrary, would at least be comprehensible. What else could possibly recommend Jacob over Esau?

There might be one more thing, although, as *Cursor Mundi* has shown, one's reading of the relevant text must be flexible to support it: the worldliness with which this chapter began, and to which Cohen alludes when he summarizes a "pattern of thought permeating all Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle Ages" thus: "Jacob the spiritual Christian had supplanted and displaced Esau the carnal Jew" (38).⁸⁶ By the time of the Middle
86. Ironically, Rabbinic tradition had associated Esau, first with the Roman empire, then later with Christianity. Gerson D. Cohen's essay shows how, for the Jews, Jacob and Esau were, respectively, "archetypal symbols of Jewry and Rome," and how easily the symbolism incorporated the new religion:

The official establishment of the Christian Church as the religion of the empire made no discernible impression on the Jews of the fourth century, for by that time the chasm between Judaism and Christianity had grown so deep and wide that the alignment of the machinery of state with the Church was of no greater moment than the succession of one emperor by another. To the Jew, it was a shift from one idolatry to

English authors, this belief had become a solid Church tradition.⁸⁷

In contrasting Christian to pagan anti-Jewish criticism, Simon remarks that "one of the most striking characteristics of Christian anti-Semitism is its subordination of social accusations to moral and religious ones" (142). It might at first seem odd to find, among his examples of this strain of Christian criticism, "the accusation, rarely made by the pagans, of Jewish greed" (143), but remember that Esau's carnality, his particular brand of gluttony, was not so much in eating as in preferring life without his birthright and blessing to a death that would have preserved them. Although behaviour associated

another, one more aggressive and openly hostile, but not a change in kind. Thus, it required no effort on the part of Jewish homilists to extend the name of Edom to Christendom. Esau might exchange his eagle for a cross, but he was Esau nonetheless. (20, 28-29)

87. In a footnote, Cohen adds that "early in the twelfth century Honorius of Canterbury . . . trace[d] the history of the relationship between Jacob and Esau back to Adam, Cain and Abel, etc., thus drawing a direct line from carnal Cain to Esau and from spiritual Abel to Jacob" (38).

with greed is often social, it is not necessarily the public display of avarice or intemperance to which detractors might object (at least officially), but rather the worldly priorities such behaviour implies. Still, whether it was condemned per se or as a sign of Jewish devotion to bodily pleasure and earthly prestige instead of spiritual health, early Christian observers seem to have been readier to spot "Jewish greed" than contemporary pagans, as Simon further remarks:

Christians . . . were loud in their complaints that the Jews were fond of money, of luxury, of the pleasures of the table, and of every form of wealth. This was a feature of the Jewish mentality the pagans had not noticed, for if they had noticed it, they would not have been slow to include it in their criticisms. It is very difficult to believe that in a relatively short interval of time, at a period when the Christian authorities had not confined the Jews to activities such as moneylending, which Christians were forbidden to take part in, this love of money and its equivalents should suddenly have become so characteristic of the Jews. (143-44)

Unsupported as they may have been, accusations of greed proved durable; there are many examples throughout Middle English

religious literature.

A twelfth-century Lenten homily encouraging fasting cites Jerome to illustrate the dangers of gluttony: "Hieronimus cwæð swa longe swa Adam hine forhæfde þat he ðæs applæs ne onburiðde, he wunode on neorcxnæwonges ifean; sone swa he ðæs ofetes onbyriðde, swa wæs he ut idrifen" (46). Although, as the *Stanzaic Life of Christ* observes, the devil contrived Adam and Eve's fall by means of "thre synnus," namely "glotery," "vaynglorie," and "auarise" (177.5263, 5265-67), the devil himself, as dramatized in *The Harrowing of Hell*,⁸⁸ cites gluttony as the crucial sin -- rather like Jerome. When Jesus descends to Hell to confront Satan and challenge him for the souls of Adam and Eve and their righteous descendants, Satan defends his claim by describing the eating of the fateful apple as part of a formal transaction:

"Whose buyþ any þyng,
hit is hys ant hys ofspryng;
Adam hungry com me to,

88. William Henry Hulme edits three manuscripts; this passage is from Harley 2253, circa 1300. The Harley version is no. 185 in the IMEV. The poem dates from about the middle of the thirteenth century.

Monrade dude y him me do;
 ffor on appel ich 3ef hym
 he is myn ant al hys kun." (9.85-90)⁸⁹

Not only do Adam and Eve trade Paradise for the deadly fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; they trade it on their children's behalf as well as their own, so that knowledge and guilt continue to descend to every human who might otherwise have known God's peace. The first bargain humans ever made was a bad one -- but not the very worst one.

Chapter One showed that the Jews involved in Jesus' execution, in Middle English writings as well as the Gospels, were often regarded as Common Era equivalents to Cain, the first homicidal human, and, in that character, the standard of Jewish behaviour, past and present. In Chapter Two, the Wandering Jew

89. The Auchinleck W.4, 1 text of *The Harrowing of Hell*, dating from about the middle of the fourteenth century, suggests a different reading; Satan begins: "'whoso biggeþ aniping,/It owe to ben his wiþouten lesing'" (9.91-92); without the reference to offspring who later inherit what their parents have bought, the passage now seems to be referring to Satan himself, who, he claims, now rightfully owns the souls he purchased "for an appel" (9.95).

emerged as a medieval avatar of Ishmael and model of the peripatetic lifestyle of contemporary Jews, whom no Christian kingdom seemed to want within its boundaries. Chapter Three's discussion of avarice and gluttony, the sins of greed, now incorporates the Gospels to show that Esau's attachment to earthly goods later degenerates into villainy in the character of Judas.

Judas' Morsel

In all four Gospels' Last Supper scenes, Jesus says of the traitorous disciple a version of Luke's "the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" (22.21; see also Matthew 26.23; Mark 14.18, 20; and John 13.18, 26). To some medieval writers, the timing of Jesus' announcement suggested that the traitor was also a glutton. In the *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord*, all the other apostles eat the Passover with restraint, perhaps even reluctance; "euer þey dredde to ete gladlygh,/For sum sorowe semed hem nygh" (4.89-90). When Jesus reveals that his betrayer is among them, "þys voys as a swerd here hertes persed,/And to ete anone þey seced," but "þe treytur ete faste, and wulde nat blyn,/As þogh þe tresun come nat by him" (4.99-100, 103-4). In the *Northern Passion*, Jesus even comments on Judas' rapacity, noting, in response to the other apostles' questions about the traitor's identity: "'He þat with mi silue ete,/To

filte his wombe he nocht for yete'" (original version 7.253-54; see also 60.357-58 of the expanded version). Worse still, in the original *Northern Passion*, Judas is so shameless as to sneak some of Jesus' food:

Ivdas sei3hi3 bei setin alle;
 Ageine Iesu gon he falle
 pat he mitht with him etene;
 His tresoun he nold noht foryitene:
 He stal out of his lord is dissche
 be beste mossel of his fische. (6.205-10)

In the midst of his supper, he is mindful of his treachery; in the midst of his treachery, he is mindful of his supper. Unashamedly he steals Jesus' food, and unreservedly he eats it.

The idea that Judas may be genuinely hungry makes his treason seem colder, as his unabated appetite suggests a heartless lack of compunction: Judas does not allow the consciousness of sin to interfere with such physical imperatives as eating. *Cursor Mundi's* Judas seems especially eager for food, and the poet, having once cast Judas as a glutton, proceeds to show why gluttony is a deadly sin by introducing Satan by means of an edible medium. Jesus plainly announces his intention of identifying his betrayer with a morsel of bread, but Judas is too careless, or hungry, to mark this warning; not only does he

accept the fateful morsel, but he takes it before it is offered:

"He þat I to take þis breed,
hit is he to bihalde" --
Iudas opened þo his moup
ar he þerto were calde;
Soone was þat mossel boun;
he di3t hit as he walde,
And Iudas swolewed hit a doun,
& sipen his lorde salde.

Out of oure lordis holy hand
þat mossel cau3t Iudas;
Wiþ þat ilke same breed
into him crept sathanas;
Of al venym & enuye
ful kyndeled he was . . . (3.88-89.15, 377-390)

In the first of these stanzas, the *Cursor Mundi* poet omits any suggestion that Judas so much as took the time to receive the morsel civilly in his hand before placing it in his mouth; he only says that Judas "opened þo his moup" and "swolewed hit a doun," unwilling to tolerate any intermediary between his mouth and the food. The next stanza furnishes evidence that Judas did not altogether dispense with restraint after all, although, as he

"cau3t" the food from Jesus' hand, snatching it away instead of patiently receiving it, he showed his greed just as plainly. But while the idea of Satan's entering Judas by way of the morsel comes from John 13.26-27, Judas' greed is non-biblical.

Thus the "Passion of Our Lord"⁹⁰ that appears in *An Old English Miscellany*, like *Cursor Mundi*, presumes beyond the Bible when it depicts a Judas who distinctly enjoys the bit of cursed bread Jesus gives him:

"Hwam ich biteche þat bred þat ich on wyne wete,
 He me schal bitraye to nyht er he slepe."
 He hit bitauhte iudas, þat alle hit myhte iseo,
 Þer he wes bivoren him and set on his kneo.
 He hit et blupeliche and lokede ful brode,
 And þe veond him on bi-com myd þerylke snode.
 (40.103-8)

Other poems have depicted Judas eating the supper that no other apostle wanted to touch, and eating it hungrily; the "Passion of Our Lord" shows him eating it with pleasure. Judas' appetite indicates how little concerned he is about endangering his soul.

90. MS Jesus College 1.Arch.1.29; IMEV no. 1441. The poem dates from the thirteenth century.

Middle English authors thus associate gluttony, not only with an imperiled soul, but with a soul so abandoned that not even a warning from Jesus himself will deter it from sin.

Among possible reasons why medieval Christians might associate the literary Judas' greed with all Jews, two stand out. First of all, the morsel of bread contrasts sharply with the bread of the Host, and opposes the beliefs represented by the Eucharist, here performed for the first time and established by Jesus himself. None of the Gospels appears to exclude Judas from this ceremony, so he may receive the Host as well as the morsel, but, according to the *Middle English Prose Complaint of Our Lady*, accepting the Host in a state of deadly sin is worse than refusing it: the devil is able to enter Judas through the morsel because of the evil Judas intends when he takes it. Although no source records Mary's presence at the Last Supper, she includes it in her narrative, which is here supplemented by comments supplied by the voice who introduces the story:

"And whan Iudas wip þe oper took þe sacrement, þe deuel entred wip þe sacrement for þe tresoun þat he pou3th to his lord." And perfore, good men & wymmen, whoso wil resceiue þat derworþe sacrement & haþ will forto do dedlich synne oþer is in dedlich synne, he resceyueþ his owen dampnacioun, þat is þe fende. (76.12-17)

As in other sources, when the apostles hear that there is a traitor among them, they ask Jesus who it is; here he gives the standard reply:

"'He þat I wete þe bred in wyne & putte it in his mouþe, he it is.' And he wett a morsel of bred & putt it in Iudas mouþe and þe deuel entred wip it & took þan so gret power ouer hym for he resceiued þe sacrement." And þat ilch resceyuyng made þat he fel into wanhope as summe of þise clerkes seien. And þerfore ich rede þat vche man bewar boþe lorde & lewed þat hym resceyueþ . . . (77.7-13)⁹¹

91. The *Southern Passion* issues a similar warning, although here Judas receives from Jesus only the morsel, not the Host:

Alle his disciples bote Iudas he tok his fflesch so,
Ak to him he tok a mossel þat was yn his disch ydo.
Men þat nolleþ beo yshriue and hare sunnes fforsake,
As hit were oure lordes fflesch holy bred hi wollep

Take;

An Ester day hi beop yliche Iudas þat so com
Wip opere to godes bord and his fflesch nou3t nom,
Ak wip þe Mossel þat he tok þe deuel in him wende.
So mowe hi drede þat so dop bote hi hare lif amende.
(31.859-66)

As noted earlier, John 13.26-27 reports that "after the sop Satan entered into him," but no Gospel has Satan gaining access to Judas through the Host. In the *Prose Complaint*, he does both.

After Mary tells us that "þe deuel entred wip þe sacrement," the voice presenting her story warns sinners against taking part in the Eucharist -- but not all sinners: only those guilty of "dedlich synne" -- one or more of the seven deadly sins, of which gluttony is an example. It soon emerges that the morsel is an additional portal, but Mary's phrasing suggests that Judas' earlier consumption of the sacrament enhances Satan's power, to an end which the commentator clarifies by observing that Judas "fel into wanhope." Matthew 27.3-5 records Judas' suicide, but this act of despair -- Judas' last crime -- only takes place after he realizes that Jesus will be sentenced to death. Perhaps the "wanhope" that afflicts Judas at the Supper is a lack of faith, a refusal, or perhaps incapacity, to believe that Jesus is God. Such unbelief might account for Judas' willingness to commit such a fatally ill-conceived crime; it might also explain the connection many medieval Christians saw between Judas and later Jews, who also did not believe in Jesus.

The second reason why Christians might assume that greed is endemic to Jews, and not just a personal trait of Judas' -- the medieval literary Judas' -- is the contrast between Judas and

John. Judas' eagerness for food betrayed his indifference toward the evil he contemplated, his lack of conscience, and perhaps even his pleasure in sin. The *Northern Passion* says that when the Last Supper was prepared, and "Ihesus bad þam all sytt doun . . . Iudas wald no langer lett:/ By-for his lord euen he him sett"; yet "all if Iudas with Ihesu satt,/His treson no-thing he forgatt" (58-59.293, 297-98, 303-4). Meanwhile, and in striking contrast,

Als saint Iohne at þe sopere satt,
 Mete and drink both he for-gatt;
 He lened doun to Ihesu brest,
 ffor he satt him alther nest.
 Vn-to carpyng he tok no kepe,
 Bot hastily he fell on slepe;
 Ane aungell toke his gast full euen,
 And bare it to þe blys of heuen,
 And þare þe aungell lete him se
 Many a selcouth preuete. (NP 60-61.373-82; see also
 the original NP 7-8.263-84)

The same Lenten homily earlier cited states that this divine favour was bestowed on John because he fasted during the Last Supper: "Johannes þe godspellere feste, þurh ðæt he earnode þa godcundan runo 3eheræn, swa swa him þe engel bodode" (46.20-22).

For many Christians, the abstemious apostle John may have embodied the spiritual values of the new faith, while Judas embodied the lack of spirituality that the Christian Middle Ages often associated with Judaism, the elder faith.

Age and the Physical World

John may represent Christianity in terms of age as well: according to the *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord Jesus*, John is the "3ungeste" apostle (3.56). No other source studied here hazards an age for Judas, but the "Passion of Our Lord" speaks of "sathanas þen olde" (38.28), and Satan's connection to Judas through the morsel has already been established. However, further proof of their alliance abounds. In *Cursor Mundi*, for example, after the Last Supper, when Jesus has led the remaining apostles to Mount Olivet to pray and await the troops, he warns Peter, James, and John to "be wakyng in orisoun/for þe waryed wi3te" -- the devil -- lest he try to tempt them (3.96.15,665-66); later, when the troops arrest him, he applies the same epithet to Judas, telling those who have followed him: "'In euel tyme leued 3e/Iudas þe waryed wi3t'" (101.15,867-68). Whatever Judas' age might be, Jesus here aligns him, almost identifies him, with an ancient killer.

The opposition of age and the devil to Jesus and the new, young faith is expressed through other Jewish characters as well:

in the *History of the Holy Rood-tree*, it is "þa yldestan cræfte3en" who first conceives of cutting down the tree that has grown from the holy rods (22.21-24); in the *Southern Passion*, it is "þe princes of þe preostes and þe eoldest of ham" who conspire to have Jesus put to death (28.759-64). Jesus himself dies young, yet in the *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*, the Meditator describes his death in terms of age and as a consequence of the sins of others:

Ry3t as þe flour fair in felde
 Passeþ heþen and weykeþ for elde,
 fful gret reuthe it was to sene
 Ðat flesch y-take of maydon clene
 Wounded wiþ spere, with scorges bete,
 And for loue his lyf to lete. (21.761-66)

The "spere" and "scorges" suggest the violence of Jesus' death, and the statement that he died "for loue" is a reminder that he did not return sin for sin. Yet the Meditator compares Jesus' death to that of a "flour" that "weykeþ for elde," deploring the trademark sign of sin as it claims even the source of life as a victim. However, as the source of life, Jesus is a rejuvenating force, and his ultimate victory over sin is the restoration of human sinners -- such as are liable to death through original sin but who still love God -- to God's peace. "Now welkeþ þe flour

so swete and dere/And makeþ vs to florische þat welked were," proclaims the Meditator, returning to his earlier trope, and he soon goes on to specify sin's role in the wasting process that Jesus came to rectify:

þe flour of flesch falleþ away
 And we þat weron welked as hay
 And mowe a-doun with syþe of synne
 Aþeyn to sprynge now bygynne. (26.973-74; 27.1001-4)

He uses the same analogy of the withered plant to describe Jesus in physical death and his creatures in sin, or spiritual death; the difference is Jesus' ability to make the plant "aþeyn to sprynge." Finally, too, Jesus arises to new life himself, defeating even physical death with his revivifying virtue. In the midst of a song of praise, the Meditator again employs natural imagery to celebrate Jesus as the source of abiding youth as well as life: "Ihesu so bri3t as spryng of day,/Swetnesse of þe it lasteþ ay" (21.783-84). Later, the flower trope reappears in a simple one-line eulogy uttered twice within five lines: "He is a flour þat welketh nought" (23.849, 853). It may be that, in the form of Jesus, "lyf is deþes pray," but because Jesus' act of dying is directed by "Loue," death does not endure: life, and youth, return (21.787-88).

Against this hope for regeneration through Jesus, Middle

English writers set fallen physicality and earthly matters, which fall within the purview of Esau the Ur-Jew. Humans may achieve spiritual life in this world through Jesus, but their bodily nature is an obstacle. "We ben in foule flesch by-loke," our Meditator laments; on the one hand, all earthly pleasure, to which the body is prone, "lastep but a lytel while/Mannes soule to be-gyle" (57.2189; 45.1687-88); on the other hand, the body is the ultimate *memento mori*, in a state of decay while still alive, and distracting the soul from seeking God:

ffor whiles I bere pis body a-boute
 Al ioye and blisse I am wipoute.
 I bere a body maud of molde
 Dat clopeth me with cares colde. (45.1691-94)

Thus perceiving through his own mortality the transience of mundane affairs, the Meditator solicits Jesus' help in avoiding them: "let me neuere for more nor lasse/Loue god to wel pat sone shal passe" (35.1333-34).

"God Dat Sone Shal Passe"

Judas' medieval status as symbolic of all Jews involves both sins of greed: avarice as well as gluttony. To refer again to the *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*, the Meditator

denounces Judas for betraying his lord "for so lytel pris," and condemns the love of money in a brief apostrophe: "Coueityse, ay worp þe wo, / Þi-self þou slest, þey non oper do" (11.394; 39.1473-74). The *Northern Passion* likewise characterizes Judas as "combyrd in couatyse" (57.223). There appears to be a connection between monetary wealth and contempt for Jesus; in *Cursor Mundi*, when Jesus' enemies have brought him to Mount Calvary, it is the wealthy who seem most eager to augment his distress:

Riche men scorned him
in al þat þei mou3t;
How þei my3t do moost despit
on vche side þei sou3t. (3.122.16,611-614)

No doubt the rich resent Jesus' sermons on the evils of worldly goods, and, perhaps even more, his own personal, and obvious, rejection of riches. The Beloved of "Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd" hails Jesus as a model of the life he preaches: that of material poverty, but spiritual wealth:

. . . poure þu þe self was, & te poure þu raðeste
cheas; pouerte þu luuedes; pouerte þu tahtes, & 3iuen
þu haues echeliche þin endelese blisse til alle þat
clenli for þi luue mesaise & pouerte wilfulliche
polien. (29.351-57)

Not only has Jesus chosen, professed, and encouraged poverty on earth; he has reserved "endelesse blisse" in Heaven for those who follow his example, such as the Beloved herself:

A hu schulde i beo riche, & tu, mi leof, swa poure? for
 þi, swete iesu crist, wile I beo poure, for þe as tu
 was for þe luue of me, for to beo riche wið þe i þin
 eche blisse, for wið pouerte & wið wa schal mon wele
 buggen. (29-30.357-64)

Only by sharing Jesus' poverty in this life can humans share his "eche blisse" in the next; the more riches they amass on earth, the less likely they are to merit the true spiritual wealth, the only wealth of any value, and this is why "wið pouerte & wið wa schal mon wele buggen."

The medieval Judas represents the supposed Jewish opposition to this spiritual ideal. The Meditator understates the case against Judas when he decries his unsound values:

Now was Iudas marchaunt vnwys
 To selle þat lord for so lytel pris
 þat hadde richesse withouten ende
 To raunsom with al mankynde. (MLPC 11.393-96)

The pittance for which Judas is willing to sell the source of

happiness and peace seems to offend the Meditator almost as much as the act of betrayal itself.⁹² His description of Judas as a "marchaunt vnwys" is ironically corroborated by the Jews who pay that modest fee, and who, in *Cursor Mundi*, congratulate Judas on "a good bargayn," and, in an unwitting and paradoxical foreshadowing of their later indifference to Judas' remorse, greet him with much cordiality: "pou art to vs louynge . . . welcome to pis gederynge" (3.89.15,414-416). Like the Meditator, the *Cursor Mundi* poet understates the case when he contradicts the Jews' positive assessment of the proposed transaction by

92. For the *Cursor Mundi* poet, Judas' acceptance of blood money is not necessarily an integral part of the betrayal, but rather an extra sin that makes an already grave offence graver still. Here the poet apostrophizes Judas:

A, pou traitour, Iudas peof,
 feloun foulest in lede,
 Of pi michel wickednes
 may al pis world drede!
 How my3te hit shape into pyn hert
 to do so foule a dede,
 Siche a lord to do be slayn --
 & perfore take mede? (3.91.15,479-486)

remarking: "to hem þat þe chepyng made/hit fel to myche vnspede"
(3.89.15,419-420).

Even when these plotting Jews do not greet Judas with ominous warmth, the affinity of traitor to conspirators is not neglected. The poet of "The Passion of Our Lord" draws a parallel between the Jews' desire for power over Jesus, and Judas' desire for food at the Last Supper: when Judas "chepte heom to sullen vre helare,/Hi were swiþe blyþe for þere cheffare" (40.115-16), and their "blyþe" mood recalls the "blupeliche" manner in which Judas ate the morsel just nine lines earlier (40.107). The link established here reflects the larger parallel between gluttony and avarice, the latter in the form of hunger for power, and suggests that the Jews who deal with Judas pursue this power with an appetitive eagerness. The relation of cupidinous to gluttonous greed is more graphically expressed in the *Southern Passion* and *South English Ministry and Passion*, which attribute to the Jews such unrelenting cruelty as to insist that Jesus' supply of blood, the currency they seek, be exhausted before his Passion is deemed complete. The poets here commiserate with their tortured lord:

Ihesu, hard was þi deth; wol narwe þe Iewis þo þou3tte
Qwan þei þe rote of þi swete lyf at þi herte ground it
sou3tte --

þat is þe wil of euery mannys lyf -- þei were lop to

leuyn ow3t;
 bei lefte in þe no drope of blood þat nas al ou3t
 brou3t.

(*SEMP* 181.2579-82; see also *SP* 60.1645-48)

The Jews here described suggest the fictive Jews of the blood libel.⁹³

Meanwhile, against the greed of the literary Jewish priests and their crucifying agents, whom Middle English poets regard, or at least present, as typical of the Jewish race, Jesus sets charity, claimed by many Christians as a uniquely Christian virtue. Like the Jews through whom the poets assail Jesus' body, but for opposite reasons, Jesus himself insists that all his blood be spilled for humankind:

Blissid Ihesu, meche was þi loue þat þou kiddest þere;
 þou woldyst þat we were clene bou3t þat no defau3t
 were.

93. Especially relevant is Trachtenberg's allusion to the victim of an alleged crime committed in Weissenberg in 1270; the report runs: "Jews accused of suspending child by the feet . . . and opening every artery in its body in order to obtain all its blood" (137).

With þe leste drope of þi blood þou my3ttyst vs ha
 bou3t,
 & þou 3eue for vs euery drope þat þer belefte ry3t
 nou3t. (SEMP 182.2601-04; see also SP 61.1667-70)

The writer of "On Lofsong of ure Louerde"⁹⁴ makes the same claim in gratitude of Jesus' liberality: ". . . a drope of pine deorewurðe blode þat tu o rode scheddest were inouh to weaschen alle folkes fulðe," he avows, then acknowledges that instead there flowed from Jesus' "wunden, moncun uor to helen," a "flod" of "sterke stremes" (11.43-47). The Beloved of "Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd" celebrates her lover's munificence, his gift of his "ahne heorte blod," by declaring that "derre druri ne 3ef neauer na lefmon to oðer" (22.95-98). She later avers that the gift is all the more charitable and precious for being undeserved; "ne was neauer unwurði þing chepet swa deore" (32.447-48). The generosity -- one might almost say the excessiveness -- of Jesus' sacrifice, greater as it is than humanity's desert, or even need, emphasizes by contrast the cold, exacting relentlessness of those who spill his blood, as well as the petty self-interest of Judas, whose exact motives must now be considered.

94. Early thirteenth century; from MS Cotton Nero A.14, dating from the second quarter of the thirteenth century.

Judas' Tithe

The Judas of the *Prose Complaint of Our Lady* evidently has no specific price in mind when he approaches the priests and asks: "'What wil 3e 3iue me & I schal 3iue 3ou Ihesu þat I ne loue nou3th?'" (75.19-76.1). Herein he conforms to the model of Matthew, the only Gospel in which he asks for money,⁹⁵ but he differs from most other Middle English Judases, who request the biblical sum of thirty pieces of silver for a reason not recorded in any gospel -- not even in John, although it does make the most of John's statement that Judas "was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (12.6). Many Crucifixion writings contain a version of the gospel story of the woman who won the disapproval of Jesus' disciples by anointing him with expensive oil instead of exchanging it for money for the poor. Mark tells the story thus:

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,
as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an
alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious;
and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.
And there were some that had indignation within

95. Compare Matthew 26.15 with Mark 14.10-11 and Luke 22.3-6.

themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might

conveniently betray him. (Mark 14.3-11; see also Matthew 26.6-16; John 12.1-8)

Although no gospel explicitly links Judas' betrayal with Jesus' prodigal disregard for monetary matters, the proximity in Matthew and Mark of the anointing scene to Judas' first visit to the priests suggests that the loss of potential funds has

disappointed him. John limits the protesters to one, Judas alone, and adds that Judas was a thief, thus lending credence to the conclusions one may draw from the earlier Gospels (12.4, 6).

John also, like Mark, estimates the ointment's value at some "three hundred pence" (12.5); Matthew does not appraise the ointment, but does give Judas' fee for betraying Jesus, saying that the priests "covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" (26.15). Medieval Christian writers fused these biblical circumstances into an apocryphal theory of Judas' personal policy regarding theft, and an explanation of why his payment from the priests could not be less than thirty pieces of silver.

The *Southern Passion* begins with the anointing scene, explains Judas' system of theft -- and rationale for his later betrayal -- within the first forty lines, and revisits the topic later, during the betrayal scene, thus demonstrating the centrality of the events that here introduce the Crucifixion story. This text is representative of the typical Middle English modifications that make Judas' crime one of simple avarice, and encourage the Christian stereotype of Jewish greed.

Like John, the *Southern Passion* places Lazarus, Martha, and Mary among those present at the supper, and identifies the woman with the ointment as Mary, although, like many Middle English renderings, it confuses Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha with Mary Magdalene:

By-ffore six dayes of Ester as a palme-sone eue
 Iesus wente to Bethanye pere to by-leue,
 Per as a lazar was ded þat Ihesus brou3te þo to lyue;
 Hi made þer a ffeste, and Martha him bed þer-to wel
 blyue,

And seruede ham atte mete, and lazar þer sat and et,
 And Marie Magdaleyne þer wosh oure lordes ffet,
 And wip a pound of oynement 3eo smerede his ffet ywis;
 Of spykenard hit was ymad þat wel precious þing is.
 3eo wypede him suppe wip hure her; þe box was of
 Marbelston,

And al þe hous was yffuld of þe smel ri3t anon.

.....

On of oure lordes disciples wroþ was wip þat dede --
 Iudas þat him suppe solde, and þeos wordes sede:
 "Lord, wher-to shal þis lire ymad beo, ffor þis mi3te
 beo seld
 ffor preo hondred payns, me þinkeþ, and to pouere men
 ydeld."
 ffor he þou3te mucche on pouere men he ne sede nou3t þat
 þere,
 Ak ffor he was him-sulf a þeof and oure lordes purs-
 berere,
 ffor mony men oure lord 3af goed þat were of goede
 þou3t

To susteyne his disciples whanne he were to depe
 ybrou3t;
 þanne wolde Iudas ate laste þe teoping þer-of stele;
 A shrewe he was al his lif -- y ne may no leng hit
 hele!

þe teoping of þreo houndred payns þritty pans is;
 To leose so mucche of his þufþe him þou3te sore ywis,
 And ffor wrappe of þulke pans to keouery 3if he mi3te
 He solde oure lord ffor þritty pans to þe gywes myd
 vnri3te. (1-2.1-10, 21-34).

The poet's combined desires to offer a reason for Judas' betrayal and to make that reason a vile one result in his adopting the tithing theory: Judas steals the tenth part of every donation made to Jesus and his disciples; as Jesus' treasurer and almoner, he has ready access to these funds. He has begun to regard the tithe as his own personal property, and when no donation from which a tithe might be taken is forthcoming, he feels cheated, and tries to "keouery" the imagined loss. So disgusted is our poet with Judas' grasping behaviour that his forbearance lasts only twenty-nine lines, after which he asserts: "A shrewe he was al his lif; y ne may no leng hit hele."

Later, as the betrayal scene begins, the *Southern Passion's* Judas approaches the priests and, like his counterpart in the *Prose Complaint of Our Lady*, asks: "'What wolde 3e 3iue me & ich

wole 3ow take him þat Ihesus is?'" (28.774). However, this Judas has fixed a price already, in accordance with his practice of stealing tithes, and the poet reminds the reader that this same theft of tithes determines the sale of Jesus itself, not just the sum that Judas receives. He begins with an ironic commendation of Judas the sound businessman for giving the priests such a good deal, then explains that the modest sum Judas requires is actually a sign of pettiness:

Goed chep þe shrewe him grauntede þat him so solde;
He ne axede nou3t a fferþing more þan þe gywes him
tolde.

He ne lowede him nou3t to deore, as þis chapmen wollep
echon

Þing þat is deoreworþ, ak he axede ham anon:

"What wollep 3e ffor him 3iue," as who seiþ: "beode 3e
And as goed chep ich wolle him 3iue as 3e wollep bydde
me."

Now luper þrift vp-on his heued; "Amen" seggeþ alle!
ffor luper chapman he was, and al-so him is byffalle.

Ak þe teoþing he nolde nou3t þat hit were ffor-lore
Of þe Magdaleynes oynement3, as hit seiþ by-ffore.

Anon ffor þreo hondred pans he preysede hit ywis,
ffor þe teoþing of þreo hondred pans þritty pans is,

And he stal oure lordes teoþinge; þerffore he nolde hit

do

No lasse þan þritty þans to keuere his þeofte so.

(29.779-92)

The indirect, understated, and vague description of Jesus as "þing þat is deoreworþ" suggests the futility of trying to commodify God, but also, granting that Judas makes the attempt, the baseness of the perversely low value he places on his lord. His attitude is the reverse of the Beloved's, who says of Jesus' sacrifice for her: "ne was neauer unwurði þing chepet swa deore" (*Wohunge* 32.447-48).

Judas' is the worst bargain any human has ever made, worse than the "chartre" Eve drew up with the devil "when ho putte hir hond to that tre/to touche that appul willesfully/that God forbode hir done schuld be" (*Stanzaic Life* 218.6397-6400),⁹⁶ and worse than Adam's consent to Eve's sin, although, as the Jesus of the *Harrowing of Hell* tells him, "þou hast duere aboht/þat þou

96. The passage that describes Eve's sin as an official transaction is lengthy and detailed, and reveals, in its portrayal of sin as a complex financial procedure, this medieval Christian poet's suspicion of the new money- and credit-based economy now replacing the land-based economy of the earlier Middle Ages. See the *Stanzaic Life of Christ* 217-18.6377-6424.

leuedest me noht" (7.59-60). Yet to many medieval Christians, Judas was not exceptional in kind in the annals of economic history -- only in scale. Just as the Jewish priests and their soldiers, Jesus' torturers, became types of Jewish cruelty, so Judas came to represent a Jewish desire for gain. Indeed, the two traits had supposedly met in the Ur-Jew Cain, who, according to *Cursor Mundi*, in addition to being "þe fendes fode," was also a reluctant giver of tithes (1.66.1056). His disinclination to return God's bounty, as much as his natural viciousness, differentiates Cain from his virtuous younger brother and leads directly to his downfall:

þis abel was an herde of fee;
 Blessed and holy man was he.
 Ri3twis he was goddes frende
 And trewely 3af to him his tende.
 For his offerynge was ri3twise,
 God payed was of his sacrificise.
 For caym 3af his wip euel wille,
 Oure lord loked not þertille. (1.66-67.1059-66)

Genesis does not say "why Abel's offering was more acceptable," but in the poet's era, "the most popular explanation was that Abel gave his in a better spirit" (359, note to 1063-66).

Although the biblical text does not support this belief,⁹⁷ tradition surrounding the seven deadly sins does indirectly provide a possible basis for it, as is evident in the note immediately following the one just cited. "In the Middle Ages, sacrilege was a branch of avarice," and in killing Jesus' likeness in Abel, Cain does commit an act of sacrilege according to the definition given: "any kind of outrage on consecrated persons or things." Since Cain is patently guilty of one form of sacrilege, he may be more likely to fall to another, such as avarice in the form of "the grudging offering of the tithe" of which the Middle Ages accused him.

Cain's resentment toward God's tithe seems especially contemptible in light of the fact that God establishes the sacrifice of the tenth part of Adam's yield as a means for fallen humanity to win back his favour. *Cursor Mundi* describes the institution of the tithe as an act of mercy toward Adam, who, on hearing his punishment for defying God, bitterly repents:

"Alas," seide adam, "woo is me
 þat I trowed not, lorde, to þe;
 Lorde, my lyf is me ful loop
 þat I euere made þe wroop;

97. Although see again Hebrews 11.4.

I woot but þe I haue no frende --
 Tel me er I fro þe wende:
 What manere and wiþ what þinge
 May I gete þi sau3telynge?"
 "Adam," he seide, "wel seystou now;
 Herkene -- I wole telle þe how:
 Amonge þine opere werkes hende,
 Of þi wynnyng 3yue me þe tende.
 Of al þi fruyt, holde partyes nyne,
 And I wole þat þe tenþe be myne." (1.64.957-70)

God appears to be rewarding Adam for his submission after the fact by proposing a simple devotional act through which Adam can prove his new-found obedience. God has no need of such an offering; as Adam remarks, on suggesting that God take a larger share, "þou 3yuest al" (1.64.971). The tithe is for Adam, not God. Yet *Cursor Mundi's* Cain rebels against it, if only in spirit, and his defiance and ingratitude earn God's disfavour and lead to ruin -- and, in so doing, confirm his status among medieval Christians as an Ur-Jew.

The Cain of the *Stanzaic Life of Christ* even goes a step further, sacrificing the worst tenth part of his crops in a perverse rejection of God's mercy:

The furst remede was offryng

That be-gunnen was ful wel
 of Adames son, with-oute lesing --
 that one hat Caym, that other Abel.

Cayme that a tilmon was
 cornes offert not oright;
 Abel of bestaile offring mas
 of furst-born to God almight.

But Caymes offering in that place
 forsaken was in Goddes sight,
 for fuylet corn bifore his face
 he brand; ther-fore had thay no light.

Abel, that good bestes took,
 had thonke of God for his doying,
 but Caynes cornes God forsok
 that of the worst made his offryng. (78-79.2329-44)

Again, the tithe is meant as a "remede," not a burden, but the Middle English Cain is a materialist, preferring, like the later Esau, grain to God's grace. Abel the proto-Christian tithed faithfully, and so, according to *Cursor Mundi*, did "Seeth þat was boþe meke & mylde/Of whom cryst hymselfen caam" (1.71.1204-5, 1207-8). So, in fact, do the proto-Christian patriarchs: we

hear of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob⁹⁸ all making the propitiatory gesture (CM 1.135.3098-3106; 146.3439-40; 158.3812-18), but not Ishmael or Esau.

Thus Judas' theft is aligned with Cain's contempt for the tithe as part of a lengthy tradition of Jewish avarice and crime, one that, like the tradition of violence, survives for centuries in early and medieval Christian writings. "Judas, the original businessman with the contract in the pocket," as Rosenberg calls him (21), assumes the status of an arch-Jew, not only through his betrayal of Jesus, but also through his hunger for money and his readiness to sate it by whatever means necessary. Judas joins the devil in Michelson's list of villainous Jews and their definitive traits:

A very Jew is Judas the hypocrite, the thief, the swindler (John, 12), the traitor. Judas Iscariot, who went up to the chief priests and said: what are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver. With a simple question the utter baseness of this Jew's soul is laid bare. (9)

98. Not surprisingly, however, Jacob cites conditions for his tithe.

Jews and the Medieval Money Trade

Many medieval Christians blamed contemporary Jews for Judas' crime, regarding it as another example -- though, admittedly, an especially egregious one -- of a racial trait. Their attitude is summarized by Felsenstein: "The scourge that is upon the Jews following the Crucifixion is compounded by Judas's betrayal of Christ at the Last Supper. By extension, all Jews must be feared for their treachery" (31). The ignorance and credulity inspiring this attitude are discernible in its evidentiary methods: "In popular culture, the equation through similarity of name of Jew and Judas marks out the Jew as one who both betrayed and killed Christ," Felsenstein observes (32), along with Fisch (15) and Synan (32). If such tenuous evidence was enough to implicate Jews in Judas' crimes, any behaviour that distinguished Jews from Christians was certain to arouse suspicion, in matters of finance as well as faith, and just as unfamiliar Jewish spiritual practices were among the factors contributing to such Christian accusations as the blood libel, so their participation in the money trade drew accusations of performing the devil's work. A brief summary of the Jewish financial experience in medieval England will prove that the materialism of Judas the thief and the earlier earth-bound Esau was believed by medieval English Christians to motivate much later Jews as well.

In The Jew in English Literature, as Author and as Subject,

Edward N. Calisch writes that William the Conqueror "brought the Jews over [to England] to help him finance his British conquest," adding that "he also made the Jews pay for the privilege of serving him" (34). Michelson further explains that William recruited Jews "to assist him in changing the backward state of the country into a modern condition," although, again, as Calisch had remarked, "the Jew had to pay heavily for the right of living in England," even to the point of virtual slavery, as "the Jew had no right or citizenship in the land. He was simply the King's chattel, and his life and goods were absolutely at the King's mercy" (Michelson 24-25), a point also raised by Esther L. Panitz in *The Alien in Their Midst: Images of Jews in English Literature* (28). Panitz further remarks that William "invited the Jews . . . to accompany him upon his invasion of England" specifically because, "officially, the Jews were the usurers"⁹⁹ of 99. Calisch explains that the term "usury" was less specialized in the Middle Ages than it became in later centuries:

The use of the word usury is misleading. To-day the taking of ordinary, legal interest for the loan of money is considered . . . a legitimate and commendable enterprise. Usury means unnatural and exorbitant interest exacted through the necessity of the borrower. In the early and middle ages all interest was called usury. (76)

the Middle Ages," having perforce entered "the fields of banking and factoring" after "centuries of forced exclusion from trade and manufacture, and clerical proscriptions against owning land" (25-26).¹⁰⁰ As the Church denounced usury as "an odious

See also Fisch 11.

100. Calisch gives a more detailed description of the adverse circumstances surrounding Jews' practice of usury:

It is an axiomatic principle of interest that the rates are proportionate to the risk involved. Did the Jewish money-lenders of the middle ages undergo a greater risk than their Christian neighbors? than even the lawless spirit of the time ordinarily created? Money-lending was practically the only means of livelihood permitted to them. They could not own land or till it. They could not enter any of the guilds, or artisans' or merchants' associations, or into any trade or profession, excepting medicine. This last, too, was held against them. Their eminence in the medical profession was ascribed to the use of "black arts." It is one of the cruel ironies of history that the Jews, driven from every other avenue of bread-winning, were forced to be money-lenders and then were spat upon because they were money-lenders. Even in this

occupation fit only for nonbelievers" (Panitz 26), Jews for a time encountered little competition, and, as Little observes, "gained such a reputation for expertise in the handling of money that they eventually became identified with money and moneylending in the Christian consciousness" (276). Thus, to quote Rosenberg, while "the accusation of commercial villainy had already been associated with Judas and his thirty pieces of silver[,] it was now given credence by the overt practice of high finance" (24). By the late twelfth century, English Jews, "prior to the development of a general and regular system of taxation, had in effect, if unofficially, become royal tax collectors" (Little 280)¹⁰¹, a position which garnered for them much resentment among the subjects of their various royal patrons, who only "in return for a large share of the profits . . . were willing to protect Jews and their moneylending" (Langmuir, "Medieval Anti-Semitism" 31).¹⁰²

occupation they were far from secure. The kings used them as sponges, to squeeze gold from, when caprice or necessity demanded. And their less noble debtors often repudiated their indebtedness. (77)

101. See also Michelson (17) and Fisch (11).

102. For more on the Jews' financial role in shaping William's new conquest, see Modder 2-3.

Often such protection was a matter of urgent need, though not always forthcoming.¹⁰³ Calisch declares: "It is a fact that many of the massacres instituted against the Jews were simply for the purpose of wiping out the evidences of indebtedness which they held" (77).¹⁰⁴ Even those who officially opposed physical violence toward Jews often tolerated, even approved of, other forms of maltreatment on account of Jewish financial activity. Peter the Venerable, for example, is paraphrased in Bestul as stating, in that same 1146 letter to Louis VII of France already consulted on a different matter, that "Christians are justified in oppressing Jews and in stealing their property, because Jews received their money fraudulently" (77). Abulafia also comments

103. Royal protection of Jews against the Christian populace also often proved counter-productive. Michelson writes:

It is only a farce, when we come across an instance of protection against the popular hatred, for then they were left to the tender mercies of their would-be protectors and this generally meant new levies of money entailing new draining of the people and thus the Jews were landed in a vicious circle. (31-32)

104. Little comments on this phenomenon at greater length (290).

on Peter's rancorous attitude toward Jewish business affairs, noting that, "with Cluny [his abbey] heavily in debt[,] he wrote about Jewish moneylending in especially bitter terms" (138).

The theory, advanced by Peter among others, that Jewish lack of belief in Jesus indicated also a lack of humanity has already been noted. Abulafia suggests that this theory accorded well with earlier attitudes toward the Jews in business:

. . . a sideline of the intellectual endeavours of the Twelfth-century Renaissance was the marginalization of Jews. This form of marginalization interlocked with the isolation of Jews from the rest of society as usurers and dependents of princes. In this way twelfth-century theology contributed to the evolving concept that Jews were less than human, falling as they did outside what was deemed to be the pale of humanity. (131)

Langmuir, too, observes that usury was often regarded as one "manifestation of an underlying essential inferiority," belief in which encouraged many Christians "to think of Jews as less than fully human and to treat them accordingly" ("Medieval Anti-Semitism" 32).

However, as noted in Chapter One, the inhuman Jew was not always merely sub-human; sometimes he was super-human, if only in

evil ways. Glassman shows that the practice of usury, as well as unbelief in Jesus, prompted charges of satanic works:

The Jew was the devil's man not only because he brought Christians into the clutches of Satan but also because of his practice of usury. On the continent as well as in England, preachers reminded their flocks that God had created farmers, priests, and soldiers, but that the usurers were invented by the devil. Satan was the Jew's partner in all his financial transactions; the two of them were closely identified with each other.

(33)

It was thus ironic, though perhaps not surprising, that the Church ultimately chose to practice usury, although "usury" was not the word it chose to characterize its activities. Calisch, however, describes the Church's financial practices in these terms:

The Popes themselves, the very heads of the Church, while it was thundering its anathema against all money-lending for profit, were the greatest usurers. Through the means of merchants called Caursini, they [lent] the immense revenues of the Church at exorbitant interest, and under a clerical subterfuge that was simply

colossal in its hypocrisy. (76-77)¹⁰⁵

"The period of expulsions was approaching," to quote Langmuir,¹⁰⁶ for kings also profited from business with Christian merchants who managed to circumvent the official Christian stance against usury ("Medieval Anti-Semitism" 31). As their Christian subjects felt such animosity toward Jews, for their association with royal protection as for anything else, many of these erstwhile protectors eventually came to deal with Christian usurers to the exclusion of Jews -- often having reduced the Jews to penury with their harsh terms and arbitrary fines and taxes on Jewries -- and ultimately expelled all Jews from their realms, to the general approbation of the Christian populace.¹⁰⁷ Most

105. See also Panitz 28. As for the Jewish response to the Popes' "infamous trade," Michelson refers us to the historical chronicler Matthew Paris: "when the Jews, says he, came to understand this Christian way of preventing usury they laughed very heartily" (30).

106. See also Modder 10-11.

107. See also Modder 8-9; Panitz 25, 28; Fisch 11; Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* 15; and, for a refinement of this account of the Jews' expulsion from England, P. Elman, "The Economic Causes of the Expulsion of the Jews in 1290," 151.

sources cite Edward I of England as the first monarch to expel Jews from a European country on a permanent basis.¹⁰⁸ He inaugurated an era of expulsions of Jews across the European continent, and the general scattering of Jews that resulted, their precarious position among different Christian majorities, and the impossibility of establishing permanent settlements -- the guaranteed impermanence, in fact, of any Jewish settlement in the western European later Middle Ages -- seemed to prove the Christian notion that the Jews were doomed to wander homeless forever. In this way, the materialism widely ascribed by Christians to Jews in the Middle Ages, the desire for worldly goods studied in Chapter Three, connects to the wandering, isolation, and exclusion from Christian society studied in Chapter Two. In fact, Isaac-Edersheim suggests that Judas' story has "parallels" with the Wandering Jew's (197); he even cites one commentator who calls the Wandering Jew as he was on the day

108. Jeremy Cohen, Langmuir, and Hurwitz all give examples of such expulsions. Among states banishing Jews in the Middle Ages, Cohen lists England, France, Spain, Sicily, Portugal, Naples, and Germany (*Friars and Jews* 14); Langmuir lists England, southern Italy (giving the date for this region as 1290 as well), France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal ("Medieval Anti-Semitism" 29); and Hurwitz lists Germany, England, Hungary, France, and Bohemia (217). Note that Hurwitz places the first expulsion in Germany in 1012.

Jesus died an "'ambitious mercenary spirit' who chased away Christ because he was afraid that he would ruin his business," and another who calls him "'the worshipper of outward success'" (198).

Thus, on observing, and participating in, the various forms of persecution endured by Jews on account of the unpopular trade they were largely obliged to practice, many medieval Christians regarded contemporary Jews, not just as passively suffering the penalty for Judas' sin of avarice, but as daily committing the same sin themselves. The equivalence of Judas to medieval Jewry was but one more reflection of that broader identification of all Jews with certain sinister biblical forebears, as well as each other. Trachtenberg illustrates one of the practical consequences of this identification, a consequence particularly relevant to the resentment inspired by Jewish involvement in the money trade:

The Church employed the term Jew as all-inclusive, embracing the entire people, past, present, and future. The principle of corporate responsibility which prevailed during the Middle Ages -- taxes were levied on the corporation as a unit, fines or other punishment for the offense of a member were exacted of the entire community or nationality -- lent added force to the traditional generalization. (167)

Disregarding the Christian authorities' own mercenary ends in so taxing and fining the Jews, the Christian populace doubtless felt, as Peter the Venerable did, that monetary loss was an appropriate hardship for the Jews to endure, given their putative link to Judas, whose crime in betraying Jesus, though egregious in itself, was rendered still more so, and, as many Christians believed, more typically Jewish, by the avarice that prompted it. Avarice, indeed, had initially prompted Judas' theft of a tenth of his takings on Jesus' behalf as his almoner, but this theft was also sacrilege, a perversion of God's tithe. The actual coins he received for Jesus represented a second perversion: according to two sources studied here, *Cursor Mundi* and *The History of the Holy Rood-tree*, the thirty silver coins had once been thirty silver rings used by David to measure the growth of the tree that the three sacred wands became (CM 1.305.8241-50; 324.8830-42; *Holy Rood-tree* 22.8-14; 24.5-8). Judas is a symbol of religious decay: the tithe in his hands becomes a diabolic mockery of the pious offering to God; the rings that encircled the tree of the Cross disintegrate into bits of money of which the *Northern Passion* poet says: "þat syluer was full wa bi-gane;/So full of syn was neuer nane" (80.1161-62; see also original version 21.805-6). In this character, he is like his forebear Esau, whose hunger reduces his birthright and blessing to a meal of soup and bread.

As *Cursor Mundi*'s Jacob absconds with Esau's blessing, God

greet him with the promise that he, and not his elder brother, will inherit their father and grandfather's divine assurance of election: "'For þine eldres to þe I take/And esau for þe forsake'" (1.157.3793-94). God is not concerned about the methods Jacob employs to extract from Esau his birthright and blessing; Genesis and, especially, medieval biblical tradition, represented in literary terms by *Cursor Mundi*, do not censure Jacob for appropriating his brother's rights, choosing rather to censure Esau for surrendering them, no matter how unwillingly or unwittingly. *Cursor Mundi*'s treatment of the rivalry between Rebekah and Isaac's twin sons reflects a medieval characterization of Esau as a base materialist whose attachment to worldly matters obstructs his understanding of the spiritual values represented by the birthright. It also reflects the Christian belief, apparent throughout the sources studied here, that in his worldliness Esau represents the Jews, and that his loss of birthright represents the Jewish loss of election in favour of Christians -- or rather, the exposure of Jewish pretensions to an election never intended for Jews. Quoting Genesis 25.23, where God explains why Rebekah's pregnancy is so troubled, Ruether shows why the relationship between Esau and Jacob was so popular among Christian apologists as a model for the Church's claim to the chosen status the Jews regarded as theirs:

"Two people" are in Rebecca's womb, and "the younger shall overcome the elder and the elder shall serve the younger." The younger people are the gentile Church, which overcomes the elder brother, the Jews, while the elder brother is to be in perpetual servitude to the younger people, the Church. (180)

In his role as a symbol of rejected Jewry, Esau joins the earlier elder brothers Cain and Ishmael as an Ur-Jew whose younger, proto-Christian brother's success is interpreted by many medieval Christians as a sign of their own faith's triumph over Judaism. Like Cain and Ishmael, Esau is furnished with ungodly or otherwise undesirable traits by Middle English Crucifixion writers trying to rationalize, in terms other than those of age, the election of younger siblings and rejection of elders. Esau's putative vice is greed, a sin that links him with Judas, distinguished in Middle English literature as a thief and a glutton as well as a traitor.

In addition to his signature sin of greed, however, the medieval Esau shares in the violence of his predecessor Cain. In Genesis, when Jacob returns from his self-imposed exile with his wives Leah and Rachel, his daughter and his eleven sons, he fears deadly reprisals from his wronged brother Esau, but instead receives a joyous welcome: "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they

wept" (33.4). In *Cursor Mundi*, however, Esau remains "fel wipouten spare" until God answers Jacob's prayer to appease his brother's anger (1.163.3974; see 1.162-64.3953-4008).

Together with the biblical detail of Esau's eventual move from home to make way for the returning Jacob (Genesis 36.6-7), and the link thus established between Esau and Ishmael, disinherited and likewise denied his birthright, this violent reception of his brother makes Esau a typical early member of what the Christian Middle Ages thought Judaism to be: a religion of the past, blind to the spirit and hostile to all who were not similarly blind. Esau is worldly, but "terrestrial" only in an ironic sense, perhaps unnoticed by the Christian scholars whom Gerson Cohen cites as reading Esau in this way (38): he may be earth-bound, yet he ultimately leaves his father's land to the uncontested dominance of his younger brother, their father's heir.

Bibliography: Primary Sources

Brown, Beatrice Daw, ed. *The Southern Passion*. Early English Text Society original series 169. London: Oxford University Press, 1927.

Belfour, A. O. *Twelfth Century Homilies*. Early English Text Society original series 137. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.; Oxford University Press, 1909.

Campbell, Gertrude H. "The Middle English *Evangelie*." *PMLA* 30:3; new series 23:3 (1915): 529-613.

Cowper, J. Meadows, ed. *Meditations on the Supper of our Lord, and the Hours of the Passion*. Early English Text Society original series 60. London: N. Trübner & Co., 1875.

D'Evelyn, Charlotte, ed. *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*. Early English Text Society original series 158. London: Oxford University Press, 1921.

Foster, Frances A., ed. *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*. Early English Text Society original series 166. London: Oxford University

Press, 1926.

---, ed. *The Northern Passion*. 2 vols. Early English Text Society original series 145, 147. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.; Oxford University Press, 1913, 1916.

---, and Wilhelm Heuser, eds. *The Northern Passion: Supplement*. Early English Text Society original series 183. London: Oxford University Press, 1930; New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1971.

Horrall, Sarah M., ed. *The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi*. Vol. 1 of 5. Gen. ed. Sarah M. Horrall. Ottawa Mediaeval Texts and Studies 5. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1978.

Hulme, William Henry, ed. *The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus*. Early English Text Society extra series 100. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1907, 1961.

Marx, C. William, and Jeanne F. Drennan, eds. *The Middle English Prose Complaint of our Lady and Gospel of Nicodemus*. Middle English Texts 19. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1987.

Morris, Richard, ed. *An Old English Miscellany*. Early English Text Society original series 49. London: N. Trübner & Co., 1872.

Napier, Arthur S., ed. *History of the Holy Rood-tree*. Early English Text Society original series 103. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1894.

Pickering, O. S., ed. *The South English Ministry and Passion*. Middle English Texts 16. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1984.

Stauffenberg, Henry J., ed. *The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi*. Vol. 3 of 5. Gen. ed. Sarah M. Horrall. Ottawa Mediaeval Texts and Studies 13. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985.

Thompson, W. Meredith, ed. *De Wohunge of ure Lauerd*. Early English Text Society original series 241. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Bibliography: Secondary Sources

Abulafia, Anna Sapir. "Twelfth-Century Renaissance Theology and the Jews." Cohen, *From Witness to Witchcraft* 125-139.

Anderson, George K. *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*. Providence: Brown University Press, 1965, 1970.

Beckwith, Sarah. *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993, 1996.

Bennett, J.A.W. *Poetry of the Passion: Studies in Twelve Centuries of English Verse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.

Bestul, Thomas H. *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.

Brown, Carleton, and Rossell Hope Robbins. *The Index of Middle English Verse*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987.

Calisch, Edward N. *The Jew in English Literature, as Author and as Subject*. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1909, 1969.

Cohen, Derek, and Deborah Heller, eds. *Jewish Presences in English Literature*. Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.

Cohen, Gerson D. "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought." *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*. Ed. Alexander Altmann. Philip W. Lown Institute of Advanced Judaic Studies -- Studies and Texts Vol. 4. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Cohen, Jeremy, ed. *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation*. Essential Papers on Jewish Studies 1. New York and London: New York University Press, 1991.

---. *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-*

Judaism. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982.

---, ed. *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996.
Harrassowitz, 1997.

---. "The Jews as the Killers of Christ in the Latin Tradition, from Augustine to the Friars." *Traditio* 39 (1983): 1-27.

Elman, P. "The Economic Causes of the Expulsion of the Jews in 1290." *The Economic History Review* 7 (1936-37): 145-54.

Felsenstein, Frank. *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830*. Johns Hopkins Jewish Studies. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Fisch, Harold. *The Dual Image: The Figure of the Jew in English and American Literature*. London: World Jewish Library; World Jewish Congress British Section, 1971.

Fredriksen, Paula. "Divine Justice and Human Freedom: Augustine on Jews and Judaism, 392-398." Cohen, *From Witness to Witchcraft* 29-54.

- Friedlander, Henry, and Sybil Milton, eds. *The Holocaust: Ideology, Bureaucracy, and Genocide*. Millwood, New York: Kraus International Publications, 1980.
- Glassman, Bernard. *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes Without Jews: Images of the Jews in England 1290-1700*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975.
- Gray, Douglas. *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.
- Hartung, Albert E., gen. ed. *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*. Vol. 7. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1986.
- Hasan-Rokem, Galit, and Alan Dundes, eds. *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Hurwitz, S. "Ahasver, the Eternal Wanderer: Psychological Aspects." Trans. Uli Linke. Hasan-Rokem and Dundes 211-26.
- Isaac-Edersheim, E. "Ahasver: A Mythic Image of the Jew." Trans. Uli Linke. Hasan-Rokem and Dundes 195-210.

Langmuir, Gavin I. "Historiographic Crucifixion." *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*. Ed. R. Blumenthal. Brown Judaic Studies 54. Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1984.

---. "Medieval Anti-Semitism." Friedlander and Milton 27-36.

Limor, Ora. "Christian Sacred Space and the Jew." Cohen, *From Witness to Witchcraft* 55-77.

Little, Lester K. "The Jews in Christian Europe." Cohen, *Essential Papers* 276-297.

Maccoby, Hyam. "The Wandering Jew as Sacred Executioner." Hasan-Rokem and Dundes 236-60.

Manning, Stephen. *Wisdom and Number: Toward a Critical Appraisal of the Middle English Religious Lyric*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962.

Mardon, Ernest G. *The Narrative Unity of the Cursor Mundi*. Glasgow: Embryo-William MacLellan, 1970.

Mellinkoff, Ruth. "Cain and the Jews." *Journal of Jewish Art* 6 (1979): 16-38.

Michelson, H. *The Jew in Early English Literature*. New York: Hermon Press, 1972.

Modder, Montagu Frank. *The Jew in the Literature of England to the End of the Nineteenth Century*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1939, 1944.

Newall, Venetia. "The Jew as a Witch Figure." *The Witch Figure*. Ed. Venetia Newall. London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.

Panitz, Esther L. *The Alien in Their Midst: Images of Jews in English Literature*. Sara F. Yoseloff Memorial Publications. London & Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1981.

Philipson, David. *The Jew in English Fiction*. Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1889.

Pickering, O.S. "The Southern Passion and the Ministry and Passion: The Work of a Middle English Reviser." *Leeds Studies in English* new series 15 (1984): 33-56.

Rosenberg, Edgar. *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction*. Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1960.

Roth, Cecil. "The Feast of Purim and the Origins of the Blood Accusation." *Speculum* 8:4 (1933): 520-526.

---. "The Medieval Conception of the Jew: A New Interpretation." Cohen, *Essential Papers* 298-309.

Rubin, Miri. *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. "The *Adversus Judaeos* Tradition in the Church Fathers: The Exegesis of Christian Anti-Judaism." Cohen, *Essential Papers* 174-89.

Severs, J. Burke, gen. ed. *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*. Vol. 2. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1970.

Simon, Marcel. "Christian Anti-Semitism." Cohen, *Essential Papers* 131-173.

Synan, Edward A. *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages*. New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965.

Trachtenberg, Joshua. *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-*

Semitism. 2nd ed. Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1980.

Turner, Ralph V. "Descendit ad Inferos: Medieval Views on Christ's Descent into Hell and the Salvation of the Ancient Just." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27:2 (1966): 173-94.

Winston, David. "Pagan and Early Christian Anti-Semitism." *Friedlander and Milton* 15-25.

Woolf, Rosemary. *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.