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The Passion of the Jews of Prague: *The Pogrom of 1389 and the Lessons of a Medieval Parody*

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Outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence in late medieval cities were hardly rare. For that reason, among others, surviving records are often frustratingly brief and formulaic. Yet, in the case of the pogrom that devastated Prague's Jewish community on Easter 1389, we have an extraordinary source that has yet to receive a close reading. This account, supplementing numerous chronicle entries and a Hebrew poem of lament, is the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, or *Passion of the Jews of Prague*—a polished literary text that parodies the gospel of Christ's Passion to celebrate the atrocity.[1] In this article I will first reconstruct the history, background, and aftermath of the pogrom as far as possible, then interrogate the *Passio* as a scriptural and liturgical parody, for it has a great deal to teach us about the inner workings of medieval anti-Judaism.[2] By "parody" I mean not a humorous work, but a virtuosic pastiche of authoritative texts, such as the Gospels and the Easter liturgy, that would have been known by heart to much of the intended audience.[3] We may like to think of religious parodies

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[1]*Passio Judaeorum Pragensium secundum Johannem rusticum quadratum*, ed. Paul Lehmann, in *Die Parodie im Mittelalter, mit 24 ausgewählten parodistischen Texten*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1963), 211–16. Lehmann reprints an 1877 edition by Vaclav Tomek. But, with the kind permission of Eva Steinová, I have used her superior critical edition, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium: Kritická edícia Pašijí pražských židov* (Master's thesis, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, 2010), 18–23. The thesis (in Czech) is available at http://is.muni.cz/th/180028/ff_m/Steinova_diplomovapraca.pdf. A complete English translation of the *Passio* will appear in my forthcoming book, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular against the Sacred*.

[2]For religious "anti-Judaism" vis-à-vis racial "antisemitism," see Gavin I. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 18–41, 275–305.

[3]Fidel Rädle, "Zu den Bedingungen der Parodie in der lateinischen Literatur des hohen Mittelalters," in *Literaturparodie in Antike und Mittelalter*, ed. Wolfram Ax and Reinhold F. Glei (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1993), 171–85. See also Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, and Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

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as "daring" or "audacious," seeing in them a progressive ideological force that challenges corrupt institutions, ridicules absurd beliefs, and pokes holes in the pious and the pompous. But *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* shows that this was by no means always the case.

According to the *Passio* and the chronicle sources, the trouble began on Holy Saturday (April 17), when a priest, bringing communion to a sick person, passed down a Jewish street and a disturbance occurred. It was said that some Jews had either thrown stones at a monstrance or mocked the priest; in one account, a pyx was broken and hosts spilled on the ground. Charges of host desecration with their violent sequels were so common that, on the face of it, it may seem unlikely that any sane Jew would have issued such an overt provocation, least of all during Holy Week.[4] Until recently, therefore, historians have taken this and similar charges as self-evident slander. Yet some revisionists now argue that such incidents did occur, given the intensity of Jewish revulsion against Christian "idolatry" toward the cross and the host.[5] In any case, there was a brawl, and the Jews deemed responsible were hauled into the town hall for punishment. There the matter might have ended, except that Prague was in a highly inflamed mood at the time because of simmering discontent with the king, and more specifically with his use of Jewish moneylenders as an instrument of royal finance.

The reigning Wenceslas IV, like most European rulers, protected "his" Jews as "serfs of the royal chamber," granting them exemptions and privileges so that, whenever he needed ready cash, he could tax them or confiscate their assets.[6] His father Charles IV had done the same, even speculating on future pogroms in order to profit from them.[7] Though such policies were

[4]On host desecration tales and the resulting pogroms, see Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999); Peter Browe, "Die Hostienschändungen der Juden im Mittelalter," *Römische Quartalschrift* 34.4 (1926): 167–97.

[5]For the older view see Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1943), 109–14, and Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York: Pantheon, 1991), 32. Jewish revisionists include David Berger, *From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Antisemitism* (New York: Touro College, Graduate School of Jewish Studies, 1997), 15, and Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 172–74.

[6]A good account of the Jews' social and economic status is Maria Tischler, "Böhmische Judengemeinden 1348–1519," in *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983), 37–56.

[7]Ruth Bork, "Zur Politik der Zentralgewalt gegenüber den Juden im Kampf Ludwigs des Bayern um das Reichsrecht und Karls IV um die Durchsetzung seines Königtums bis 1349," in *Karl IV: Politik und Ideologie im 14. Jahrhundert*, ed. Evamaria Engel (Weimar: Böhlau, 1982), 30–73. For a milder account of the emperor's *Judenpolitik* see Willehad Paul Eckert, "Die Juden im Zeitalter Karls IV," in *Kaiser Karl IV: Staatsmann und Mäzen*, ed. Ferdinand Seibt (Munich: Prestel, 1978), 123–45.

commonplace, they were also deeply unpopular, not because ordinary Christians pitied the Jews but because they resented the profits of usury, which theologians and church councils repeatedly condemned as sinful.[8] It did not help that Wenceslas was a weak and unpopular king, unlike his father Charles. According to the abbot Ludolf of Sagan (d. 1422), he was disliked by "clergy and people, the nobles, the burghers, and the peasants—and acceptable only to the Jews."[9] So, by attacking this resented and vulnerable minority, the people could also voice their displeasure with the king. As David Nirenberg has written in a different context, "attacks upon the king's Jews were attacks on royal majesty, and time after time the Crown condemned them as such."[10] Moreover, the clergy and especially theologians at the University of Prague (founded by Charles in 1348) had been engaged in a long-standing dispute with the Crown over usury. By protecting Jewish moneylenders, the king was directly promoting the reign of Antichrist—or so the archbishop of Prague, John of Jenstein, had preached in a recent Christmas sermon:

> One key sign [of his advent] is the prosperity of the Jews, who are multiplying and gathering everywhere, favored with such great immunity that we must greatly fear the wrath of the Lord, lest he permit the Antichrist to come. For you see well that the clergy and the Christian faithful are daily supplanted and subordinated in their rights and liberties and endure many injuries. The synagogue profits more than the church of Christ, and among princes, a single Jew can accomplish more than a nobleman or a prelate. Indeed, princes and magnates are impoverished by unheard-of interest rates (*usurias*), as if [the Jews] could enrich and assist their lord Antichrist with those treasures.[11]

[8]John T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957); Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978); Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Ranum (New York: Zone, 1988).

[9]"Exosus igitur erat clero et populo, nobilibus, civibus et rusticis, solis erat acceptus Iudeis," Ludolf von Sagan, *Tractatus de longevo schismate*, ed. Johannes Loserth, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der husitischen Bewegung, III," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 60 (1880), 419. Cited in Franz Machilek, *Ludolf von Sagan und seine Stellung in der Auseinandersetzung um Konziliarismus und Hussitismus* (Munich: Lerche, 1967), 141, 197.

[10]David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 222.

[11]"[I]nter cetera [signa Antichristi] est non modicum indicium prosperitas Judeorum, qui ubique multiplicantur et congregantur tantaque immunitate foventur, quod nimirum ira domini formidanda sit, ne permittat, ut Antichristus veniat. Nam bene videtis clerum et Christifideles cottidie in suis iuribus et libertatibus supplantari et subici multasque iniurias perpeti et magis synagogam quam Christi proficere ecclesiam et inter principes plus unum posse Judeum quam procerem vel prelatum. Ymmo per usurias inauditas principes et magnates adeo depauperantur, ac si cum thesauris illis suum dominum Antichristum ditare et adiuvare queant." John of Jenstein, sermon delivered in the 1380s, cited in Ruben E. Weltsch, *Archbishop John of Jenstein (1348–1400): Papalism, Humanism and Reform in Pre-Hussite Prague* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), 62n89.

There were also some local causes of discontent. The Jewish quarter of Prague had recently been enclosed by a system of gates, which were locked on Sabbaths and holidays to protect the inhabitants from just such a calamity as they faced in 1389.[12] But even within this gated community, Jews and Christians shared an unusually cramped area, sometimes with Jews living on one side of a street and Christians on the other. This would explain the likelihood of a eucharistic procession passing through even a predominantly Jewish neighborhood. The dying person who required last rites on Holy Saturday—if there actually was such a person—could even have lived within the Jewish quarter. In addition, the peculiar fiscal system of Prague dictated that every house in the quarter be legally designated either Jewish or Christian, with differing tax liabilities. Jews could purchase Christian houses by permission of the king and the town council, but if they did, they remained liable for payment of tithes to the Christian parish—a provision they naturally found repugnant. In the second half of the fourteenth century, an expanding Jewish community had made such purchases increasingly common. So when the archdeacon of Prague, Paul of Janowicz, conducted a visitation in early 1380, two parishes overlapping the Jewish quarter had complaints against these householders. The priest at St. Valentine was annoyed that Jews owned eleven of the better houses in his parish, from which "he and his church suffer great damage because they pay no offerings and parish tithes."[13] A priest at the neighboring parish, Holy Rood Major (governed by a branch of the Knights Hospitallers), complained of thirty-four such houses. His order had just sued these Jews in the court of John of Jenstein for non-payment of tithes.[14] At the time of the pogrom, the suit was apparently still unresolved, though—to judge from the sermon just cited—it is not hard to guess how the archbishop would have ruled. Nor is it hard to imagine how seamlessly charges of host desecration and fiscal grievances might have fused.

In short, it appears that clergy and laity alike were waiting for a provocation, and the incident on Holy Saturday supplied one. When Easter dawned, hot on the heels of a Good Friday service pocked with allusions to "perfidious Jews,"

[12]My information in this paragraph derives from Alexandr Putík, "On the Topography and Demography of the Prague Jewish Town Prior to the Pogrom of 1389," *Judaica Bohemiae*, 30–31 (1994/1995), 7–46.

[13]"Dominus Fridricus, plebanus ibidem X annis et ultra, interrogatus dicit, quod Judei habent XI domus pociores in plebe sua et per hoc ecclesia sua et ipse dampnificatur in magna parte, nam deficiunt ipsi ofertoria et iura parrochialia," *Protocollum visitationis archidiaconatus Pragensis annis 1379–1382 per Paulum de Janowicz, archidiaconum Pragensem factae*, ed. Ivan Hlaváček and Zdeňka Hledíková (Prague: Academia scientiarum bohemoslovacae, 1973), 82.

[14]"Item dicit, quod habent XXXIIII^{or} domos Judeorum in parrochia sua, qui nunquam solwnt iura parrochialia, et per hoc ecclesia et ipsi, videlicet plebanus et conventus, magnum paciuntur detrimentum et dicit, quod anno presenti habuerunt unam commissionem a curia Romana super ipsis et dominus archiepiscopus, iudex delegatus, nondum fecit ipsis iusticiam contra dictos Judeos," *Protocollum*, 96.

preachers denounced this fresh insult to Christ's body by his ancient foes. As it happened, Easter 1389 was also the last day of Passover—a coincidence that rendered mob violence more likely. Taking advantage of the king's absence from Prague, Christians set on avenging their Lord made their way to the Jewish quarter with stones, swords, axes, and firebrands, urged on by the populist leader Ješek (also called Ieško or "Gesco" in the *Passion*).[15] Although the town council tried to forestall violence, knowing that it would result in a hefty fine when the king returned, there was no stopping the bloodthirsty mob. According to the *Passion*, the council commanded the town criers to declare a curfew, but instead, they proclaimed on their own initiative that "the whole people should all attack at once for the plunder and extermination of the Jews."[16] A rich community leader named Jonas (the *parnas ha-chodesh*) was the first to be targeted. The *parnas* was the official responsible for collecting Jewish taxes and delivering them to the king, as well as representing the community's interests. Elected by the Jewish mercantile elite, he was normally a learned and wealthy man.[17] Described in the *Passion* as "prince of the Jews," Jonas may have been all the more resented for living in a legally Christian house, among the finest in the quarter, which served as a kind of Jewish town hall. Though he managed to survive the pogrom, his house next shows up in the archives in 1409, owned by a Christian nobleman.[18]

Spurred by Ieško and the mutinous town criers, the mob went on to massacre men, women, and children with every weapon at their disposal. According to an early fifteenth-century poem, they even killed for good measure a few Christians who, in their opinion, "looked like Jews"—an early hint of racial anti-Semitism.[19] When the Jewish quarter was set ablaze, many took refuge in their stone synagogue, known today as the Altneuschul, but the Christians

[15]According to František Graus, Ješek is a Czech form of Johannes, which is the name another contemporary source gives the ringleader: *Struktur und Geschichte: Drei Volksaufstände im mittelalterlichen Prag* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1971), 57; Josef Jireček, ed., *Historia de caede Iudaeorum Pragensi*, in "Zpráva o židovském pobití v Praze r. 1389 z rukopisu Krakovského," *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich-Böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften in Prag* (Prague, 1880), 227–29.

[16]"Clamabant enim, ut regio edicto et consulum tota simul plebs irrueret in predam et in exterminium Iudeorum." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 19.

[17]Bernard Rosensweig, *Ashkenazic Jewry in Transition* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975), 40–41.

[18]Putík, "On the Topography," 38.

[19]"Commotorum christicolarum tanta perarsit / ira, quod et similes Judeis mortificarent / christicolas facie, quos Judeos reputabant." (The rage of the rioting Christians burned so fiercely that they even put to death Christians whose faces looked Jewish, thinking that they were Jews.) Johannes von Wetzlar, *Dialogus super Magnificat*, vv. 2139–41, ed. Ernst-Stephan Bauer, *Frömmigkeit, Gelehrsamkeit und Zeitkritik an der Schwelle der grossen Konzilien: Johannes von Wetzlar und sein* Dialogus super Magnificat *(1427)* (Mainz: Gesellschaft für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 1981), 278; see also 147-48n94.

rushed in after them with knives and swords.[20] There, following an ancient practice of Jewish martyrdom that had been revived in 1096, during the First Crusade, the rabbi and others sanctified the Name (*kiddush ha-Shem*) by killing first their children, then themselves, rather than submit to massacre or forced baptism.[21] Two quick-thinking Jews—so the *Passion* claims—tonsured themselves and escaped in the guise of priests. Meanwhile, the mob was eagerly searching for hidden wealth, snatching books from synagogues, and desecrating the Jewish cemetery in the hope that even there, buried treasures might be found or bodies redeemed for money. The practice of exhuming Jewish corpses for ransom was common enough to have been prohibited by papal bulls.[22] Likewise, the fact that Torah scrolls and copies of the Talmud were confiscated, rather than burned, bespeaks a rage tempered by calculation: these valuable books could later be resold to the survivors. Although the pogrom began with a charge of host desecration, it produced no bleeding wonderhost or cult, in contrast to the miraculous blood cults recently studied by Caroline Bynum.[23] This lack suggests the priority of economic motives in the minds of at least some perpetrators, despite the religious hatred emphasized in the *Passion*.

The death toll of the pogrom has been a subject of much confusion. Tilemann Elhen von Wolfhagen, writing before 1400 but citing an older written source, perhaps a letter, states in the *Limburg Chronicle* that "about a hundred Jewish households" were put to death.[24] If this figure is correct, it would suggest a toll of four to five hundred, since Jewish families were relatively small. Wilfried Brosche estimates the death toll at about a thousand.[25] Various fifteenth-century chronicles cite vague numbers of victims (*infiniti Judei*, *Judei multi*, *Iudei omnes Prage*),[26] but Dietrich Engelhus supplies the seemingly more

[20]Eli Valley, *The Great Jewish Cities of Central and Eastern Europe: A Travel Guide and Resource Book to Prague, Warsaw, Crakow, and Budapest* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1999), 64, 79–80.

[21]On suicide and infanticide as tactics against forced conversion, see Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), and Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chapman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 144–89.

[22]"Constitutio pro Judeis," a bull of Innocent III (1199), repeatedly reissued in the thirteenth century. Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century: A Study of Their Relations during the Years 1198–1254*, rev. ed. (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 92–95.

[23]Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[24]"Item da man schreip . . . daz der juden doit vurleben binach als umb hondert huisgeseß," Tilemann Elhen von Wolfhagen, *Die Limburger Chronik*, 143, ed. Arthur Wyss, MGH. Scriptorum qui vernacula lingua usi sunt, 4:1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 79.

[25]Wilfried Brosche, "Das Ghetto von Prag," in *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern*, 95, 117.

[26]*Chronicon Bohemiae Lipsiense* (after 1411), ed. Josef Emler, *Kronika česká lipská,* in *Fontes rerum bohemicarum* 7 (Prague: Palackého, 1932); *Chronicon Palatinum* (after 1438), ed. Josef

precise figure of three thousand (*tria milia*).[27] Like most casualty estimates from the period, this figure is wildly inflated, far exceeding the Jewish population of Prague. Yet it has been echoed by many historians, making this pogrom seemingly the deadliest of the Middle Ages.[28] More recently, a painstaking demographic study by Alexandr Putík of the Jewish Museum of Prague has estimated the total population of the Jewish Quarter in 1389 as about nine hundred, of whom about 750 were actually Jews.[29] Putík's reconstruction suggests that the *Limburg Chronicle* (which he does not cite) may in fact be the most accurate of the medieval estimates.

In the aftermath, when the dust had cleared on Monday morning, the town council decreed that all Jewish property seized by rioters must be brought to the town hall to contribute to a fine, which was levied as expected by the king's deputy treasurer, Sigmund Huler. Further, Huler decreed on the king's behalf that all surviving Jews were to be quietly arrested and their goods confiscated.[30] One source values the proceeds of the pogrom at five barrels of silver for the royal fisc.[31] Given these lucrative profits, it is quite possible that Wenceslas, like his father before him, had secretly connived at the pogrom while only pretending to be dismayed by it. It may seem suspicious that, while the *Passio* describes the king as spending Easter in the western city of Eger (now Cheb), Huler's "morning after" decree was issued from his royal castle of Křivoklát, not far from Prague.[32] (Ironically, Huler himself—denounced by Ludolf of Sagan for being too fond of Jews—would be excommunicated and sentenced to death by the king in 1405, for allegedly professing openly that Judaism was superior to Christianity.[33]) Meanwhile, the physical damage had to be contained. Afraid lest the heap of corpses might cause a pestilence—or, as the *Passion* says, "lest the city be infected by air corrupt with the stench of usurious fat"—the town council paid some poor Christians to burn the bodies, along with any survivors they might find

Emler, *Kronika vídeňská druhá, Fontes rerum bohemicarum* 7 (Prague: Palackého, 1932); *Continuator chronicae Beneši Krabice* (after 1487), ed. Gelasius Dobner, *Kronika Beneše Krabice, Monumenta historica Boemiae* 4 (Prague: Clauser, 1779).

[27]Dietrich Engelhus, *Chronicon Engelhusii,* in *Scriptores rerum brunsuicarum* II, ed. G. W. Leibnitz (Hannover: Hahn, 1711), 1134.

[28]Weltsch, *Archbishop John*, 61; Valley, *Great Jewish Cities*, 78; Peter Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold: Scenes from the Life of a European City* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1997), 116; Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd rev. ed., vol. 9, *Under Church and Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 202.

[29]Putík, "On the Topography," 45–46.

[30]Baron, *Social and Religious History*, 9:318n30. Huler's charter is dated 19 April 1389.

[31]"V tunnas plenas argento": *Chronicon Engelhusii*, 1134. A tun was a large cask or barrel used for wine.

[32]Steinová, *Passio*, 60.

[33]Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, 120; Machilek, *Ludolf von Sagan*, 142.

still alive.[34] The gates of the Jewish quarter were then sealed against looters. A few children snatched from the flames were baptized and adopted by Christian families, while others submitted to the sacrament "voluntarily." No perpetrators were ever punished.

About twenty Christian accounts of this pogrom are extant in Latin, Czech, and German. All relatively brief, they range in tone from dispassionate to gleeful. The *Passio* to be examined here was written by an eyewitness, obviously a cleric, soon after the event. It survives in three fifteenth-century manuscripts, none precisely datable. One appears to have been a teaching text from the University of Prague, containing a variety of mathematical, musical, grammatical, and astronomical treatises. A second, from the Prague Cathedral, includes anti-Hussite works along with pastoral and homiletic material. The third and probably the oldest, the basis of Eva Steinová's new edition, contains the *Passio* along with a life of Alexander the Great and an ancient anti-Jewish text, the *Gesta Salvatoris*, to be discussed below.[35] A shorter, closely related Latin account, the *Historia de cede Iudeorum Pragensi* [*History of the Slaughter of the Jews in Prague*], survives in a manuscript from Krakow. Though less elaborate, it cites Scripture in similar ways, ending with a celebratory verse in the vernacular.[36] In addition, a certain Master Mathias penned a few leonine verses, happily noting how on Easter night the "guilty Jew" paid the due penalty for blasphemers—"pierced, cut down, burned alive and bound with rope."[37] Of all the records, only the *Limburg Chronicle* sounds a skeptical note. It says the uproar began when a "small pebble" was thrown at the monstrance by a Jew—or "so the Christians say."[38]

The most virulent of these texts is a Latin poem by John of Wetzlar, a disciple of the anti-Jewish archbishop John of Jenstein. Wetzlar's *Dialogus super Magnificat*, completed in 1427 though drafted earlier, was meant to promote

[34]"inito consilio, ne ex usuraria pingwedine aeris corruptio inficeret civitatem, statuerunt, ut quidam indigentes et egeni cristiani tamen precio apreciati comportatis omnibus cadaveribus in cumulos, que nondum ignis consumpserat, eadem in cineres redigerent igne forti, adiunctis illis et si quos adhuc vivos in latibulis reperissent." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 6.

[35]These mss. respectively are P (Prague, Národní Univerzitní Knihovna, XI D 7); K (Prague, Knihovna Metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta v Praze, O 3); and T (Třeboň, Třeboňský archív, A 14): Steinová, *Passio*,12–13. The first two were identified by Lehmann in *Die Parodie*, 211; ms. T was unknown to him.

[36]"Bvoh wyemohuczy zpyewachu prazene, tepucze zydy. Alleluia!" (Almighty God, sang the people of Prague as they destroyed the Jews, alleluia!) *Historia de caede*, ed. Jireček, 229; ed. Steinová, 29. I thank Benjamin Frommer and Andrea Orzoff for help with the translation.

[37]"M semel, tria C, bis L, undecim removeto, / Pascha luce reus periit tunc ense Judeus. / Punitur dire, contingit nos modo scire: / Paschali festo Judeus vespere facto / Transfigitur, ceditur, crematur, fune ligatur, / Scelus blasphemie penam meruitque subire. / Signum erat ire, punitur, quod vidimus, dire." "Paběrky z rukopisu Klementinských," 39, ed. J. Truhlář, *Věstník české akademie věd* 9 (Prague, 1900), 295.

[38]"Da wart von eime juden ein klein steinichen geworfen uf di monstrancien. Daz sagen di cristen." *Limburger Chronik*, 79.

the Marian feast of the Visitation, but ranges widely across polemical themes. The poem devotes about a hundred hexameters to the massacre at Prague, all set in the mouth of the Virgin herself. Like a vengeful war-goddess, Wetzlar's Mary unabashedly exults in the slaughter, describing it in no uncertain terms as an act of God: "*Deus illud/fecit non homines*" (God did this, not men).[39] She dwells with special glee on the fate of one Jew who allegedly cursed her. After he was killed, his blasphemous tongue issued a stench so vile that even the dogs fled from it.[40] No surviving Christian narrative condemns the pogrom. But the revered Rabbi Avigdor Kara (d. 1439), a young man at the time, composed a lament in Hebrew, which for centuries was recited on Yom Kippur in the liturgical use of Prague.[41]

While events like those of Easter 1389 were all too common, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* is exceptional—a caustic parody that cuts in many directions, some perhaps unintended. According to Paul Lehmann's survey of medieval Latin parody, the genre to which it belongs—the political *passio*—was probably of English origin. Unlike most forms of scriptural parody, the political passion was not a comic mode.[42] Lehmann's anthology includes other *passiones* written to celebrate Edward I's punishment of a disloyal regent (1289), the same king's victory over Robert the Bruce (1306), and a French defeat at the hands of the Flemish (1302).[43] So it looks as if the genre was born at about the same time the Jews were expelled from England. As a literary form, the *passio* descends from the late antique *cento* or "patchwork cloak," a poem composed entirely of verses from other poems, rearranged to tell a new story.[44] Just as the early Christian poet Proba related the whole life of Christ in lines from Virgil, sacralizing the *Aeneid*, medieval parodists moved in the opposite direction. By lifting verses from the Gospel to recount secular history, they consciously profaned it. But, as Lehmann rightly observes, "anyone who takes offense at profanation of the Bible cannot understand the Middle Ages."[45]

Political passions do more than this, however. Not only do they secularize the Passion of Christ; they turn it on its head. René Girard argued in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* that the Passion is a scapegoat myth to end all scapegoating. By representing Jesus, a victim of mob frenzy and judicial torture, as innocent, the Passion narrative exposes the mechanism of scapegoating for what it is and so undermines the whole social order based on sacrificial

[39]Johannes von Wetzlar, *Dialogus super Magnificat*, vv. 2151–52, 278. ed. Bauer, *Frömmigkeit*.
[40]Johannes von Wetzlar, *Dialogus*, vv. 2159–68, ed. Bauer, *Frömmigkeit*, 278.
[41]Rabbi Avigdor Kara, "All the Afflictions," trans. Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 196–98; see also 139–40. There are also several Hebrew narrative accounts.
[42]For this reason Bayless, whose *Parody in the Middle Ages* treats humorous texts, excludes the genre of political *passiones*.
[43]Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, 84–85, 199–211.
[44]On late antique and medieval centos, see Bayless, *Parody*, 129–76.
[45]Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, 85.

violence.[46] But medieval parodic passions give Girard the lie. Reverting to the primeval order of sanctified violence, they blame, shame, and ridicule its victims, encouraging readers to identify with the torturers, not the tortured. Instead of sympathy they solicit *Schadenfreude*.

The parodic passion, Lehmann writes, "came into literary fashion as a victory song around 1300."[47] When the floodgates of cultural exchange between London and Prague sprang open in the 1380s, with the marriage of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia,[48] the Czechs acquired not only Wycliffite ideas, but also a taste for the political *passio*. One Czech example from this period gloats over the execution of Polish robbers in Brno; others ridicule Jan Hus. For example, the "book of cursing of all heretics, sons of the devil," spoofs biblical genealogies: "Wyclif begot Jan Hus in Bohemia, Jan Hus begot Coranda, Coranda begot Čapko," and so forth, listing Prague intellectuals sympathetic to Hussite ideas, right down to "Zdislaus the leper, by whose contagion many Bohemians have been infected."[49] Even a sympathetic account of Hus's martyrdom bears a mocking title slapped on by an opponent: "Passio [Magistri Johannis Hus] secundum Johannem Barbatum, rusticum quadratum" (Passion of Master Jan Hus according to John the Bearded, the Square-Shouldered Peasant).[50]

The same character, "John the Peasant," is also the putative author of *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*. Perhaps a folkloric figure, he stands for the common people in their rude simplicity—in short, for the lynch mob of 1389. The phrase *rusticus quadratus* had long been a pejorative idiom for "peasant," at least in central Europe. For instance, in Caesarius of Heisterbach's early thirteenth-century *Dialogue on Miracles*, a monk sees a demon in the form of a *rusticus quadratus* and offers a memorable description: "He had a broad chest, square shoulders, a short neck, hair styled proudly enough over his

[46]René Girard, with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987). See especially "A Non-Sacrificial Reading of the Gospel Text," 180–223.

[47]Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, 85.

[48]Alfred Thomas, *Anne's Bohemia: Czech Literature and Society, 1310–1420* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Alfred Thomas, *A Blessed Shore: England and Bohemia from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007). On Chaucer's likely knowledge of the pogrom see Sarah Stanbury, "Host Desecration, Chaucer's 'Prioress's Tale,' and Prague 1389," in *Mindful Spirit in Late Medieval Literature: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth D. Kirk*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 211–24.

[49]"Wiklef autem genuit Joannem Hus in Bohemia, Joannes Hus genuit Corandam, Coranda genuit Čapkonem . . . Jesenic autem genuit Zdislaum leprosum, cujus contagione infecti sunt multi Bohemi." "Missa Wiklef et Hussitarum," ed. Franz Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkrieges in den Jahren 1419–1436*, 2 vols. (1873; repr., Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1966), II: 521–22.

[50]Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, 86; Graus, *Struktur und Geschichte*, 52 n. 15; V. Novotný, ed., "Passio etc secundum Johannem Barbatum, rusticum quadratum," in *Fontes rerum bohemicarum* 7 (Prague: Palackého, 1932), 14–24.

forehead, the rest of his hair hanging down like spikes of wheat."[51] This image could serve for a fictive author-portrait of our parodist. A late medieval Bohemian poem describes such rustics as sullen and quick to anger.[52] In addition, they were linked with Jews as targets of elite contempt and perceived —ironically in this context—as prone to mob violence.[53] In a grammatical parody, a catechism runs: "What part of speech is *rusticus*? A noun. What kind of noun? Jewish. Why? Because he is silly and base, like a Jew."[54] Yet peasants could also be idealized as loyal, unpretentious repositories of folk wisdom. Přemysl, the legendary founder of the first Bohemian dynasty, had been a peasant, and the national patron St. Wenceslas was said to do peasant labor in spite of his noble birth.[55] So "John the Peasant" is a fittingly ambiguous pseudonym for an ambivalent author. The epithet links him on the one hand with the evangelist he parodies ("The Passion according to John"), but on the other with Ieško or Johannes, the ringleader of the pogrom.

Although the *Passion* has often been mined as a historical source, it has yet to be subjected to literary analysis. Though it would now be impossible to read the text as its author meant it, it is worth lingering over the work of "John the Peasant" because, in its deliberate perversion of Scripture, it raises searching questions about the normative practices of medieval exegesis, devotion, and liturgy. Moreover, because the Gospel narrative itself resists what John the Peasant wants to do with it, the *Passion* proves to have a textual unconscious that undermines its overt anti-Judaism, leaving the modern reader with a strangely ambivalent impression.[56] I will discuss six literary techniques that contribute to this peculiar ambivalence: direct citation, role-switching, inversion, selective omission, reverse typology, and liturgical parody.

Unlike other political passions, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* maintains an uncomfortable intimacy with its original. Since the terrible events actually took place during Passover and Easter, the narrative and liturgical time of the

[51]"Habebat enim pectus latum, scapulas acutas, collum breve, capillum in fronte satis superbe tonsoratum, crines reliquos sicut haristas dependentes." Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum* V.5, ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne: Heberle, 1851), I: 282.

[52]"Rustici quadrati / semper sunt irati / et eorum corda / . . . / nunquam letabunda." (Square-shouldered peasants are always angry, and their hearts . . . are never glad.) Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, 86. See also Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 136. But no *rusticus quadratus* appears in Du Cange's *Glossarium* or any of the standard Medieval Latin dictionaries.

[53]Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 97.

[54]"Rusticus que pars est? Nomen. Quale nomen? Judaicum. Quare? Quia ineptus et turpis ut Judeus." "Bauernkatechismus," ed. Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, 197.

[55]Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 210–11. Legends of the tenth-century St. Wenceslas inspired J. M. Neale's famous nineteenth-century carol, "Good King Wenceslas."

[56]For this concept see Jonathan Culler, "Textual Self-Consciousness and the Textual Unconscious," *Style* 18 (1984), 369–76, and Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xiii, xvi.

sacred story is also the real time of the violence. Moreover, tension between "Jews" and "Christians" is already a central theme in the Gospels, if by "Christians" we mean the disciples of Jesus, and by "Jews," the religious authorities who opposed him. John the Peasant draws most heavily on Matthew's Gospel and secondarily on John's, mainly because these were the two most often recited liturgically in Holy Week, but also because of their intrinsic qualities. Matthew, whose Gospel is structured around the idea of Jesus as New Moses, shows a profound, persistent concern with controversies over the observance and interpretation of Torah. John, writing against the background of a split between the nascent church and synagogue, refers pervasively to "the Jews" (*Judei* in the Vulgate) as enemies of Jesus, fanning the flames of anti-Judaism.[57]

For John the Peasant, *Judea* signifies the Jewish quarter of Prague, which a priest enters "with the body of Jesus," that is, the host. When the Jews go to meet him with stones because "he has made himself the Son of God" (Jn. 19:7), the parody starts off on a simple footing, as if to follow the Johannine narrative of steadily intensified controversy between Jesus and his opponents. But direct citation, without ironic reversals, is relatively rare. It occurs most openly when the author invokes the notorious curse, "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Mt. 27:25)—a curse the Jews supposedly called down on themselves to exempt Pontius Pilate from guilt for the crucifixion. For the rioters of 1389, this verse fully justified their actions. Another direct citation follows when the Christian mob taunts the Jews: "henceforth you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mt. 26:64)—at which time they will be eternally damned. A third example depicts the victims' terror via Jesus's apocalyptic warning: "The days shall come in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren who have not given birth, and the breasts that have not given suck.' For then the Jews said to the mountains of their dwellings, 'Fall upon us,' and to the hills of their houses, 'Cover us'" (Lk. 23:29-30).

But the Jews are not confined to the role of persecutors or eschatological losers. A disconcerting feature of the *Passion* is the instability of their narrative position, for Jews are made to fill both negative and positive roles in the Gospel parody. When the Christians predict that "before the cock crows," they will perish miserably (Mt. 26:34), they stand in the place of Peter, who denies Christ three times before the cock crows. They again fill Peter's role when two Jews, having disguised themselves as priests, deny their identity to escape persecution (Mt. 26:70, 73). Those who martyr

[57] *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

themselves with sword or noose imitate Judas, who committed suicide (Mt. 27:5, Acts 1:18). But more often the Jews take the place of Jesus himself as sacrificial victims. As the lynch mob approaches, they ask, "Friends, why have you come?" (Mt. 26:50)—the same question Jesus asked Judas in Gethsemane. Their query suggests that the Jewish community too had been betrayed, probably by some with whom they did business, if not by the king himself. Ieško the peasant, "as it were high priest for that year," prophesies that "all the Jews together should die for the Christian people, lest the whole nation perish" (Jn. 11:49-50). Hence the Jews collectively stand in the role of scapegoat assigned to Jesus by Caiaphas, the high priest.

Jonas, the *parnas ha-chodesh* called "prince of the Jews," echoes Christ's lament, "My soul is sorrowful unto death" (Mt. 26:38). But, lest this remark make him appear too sympathetic, John the Peasant adds "even perpetual death." At the apex of the Passion the tormentors, "plaiting straw, fashioned crowns of burning wood and set them on the heads and bodies of the Jews and, mocking them, set them on fire. And after they had mocked them, they stripped them of their clothing and clothed them in fire, and gave them flames to drink mingled with smoke. And when they had tasted, it was fitting for them to drink" (Mt. 27:29, 31, 34).[58] Christ's crown of thorns, mockery, nakedness, and potion of gall are pressed into metaphorical service, carried yet further into the realm of cruelty to describe victims burned alive in their houses. None of the other *passiones* collected by Lehmann place their victims similarly in the role of Christ, or cleave so closely to the Gospel account of his suffering.[59] The *Passio*, in short, employs a double ironic inversion. On the one hand, the Jews collectively play the role of Jesus, while the Christian mob plays the role of the biblical Jewish mob. On the other hand, the Jews remain Jews (wicked desecrators of Christ's body), and the Christians, Christians (righteous avengers of Jewish blasphemy).

By simultaneously identifying the Jews with Christ and rejoicing in God's vengeance on them, the *Passio* stands at the crossroads of two uneasily coexisting attitudes. As Bynum astutely notes, late medieval Christians perceived Jewish violence as necessary to procure both the death of Christ and the creation of new "holy matter" (blood relics) through their acts of host desecration. Yet, while Christians viewed the Passion as the ultimate

[58]"Et plectentes struem, corone de lignis ardentibus imposuerunt super capita et corpora Iudeorum. Et illudentes eis composuerunt eos in ignem ardentem. Et postquam illuserunt eis, exuerunt eos vestimentis eorum et induerunt eos igne. Et dederunt eis bibere flammam cum fumo mixtam. Et cum gustassent, oportuit eos bibere." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 21.

[59]Of the three other texts, only the one concerning Edward I's regent is called a *passio* in the manuscript ("Passio iusticiariorum Anglie"); the other two begin with the liturgical rubric *in illo tempore*. All of them range much more broadly across the Bible. Lehmann, *Die Parodie*, 199, 202, 205.

sacrifice, they never represented the Jews as sacrificing Christ, merely as killing him. To say anything more would be to ascribe unacceptable power to human beings, for no one but God could sacrifice God. Hence Christ himself occupies a paradoxical role as both priest and victim, himself the sacrifice as well as the high priest who offers and the God who receives it.[60] The *Passio* mirrors this theological complexity in its corresponding ambivalence toward the Jews. Overtly, they are the objects of justified Christian revenge. Covertly, however, the play of biblical allusion turns them too into sacrificial victims. In other Passion-related texts we find a similar tension, though seldom in such a compressed and jarring form. The dominant pole is expressed by an ancient legend, the *Vindicta Salvatoris* (*Vengeance of the Savior*), which represents the destruction of Jerusalem by the emperor Vespasian and his son Titus in 70 CE as divine vengeance for the crucifixion.[61] Extant in numerous versions, this anti-Jewish legend was widely dramatized in the later Middle Ages and could easily justify pogroms. In fact, a version of it (with the title *Gesta Salvatoris*) accompanies the *Passio* in one of its three manuscripts, suggesting that the scribe or patron made precisely this connection.[62] He and probably many others saw the events in Prague as renewing the Savior's vengeance against the Jews.

In a Czech farce called *Mastičkář* (*The Ointment Seller* or *The Charlatan*), from the early fourteenth century, anti-Jewish parody appears in the context of paschal festivities. The three Maries who come to anoint Christ's body on Easter morning are parodically doubled by the Jew Abraham, who seeks an ointment to resurrect his son Isaac. Tricked by a merchant, Abraham unwittingly buys a pot of excrement instead and smears it on his son's buttocks, but it does the trick anyway; the boy returns to life.[63] Certain Jewish exegetes, influenced by the Church and a burgeoning theology of martyrdom, had already converted the near-sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) into his actual death and resurrection.[64] So this scene, unique to the Bohemian play, ridicules Jewish religious belief even as it deploys the old association of Jews with feces. Since the clueless Abraham cannot even tell the difference between filth and fragrance, scatology serves to keep the Jews in their place. It undermines

[60]Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 75–81, 239–44.

[61]Stephen K. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989); *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur: The Old and Middle French Prose Versions*, ed. Alvin E. Ford (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993); Yuval, *Two Nations*, 38–49.

[62]Steinová, *Passio*, 12.

[63]Jarmila F. Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce from Medieval Bohemia: Mastičkář* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, 1985), 349–51; Thomas, *Anne's Bohemia*, 69.

[64]Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 173–99.

the typology that would make Isaac a figure of Christ by setting a comic rift between Abraham's grief for his son and the Magdalene's sorrow for Jesus.

Most of John the Peasant's readers would also have known meditations on the Passion, like those of pseudo-Bonaventure and Ludolph of Saxony. Less scholarly versions were available in the vernaculars. Thomas Bestul has made a convincing case that these narratives not only reflected, but actively promoted anti-Judaism. They dwelt in excruciating detail on the physical torments of the Passion, since their explicit purpose was to evoke compassion for the Crucified. A secondary, though ethically more significant, goal was to arouse contrition, reminding readers that their own sins were the ultimate cause of Christ's suffering.[65] But these spiritual goals were forever competing—at a disadvantage—with the easier dynamics of blame.[66] As Bestul writes, "The avowed aim of . . . affective rhetorical strategies is to increase the reader's sense of pity for the sufferings of Christ: but this is done by emphasizing in vivid detail the horrible deeds of the Jews; the result is a subtext with a strong, but much different meaning, a subtext that surely led to the arousal in the reader of emotions quite other than love of Christ."[67] Far overshadowing the Romans, the "perfidious Jews" in these meditations bear the brunt of guilt as they defile Christ's face with their spittle, strike him with sacrilegious hands, and abuse him like a slave.[68] Standing at the foot of the Cross, Mary not only invites spectators to lament with her, but often cries out against the Jews as her Son's torturers.[69] Carried to extremes, this affective stance could end in the merciless Mary of John of Wetzlar, gloating over the Jews' destruction.

Yet the impact of such meditations may have been more ambivalent than we think, for the call to repentance was linked, at best, with a demand for the forgiveness of enemies. Although Passion plays and devotional works frequently included anti-Jewish material,[70] they could also warn against the

[65]Ellen M. Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17–28.

[66]Modern liturgical recitations of the Passion short-circuit this process by having the entire congregation shout "Crucify him!" The phrase "the religious authorities" is often substituted for John's references to "the Jews."

[67]Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 94–95.

[68]Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 83–90 (on Ekbert of Schönau or pseudo-Bernard), 93–97 (on Bonaventure), and 102–03 (on *perfidus* and *perfidia* in anti-Jewish texts).

[69]Miri Rubin, "The Passion of Mary: The Virgin and the Jews in Medieval Culture," in *The Passion Story: From Visual Representation to Social Drama*, ed. Marcia Kupfer (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 53–66; Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 252–55; Georg Satzinger and Hans-Joachim Ziegeler, "Marienklagen und Pietà," in *Die Passion Christi in Literatur und Kunst des Spätmittelalters*, ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), 241–76.

[70]Florian Rommel, "Judenfeindliche Vorstellungen im Passionsspiel des Mittelalters," in *Juden in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Religiöse Konzepte—Feindbilder—Rechtfertigungen*, ed. Ursula Schulze (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 183–207.

sentiments voiced by John the Peasant. A remarkable Passion play from Revello, in the Piedmont, features a vigorous Jewish debate on the advisability of having Jesus crucified. Only one Jew wants him condemned as a criminal; another wants to free him because he is innocent; but the majority favor crucifixion on orthodox Christian grounds, precisely because they recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and must die in this way to fulfill God's saving purpose.[71] Their debate recalls a perennial revisionist tradition that dates back to the second-century *Gospel of Judas*. On the revisionist view, Judas is exonerated or even revered on the ground that, without his betrayal, Jesus would not have died and humanity would not have been saved. Accordingly, Judas was doing God's will; in some versions, he does so with Christ's full knowledge and consent.[72] Since Judas is so often treated in literature as the paradigmatic Jew, his vindication could by extension exonerate the whole people, which is what seems to happen in the Revello play. If such a view is accepted, then Christians have no ground for blaming Jews, but should rather be grateful to them.

While the Revello play is unusual, there can be no more influential witnesses to mainstream clerical piety than pseudo-Bonaventure's ubiquitous *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Jesus Christ*. Pseudo-Bonaventure's mid-fourteenth century work, which soon became available in all the European vernaculars, says this about Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Mt. 26:39):

> As the wise men and commentators say, the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father not so much because he feared to suffer as out of mercy for the prior people of God, for he had compassion on the Jews who would be lost because of his death. They were not supposed to kill him because he was one of them, he was prophesied (*continebatur*) in their Law, and he had conferred so many favors on them. Hence he prayed to the Father: "if it is possible for the multitude of Gentiles to believe while the Jews also are saved—then I refuse the Passion. But if the Jews must be blinded so that others may see, then not my will, but thine be done."[73]

[71]*La Passione di Revello: Sacra rappresentazione quattrocentesca*, ed. Anna Cornagliotti (Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1976); Jesse Njus, "Performing the Passion: A Study on the Nature of Medieval Acting" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 2010), 195–204. The Revello play was written about a century after the pogrom at Prague, though in the meantime the general animosity toward Jews had only hardened.

[72]Marvin W. Meyer, *Judas: The Definitive Collection of Gospels and Legends about the Infamous Apostle of Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2007); James M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His Lost Gospel* (New York: Harper, 2006); William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

[73]"Dicunt tamen sapientes et expositores quod orauit Dominus Iesus Patrem non tam timore paciendi quam misericordia prioris populi: quia compaciebatur Iudeis, qui de sua morte perdebantur. Non enim ipsi eum occidere debebant quia ex eis erat, et in lege eorum

Similarly, the great Carthusian scholar Ludolph's massive *Vita Jesu Christi*, completed perhaps two decades before the pogrom at Prague, explains why Christ wept over Jerusalem:

> These tears of the Lord were shed for us, brethren, that we might imitate the master, and learn from this great teacher of ours how we should behave at the death or destruction of our enemies. Hence he also said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." . . . The compassionate Lord wept for the City because of the misery that was soon to fall upon it, as prefigured of old in the lamentations of Jeremiah. . . . So we too should compassionately weep for the affliction of our neighbors, even our enemies, after the example of Christ who had compassion for his own enemies.[74]

My last example is the Dominican Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* (*Clock of Wisdom*, 1334), a phenomenally successful work that survives in more than two hundred manuscripts and was translated into nine languages, including Czech. It contains a powerful Passion meditation in which Christ graphically recalls his sufferings, yet never once refers to his tormentors as "Jews," with all the dangerous, universalizing connotations of that term.

> When the sons of darkness had nailed me to the gallows of the cross, the hideous torments already laid upon me were not enough for them, but, raging more savagely, they stood around me as I lamented and died, and they "derided me," and "blaspheming me" they gestured at me, "wagging their heads," and with their insults afflicted me most hatefully in my misery. But I was not moved by what they did, but, enduring patiently, I said: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."[75]

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continebatur et tanta eis contulerat beneficia; unde orabat Patrem: si fieri potest, cum salute Iudeorum, quia credat multitudo gencium recuso passionem. Si uero Iudei excecandi sunt ut alii uideant, non mea uoluntas sed tua fiat." Johannes de Caulibus [*sic*], *Meditaciones Vite Christi* 75, ed. M. Stallings-Taney (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 260. On the attribution of this work, see Sarah McNamer, "The Origins of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*," *Speculum* 84 (2009): 905–55.

[74]"Nobis, fratres, istae lacrymae Domini fiunt ut Magistrum imitemur, et ab hoc tanto praeceptore nostro discamus quid in nostrorum inimicorum morte, et ruina agere debeamus. Unde et ipse ait: Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos. . . . Iste fletus Domini compatientis Civitati de miseria, quae illi mox imminebat, praefiguratus fuit olim in lamentationibus Jeremiae, . . . sic et nos in afflictione proximorum, etiam inimicorum, ex compassione flere debemus, exemplo Christi, qui compassus est suis inimicis." Ludolph of Saxony, *Vita Jesu Christi* II.28 (Paris: Palmé, 1865), 496.

[75]"Igitur cum me filii tenebrarum crucis patibulo affixissent, non suffecit eis horrendum supplicium mihi illatum, sed crudelius saevientes coram dolente et moriente stabant, et me deridebant, et blasphemando subsannabant, moventes capita sua, et opprobriis impiissime miserum affligebant. Ego autem his non motus, sed patienter sustinens aiebam: 'Pater ignosce eis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt.' Heinrich Seuse, *Horologium Sapientiae* 1.15, ed. Pius Künzle (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1977), 499; *Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours*, trans. Edmund Colledge (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 208.

These examples show that even highly affective accounts of the Passion could resist the lure of anti-Judaism and its accompanying cry for vengeance. In fact, the three texts I have just cited were by far the best-known and most widely read of their type, so their teaching can be taken as normative. Under typical circumstances, of course, a meditant might contrive to feel compassion for Christ, remorse for his own sins, and anger at the Jews all at once, with no sense of contradiction—despite reminders of the forgiveness and love of enemies modelled by Jesus himself. But *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*, by identifying the Jews simultaneously with Christ and his persecutors, compels a choice. Is the reader to exult in God's vengeance, as the writer apparently did, or maintain the usual stance of sympathy with the tortured victim? Could John the Peasant have gone too far, driving some readers to feel horror rather than satisfaction?

In order to score points, the author frequently has to invert or negate the Gospel verses he cites. Blessing gives way to cursing. For example, Jesus' promise to the woman who anointed him—that this good deed will be told in her memory wherever the Gospel is proclaimed (Mt. 26:13)—becomes a threat concerning the Jews' nefarious deed. Jesus comforts the disciples who fail to keep watch with him in Gethsemane, noting that "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt. 26:41). In the *Passion*, on the contrary, the ringleader Ieško swears vengeance until his sword is "drunk with the blood of the Jews," affirming that "my spirit is willing, and my flesh is not weak."[76] Unlike the soldiers who cast lots for Christ's tunic (Mt. 27:35), the mob did not bother to cast lots for the Jews' garments, but "seized them whole and in great heaps—and not only the garments, but all their treasure and furniture with them."[77] After Christ's resurrection, Matthew says, many tombs were opened and the bodies of the saints arose, "came into the holy city and appeared to many" (Mt. 27:52-53). Conversely, when Christians desecrated the Jewish cemetery, "no bodies of the Jews rose from the dead. But after the last day they shall come into the profane city of hell and appear to Lucifer and many demons."[78] The most striking of these reversals negates Jesus' prayer of submission to his Father in the garden of Gethsemane: "Thy will be done" (Mt. 26:42). Rather than surrendering to the divine will, Ieško promises that the outcome will be "not as [the Jews] will, but as we will.

[76]"Respondens autem Ieško quadratus ait: 'Non iocundabor ad plenum, donec inebrietur gladius simul et animus meus de sanguinibus Iudeorum. Spiritus quidem meus ad hoc promptus est et caro non infirma.'" *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 20.

[77]"Diviserunt autem inter se vestimenta eorum, unusquisque quantum rapere valuit. Nec sortem miserunt super eos, sed integre et cumulatim ceperunt indifferenter non solum vestimenta, verum tamen omnem thesaurum et suppellectilia eorum cum illis." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 20.

[78]"monumenta eorum per cristianos aperta sunt, nec tamen ulla corpora Iudeorum surrexerunt. Sed post diem novissimum venient in prophanam infernorum civitatem et apparebunt Lucifero et cum eo multis demonibus." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 21.

The cup that God the Father has prepared for them shall not pass from them until they drink it. Our will be done."[79] The cumulative effect is to stress the avenging zeal of the rioters. Outdoing Christ's tormentors in violence, they mock his patience with their lack of it.

Closely linked to the inversion of some biblical verses is the total suppression of others. Since the Gospel's core message is forgiveness, turning it into a tract of vengeance requires some loud silences. In the Gospels, for instance, Peter tries to resist the arrest of Jesus by cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave. Jesus, renouncing violence, tells him to put his sword back in its sheath, "for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt. 26:51-52; Jn. 18:10). In Luke's Gospel he also heals the slave (Lk. 22:51). But John the Peasant reports instead that the mob struck their victims "without mercy, cutting off not only their ears, but their heads, hands, and feet." Conspicuously, too, the text echoes none of Jesus' last words from the Cross. It does not make the Jews ask, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46), although that would have been a legitimate question. Much less is there any hint of Jesus' prayer of pardon: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). The text ends with a statement that the civic authorities "went out and secured the Jewry, sealing the gates and setting a guard" (Mt. 27:65-66), just as the Romans did at the tomb of Jesus. This is where the Gospel reading on Good Friday would have ended, although the pogrom occurred on Easter Sunday. Here there will be no repentance, no resurrection. Finally, though the text supplies analogues for Jesus, Peter, and Judas, two key roles go unfilled. In Passion plays, the lamenting figures of the Virgin Mary and the Magdalene provide focal points for the spectator's empathy and, occasionally, protest.[80] Here they are necessarily absent. Only near the end does John the Peasant write that "an old Jewish woman," who had accepted baptism, "told her confessor that she had seen the blessed Virgin Mary . . . standing above the gate of the Jewry."[81] He does not say whether she was brandishing a sword or weeping.

The *Passion* cites over ninety biblical verses, more than half from Matthew's Gospel. While the Old Testament is evoked rarely, its submerged presence introduces what I will call "reverse typology," a particularly bizarre form of Scriptural memory. For instance, when the *parnas ha-chodesh* Jonas says

[79]"Ut non sicut ipsi volunt, sed sicut nos volumus. Calix, quem disposuit eis Deus Pater, non transibit ab eis, sed bibent illum. Fiat voluntas nostra." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 21.

[80]Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 150–73.

[81]"una Iudea antiqua . . . post regeneracionis lavacrum suo retulisse dicitur confessori, quod beatam virginem Mariam, Genitricem Domini nostri Iesu Cristi, stantem viderit supra portam Iudeorum." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 23.

that his soul is "sorrowful unto death," the text alludes primarily to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. But readers might also have recalled his namesake, the prophet Jonas—a Jew so grieved by God's deliverance of the Gentiles in Nineveh that he declares himself "angry enough to die" (Jon. 4:9). The *Passion* includes at least three more complex incidents of reverse typology. The first occurs when the civic authorities (equivalent to the Gospel's Romans) command the town criers to "summon the congregation of all the people into the praetorium [the town hall] to prevent further peril to the Jews. But by the dispensation of God, it happened that the Holy Spirit used the tongue of the criers to proclaim the opposite of this command."[82] Subverting the council's wishes, the criers took it on themselves to fake a royal decree, summoning the people instead to exterminate the Jews. Consciously or not, the text here gestures toward the famous story of Balaam (Numbers 22–24). A professional prophet, Balaam was hired by the Moabites to curse Israel, but God deflected him from that course by causing the prophet's ass to speak. Instead of cursing the Israelites, Balaam ended by blessing them fivefold. In the *Passion*, reverse typology serves to excuse the town criers' malice and insubordination. Moved by the Holy Spirit, John the Peasant claims, they disobeyed orders and inverted Balaam's example, cursing where they had been commanded to bless.

Urged on by Ieško and these murderous criers, the Christians therefore "plotted how to destroy all the Jews," in words that echo the Gospel conspiracy against Jesus (Jn. 11:53). But a literal-minded reader might recall someone else who had plotted to destroy all the Jews: Haman in the book of Esther, which celebrates a pogrom narrowly averted by the queen's heroism. Jews read the story of Esther liturgically at Purim, shortly before Passover, just as Christians read the Passion on Good Friday, so the allusion to her story touched an extremely raw nerve. Since Haman was hanged during Passover, the festivals of Purim and Passover are closely linked. Moreover, in the Septuagint version of Esther, the archvillain's execution is explicitly described as a crucifixion. Hence, in a medieval climate marked by mutual antagonism, the Jewish custom of hanging—or crucifying—Haman in effigy could easily lead into mockery of Christ, especially when the wine was flowing. (The Talmud famously says that on Purim, it is a religious duty to become so drunk that one cannot tell the difference between "cursed be

[82]"Videns autem potestas civitatis communem plebiculam magno contra Iudeam fremitu incandescere, mandavit preconibus, ut clamore valido publice per plateas congregacionem tocius populi ad resistendum futuris Iudeorum periculis in pretorium convocarent. Sed dispensacione divina factum est, ut Spiritus Sanctus lingwa preconum oppositum precepti uteretur clamancium. Clamabant enim, ut regio edicto et consulum tota simul plebs irrueret in predam et in exterminium Iudeorum." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 19.

Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai."[83]) Even if the frequently alleged Jewish mockery of Jesus on Purim was only a Christian fantasy, it could still spur ritual murder accusations and violence at that time of year. John the Peasant may well have been aware of these traditions, for the Christians of Prague, living in close proximity with Jews, must have had at least some familiarity with Jewish holidays. But even if John was not consciously invoking Esther, the allusion still lurks in the textual unconscious of the *Passion*. Typology once again works in reverse: if God blessed the Jews through Balaam and saved them through Esther, the mob curses and slaughters them, as John the Peasant inverts both these stories.

The third instance of reverse typology is more deliberate. Our author compares the Christian mob to fire-breathing lions who "consumed all with fire and sword, except for a few of the more attractive little children, whom they snatched from the burning fiery furnace" to be baptized and adopted.[84] Alert readers would have recognized an allusion to the book of Daniel, conflating the prophet's salvation from the lions' den (Daniel 6) with the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the burning fiery furnace (Daniel 3). Known as the Three Holy Children, these Jews were cast into a furnace as punishment for refusing to worship an idol set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. All the king's subjects were supposed to fall down in worship when the royal orchestra sounded with "every kind of musical instrument"—a refrain that accounts for the *Passion*'s odd reference to music sounding amid the fires.[85] A well-known addition to the book of Daniel, found in the Septuagint and the Vulgate, says the three youths "walked in the middle of the flames, praising God and blessing the Lord" (Dan. 3:24) in a long prayer, called the Song of the Three Children.[86] After their song of praise, the king returned to find them alive and unharmed amid the flames, along with a fourth man "in appearance like a son of God" (Dan. 3:25; 3:92, Vulgate). For Jews this was an angel; for Christians, a figure of Christ. Both communities therefore used the story from Daniel to acclaim God's deliverance of willing martyrs. A Jewish writer invoked it in the context of a pogrom at

[83]T. C. G. Thornton, "The Crucifixion of Haman and the Scandal of the Cross," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 37 (1986): 419–26; Yuval, *Two Nations*, 165–67. On Jewish violence against Christians at Purim see Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*.

[84]"Concluserunt itaque omnia in gladio et ferro et igne, paucis elegantioribus infantulum de camino ignis ardentis abductis." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 21.

[85]"Sic itaque non moti penitencia, sed desperati in malicia, sonantibus inter ardores ignium musicis instrumentis, quidam ex eis propriis mucronibus sua viscera et puerorum suorum confoderunt." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 22.

[86]This canticle was sung on the Ember Saturdays of Advent and Lent, and the passage about King Nebuchadnezzar was one of twelve Old Testament lessons read at the Easter Vigil between the Exsultet and the rite of baptism. Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to Their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 36, 98, 264.

Blois in 1171, when a Christian attempt to burn three Jews at the stake repeatedly failed—even though they were ultimately slain with the sword.[87]

The fate of the baptized children in Prague would have marked a great divide between Jewish and Christian interpretations of the event. In the eyes of John the Peasant, their selection for baptism was a case of genuine mercy—the only one in his narrative—and an instance of true rather than reverse typology. While the great majority of Jews perished in the flames, a few small children were saved like the holy youths and "raised afterwards by the mercy of the faithful Christians as their adopted sons and daughters, delivered . . . from the darkness of perfidious Jewish errors into the light of the true and orthodox faith."[88] The *Historia de cede* credits "devout women" with rescuing these children.[89] In Jewish eyes, on the other hand, the infants suffered a fate worse than death—apostasy, which parents willingly killed their own children to prevent. For Jews, then, this use of Daniel would have been another example of reverse typology. Unlike the Three Holy Children, whom God saved for their loyalty to the Jewish faith and their rejection of idolatry, the baptized children were not saved, but lost for being raised in that very sin. Interestingly, *De cede* remarks that the king was especially angry when he heard that Jewish children had been baptized against their parents' will.[90]

As the allusions to Daniel suggest, John the Peasant was not only creating a biblical *cento*; he was also producing liturgical parody. Easter and Passover are of course inextricable. Jesus was crucified on the first day of Passover (or according to John, on the day of preparation), and the Latin term for Easter, *Pascha*, is simply the Greek for Passover (Hebrew *Pesach*). Since the dating of Easter depends, by an oft-debated formula, on the date of Passover, in most years the celebration of Holy Week and the Jewish festival overlap, as they did in 1389. Always a time of danger, this season spawned charges of ritual murder as well as host desecration, for Jews were said to use the blood of Christian children to bake matzoh or other Passover foods.[91] In Prague and elsewhere, they were forbidden by law to appear in public between Holy Thursday and Easter.[92] All the same, Christians necessarily observed the

[87]Yuval, *Two Nations*, 190–91.

[88]"[infantulos] . . . postmodum viscera misericordie cristianorum fidelium per regeneracionem sacri baptismatis a tenebris errorum Iudayce perfidie ad lucem vere et orthodoxe fidei perduxerunt constituentes eos sibi in filios et filias adoptivas." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 21–22.

[89]"Altera autem die post occisionem maledictorum Iudaeorum paruuli, qui reseruati fuerant, a deuotis mulieribus collecti, baptismi gratia insigniti sunt." *Historia de caede*, ed. Jireček, 229.

[90]"Quod audientes Skopko et (sub)camerarius, ad notitiam regis perduxerunt, dicentes, quod extra voluntatem parentum illorum haec facta fuissent. Propter quod provocatus rex indignari coepit in communitatem Pragensium." *Historia de caede*, ed. Jireček, 229.

[91]Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 108; Yuval, *Two Nations*, 254.

[92]Graus, *Struktur und Geschichte*, 55; Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 74–75. Canon 68 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) repeated this ancient prohibition. For later iterations of the law

Passover themselves, for it forms the indelible core of the Easter liturgy. As Israel Yuval has shown, the rabbinic Passover Haggadah and the liturgy of Holy Week developed in tandem, with mutual influence and polemic, as the sister faiths developed their competing explanations of the Temple sacrifice and why God allowed it to end.[93] While the Jewish festival celebrates the exodus from slavery into freedom under Moses, the Christian feast interprets this event typologically: Jesus as the new Moses leads his people triumphantly from death to life, from darkness to light. The Red Sea crossing signifies liberation from the bondage of sin, with the defeated Pharaoh representing Satan—a symbolic understanding that applies not only to Christ's resurrection but also to baptism, another key part of the Easter liturgy. Hence the Exsultet prayer, solemnly chanted at the beginning of the Vigil, commemorates both the old and the new Passover:

> This is the night on which you first led our fathers, the children of Israel, out of Egypt and made them cross the Red Sea with dry feet. This then is the night which banished the darkness of sin with the radiant pillar of light. This is the night which today throughout the world delivers those who believe in Christ from the vices of the world and the darkness of sin, restores them to grace, and clothes them with sanctity. This is the night on which Christ rose from hell as its conqueror, having broken the chains of death. . . . O truly blessed night, which despoiled the Egyptians and enriched the Hebrews! O night on which heaven is united with earth, the divine with the human![94]

John the Peasant must have heard this prayer recited only days or weeks before he penned his parodic version of it: "O truly blessed night, which despoiled the Jews and enriched the Christians! O most sacred Passover of ours, in which the faithful, . . . liberated from the chains of sin . . ., spared neither the Hebrew children nor their white-haired old men."[95] Offensive to

see Grayzel in *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, ed. Kenneth Stow, vol. 2, 1254–1314 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1989), 258–61, 270.

[93]Yuval, *Two Nations*, 68–90.

[94]"Haec nox est, in qua primum patres nostros, filios Israël eductos de Aegypto, mare Rubrum sicco vestigio transire fecisti. Haec igitur nox est, quae peccatorum tenebras, columnae illuminatione purgavit. Haec nox est, quae hodie per universum mundum in Christo credentes, a vitiis saeculi et caligine peccatorum segregatos, reddit gratiae, sociat sanctitati. Haec nox est, in qua destructis vinculis mortis, Christus ab inferis victor ascendit. . . . O vere beata nox, quae exspoliavit Aegyptios, ditavit Hebraeos! Nox, in qua terrenis caelestia, humanis divina junguntur." Exsultet, "De Vigilia Paschali," *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii*, ed. monks of Solesmes (Tournai: Desclée, 1953), 776n. The clause "quae exspoliavit Aegyptios, ditavit Hebraeos," was removed in a liturgical reform of 1975.

[95]"O vere beata nox, que spoliavit Iudeos, ditavit cristianos. O sanctissimum Pascha nostrum in quo fideles incontaminati agni esu, corpore videlicet et sanguine Cristi Iesu, pridie et tunc refecti et

Jews and Christians alike, this version of the paschal prayer equates the Jews with the Egyptians and thus, typologically, with the devil. Once again reverse typology transforms a biblical miracle into an act of violence. In the Exodus story, the Jews do not defeat the Egyptians by military force; rather, Pharaoh's army drowns in the Red Sea. But in John the Peasant's version, the newly redeemed Christians become the Lord's avenging army, their might and zeal as it were magically heightened by their Easter communion ("the supper of the immaculate Lamb").[96]

Though hardly pleasant reading, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* is important for at least three reasons. First, the work of John the Peasant provides as clear an insight as we are likely to get into the mentality behind Easter 1389 and other pogroms. It is easy, as we have seen, to identify material causes of the violence: the self-interest of borrowers seeking debt relief, the annoyance of fiscally strapped parish priests, the impotence of the town council, and smoldering resentment against an ineffective king, not to mention the mindless cruelty of mobs. Beyond all these, however, the *Passion* exposes the fanaticism of a learned and rhetorically skillful cleric, so bent on celebrating the slaughter that he hid behind the mask of a peasant, which a man of his attainments would ordinarily have spurned. His motives, like those of the inflammatory preachers, are clearly religious, but his Gospel is one of purity and vengeance. Even as he satirizes the greed of the lynch mob, he does not doubt that the pogrom was inspired by God: "For what power could . . . by any cunning restrain the mighty force of these lowly common people to keep them from avenging the injury to God? For this the Spirit of the Lord gathered them together . . . in unity of wills and holy faith."[97] In his mind, just as Christ had chosen "lowly common people" as his apostles, so too he chose them for the noble work of massacring the Jews. Vengeance, indeed, might almost be described as a religious duty. There is no reason to doubt that John the Peasant truly perceived the host desecration as an "injury to God," which Christ would have avenged on the Christians had they not first avenged it on the Jews.[98]

In the second place, however, a close reading of the *Passion* should remind us that there is nothing natural or inevitable about an anti-Jewish interpretation of the Gospels, even in the fourteenth century. As we have seen, the same

a pecatorum vinculis per contritam confessionem liberati, . . . nec infancie nec caniciei Hebreorum pepercerunt." *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 21.

[96]For Jewish fantasies of vengeance against Christians, see Yuval, *Two Nations*, 92–134.

[97]"Nam que tunc potestas tantum vilis et communis plebicule fortitudinis impetum quovis ingenio poterat cohibere, quin pro ulciscenda Dei iniuria proficerent, pro quo Spiritus Domini ipsos . . . in unitatem voluntatum et sancte fidei congregavit?" *Passio*, ed. Steinová, 22.

[98]Cf. Graus, *Struktur und Geschichte*, 56.

Passion meditations that stressed the cruelty of Christ's torturers also recalled his love for the Jewish people and his readiness to forgive those who crucified him. Insofar as these devotions proposed Jesus' love of enemies as a model to emulate, they challenged the crude anti-Jewish rhetoric of the very same texts. As Michael Jones has written, "medieval Christian anti-Judaism is in no way static, or monolithic, nor is it in any way natural or given."[99] Yet he insists at the same time that anti-Judaism "is central to medieval European culture rather than a regrettable pathology or 'prejudice' that erupts on occasion."[100] I would contest neither the prevalence nor the ferocity of Christian hatred for Jews, nor the ideological work performed by pogroms and their defenders. But if we are truly to resist the trap of taking anti-Judaism as "natural," we must acknowledge that resistance was possible and did sometimes surface. The *Limburg Chronicle* is not the only account to express reserve about a charge of host desecration. Deadly as the accusation could be, Miri Rubin remarks, it "was not so powerful as to leave no space for evasion, doubt and rejection by those to whom it made its appeal."[101] Pogroms occurred with depressing frequency, but the most interesting cases, as Rubin shows in *Gentile Tales*, are those where provocateurs who tried to incite violence were successfully resisted. On the literary front, anti-Judaism occurs in a great many, but by no means all, Passion plays and devotions. Julian of Norwich, writing at the same time as John the Peasant, composed an exceedingly graphic account of Christ's sufferings without once mentioning Jews.[102] If the history of antisemitism teaches anything at all, it is to warn against universalizing blood-guilt. So—despite the nexus of political, economic, and religious factors that conspired to facilitate pogroms—the blood of the Jews of Prague rests squarely on the heads of Ieško and his accomplices. No less does it stain the hands of "John the Peasant," their cheerleader after the fact.

This brings me to my final point, which has to do with the *Passion* as a literary parody. Though we often think of parody as a comic genre, it can

[99]Michael Jones, "'The Place of the Jews': Anti-Judaism and Theatricality in Medieval Culture," *Exemplaria* 12 (2000), 353.

[100]Jones, "'Place of the Jews,'" 330.

[101]Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 3. For similar views in an English context, see Elisa Narin van Court, "Socially Marginal, Culturally Central: Representing Jews in Late Medieval English Literature," *Exemplaria* 12 (2000), 293–326.

[102]Reflecting more than twenty years later on their absence from her visions, Julian said she knew as a matter of faith that "the Jewes that did him to deth . . . ware acursed and dampned without ende, saving tho that were converted by grace." Yet she added that she never saw their acts or their fate "properly specified." *A Revelation of Love*, ch. 33, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 225.

just as easily be a corrosive force—an agent of hatred rather than light.[103] In order to use the Bible for his purposes, as I have shown, John the Peasant must invert or negate most of the verses he cites, suppress key elements of the Passion narrative, and employ typology in reverse, turning stories of salvation and promise into accounts of slaughter and destruction. By the same token, he transforms the Easter liturgy's ancient proclamation of continuity between Judaism and Christianity into violent opposition. To read the *Passion* as its author must have composed it, with a Gospel book open in front of him, is to realize that this text is not simply a parody of hapless Jews, mercenary rioters, and feckless magistrates. It is a parody of Christ's Passion itself, along with many of the exegetical and devotional traditions surrounding it. The Passions of Matthew, Luke, and John are not only more radical than *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*, but they undermine it at every turn, creating a textual unconscious that, despite the author's best efforts, allows the grace of irony and pity to seep through.

[103]The influence of the *Passio* has yet to be fully explored, but a later text describing a pogrom at Wrocław (Breslau) in Poland may be indebted to it: "De persecutione Iudaeorum Vratislavensium a. 1453," in *Monumenta Poloniae historica*, ed. August Bielowski, 6 vols. (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawn Naukowe, 1960–61), 4: 1–5; Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 119–28; Steinová, *Passio*, 107.