

GOOD DOG/BAD DOG: DOGS IN MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS POLEMICS

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In the long history of *Adversus Judaeos* literature, the dog, because it was a potential source of ritual impurity in the Hebrew Bible,¹ became one of the animals most frequently identified with the religious “Other,” the Jew. In this way, the dog became an important symbol of the religious conflict between Jews and Christians that may be traced back to Pauline New Testament literature (and to Paul’s later interpreters).² Christian exegetes understood important Gospel texts—e.g., Matt. 15.26 (“It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs”) and Matt. 7.6 (“Do not give what is holy to dogs...”)—to be clear references to Jews. Not only were these texts invoked to express Christian fears of Jewish aggression toward the Eucharist (“the bread”),³ but others as well—for example, Ps. 21.17 (“For many dogs have encompassed me, the council of the malignant has besieged me. They have dug my hands and my feet.”)—became proof-texts to condemn Jewish—but not Roman—“dogs” for the Crucifixion.⁴ Whether or not these New Testament texts represent a Christian attempt to reflect back upon Jews a canine image that Jews were themselves thought to have directed toward Gentiles, the fact remains that uses of the dog as a symbol of religious impurity would have been well known at the time, and examples abound in a variety of texts. But the history of this phenomenon, as well as the history of Jewish reactions to it, is complex, and deserving of closer examination.

Nowhere is this tendency to use the dog as a symbol of religious impurity clearer, perhaps, than in Peter the Venerable’s mid-twelfth-century anti-Jewish polemic, *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews*. Peter’s text is one of the first medieval Latin compositions to polemicize against the Talmud, and the Cluniac abbot opposed fiercely its “wicked teachers” who poisoned the minds of the Jews.⁵ In particular, Peter condemned a Talmudic legend according to which the *Jews’* messiah has appeared “torn and gnawed to pieces by dogs” in the crypts of first-century Rome, from which he will emerge to accomplish the ingathering of the exiled Jews to the Land of Israel. Peter remarked:

I have heard from some people that they [Talmudic sages] say that their Christ was born at the time of Vespasian and was transferred (by what art I do not know) to Rome.⁶ There he hid in crypts or subterranean caves, there he was torn and gnawed to pieces by dogs, and he endured the pain and wounds of that gnawing for Jewish sins or iniquities, and this is why it is said: "He was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins" [Is. 53.5]. Moreover, he will live and endure these pains in the bowels of the earth until he will go forth from there, at a time determined by God, and, gathering up the Jews from all the world, he will return them anew to the first place of the land promised to them. Then all things will be fulfilled that were foretold by the prophets concerning the future felicity of the Jews, then their Christ will rule over many nations, then there will be peace without fear of any disturbance, then, they affirm, they will live in the utmost delight and with glory. (122-23)

But, alleges Peter, this false messianism and erroneous interpretation of Scripture must be corrected. For him it is the Jews themselves that are the dogs that have attacked the true messiah, the Christians' Christ:

Behold, you present us a dog-Christ, and you who are embarrassed by the fact that he was slain by Jews blame this on dogs. We do not disagree with that. In truth, as you say, Christ was gnawed by dogs, by ones unclean, by ones who barked at him, and, as we confess, Christ was slain. Let Christ be heard in the psalm: "For many dogs have encompassed me, the council of the malignant has besieged me. They have dug my hands and my feet." [Ps. 21.17] Were you not the dogs when, like dogs, you thirsted after blood and licked it almost like a rabid dog, saying: "His blood be upon us and upon our children"? [Matt. 27.25] Did you not bark when you cried out time and time again to the judge who condemned your wickedness and attempted to turn it aside, "Crucify him, crucify him"? . . . It is clear, then, that the prophet predicted that Christ would be led to his death not by dogs of this sort but by Jews, who are far worse than dogs.

Peter insists, then, that Scripture refers one not to dogs, properly speaking, but to Jews who, like dogs, surrounded, attacked, barked and

snapped at Jesus, and lapped up his blood. Although, Peter acknowledges, some may think his language intemperate, nonetheless,

even if I have called them [Jews] dogs or pigs, I have not gone too far. For although carnal impurity is customarily signified in the sacred Scriptures by these animals, nonetheless does not such a great and oft-repeated blasphemy surpass carnal evils? (244)

Other late eleventh- and early twelfth-century texts aggressively linked contemporary Jews and dogs. Jews themselves were not unaware of this polemical association and its implications. Near the end of the eleventh century, the Jewish interlocutor in the *Disputation of a Jew and a Christian Concerning the Christian Faith* by Gilbert Crispin (d. ca. 1117), Abbot of Westminster, objected, “if the [biblical] Law must be observed, why do you treat its defenders [the Jews] like dogs and pursue them everywhere after having driven them away with cudgels?”⁷ Similarly, the Jewish convert Herman of Cologne, in his account of a debate with Rupert of Deutz, complained that Christians regularly revile Jews as “dead dogs” (*canes mortuos*) [3.77].⁸

Not only did Jews complain that Christians abused and treated them like dogs, but from the thirteenth century it was an increasingly common practice to impose a unique form of capital punishment upon Jews (or converted Jews): to be hanged, upside down, between two dogs.⁹ In such cases, it appears that the dogs would gnaw on their flesh until, days later, the victims finally expired,¹⁰ imposing upon the Jews the punishment—to be torn and gnawed to pieces by dogs—which, according to Peter the Venerable, the Talmud claims the messiah suffered. In the last quarter of the thirteenth century, Rudolf of Schlettstatt prescribes the inverted posture of Jews on the gibbet:

Jews, who are unclean and stinking and more vile than dogs, should be punished for a long time in prison and then their feet should be tied to the tails of horses and led through the fields and thorns to the gibbet, and hung with their feet above them, and completely burned up with a fire placed beneath their head. (101)

Although Rudolf of Schlettstatt does not mention the presence of dogs beside the Jew, a woodcut-illustration in Thomas Murner’s *Entehrung Mariä*, printed in Strassburg in 1515 depicts a Jew hung upside down, with a dog hung upside down beside him, while a fire burns beneath his

head.¹¹ Birgit Wiedl notes that in one copy of the sixteenth-century pamphlet *Der Juden Erbarkeit* (*On the Jews' Respectability*) the author also expresses a desire that Jews be hanged like dogs.¹²

The association of Jews and dogs even extended beyond this life. In the inquisitorial documents of Bishop Jacques Fournier, Arnaud Gélis is known as the “messenger of souls” because he claimed to have enjoyed visions of the souls of the dead. The bishop asked Mengarde de Pomiès de Pamiers what Arnaud had said about Jews. She replied that although the Jews’ souls travel pathways in the afterlife like the souls of Christian dead, the Christian souls mock them and call them dogs.¹³

A DOGGED TRADITION

To call someone “a dog” was clearly an insult. Although Christians did not direct that insult only against Jews, in the case of Jews, both scriptural exegesis and an apparent connection to Jewish customs and behavior firmly established the analogy. In the second half of the eleventh century, Otloh of St. Emmeram (d. 1072) remarked that he was well acquainted in Regensburg with a Jew, Abraham, who harbored such malice in his heart toward Jesus that if one happened to mention the Lord Christ in his presence, the Jew would burst out with cursed blasphemies, barking like a dog (82).¹⁴ The Benedictine Gautier de Coincy (d. 1236), prior of Vic-sur-Aisn and author of the popular Old French *Miracles of Notre Dame*, often refers to the Jew as a “stinking dog” (*puant chien*) or “treacherous dog” (*felon chien*), for the Jew’s perceived hostility to Mary.¹⁵ Similarly, Chrétien de Troyes, in his twelfth-century romance *Perceval*, demands that the Jews, whom God nourished on the Old Law but who crucified him in their hatred, should be slaughtered like dogs (I: 205).

Like Jews, Muslims are often linked to dogs, perhaps because Muslims regard dogs (but not cats!) as impure. Indeed, as Alexandra Cuffel points out, “Calling someone a dog...was degrading in medieval Muslim society, for it suggested that a person was lustful, uncontrolled, and categorized among the vermin unworthy to enter holy space” (216). The insult was also turned against Muslims by Christian polemicists. Alain de Lille (d. 1202) insists that dogs devoured Mohammad’s body after his death, seemingly as a sign of the prophet’s own impurity.¹⁶ In a thirteenth-century religious debate between a Christian mendicant and Muslims at the Mongol court, moreover, the friar lashes out, dismisses the Muslims as impure dogs, and insists “I speak the truth that both you

and your Machomet [Mohammad] are vile dogs.”¹⁷ As a result, in Christian iconography, both Muslims and Jews are sometimes depicted as dog-headed creatures, *Cynocephali*, in art and architecture.¹⁸

In an epitome of the exegetical tradition, Albert the Great (d. 1280) remarks that the dog is an unclean animal in a double sense—both because it does not have a cloven hoof, and because it does not ruminate.¹⁹ This double form of uncleanness, he adds, corresponds to the faithlessness and impure customs of “perfidious Jews,” heretics, and pagans (i.e., Muslims), who attack Truth like barking dogs (Albertus Magnus, *Super Matthaeum* 7.6, p. 247, ll. 6-48).

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CANINE ATTRIBUTES

Certainly the image of the barking dog could also have a positive significance. It is essential for a good guard-dog to bark when a thief invades a home in the night, or when a wolf threatens the sheep. As a result, Peter Damian (d. 1072), in a letter to Peter, Archpriest of the canons of the Lateran, commended the latter for demanding that his clergy observe clerical celibacy: “For like an excellent watchdog that guards the court of the king, with your loud bark you assail the nocturnal thieves and seize them in your teeth, lest they burn down the royal palace with the fires of their sexual desires” (*Letters* 162, 2, 143). Similarly, in a treatise opposed to clerical marriage entitled *On the Stumbling Block (De offenculo)*, Honorius Augustodunensis (d. 1154) describes priests as the dogs guarding the Church against demons (“thieves”) and heretics (“wolves”), who should “bark” like a good dog when they preach against them by word and example (30, p. 48). The Aberdeen bestiary (c. 1200) compares ecclesiastical preachers that chase away the Devil to dogs that chase away intruders, and compares the dog’s saliva, which it uses to heal its own wounds, to the fruit of confession (fol. 19v). Analogously, the *Book of Beasts* maintains that priests are like watchdogs trained to drive away the Devil; moreover, as a dog’s tongue cures a wound by licking it, so too the priest “cures” the wounded by laying bare their sins in confession (66-67). The medicinal properties of the dog’s tongue and its saliva were well known. According to Albert the Great, “[Dogs] are said to cure both their own wounds and those of others with their tongue and . . . if they are not able to touch it with the tongue, they use a foot that has been coated with saliva to touch the injured place and cure it” (*De animalibus* 22.2.1.27(16), 2:1363; *On Animals* 2:1458).²⁰ Alexander Neckham remarks that a preacher (*doctor*) is said to be a dog because his

speech or ‘tongue’ (*lingua*) has medicinal properties that summon those subject to him to heaven (cap. 157, p. 257). Contrariwise, those prelates who fail to exercise the office of preaching are like “mute dogs, unable to bark” (“*canes muti, non valentes latrare*” 258).

In the thirteenth century, the Dominican friars were nicknamed the “hounds” or “watch dogs of the Lord” (*Domini canes*). St. Dominic himself was represented as a dog with a burning torch in his mouth, to shine his light upon the wolves of heresy and ward them off with his barking (Henricus 1, q. 6, col. 40C, 1:282–83; col. 125A, 2:294). Perhaps the most famous thirteenth-century Dominican, Albert the Great, commented on the text of Luke 16.21, which describes the fate of the leper, Lazarus, who received no food from the table of men: “But the dogs came and licked his sores” (Lk. 16.21). This can be seen in our own day, Albert remarked; indeed, the hounds signify the Order of Preachers (i.e., the Dominicans) that come to the poor and lick the wounds of their sins, having in their mouths the fierce bark of their preaching.²¹ Perhaps to evoke this same scriptural text, Christian iconography often depicts the leper with a dog—who licked the sores of Lazarus—sitting at his feet.²² Albert’s most famous student, Thomas Aquinas, interpreted this text at Lk. 16.21 somewhat differently, and treated the sores or wounds as a figure for the sufferings of Christ. The dogs that licked the sores are Christians themselves, “who lick the sufferings of the Lord in the sacraments of his body and blood,”²³ but these are the very same people that the *Jews* called unclean.²⁴

Albert adds that with respect to its food, the dog has two additional forms of uncleanness: first, it eats so much more than it needs that we call a gluttonous appetite that is never satisfied “canine”;²⁵ and second, it returns to its vomit and eats it again. The dog’s voracious appetite signifies the insatiability of the flesh, and returning to its vomit (cf. 2 Peter 2.22) signifies those who are drawn back to their evil. This is why Matthew says “Do not give what is holy to dogs...”²⁶

The text of Matthew 7.6 may also provide the appropriate basis on which to understand a specific form of alleged Jewish aggression against the Eucharist. During the inquisition at Briançon in the Dauphiné in March 1433, a Jew named Abraham, who had converted to Christianity and then took the name Jean of Saint Nicholas, confessed under torture that “Jews nurture much hatred toward Christians.” Moreover, Jewish physicians “do not heal any [Christians] but rather kill as many of them as they can.” In addition, according to the confessant, “[Jews] also make an image of the Virgin Mary and her Son which they burn in contempt of

them, and they also crucify a lamb and give its flesh to the dogs.”²⁷ It does not take much imagination to interpret the crucified lamb as a substitute for Jesus and for the Eucharist, nor to see the act of throwing the lamb’s flesh to the dogs as a specific violation of Matthew’s injunction: “Do not give what is holy to dogs...” Perhaps to relieve Christian anxiety in such matters, in another medieval tale a Jew attempts to prove to a Christian that the consecrated host is merely bread, and wagers that his dog will readily eat it. To his chagrin, his dog refuses to eat the host and, when the Jew attempts to force him to do so by beating the dog with a staff, the dog instead kills his Jewish master (Gregg 224-25).

“Canine” gluttony would also produce moralizing links to Jews (or others), whose appetites are allegedly never satisfied. The dog’s gluttony is reinforced by frequent retelling of the tale of the dog and its reflection, which can be traced back to Aesop’s Fables. According to the twelfth-century *Book of Beasts*, “if it [a dog] happens to cross a river carrying some meat or anything of that sort, when it sees its reflection it opens its mouth and, while it hastens to pick up the other bit of meat, it loses the one which it had.”²⁸ The “moral” seems clear: because of its voracious appetite and avarice, the dog loses everything.

In other contexts, Christian naturalists explained the basis for a “canine” appetite neutrally. For example, in his *De animalibus*, Albert the Great notes that because the dog’s intestines are very narrow and short, it is difficult for dogs to metabolize nourishment: “This is why dogs have large appetites and why people who have inordinate appetites are said to suffer from ‘dog hunger’ [*fames canina*]” (*De animalibus* 13.2.1.83, 2: 931; *On Animals* 2: 1024). The dog’s gluttony, then, stems from its physical constitution. Its gluttony causes the dog to “swallow food without chewing it, and this swells the intestines” (Albert the Great, *Questions* 6, qq. 24-26, p. 224), which often produces colic or constipation. Albert the Great remarks that “This [affliction] is seen most often in the ladies’ small dogs which almost always die of constipation” (*De animalibus* 22.2.1.34, 2:1367; *On Animals* 2:1463). This illness highlights another quality associated with dogs: wrath or anger (*De animalibus* 1.1.3.50, 1:20; *Super Sententiarum* 2, dist. 6, art. 6, 134b). Thus, says Albert, “because they suffer cramps when defecating, they [dogs] tear at the ground as if they are angry...” (*Questions* 6, qq. 24-26, 224). Anger was so closely linked to the dog that humans who display anger are said to be dog-like (*De animalibus* 22.1.5.9, 2:1353; *On Animals* 2:1445).

The dog's vomit could also be explained in a natural sense, as when Albert the Great remarks that when dogs are unwell, they will often overeat in order to produce vomiting; by vomiting they seek, like good physicians, to expel the unhealthful humors that have caused their illness (*De animalibus* 7.1.5.45, 1:515; *On Animals* 1:606). In a similar way, Christian penitents were encouraged to cause the "belly of the heart" or conscience to vomit and relieve itself of the vices by revealing them to a priest through confession. As a result, sometimes confession will be called "spiritual vomit."²⁹ Albert the Great invokes vomit as well when exploring the relationship between the sacrament of penance and the reception of the Eucharist. Albert cites Ecclesiasticus 31.25: "And if you have been forced to eat much, arise, go out, and vomit: and it shall refresh you, and you will not bring sickness upon your body." Since vomiting here is said to refresh and purge the body, Albert concludes that certainly the same holds true for the soul, and before the Eucharist is received the "bilious humors" have to be vomited forth through confession and penance (*De corpore domini* dist.6, tract.1, cap. 3, 360a).

If the act of vomiting, then, could carry a positive valence and reflect the benefits of confession and penance, contrariwise, however, the image of the dog *returning* to its vomit was sometimes invoked by Christian moralists to describe Christian recidivists who failed to repent properly of their sins. Thus, a twelfth-century Latin bestiary declares that "the fact that a dog returns to its vomit signifies that human beings, after a complete confession, often return incautiously to the crimes which they have perpetrated" (*Book of Beasts* 67). The Cistercian Caesarius of Heisterbach (d. ca. 1240) remarks upon a novice who entered the monastery with him, but then returned, like a dog to its vomit, to the world (I:21). The same image could be invoked against Jews, as well as against lapsed Jewish converts to Christianity. In this way, once again, the inquisitorial documents of Bishop Jacques Fournier recount the story of one "Baruch of Germany, who was once a Jew, but abandoned the blindness and perfidy of Judaism and was converted to the faith of Christ... and that later 'like a dog returning to his vomit' (II Pet. 2.22) he took the opportunity, while living with the Jews of the city of Pamiers, to return to the sect and rite of the Jews" (Duvernoy 1:177).

Another canine quality was an insatiable, illicit, and indiscriminate sexual appetite. Albert the Great noted that the dog is a dry and melancholic animal that is especially given to intercourse (*Questions* 7, qq. 33-39, 266), and he also identified an affinity between humans and dogs with reference to their sexual practices. Although most animals

have intercourse only during oestrus, that is, when they are in heat, “humans, however, copulate at any time, as do most animals that dwell with them... Examples include the pig and dog...” (*De animalibus* 5.1.2.25, 1:418; *On Animals* 1:499). Not only does Albert seem to believe that both the human and the dog have sexual intercourse whenever they will, but all too often both satisfy their desire inappropriately. Thus, Isidore of Seville sought to condemn the Cynics with a popular etymology that derived the sect’s name from the Greek *Kynikós* for “dog-like.” Isidore averred that “Cynics are so named because of their shamelessness, since they said that it was proper and right to copulate publicly in the streets, like dogs, with their wives...” (8.6.14, 179). Although the Cynics transgressed with their own wives when having intercourse publicly, other types of inappropriate sexual encounters were also described as canine or dog-like. In a fierce polemical campaign against Anaclet II (d. 1138)—the so-called “Jewish pope” because his grandfather was a convert from Judaism—Manfred of Mantua accused Anaclet II of having engaged in sexual relations with nuns, married women, and even his own sister, copulating randomly as if he were a dog.³⁰ Similarly, in a thirteenth-century treatise on penance, *Si dicat peccator*, attributed to Robert de Sorbonne, the author notes that if the penitent has engaged in incest, we call this sin “canine” because, like dogs, the sinner will copulate indiscriminately with anyone (Diekstra 110). While Robert acknowledges that Christians may be guilty of the “canine” sin, often it was especially Jews and Muslims who were associated with this crime. Thus Jacques de Vitry (d. 1240) condemns the Saracens who, he declares, “copulate like dogs” (28), to suggest not only an unrestrained sexuality but possibly also an illicit posture for sexual intercourse, since the dog was known for copulating back to back with the female (Thomas of Cantimpre 1:262, fol 17r). Finally, Albert the Great notes that dogs frequently follow people who give themselves over to frequent intercourse, because “dogs take more pleasure in a strong odor and follow after dead bodies. Further, the body of person who has a great deal of intercourse closely approaches in its disposition the nature of a dead body owing to an abundance of corrupt semen. This is why dogs, which have very good sense of smell, follow them” (*Questions* 5, qq. 11-14, 202).

In sum, then, various negative attributes assigned to dogs—‘uncleanness,’ gluttony, a greedy voraciousness, and unrestrained sexual appetites—made it possible to insult one’s opponents by calling them dogs. This tendency was most pronounced in religious polemics, and was hardly offset by a dog’s many positive qualities. It will be useful to recall

some of these qualities. For example, it was a commonplace to describe the dog as “the most sagacious animal” (*Book of Beasts* 61, Isidore 8.11.49, 186) because the dog alone (so it was said) recognizes both his own name and his master. The dog’s intelligence even suggested a potential for syllogistic reasoning. When a dog is tracking a stag and comes to cross-trails, the dog

puzzles silently with himself... He shows his sagacity in following the scent, as if enunciating a syllogism, ‘Either it has gone this way,’ says he to himself, ‘or that way, or, indeed...in that other direction. But as it has neither entered into this road, nor that road, obviously it must have taken the third one. And so, by rejecting error, Dog finds truth. (*Book of Beasts* 64)

This example of canine “reasoning” can be traced back to Sextus Empiricus, who notes that according to Chrysippus the dog makes use of the fifth complex indemonstrable syllogism when, arriving at a spot where three paths meet, and after smelling the two paths its quarry did not take, using a process of elimination it rushes off on the third, without stopping to catch its scent. Moreover, “Socrates used the oath ‘by the dog’ because of the rationality of the animal, and Plato himself described the dog as a philosophical animal.”³¹ Medieval scholars acknowledged the dog’s remarkable intelligence and commented frequently on its power of “discretion,” which displayed itself in the ease with which one can train a dog (Albert, *Questions* 2, q. 28.2, 103; Albertus, *Metaphysica* 1.16). To be sure, the dog was not the only animal that could be trained to perform a variety of tasks. Albert the Great noted, “certain animals are teachable, like the elephant, the horse, the dog, the falcon, the bear...” (*Questions* 8, q. 10, 276-77), but “the dog is by far the most easily taught animal” (*De animalibus* 22.2.1.30, 1:1364; *On Animals* 2:1460).

In addition, the dog is a domestic animal that also could be the object of human affection. Although medieval society especially valued dogs as working animals—hunters, guard-dogs, herders, etc.—still one does find some references to dogs as pets. For example, near the beginning of the twelfth century, Theodoric, the Abbot of St. Trond (d. 1107) composed an elegant lament in praise of his little dog, “Peewee” (*Pitulus*).³² Albert the Great remarked (fondly?) that “I had a beautiful little dog at Cologne that had one white eye and one black” (*Questions* 1, qq. 29-31, 580).

Besides intelligence, the dog was distinguished by its special regard for humans. Peter Damian reports that a group of starving Christian pilgrims *en route* to Jerusalem were saved by a dog that brought to them a sack filled with bread, enabling them to complete their journey (*Letters* 170, 10, 251). Dogs were also renowned for their loyalty and their willingness to sacrifice themselves to protect their master. Jacques de Vitry remarks,

Dogs alone know their own names and love their masters very tenderly, and will expose themselves to death for them. No hunger will compel them to abandon the dead bodies of their masters. Although they sleep gladly, lying awake at night they guard the dwellings of their master.³³

By the thirteenth century a cult had even emerged in France to venerate Saint Guinefort, a greyhound, who was held to be a special protector of young children.³⁴ The dog's loyalty and lack of self-regard became legend. Again, according to the *Book of Beasts*,

So much do dogs adore their owners, that one can read how, when King Garamantes was captured by his enemies and sold into slavery, two hundred of his hounds... rescued him from exile out of the middle of the whole battle-line of his foes, and fought those who resisted. When Jason was killed in a quarrel, his dog refused food and died of hunger. The hound of King Lisimachus threw itself into the flames when its master's funeral pyre had been lighted and was burnt up by the fire in company with him. (*Book of Beasts* 62; cf. Aberdeen Bestiary, fol. 18v)

The loyal dog also sought justice for his master's wrongful death and provided "mute testimony" to identify and seize his master's murderer (*Book of Beasts* 64; Aberdeen Bestiary, fols. 19r-v). After the murder of Aubry de Montdidier in 1371, his dog Dragon reacted with special violence to Richard Macaire. King Charles V (d. 1380) ordered a trial by combat; the dog was victorious, and Macaire was condemned.³⁵

Despite these positive qualities, however, it remained an insult to call someone a dog. In part this may stem from a sense that even the domestic dog retained a strong link to its wild ancestor.³⁶ As such, its behaviors remained somewhat unpredictable and its bond to humans was potentially quite fragile. Nowhere is this more visible than in the case of

a dog that contracted rabies, suddenly to become a deadly threat. Such dogs became “poisonous” and threatened with infection not only other dogs but also human beings. Once infected, humans become more dog-like themselves. Thus, as Bartholomew the Englishman remarks, those people bitten by a rabid dog will have terrible dreams and become angry without reason; they will bark like dogs and they are terrified by water.³⁷ “Canine rabies somewhat resembles demonic insanity,” according to Albert the Great, and “all animals that are bitten by a rabid dog go mad and die. Humans are an exception, for they can be helped through medicine. Still, many such people die, for I myself saw one who had been bitten in the arm by a rabid dog. In the twelfth year after the bite, the place with the scar began to swell and he was dead within two days” (*De animalibus* 7.2.2.109, 1:542-543; *On Animals* 1:636). When Peter the Venerable identified Jews as “almost like a rabid dog,” he associated them with the most dangerous, most poisonous and infectious, and most feared canines.

The “madness” displayed by the rabid dog may also hint at an association between the dog and the devil, who sometimes adopted the form of a large, black dog.³⁸ If the rabid dog represents the most dangerous canine threat, however, there remained numerous ranks in between the beloved pet and the rabid animal, evidenced by the often drawn distinction between “noble” and “ignoble” or low-born dogs (*De animalibus* 22.2.1.27(16), 1:1362-64; *On Animals* 2:1457-60), which may correspond to observed differences between domesticated dogs, bred to perform certain tasks, and feral or wild dogs that retained certain negative traits and behaviors. This distinction was reinforced with another: between the Lord’s dogs and the Devil’s, which correspond, therefore, to different types of people. Thus, Stephen of Tournai (d. 1203) remarks,

There are indeed dogs of the Lord and dogs of the Devil; we have found dogs with an evil signification and good. They are said in many ways according to the evil signification. To be sure, there are unclean dogs, envious dogs, rabid dogs, fawning dogs, brutish dogs, [and] mute dogs. The first are defiled with mud, the second [*sic*] are poisonous, the third quarrelsome, the fourth are fickle, the fifth are those that stand with legs wide apart, and the last are timorous. The first are low-born, the second bite, the third rage, the fourth fall to the ground, the fifth are ignorant, and the last run away. —There are also found dogs with a good signification. To

be sure, these are the living dogs, hungry dogs, beggarly dogs, and healing dogs. The first are penitents, the second are those that learn, the third are those that love, and the last are those that teach.³⁹

JEWISH RESPONSES

Jews might respond in various ways to the insult that identified them with dogs. Since Christians often referred the biblical passages that portrayed dogs negatively to Jews, Jews might challenge the textual reading, or respond in kind. For example, in his massive late thirteenth-century work, *Pugio Fidei*, the Dominican Raymund Martin complained that Jews had introduced a scribal correction to the text of Ps. 21.17 (cited above by Peter the Venerable) to obscure the reference to the Crucifixion, so that the text read, "For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me, watching my hands and my feet as though I were a lion" (278, 850). In other instances, Christians perceived that Jewish exegetes attempted to reassign the dog imagery. According to *The Glosses of Solomon of Troyes (De glosis Salomonis Trecentis)*, a thirteenth-century Latin collection of exegetical texts drawn from the work of the rabbinic commentator Rashi (R. Solomon bar Isaac of Troyes; d. 1105), whose work had become *the* authoritative guide to Jewish exegesis for many Christian scholars, the dogs mentioned in Ex. 22.31—"the flesh that beasts have tasted before, you shall not eat, but shall cast it to the dogs"—refer to the *goyim* or Christians. In this way, Jewish biblical exegetes might reflect the insult back upon Christians.⁴⁰ Perhaps this provides background for a later medieval incident: in early fourteenth-century Marseilles a Jewish woman was fined five *sous* for having replied to a Christian woman, "You are more of a dog than I am."⁴¹

As Rashi might identify the dogs of Ex. 22.31 with Christians, the ninth-century (?) *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* seemingly identified *all* non-Jews with dogs. The author remarks that whoever eats with an uncircumcised person, it's as though "he were eating flesh of abomination. All who bathe with the uncircumcised are as though they bathed with carrion, and all who touch an uncircumcised person are as though they touched the dead." In one edition, however, following the term "abomination" the text reads "as though he were eating with a dog. Just as a dog is not circumcised so the uncircumcised person is not circumcised" (208 and n. 5).

Nonetheless, the insult remained popular in Christian circles. In the early sixteenth-century *Letters of Obscure Men*, a Christian remarks that when he had been at the Frankfurt fair, he encountered two men wearing black cassocks with large hoods. He took them to be doctors of theology and therefore doffed his cap, whereupon his companion reproved him and told him the two were Jews, adding that it was a mortal sin to salute Jews in this way. The first man condemned the people of Frankfurt for allowing Jews to dress in this way, and insisted that the emperor ought not allow this, because the Jew is a dog and enemy of Christ (*Epistolae* 1:11). In a seemingly humorous Jewish reply to such insults, the seventeenth-century Jewish physician Isaac Cardoso explains that a Christian mocked a Jew and called him a dog. Suddenly a dog passed, and the Jew lifted its tail to point out that the dog was not circumcised (349). Despite the evidence derived from nature to suggest a closer affinity between the dog and non-Jews, however, Shakespeare's Othello remarked that in Aleppo he had once attacked a Turk, a "circumcised dog."⁴²

A distinction among various types of dogs also allowed Jews to respond in another way to Christians who insulted them, and to *embrace* the canine association. In a collection of thirteenth-century fables, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, by the Iberian Jew Isaac ibn Sahula (d. ca. 1284), the author includes a fable of the dog and the cow, in which the cow rebuffs the dog as a member of a savage and gluttonous race (cf. Is. 56.11). Not unlike Stephen of Tournai, above, the dog replies that dogs must be divided among various classes: some are noble and some common or low-born, some are strong and some are weak, etc. The dog then invokes Ex. 11.7, which declares that, as a sign of God's miraculous power, dogs will not bark in the presence of the people of Israel, thereby making it possible for them to escape from Egypt without raising the alarm. Thus, says the dog, "From God's own hound trace my descent, / Chosen when Israel went forth from Egypt."⁴³ Just as the Jews are God's chosen, so too the noble dog has been chosen by God to enjoy a special relationship with Israel. Indeed, the dog treats it as a sign of divine favor that the food that Jews may not eat—flesh that has been torn—is to be thrown to the dogs.⁴⁴ The dog declares, moreover, that dogs are unfairly depicted as gluttons. In reality, they refuse many foods in order to avoid stomach ailments (Meshal, l. 965). Isaac ibn Sahula does not reject the association of Jews and dogs; instead, he embraces it to defend the nobility and election of both the Jews, and their canine counterparts.

CONCLUSION

The dog, as has been seen, provided a protean rhetorical image for medieval religious polemics. From its positive attributes, the dog became a Christian symbol for conscientious prelates and preachers who guarded the community from the devil and applied the dog's curative properties to heal the community of sin. Many biblical texts invoked the dog's negative attributes, however, by which the dog represented religious impurity as well as a number of vices—gluttony, insatiable sexual appetite, and voraciousness—and thus could be employed to stigmatize the religious 'Other,' viz. both Jews and Muslims. Jews developed several strategies in response, to include challenges to the Christian received biblical text, attempts to reflect the negative canine imagery back upon Christians, and a willingness to embrace the identification of the Jew and the dog as a positive, divinely ordained relationship.

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Notes

¹ In particular, while the Temple stood, it was important to prevent dogs from eating or stealing food that had been dedicated at the altar, since that would result in defilement in the Temple itself. In this way early Christians understood as well biblical injunctions against giving holy things to the dogs. For discussion, see Huub van de Sandt.

² For an investigation, see Mark D. Nanos, “Paul’s *Reversal* of Jews calling Gentiles ‘Dogs’ (Philippians 3:2).”

³ Ken Stow argues persuasively that Christian exegetes understood “the bread” to refer to the Eucharist. Therefore this gospel text (and others) presented to Christians opportunities to articulate their fears of Jewish plotting against the Eucharist, which culminated in the later twelfth century and beyond in a series of ritual murder charges.

⁴ See Rupert of Deutz, and, especially, James H. Marrow.

⁵ Peter the Venerable’s treatise, which was completed ca. 1146-47, is the first to identify the Talmud *per se*, although for his knowledge of the legends and folklore of the Talmud he was especially indebted to Petrus Alfonsi’s *Dialogue against the Jews*, which was completed ca. 1109.

⁶ Compare B.T. *Sanhedrin* 98a and Amulo, *Epistula, seu Liber contra Iudaeos* 12, PL 116: 148. This same tale featured prominently in the public disputation at Barcelona in 1263, in which Pablo Christiani sought to demonstrate that the messiah that had appeared in first-century Rome must be Jesus, and that the sages of the Talmud *knew* Jesus was messiah but rejected him nonetheless. Nahmanides worked to prove otherwise. See Hyam Maccoby, ed., 113-14.

⁷ “Si autem lex observanda est, cur ejus observatores canibus assimilatis, fustibus extrusos usquequaque insectatis?” *Gilbert Crispin* 10–11. A variant reading—“Si autem lex observanda est, cur eius observatores canibus assimilamur, fustibus extrusi usquequaque insectamur?”—is found in a second group of manuscripts.

⁸ For Herman, see Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew*.

⁹ For more on this subject, see Norbert Schnitzler. This form of execution of Jews continued for centuries. A woodcut from Johannes Stumpf’s sixteenth-century *Gemeiner loblicher Eydggnoschafft* depicts the Jew Ansteet hung between two dogs that snap at his face. For the

illustration, see Elisheva Carlebach's *Divided Souls* 41; another illustration from a later edition is found in Schreckenberg 360.

¹⁰ For examples from the Inquisition, see B. Netanyahu 40-41.

¹¹ See Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art* 263.

¹² "Laughing at the Beast" 353, n. 133, where Wiedl cites Winfried Frey, "Woelt Gott man hing sie wie die Hund," in the special volume *Tier und Religion in Das Mittelalter* 131.

¹³ "Il me dit que les juifs qui meurent vont les chemins comme les chrétiens...et que les chrétiens défunts se moquent d'eux en les traitant de chiens." Jean Duvernoy 1: 175. Cf. Claudine Fabre-Vassas 103.

¹⁴ For Otloh, see my "*Scientia liberalis*, Dialectics, and Otloh of St. Emmeram," and "*Litterati, Spirituales*, and the Lay Christian According to Otloh of St. Emmeram." That Jews "bark" against Truth was a common trope. Compare Beatus of Liébana (d. ca. 800), who declared that the Jews are dogs that barked against Truth with a blasphemous bark: "Canes itaque Iudaei sunt, qui contra ueritatem blasfema uoce latrabant" 1.125.

¹⁵ *Les miracles de Nostre Dame*, ed. Frédéric Koenig (Geneva: Droz, 1955-70) 4:56, 4: 47, cited in Cuffel 217-18.

¹⁶ *Contra paganos* 14, p. 347. For discussion of the tradition that dogs devoured Mohammad's corpse, see also Ferreiro 45-90, but esp. 64-66. An alternative tradition—attributed to Jews—declares that Mohammad was killed and devoured by pigs. See *Sefer nitsahon yashan* 217. This tradition was clearly well known, and was reiterated by the fifteenth-century Christian pilgrim Felix Fabri, in his *Evagatorum in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egyptii peregrinationem* 2: 221; see also Antoninus of Florence 4, tit. 11, cap. 6, §1, 4: 588. For discussion, see Tolan 53-72.

¹⁷ See Anastaas van den Wyngaert, ed., *Sinica franciscana* 32.8.

¹⁸ See Debra Higgs Strickland 160. For a thirteenth-century attempt to treat these *Cynocephali* as metaphors for humans who display the behavior of dogs, see Alexander of Hales, *Inq.* 4, tr. 2, sect. 2, q. 1, tit. 1, membrum 2, cap. 3, 2: 575. But compare also Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Naturale* 31, 126 (in *Speculum quadruplex, sive, Speculum maius*, 2392-93) in which Vincent recounts the appearance before King Louis of France of a dog-headed creature, who otherwise had the body of a human and displayed human behavior. He noted, however, its over-

sized genitals, and that it engaged freely in sexual intercourse with girls and women.

¹⁹ Cf. Lev. 11.3: “Whatever divides a hoof, thus making split hoofs, and chews the cud, among the animals, that you may eat.” Also Lev. 11.26: “Concerning all the animals which divide the hoof but do not make a split hoof, or which do not chew cud, they are unclean to you: whoever touches them becomes unclean.”

²⁰ Here and throughout the article, references to this work in Latin are from Albertus Magnus, *De animalibus*, ed. Hermann Stadler; the English translations are from *Albertus Magnus On Animals. A Medieval Summa Zoologica*, trs. Kenneth F. Kitchell Jr. and Irven M. Resnick.

²¹ “‘Sed et canes veniebant, et lingeabant ulcera ejus.’ Hoc istis temporibus verificatum est. Canes enim venatici, Ordines sunt praedicantium, qui non exspectant domi, sed veniunt ad paupers, et lingunt ulcera peccatorum suorum, habentes in ore latratum praedicationis.” Albertus Magnus, *In Evang. Lucae* 16.21, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, vol. 23 (Paris: L. Vivès, 1895), 443.

²² See Demaitre, 57, 116.

²³ “Passiones domini in sacramentis corporis et sanguinis eius...lambunt.” Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in Lucam*, 16.6, in *Catena aurea in quattuor evangelia* 2:232. Compare Augustine, *Quaestiones euangeliorum* 2.38.

²⁴ “canes qui ea lingeabant, gentes sunt, quos immundos Iudaei dicebant.” Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in Lucam* 16.6.

²⁵ Albert cites Is. 56.11: “And dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied.”

²⁶ Matt. 7.6. See Albertus Magnus, *Super Matthaem* 7.6, 247, ll. 6-48.

²⁷ “faciunt ymaginem Virginis Marie et ejus Filii, quam in contemptum ipsorum comburunt, et agnum unum cruciffigunt, et carnes inde canibus tradunt...” Jean Marx, *L'inquisition en Dauphiné* (Paris, 1914; rpt. Paris and Geneva, 1978), 221, cited in Shatzmiller 184, n. 20.

²⁸ *Book of Beasts*, 66; cf. Pseudo-John Folsham, *Liber de naturis rerum*, in Abramov 412-413, ll. 2400-2401. Although John of Folsom was born ca. 1300, this text stems from the first half of the thirteenth century. Cf. also Stephen of Bourbon, *Tractatus de diversis materiis*

praedicabilibus, tit. 7, 266, in *Anecdotes Historiques* 224; and *The Aberdeen Bestiary*, fol. 19v.

²⁹ See especially William of Auvergne, *Opera* 1, ed. F. Hotot (Orleans and Paris, 1674; repr. Frankfurt a. M., 1963) 1: 487aB-D and 488aH, cited in Lesley Smith, 95-96.

³⁰ *Gesta* 2, in *Pontificum Romanorum*, Vol. 2: 275-76, n. 1. For Anaclet II, see my “Race, Anti-Jewish Polemic, Arnulf of Seéz, and the Contested Papal Election of Anaclet II (1130 A.D.)” 45-70.

³¹ Floridi 34. For a different view of Socrates’s oath “by the dog,” see also Montagu 26-27.

³² For the text and translation of this poem, see Ziolkowski 481–85.

³³ “Canes soli nomina sua cognoscunt, dominos suos tenerissime diligunt, et pro eis morti se exponunt; corpora mortuorum dominorum nulla fame compellente, relinquunt; quamvis autem libenter dormirent, hospitia domini sui nocte vigilantes custodiunt.” Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis*, 92, 412. Albert the Great confirms this view. See *De animalibus* 22.2.1.27(16).

³⁴ See Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children Since the Thirteenth Century*. For contemporary criticism of the cult that arose around Guinefort, see especially Stephen of Bourbon, *Tractatus de diversis materiis praedicabilibus* tit. 7, 370, 325-28.

³⁵ Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 9. The story is also recounted (with an illustration) in Eric Jager’s *The Last Duel*, 136-37. This episode provided the title as well to Melusine Draco’s *Aubry’s Dog. Power Animals in Traditional Witchcraft*.

³⁶ For a good examination of the complex relationship between the dog and humans in Greek antiquity, see Kenneth F. Kitchell Jr., “Man’s Best Friend? The Changing Role of the Dog in Greek Society,” 181-86.

³⁷ “Morsi autem a canibus vident in somnis terribilia, & sunt timorsi, stupidi, sine causa irascuntur, ab aliis videri timent, & etiam sicut canes latrant, & super omnia timent aquam & abhorrent...” Bartholomew 7.67, p. 358.

³⁸ See Woods 229-35.

³⁹ “Sunt enim canes domini sunt canes diaboli inuenimus canes in significatione mala inuenimus et in bona. Secundum malam significationem multis modis dicuntur. Sunt enim canes immundi canes

inuidi canes rabidi canes blandi canes bruti canes muti. Primi sunt lutosi secundi uenenosi tertii rixosi quarti uentosi quinti uaricosi ultimi meticulosi. Primi sordent secundi mordent tertii seuiunt quarti applaudunt quinti nesciunt ultimi fugiunt ----. Inueniuntur autem et canes in bona significatione. Sunt enim canes uiui canes famelici canes mendici canes medici. Primi penitentes secundi discentes tercii diligentes ultimi docentes.” Stephen of Tournai, *Sermones*, 96.

⁴⁰ See Gilbert Dahan, 329. More generally, on the dog in Jewish culture, see the interesting collection, *A Jew's Best Friend. The Image of the Dog throughout Jewish History*, ed. Philip Ackerman-Lieberman and Rakefet Zalashik.

⁴¹ Archives Départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, B 1940, fl. 129v, quoted in Green and Smail 202.

⁴² *Othello* act 5 scene 2, ln. 360. See Horowitz 538.

⁴³ *Meshal Haqadmoni*, ll. 892-894; 897. For more negative rabbinic views of the dog, however, see Sophia Menache, “Dogs: God’s Worst Enemy?” 23-44, esp. 29-31, and also her “Dogs and Human Beings: A Story of Friendship,” 67-86, esp. 74-75.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ex. 22.31. This interpretation stands in sharp contrast to Rashi’s, noted above.

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