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Sanctity, Community, Apostasy: Jewish Conversion Miracles in the Old French *Vie des pères*

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One of the essential functions of the Marian miracle tale is to provide hope for the faithful by offering examples of faith and mercy. Indeed, although the miracle tale has many forms, its plot is quite consistent: when weak and sinful human beings find themselves in desperate situations, the Virgin Mary appears to perform a miraculous rescue that sometimes contradicts theological expectations.[1] As divine interventions that are made on behalf of undeserving sinners, miracle tales highlight the role of grace and mercy in salvation by demonstrating God´s love for sinners, and sometimes, God's love for unbelievers. This essential spiritual lesson is at the core of two Old French conversion miracles in *La Vie des pères*, the thirteenth-century *Juitel*[2] and the fourteenth-century *Juive*,[3] which replaced *Juitel* in a fourteenth-century branch of manuscripts from *La Vie des pères*, a popular collection of devotional literature featuring pious hermits, saints' lives and miracle tales.[4]

Conversion miracles are a particular subgenre of miracle tales, as they are told by and for Christians to demonstrate the essential truth of Christianity, and the subtext of conversion miracles allows Christians to reflect not only on Christian virtues, but on the theological and practical position of Christians towards members of minority religions and ethnic groups in a predominantly Christian society.[5] While *Juitel* has already been the object of several studies, few scholars have examined *Juive*, whose *Vie des pères* variant is, in fact, unique to Old French literature. *Juive* merits our attention for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it stresses the social reception of literature

and indicates changes in the definition of women's sanctity in late medieval society. And while *Juive* reinforces the universal truth and triumph of Christianity by reiterating conventional anti-Semitic attitudes, it also provides a more nuanced view of Jews in medieval society by highlighting some of the practical difficulties that Jews would have encountered as a result of their conversion to Christianity.

Moreover, although *Juive* is unique to Old French literature, this miracle tale is not unique to *La Vie des pères*. A vernacular model for the miracle section of the narrative may be found in Alfonso X's (1221-84) *Cántigas de Santa Maria*, which ends with the baptism of the Jewish woman, her infant son and an older daughter, followed by the new convert's testimony in the church,[6] but the French variant's hagiographic coda is not only the only extant variant in Old French, but also the only known variant in which the protagonist becomes a saint. A comparison of *Juitel* and *Juive* highlights the changing attitudes towards women's holiness in late medieval society, as well as differing attitudes towards Jewish apostates and their role in Christian society. Both tales preserve the essential spiritual message of miracle tales through their emphasis on grace, as opposed to the Law, but the addition of a new ending, in which the Jewish woman becomes a saint, permits the author to address contemporary social concerns.

The *Vie des pères*' thirteenth-century conversion tale presents *Juitel* as a non-Marian miracle tale, it reprises the traditional motif of the Jew as the enemy of Christians, and focuses on the reward of conversion and the punishment of disbelief, as well as the presumed violence that all Jews harbor towards Christians.[7] In contrast, the fourteenth-century *Juive* demonstrates a keen awareness of the social realities of apostate Jews in late medieval Christian society, so that the woman's Jewishness is ultimately less important than the poet's representation of ideal Christian virtues and the religious practice of them.[8] As a result, both the expression of anti-Semitic attitudes and the theological conflict between Christians and Jews is muted in favor of the performance of Christian generosity towards the new convert, while the protagonist's exceptional spirituality offers a model of women's holiness grounded in contemporary religious values.

Since conversion miracles are frequently more concerned with the representation of ideal Christian virtues than any real interaction

with members of minority religious and ethnic groups, it may be instructive to examine the collection in which these tales appear. *La Vie des pères* is an eclectic collection of devotional literature that began as 42 tales written ca. 1215-30, but it was expanded twice during the thirteenth century to include 32 additional tales, mostly miracles of the Virgin. To distinguish the original collection of 42 tales from its later expansions, the *Vie des pères* has been divided into the First, Second and Third *Vie des pères*.[9] *Juitel* recounts the story of a Jewish boy who took communion on Easter Sunday and is cast into a glass-blowing oven by his father, only to be removed from the oven completely unscathed by this harrowing experience. In this collection, *Juitel* is not an explicitly Marian miracle,[10] but the division between grace and the Law is highlighted by the reaction of the father to his child's conversion and subsequent rescue. *Juitel* is also the more popular of the two miracles, as may be attested by the sheer number of extant variants in vernacular languages.[11] In fact, Kati Ihnat's discussion of this tale concludes that it is a staple of miracle collections;[12] it is also an integral part of the First *Vie des pères*, and the only Jewish conversion tale in this collection.

The other conversion tale, *Juive*, presents an anomaly, in that its inclusion in *La Vie des pères* is somewhat tenuous. *Juive* is a new addition to *La Vie des pères* that appears only in a fourteenth-century manuscript branch, which may represent an attempt to expand the collection for a fourth time. Six of the *Vie des pères* manuscripts that date from the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries contain new tales that were not previously associated with the collection,[13] and of these six manuscripts, three of them are virtually identical with respect to their contents and compilation.[14] It is within three of these fourteenth-century manuscripts that we find an interpolation of ten Marian miracles, copied in the same order and inserted in the same place in all three manuscripts. Both the order and the placement of these tales suggests a late medieval addition to the collection that constitutes a Fourth *Vie des pères*.

Juive is Miracle 9 of the interpolation, and it is a tale that is both marginal and exceptional. The protagonist is a Jewish noblewoman who leaves her husband and her community to become a Christian saint after a childbed conversion in which the Virgin Mary plays the

role of midwife. Although this tale is not unknown in Latin literature,[15] the only other vernacular variant is *Cántiga* 89 in Alfonso X's Galician-Portugeuse collection of miracle tales. *Juive* is unusual not only because it represents the only Old French version of this tale, but also because this new conversion miracle replaces *Juitel*, which has been excised from this manuscript branch, thereby rendering *Juive* the sole Jewish conversion tale in *La Vie des pères*. Unlike most conversion miracles, the Jewish woman's conversion to Christianity is a result of the miracle, rather than its primary purpose. Since the Jewish woman's commitment to the Christian faith follows the miracle rather than precedes it, the new ending that recounts her post-conversion life of religious devotion not only underscores the role of grace in salvation but also emphasizes her spiritual merit as a presumably "undeserving" beneficiary of the miracle.[16]

While there is no explanation for the substitution of a popular Jewish conversion tale for one that is relatively unknown in this branch of *La Vie des pères*, and there is no indication as to whether this was a choice of the compiler or the request of the patron, the addition of a series of ten miracle tales in this manuscript branch clearly takes advantage of the two previous additions to *La Vie des pères*, which have rendered the contents of the collection unstable. In addition, the choice of literary genre capitalizes on the increased consumption of devotional literature in the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-centuries. *Juitel*'s entry into Old French literature dates to Gautier Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, which is roughly contemporary with the First *Vie des pères*. More importantly, *Juitel* has a number of pre-existing variants in Latin and in Greek.[17] Given the revived interest in miracle tales during the period in which this branch of *La Vie des pères* was composed, *Juive*'s status as a predominantly Latin miracle tale appears to respond to a desire for novelty, creating a new Marian miracle for a new audience.

The inclusion of *Juitel* in the fourteenth-century manuscript branch would also have limited the author's creative expression because of the need to conform to familiar, pre-existing narrative details, whereas *Juive*, a miracle that was virtually unknown in vernacular romance literature and entirely new to Old French,[18] allows the poet to craft a different type of conversion tale that reflects

contemporary notions regarding women's holiness. In expanding the Jewish woman's story beyond the miracle itself, the poet incorporates hagiographic tropes such as the longed-for child predestined for greatness, the abandonment of the spouse for a life devoted to religious service, the *contemptus mundi* motif that is demonstrated by her voluntary poverty, and the pilgrimage motif that closes the narrative. Moreover, as a blend of two medieval literary genres, the miracle tale and the saint's life, *Juive*'s narrative structure conforms to many other stories found in *La Vie des pères*, a work that routinely frustrates attempts to precisely define the boundaries of sacred literature by consistently and liberally borrowing narrative motifs and stylistic figures from other medieval literary genres.[19]

As a hybrid tale, the poet's hagiographic coda also reflects contemporary definitions of women's holiness. Twelfth-century saint's lives were preoccupied with women's sexuality, and virginity was frequently a pre-requisite for sanctity, as may be demonstrated by the numerous tales of virgin martyrs and a small number of transvestite saints who rejected marriage to live as men. However, by the fourteenth century, increased attention was paid to the holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as well its secular corollary. Inspired by the model of the Virgin Mary as the ultimate *mater dolorosa*, increased spiritual value was placed on women in their roles as virtuous wives and suffering mothers. As a result, "increasing numbers of married women were admitted to the company of saints after the thirteenth century."[20] Having expanded the means by which women could achieve sanctity beyond virginity, martyrdom, or both, wives and mothers began to enter the rank of female saints, as may be seen in the lives of Christina of Markyate, Catherine of Sienna, Birgitta of Sweden, and Margery Kempe, among others.[21]

Therefore, *Juive* is significant not only because of its novelty, but also because the poet's vastly expanded plot addresses contemporary concerns about women's spirituality. Moreover, while it is a conversion miracle, it is also belongs to another subgenre of miracle tales: the childbirth miracle. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski's typology of childbirth miracles concludes that they constitute the smallest category of all miracle tales and that nearly all of the fourteenth-century childbirth miracles highlight the difficulties of childbirth or

infant mortality.[22] She also points out that although both infertility and difficult labors have biblical and theological precedents, childbirth miracles correspond to defined medieval medical needs.[23] The Jewish woman's conversion to Christianity is a direct result of the miracle performed on her behalf during childbirth, and it demonstrates the basic tenet that grace and mercy is extended to all sinners, even the undeserving. However, the protagonist's subsequent religious fervor, as well as the destiny of her youngest child, reflects contemporary attitudes towards women's capacity for holiness in which maternity is no longer an obstacle to sainthood, but rather a legitimate path to it. Given the rarity of childbirth miracles and conversion miracles, as well as their relevance to medieval society, the Jewish woman's story is intriguing both for its novelty in Old French literature and its narrative type, as well as the poet's deft combination of miracle motifs and late medieval hagiographic topoi.

As a Jewish conversion tale that has both a considerable literary history and a privileged status in the First *Vie des pères*, a brief discussion of *Juitel* will not attempt to shed new light on this miracle, but rather to demonstrate how it differs from *Juive*, which replaced it in the fourteenth-century manuscript branch of the collection. Both *Juitel* and *Juive* respond to questions regarding the compatibility of individual holiness within the family unit as well as the individual's relationship to society as a whole. More importantly, each miracle relates a different vision of the Jewish community to Christian society, and while this is not necessarily reflective of an official position on Christian-Jewish relations, it is indicative of local attitudes at the time of their composition. Both authors embody supposed Jewish vices in particular characters, but *Juitel* amplifies existing tensions between Christians and Jews by exhorting the audience to view the Jewish community in opposition to Christian society in extensive authorial commentary, whereas *Juive*'s banal repetition of anti-Semitic rhetoric, which is primarily voiced by minor characters, serves to minimize the theological conflict between Jews and Christians by generalizing the expression of Christian prejudice. Yet if both poets adhere to stereotypes of medieval Jews and their communities, the authors' positive depiction of their protagonists may derive from both the

liminal status of women and children in medieval society and their privileged status as the subject of conversion tales.

In effect, both characters trade their status as disenfranchised members of medieval minorities for an equally marginalized position on the fringes of Christian society: the bourgeois child becomes a priest, the noblewoman becomes a saint. Each miracle also highlights different social aspects of conversion, so that the protagonists' post-conversion reform illustrates the integration of Jewish converts into Christian society, even if their exemplary spiritual aptitude maintains their status as Other. However, both the drama of *Juitel*'s miracle and its lack of attention to the real problems faced by Jewish converts renders this miracle a Christian fantasy of mass apostasy in which the child's religious origin serves as the basis for anti-Semitic polemic; it is simply less credible than its replacement. *Juive*'s insistence on issues of class, contemporary childbirth customs, and the practice Christian charity reflects the realities of many Jewish women who converted to Christianity, so that the fiction of this miracle tale cum saint's life is at least partially grounded in sociohistorical truth.

The context of conversion in *Juitel* and *Juive*

According to David Flory, the social reception of the miracle tale in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries was 'a sternly orthodox doctrinal atmosphere in which Jesus emerged as spokesman for the Old Law as much as for grace, and in which only Mary could plead for exceptional favor.'[24] If Mary takes on the role of spiritual advocate in early Marian miracles, her role as an intercessor for sinners was well-established by the fourteenth century, so that the author of *Juive* frames his narrative as a traditional illustration of the opposition between the grace dispensed by Mary and the Law represented by Christ. However, while most recipients of miracles are quite ordinary, the issue of class figures prominently in this tale. The poet sets the tale in Narbonne (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. A), a city whose Jewish community was established in the fifth century and which was renowned as a center for Jewish culture. The Jewish community of Narbonne is defined by its adherence to the Law:

De la nessance au dous Ihesu
Tint moult bien cele loi son lieu.
Or sont deceu en apres,
Car li temps de loy est passes
Et le tans de grace est venu,
De creance en la foy Ihesu.
Et ceste creance n'ont mie
Celle folle iuierie,
Qui sont gent felonnesse et dure,
Et n'entendent pas l'Escripture.
(Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. B)

[Since the birth of sweet Jesus, they have kept the Old Law in its place. But they were deceived in this, because the time of the Old Law is over, and the time of Grace has come, by belief in the faith taught by Jesus. These foolish Jews do not believe this at all; they are a difficult and wicked people, and they don't understand Scripture.]

The characterization of Jews as a 'gent felonnesse and dure' is the direct result of their disbelief, since their categorical denial of Jesus' divinity renders them spiritually inferior to all Christians. Moreover, the emphasis on the Law is not gratuitous. In the prologue, the poet alludes to the Law by contrasting the 'iustice' (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. A) [justice] of Jesus with the grace of Mary, who extends mercy even to unbelievers. The epilogue insists on Mary's 'courtoisie aperte' (Ms. K, fol. 128v, col. A) [obvious courtesy], and specifically evokes this miracle as evidence of her desire that all sinners might know salvation:

La sainte glorieuse mere
Qui veult que li pechierres vive,
Onques encore cele iuive.
(Ms. K, fol. 128v, col. A)

[The glorious Holy Mother desires that the sinner might live, even unto this Jewish woman].

Although it is clearly an insurmountable obstacle to salvation, the family's lack of faith does not prevent them from participating in communal life. The woman's husband is of the Jewish nobility, a descendant of Judah, and a leader in the Jewish community, so that his social status as a *seigneur* sets him apart (and perhaps above) other Jews:

> Pour sa richesce ot le pooir
> Sur les autres la seingnorie,
> Qu'autre roÿ n'i avoit il mie'
> (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. B)
>
> [Because of his wealth and power, he had lordship over the others; there was no other king at that time].

The husband is therefore what Miri Rubin calls a 'quintessential Jewish person:' a man in a position of economic and political authority.[25]

The location in the South of France implies that the story takes place before the series of expulsions of the Jews from France.[26] As a work of literature composed during a period of political turmoil and strife between Jews and Christians, the poet's seemingly neutral recitation of anti-Semitic tropes without additional authorial commentary might be read as an effort to distance this tale from the real political context rather than to aggravate public sentiment against the Jews remaining in their midst. However, the author's neutrality is deceptive. The placement of the miracle in Narbonne recalls legends of a Jewish prince in Narbonne that were widespread by the twelfth century.[27] In the context of expulsion, the conversion of Jews from this particular community has both religious and political implications concerning Jews in France, precisely because recruiting a new Christian from this prestigious Jewish community (and possibly from a royal Jewish family) unequivocally demonstrates the essential truth and triumph of Christianity.

Much like her husband, the Jewish wife is described in glowing terms; she is 'vaillans/ Et moult charitable en sa loy' (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. B) [worthy and full of goodness, *according to her Law*; my

emphasis], and he is overcome with joy at his wife's fourth pregnancy (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C). In her analysis of pregnancy and childbirth, Sylvie Laurent cites a number of medieval theologians who attest that the principal religious justification for marriage was procreation.[28] Indeed, in a culture where the primary purpose of marriage is to produce children and infertility is grounds for divorce, the Jewish woman's fecundity signifies her great value as a wife. By the fourteenth century, although most sexual activity was still regarded as sinful, the attitude towards conjugal relations between husband and wife had relaxed. This revised perception of marriage as a social and moral good is exemplified by Jacques de Vitry, who called marriage an 'order' with its own duties and obligations.[29] Within a late medieval context that validated the social capital of women in their roles as wives and mothers, the Jewish woman's pregnancy is thus celebrated as proof of a good marriage ('fruit que a honneur retret,' Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C) [[a] fruit that brings honor].

The husband's reaction to his wife's pregnancy is also significant because it echoes the hagiographic motif of the only child. In hagiographic literature, the birth of a longed-for heir is frequently accomplished through prayer and fasting, and the future saint's status as an only child foreshadows their aptitude for spiritual greatness.[30] The reformed notion of marriage as a spiritual good logically extends to the byproducts of marriage, children, so that the impending birth of the couple's fourth child is just as important as the first. Therefore, the 'grant ioie' (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C) [great joy] that fills the entire Jewish community not only confirms the notion of this marriage and these children as a moral good, but also underscores the privileged status of the family in that community. Nonetheless, the positive portrait of this noble family is marred by their religious beliefs, which alienate them from the Christian majority (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. B).

In contrast to *Juive*, whose story takes place in a legendary Jewish community and whose protagonist is a Jewish noblewoman, *Juitel* unfolds in a bourgeois family in a community of no special importance to Jewish culture. But unlike the subtle Christian bias of the fourteenth-century poet, the author of *Juitel* displays an openly negative attitude towards all Jews, except in the case of the child, who is consistently referred to as the 'fil del juïf' (v. 463) [the Jew's son], 'fil'

(vv. 538, 588) [son], 'l'enfant' (v. 600) [the child] or simply as 'juitel' (v. 474) [the little Jew].[31] The use of the diminutive '*-tel*' also identifies the protagonist as a child, a member of society whose lack of reason implies a sympathetic reading of this character. Although most versions of the tale are set in Bourges, including Gautier de Coinci's Old French variant (v. 1), this variant takes place in the generic *Vie des pères*' setting of Egypt (v. 429), an exotic locale that emphasizes the spiritual truth of the story at the expense of the audience's credibility. Like Gautier's contemporary version of the tale, the boy's father is a glassmaker (v. 430), a common Jewish profession,[32] but these minor details have little bearing on the plot. Just after introducing the family, the poet interrupts his narrative to exhort all good Christians to revile the killers of Christ in a common anti-Semitic lament:

> Bien est drois ke nos les haions
> et ke contre cuer les aions
> quant Jhesucrist crucefierent
> en Monte Calvaire et livrerent
> a mort per lor grant fellonie.
> (vv. 441-45)

> [It is right that we hate them, and that we hate them in spite of ourselves, because they crucified Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary and delivered him unto death because of their great wickedness.]

Like the *Juive* poet, the author of this tale also mentions the spiritual folly of the Jews' unbelief, but unlike the *Juive* poet, he insists that all Jews will suffer the torments of hell (vv. 446-54) and declares that they are Satan's children (v. 456). Finally, the *Juitel* poet closes his digression by declaring eternal enmity between Jews and Christians: 'Qui les aime et ki les maintient,/ Damedeu por enemi tient' (vv. 457-58) [God holds as an enemy whoever loves and supports them]. In fact, in the epilogue, the author makes no distinction between Jews, Publicans and Albigensian heretics (vv. 684-87) because they all adhere to a false religion. In his analysis of the

narrative's structure, Adrian Tudor suggests that the author's commentary encloses the narrative 'within a context which firmly establishes the identity of those who 'belong' and those who do not,'[33] so that the Jewish family's conversion and commitment to Christianity will secure them a place in mainstream society.

While it is impossible to determine to what extent this vilification of a medieval minority group is due to the author's personal views, it seems evident that his negative portrait of Jews conforms to contemporary attitudes towards Jews. Nonetheless, the amount and frequency of authorial interventions that repeat anti-Semitic invective not only reinforce the notion of the Jew as the enemy of Christians,[34] but also support the practice of segregating Jews from their Christian neighbors. The poet's anti-Semitism is most vividly illustrated by the character of the father, who frequently criticizes his seven year-old son for consorting with the enemy, stating that Jews and Christians 's'entrament comme chat et chien' (v. 440) [get along like cats and dogs].[35] When the father's verbal recriminations to his son have no effect, he employs corporal punishment, but even regular beatings do not deter the child from his continued fraternization with Christian children (vv. 466-68). While this act of discipline may be read as a symptom of the animosity between Jewish and Christian communities, the father's admonition that his Jewish child avoid Christian company also inverts the Christian fear of contamination through contact that formed the theological basis of strictly regulating the social and commercial interactions of the two communities.[36]

On Easter Sunday, the parents begin their workday, which includes firing up the glassmaking oven (vv. 510-11). While this act is critical to the plot, the timing allows the poet to make a more subtle critique of the Jews' state of savage disbelief; the adults of the narrative are violating Christian law by working not only on Sunday, but on the holiest day of the Christian calendar![37] Meanwhile, their son sneaks out of the house to go to mass, where he takes communion 'come enfes ki tot vuet veoir/ et qui de tot vuet essayer' (vv. 516-18) [like a child who wants to see everything and wishes to try it]. Thus his taking communion is not an overt act of faith, but a child's natural curiosity or simply a desire to fit in with his Christian friends. The poet underscores the child's lack of spiritual awareness, commenting that

communion is a Christian sacrament 'dont sa loi bleça et descut' (v. 522) [that breaks and disavows his law] and characterizing the Jewish boy as acting 'conme nices ki ne savoit/ se sen ou folie fesoit' (vv. 523-24) [like a fool who cannot tell whether he is acting intelligently or foolishly].

The child's innocent disregard for the Law suggests an act of providence, and although the boy appears equally unaware of his new state of grace, what is more remarkable is that the conversion of a Jewish heretic goes unnoticed by the other churchgoers (vv. 525-26). While this may indicate the extent of the boy's integration into the Christian community, when the child returns home to naively confess that 'un enfant mengié avoit' (v. 546) [he ate a child], the father is initially grief-stricken that his son has broken 'nostre loi' (v. 562) [our Law]. The poet describes him as follows: 'Mout fu abrotiz et dolenz/ que del poig ce feri es denz' (vv. 559-60) [He was stupefied and very sorrowful, hitting his teeth with his fist]. However, his grief quickly turns to anger, and he casts the child in the glassblower's furnace to punish him for 'son pechié' (v. 557) [his sin].[38]

This passage highlights contemporary beliefs about Jews as desecrators of the host and participants in ritual murder.[39] In fact, the wording of the child's admission of guilt, in which he claims to have eaten a child (v. 546), recalls both of these acts of outrage at once, even if his participation in the communion service is portrayed as naive for maximum dramatic effect.[40] In contrast, the father's extreme reaction illustrates the violent intent that all Jews harbor towards Christians, but it also inscribes this tale in the tradition of Jews as murderers of Christian children, so that the ensuing miracle constitutes a divine correction of justice.

The mother's hue and cry alerts the neighbors, who quickly remove the young convert from the oven to find him 'sain et riant' (v. 600)[healthy and in good spirits], a miracle that he unwittingly attributes to Christ's presence in the oven: 'cil si est avueques moi/ que j'ai mengié hui au mostier' (vv. 606-07) ['The one I ate in the church today was with me']. The child's testimony recalls Daniel 3, in which Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were cast into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar for refusing to worship false idols and witnesses reported seeing a fourth figure in the flames who is 'like the Son of

God' (Daniel 3:25).[41] If the father's punishment of his son echoes Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of Daniel's friends, the Biblical allusion is further strengthened when the father accepts the miracle as proof of the superiority of grace over the Law:

> 'Or sai je bien de verité
> Que folz est qui en vos ne croit,
> Et com avugles se deçoit'
> (vv. 628-30)
>
> ['Now I really understand the truth. Whoever doesn't believe in You is foolish, and deceives himself like a blind man'].

However, the father goes beyond Nebuchadnezzar's public declaration of tolerance for the Jewish faith (Daniel 3:28-29). The repentant father launches an impromptu sermon to the crowd in which he not only vows to receive baptism for himself and his entire household that very day but also repudiates the Law by calling himself 'un ort juïf vil et malvais' (v. 639) [a repulsive, evil and vile Jew]. More importantly, the miracle inspires not only the conversion of the child's immediate family, but a spontaneous mass apostasy within the Jewish community (vv. 661-62) in which ('maint juïf,' v. 661) [many Jews] become Christians.

In the *Vie des pères*' variant, the Jewish father's transformation from upholder of the Law to recipient of divine grace rewrites the traditional ending of the story, in which the man is cast into the oven by onlookers and incinerated because of his continued disbelief.[42] This ending parallels conventional treatments of Jewish characters in miracle tales, which typically result in either conversion or punishment. Nonetheless, the alternative ending does not mitigate the anti-Semitic tone and message of the miracle tale, as is demonstrated in the new convert's virulent self-recriminations (vv. 636-39), and given that the author frequently interrupts the narrative to encourage discord between Christians and Jews, it seems unlikely that his characterization of the father is intended to heighten dramatic tension.

A brief epilogue reveals that the converted family become model Christians after their conversion. In this version, the child becomes a priest (v. 668), maintains a good reputation ('Proudons fu et de bone vie,' v. 669) [He was a good man who led a holy life], and the entire family goes to heaven (vv. 673-74). Although this variant is a non-Marian miracle, it confirms the superiority of grace over the Law, because Christ's presence in the oven extends divine protection to the child from his father's punishment for having broken that Law. Yet despite the mass conversion of Jewish witnesses to the miracle and the father's spontaneous sermon, *Juitel* ultimately reinforces Christianity's claims to a singular spiritual truth even as it justifies (or perhaps fuels) anti-tolerant attitudes towards Jews. The father's strict adherence to the Law highlights the depth of his spiritual error, whereas the child's post-conversion destiny as a priest both signifies his exemplary spiritual character and validates the miracle performed on his behalf. And although the narrative's dramatic miracle stresses Christian virtues and values, the happy ending of conversion reveals surprising little about the actual social conditions of life as a Jewish apostate.

Juive as miracle tale

Unlike the high drama of *Juitel*, *Juive* offers a mundane miracle based on contemporary women's realistic fear of death in childbirth, followed by a saint's life of equally modest proportions. As in *Juitel*, there is an early emphasis on the Law that is soon eclipsed by grace, but unlike *Juitel*, the Jewish woman's story contains ample evidence of its fourteenth-century context, emphasizing a model of women's holiness based on motherhood, as well as details that accentuate the situations and attitudes that converted Jews might encounter as they integrate into Christian society.

The relaxed standards for women's sanctity are present from the beginning of the tale, where the Jewish woman is portrayed as an exemplary wife and mother whose post-conversion life will lead to sainthood. As a miracle tale, the Jewish woman is a recipient of divine grace: 'Miracles focused on those needing supernatural help and ... on sinners who receive succor because of their unquestioning devotion to the Virgin rather than because of any particular merit on

their part.'[43] However, it is her status as a mother that allows the poet to expand his Latin and Galician-Portuguese models to transform the miracle tale into a saint's life. Since early medieval hagiography typically depicted female saints as virgins, martyrs, or both, the protagonists were models of inimitable virtue to which ordinary women could aspire, but not imitate. As a late medieval saint's life, *Juive* provides a credible portrait of female spirituality whose very banality signals to its married, female audience that holiness is an attainable goal. This model of sanctity reflects fourteenth-century definitions of women's holiness, in which the roles of secular wives and mothers paralleled the role of Mary in the Holy Family, and where Mary's humanity was frequently highlighted in representations of the holy mother as the *mater dolorosa*.[44] Of course, Mary's virginity was theologically incompatible with any realistic notion of labor and delivery, but by virtue of the suffering of the mother of Jesus, the physical pain and suffering of ordinary women in childbirth became a spiritual virtue through which mothers might be eligible for sainthood.[45]

Although the child in *Juitel* converts to Christianity as a result of divine providence, the Jewish woman's childbed conversion is a deliberate, albeit desperate act. The Marian miracle is an act of grace towards an undeserving sinner, but the woman's physical suffering in childbirth foreshadows her spiritual aptitude for holiness. The poet includes an oblique reference to Genesis 3:16 that emphasizes the pain of labor as divinely ordained (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C) just prior to describing the protagonist's travails:

> Elle criot en traveillant,
> Elle traveilloit en criant;
> Or se pasmoit, or se levoit,
> Si com la griez maus la tenoit.
> Par l'angoise qu'el[le] ot si fort
> N'i atendoient fors la mort.
> (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C)

> [She screamed and labored, labored and screamed; first she passed out, then she got up, as if in the throes of the most

grievous pains. She was in so much pain that they expected her to die.]

At this critical juncture, a light descends from heaven and advises the woman to call upon the Virgin Mary, a fellow mother, to receive deliverance from her labor and salvation for her soul. Although there are several medieval saints who specialize in childbirth,[46] the Virgin Mary's own painless childbirth renders her a privileged intercessor in difficult labors.[47] Naturally, as soon as Mary intervenes, the woman's labor pains cease and she gives birth to a healthy child (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C).

However, the Christian theological notion of the virgin birth was not accepted by Jews, who recognized neither the divinity of Christ nor the exalted status of the Virgin Mary. The reaction of the midwife and attendants closely parallels the father's anger in *Juitel*:

Les fames qui ce non oïrent
De duel et de courrous fremirent,
Et erent comme hors du sens,
Et rechignant seuvont des dens.
Ja l'eussent occis de venue
Se Deux ne l'eust secourue.
(Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C)

[The women who heard [Mary's] name trembled with grief and anger, and they acted like people out of their wits, frequently grinding their teeth. They would have killed her on the spot God had not come to her aid.]

Like the father who hit his teeth with his fist (vv. 559-60), the women's 'courrous' [anger] quickly deepens to 'ire' [wrath] (Ms. k, fol. 127v col. A) as they criticize their charge's decision to invoke a Christian saint during her labor. In fact, after denouncing the new mother for appealing to Mary, her attendants specifically deny Mary's virginity:

'Fausse deloial! Mescreüe!

La nostre loÿ avez fausee
Quant a cest besoing reclamee
Avez cele rousse Marie,
Qui disoit par sa tricherie
Que vierge avoit porte enfant!'
(Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. A)

['False traitor! Unbeliever! You have broken our Law by soliciting aid from that red-headed Mary, who falsely claimed that she had a baby and was [still] a virgin!']

A similar accusation of disloyalty was leveled by the father in *Juitel*: "Tu as nostre loi honie!" (v. 562) ['You have dishonored our Law!']. More importantly, the midwives' intense reaction echoes several contemporary treatises on Jewish theology that question one of the core tenets of Christianity: the virgin birth.[48] In addition, the attendants' explicit denial of the virgin birth is intensified by their qualification of Mary as a redhead. In medieval literature and art, red hair signified deceivers and tricksters, and in women, this physical attribute also suggested an excessive or depraved sexuality.[49] When the midwives claim that the Holy Mother is a woman of dubious moral virtue, the poet succinctly reveals his Christian bias without resorting to inflammatory anti-Semitic language, because the Jewish characters condemn themselves through their own disbelief.

The new mother quickly gathers her wits and claims to know nothing about how she acted:

'De ma bouche n'issi tel dis
Par non que ie le sache mie!
I'ai este entre mort et vie—
Ne ne sai que m'est avenu.'
(Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. A)

['I said no such thing, at least not to my recollection! I was between life and death—I don't know what happened to me.']

Since the poet informs us that the Jewish woman was 'moult sachant' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. A) [very knowledgeable], her refutation of the attendants' accusations appears to be little more than a ruse to gain their sympathy, but within the context of the midwife's role in society, this exchange is far from innocent. Women were frequently the subject of attempted conversions because 'female Jews were, like other women, seen as pliant and impressionable, lacking in reason and moral faculties.'[50] However, this scene corresponds to specific concerns within the Jewish community that women in labor might convert to Christianity, presumably urged on by a Christian midwife, so that the attendants' distress reflects their fear of the mother's apostasy.[51] Given the absence of Christian midwives or attendants, it seems evident that the woman's conversion was effected by no other means than her own divinely-inspired vision (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C), but the motif illustrates contemporary beliefs held by both Jews and Christians. As in *Juitel*, the woman's conversion is accomplished by divine grace, but her conversion also signifies earthly merit, which will be revealed in the hagiographic continuation of her story.

In addition, the attendants' accusations of breaking the Law take on additional meaning within the secular context of the courts. Beginning in the thirteenth century, midwives gave testimony regarding their obstetric and sexual knowledge in a range of legal cases, and this testimony was entered into official court records.[52] Therefore, what appears at first glance to be a clever riposte is actually the new mother's effort to establish her innocence by suggesting that the intense pain of labor has caused temporary amnesia, thereby removing the intent to commit apostasy by calling on the Virgin for aid during a difficult labor. It is both a theological and a legal response to the attendants' accusation.

Whatever the legal implications of this exchange, the Jewish community's fear of women's labor as a catalyst for apostasy is borne out in this tale. As soon as her required period of confinement is over, the new mother takes her three older children to church, preaches to them until they convert, testifies of the miracle to a crowd of Christians gathered around a statue of the Virgin Mary, and has herself and her children baptized (Ms. k, fol. 127v, cols. A and B).

As grace triumphs over the Law, the poet's attitude towards his protagonist changes. The author's use of the noun 'juive' identifies her as female, and is entirely neutral in Old French, much as the epithet 'juitel' identifies the age of the character in *Juitel*. After her conversion to Christianity, the poet continues to identify her as a Jewish woman, but she gains a positive adjective and becomes 'la bonne iuive' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. A) [the good Jewish woman]. She is also referred to as 'la converse' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. B) [the convert] or 'la bonne converse' (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C and fol. 128r, col. B) [the good convert], a noun that continues to highlight her status as Other, but which also celebrates her entry into Christian society. The poet alternates between these positive qualifiers until the epilogue, where she is once again identified by her former status as a member of a minority religion ('cele iuive'; Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A) [that Jewish woman]. But unlike the author of *Juitel*, while the poet repeats common Christian beliefs about the Jews in their midst, his story neither incites violence against Jews by Christians nor explicitly attempts to justify the Jewish expulsions of the early fourteenth century. Yet despite the absence of obvious prejudice, the author does maintain and reinforce stereotypes about Jews and their antagonistic relationship to Christian society by portraying the Christian characters in the best possible light as they fulfill their various roles in aiding and abetting Jewish apostasy.

The subtext of Christian superiority is most apparent in the deliberate parallels between the Jewish mother and her saintly counterpart. The narrative confirms contemporary fears of childbed conversion when the new mother explicitly attributes her conversion to Christianity to the Virgin Mary's miraculous midwifery, as she explains in a prayer:

'Dame, se disoit la converse,
Vous m'avez de la loy parverse
Por cel enfancon delivree.
S'il vous plest donques et agree
.....
En aleiant ma grant angoisse,
Car me rendez mon dous enfant

Par qui m'avez faite creant.'
(Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. B)

['Lady,' said the convert, 'You have delivered me from the false Law because of this little baby. So if it pleases and suits you ... to lessen my great pain, give me back my sweet child, by whom you made me a believer.']

Throughout these events, the Jewish woman's husband is conspicuously absent, and the Jewish community itself receives scant attention, despite the public confession of faith made by his wife before the statue of the Virgin Mary. This is the exact opposite of *Juitel*, in which the father's eyewitness testimony of the miracle results in mass apostasy (vv. 661-62); here, news of the miracle spreads via gossip, and the general reaction of the citizens of Narbonne is summed up as follows: 'Crestien en furent ioieus,/ Et li iuif moult angoisseus' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. B) [The Christians were happy and the Jews were very upset]. In fact, the poet now turns exclusively to the response of the Christian majority to the Jewish woman's conversion, thereby encouraging the audience to read the narrative as an exposition on Christian virtue. Convinced of her 'bonne conversion' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. B) [honest conversion], a nobleman gives her the gift of an expensive *peliçon* ('Riches ioiaus et de grant pris,/ Et grant atour de grant noblesce,' Ms. k, fol. 127v, cols. B and C) [with valuable jewels of great price, and obviously a garment of great nobility], which she will use to bribe the wet nurse to smuggle her infant out of the family home. The gift was an act of charity towards the new Christian, and the nobleman's generosity is intended to help her escape from the community of unbelievers:

Nequedent pour la grant destresce
Qu'ele avoit de sa parteüre,
Qui estoit encore en l'ordure
De cele orde iuiuerie.
(Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. C)

> [However, because of the terrible distress she had suffered during her departure, she was still in the muck of that filthy Jewry.]

While the gift of the *peliçon* may seem unusual, many new converts were indigent, and relied on Christian charity to survive,[53] and the financial repercussions of conversion were even more apparent in the case of married couples. In the case of married couples, the law favored the Christian parent; that said, having left her home with only her three older children, it is unlikely that her husband would have returned her dowry, even if she was able to secure a *get* (a Jewish bill of divorce). Paula Tartakoff notes that the Bishop Berenguer d'Erill instructed the clergy of his diocese to give financial assistance to Spanish converts in 1371; he also promised a partial indulgence to Christians who gave alms to converted Jews.[54] Although this exhortation to give financial assistance to a specific class of Christians postdates the miracle tale by roughly fifty years, it is likely that this decree merely formalized and incentivized a common practice towards converted Jews throughout Christendom, so that the nobleman's donation might have been in keeping with ideal charitable practices. In any case, this display of generosity reinforces the notion that Christian truth is superior to all other.

While the convert and her older children take refuge in a convent, the infant still resides 'chiez le iuis' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. C) [at the home of the Jew], and the miracle child must be rescued from the spiritual error of Jewish disbelief. The poet underscores the fact the wet nurse is a Christian, plainly stating that 'Cele nourrice ... estoit de la nostre creance' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. C) [The wet nurse ... was of our faith] and when the mother pleads her case, she addresses her as "O Crestienne Dieu amie" (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. C) ['O Christian, friend of God']. The poet's insistence on the wet nurse's religious identity is hardly gratuitous, as it recalls the Jewish fear of Christian contamination in *Juitel* (vv. 466-68) as well as the midwives' furor in the birthing room (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col.C).

The poet explains that the wet nurse lives in the Jewish nobleman's home 'pour avoir sa soutenance' (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. C) [to earn her bread], so that her presence is excused due to economic

necessity. Nonetheless, the choice of a Christian wet nurse frames the infant's rescue in terms of a theological debate on nature versus nurture. Both moralists and religious reformers believed that mother's milk imparted moral qualities as well as nutrition.[55] Jean Gerson went even further, and one of his sermons advises new parents that mother's milk was the beginning of the child's Christian education.[56] Since Christianity could be imparted through breast milk, the selection of a Christian wet nurse for a Jewish child is a risky proposition because of its implications for the child's moral and spiritual development. Just as the presence of Christian midwives might encourage apostasy during childbirth, a Jewish child might incline towards Christianity during breastfeeding, so that the subtext of this episode highlights the importance of the notion of contamination through association.

However, the principal purpose for the introduction of this new character is to heighten the drama and to effect a transition to the hagiographical section. When the new convert negotiates with the wet nurse for the return of her baby, she first appeals to the woman's natural, motherly affection towards her charge (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. C). Since this argument proves unpersuasive, she next urges her to consider the child's spiritual welfare:

> 'Ne vueilliez pas que soit perie
> En ame tele creature,
> Dont en mon cors fis porteüre.
> Rent-le moi par ta grant franchise
> Tant qu'il puist estre en sainte eglise,
> Baptiziez et desous levez,
> Puis ne pourroit estre grevez.'
> (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. A)

> ['Don't allow such a creature, that I carried in my body, to lose his soul. Give him back to me out of your great kindness, so that he might be baptized and raised in the holy church. Then he can never come to harm.']

The mother's plea posits the return of her infant as an act of Christian charity, but the wet nurse is unmoved. Finally, it is the wet nurse's greed that constitutes the deciding factor; only when she is offered financial compensation does she agree to bring the baby to the convent. The wet nurse also invokes the fear that she, a Christian woman, will be killed by members of the Jewish community in retribution for her good deed: 'Mes bien sai s'en sui entreprise/ Que des iuis serai occise' (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. A) [But I know very well that in taking on this project, I will be killed by Jews]. As in the case of the mother's attendants, the poet uses the characters themselves to express anti-Semitic rhetoric, and the wet nurse's fear of murder if she removes the baby from the home echoes Christian beliefs about Jews who want to harm them.

This conversation also introduces the traditional saintly motif of *contemptus mundi* when the mother characterizes her concern for her infant as one of spiritual well-being rather than maternal love. The nobleman's *peliçon* was quite valuable, but it was not put to its intended purpose, which was to support the new Christian and her family. Although early medieval saints retreated to the desert or lived in cells to lead a life of solitary contemplation, the reformers of the thirteenth century rejected extreme isolation and remained visible in medieval society. Jacques de Vitry advocated both the renunciation of wealth in his sermons, and he also praised poverty as a spiritual lifestyle.[57] Moreover, the philosophy of the mendicant orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, as well as the Beguines, also favored the poor, so that voluntary poverty became the preeminent Christian virtue by the early fourteenth century.[58] Thus the casual giving away of the *peliçon* is the future saint's first renunciation of worldly wealth, foreshadowing the spiritual virtue of poverty that will dominate the hagiographic section of the story.

The use of the luxury garment to purchase her child's salvation also highlights the influence of holy mothers on their children's salvation, because it allows the former Jew to reunite with the miracle child and formally induct him into her new faith. As previously stated, early medieval saints' lives reveal a strong preference for virginity as a pre-requisite to sanctity, but as the importance of virginity declines by the fourteenth century, virtuous wives and suffering

mothers could also become saints. The Jewish woman's maternity aligns her with late medieval women saints, because 'a holy mother could save her children, and by extension, other sinners.'[59] Her sacrifice of material goods demonstrates her commitment to Christianity as well as the concern for her baby's spiritual well-being, but it also provides a stark contrast to the spiritual poverty of the Christian wet nurse, who must be bribed to perform the correct action. Moreover, although the poet underscores the wet nurse's financial need and her fear of retribution by the Jewish community, she remains the only Christian character who is not portrayed as morally superior to Jews.

As soon as she is reunited with her baby, the mother rushes to the church to have him baptized:

> Puis court ot enfant a l'eglise,
> Baptesme a son enfant requist,
> Tost vint que lieement le fist.
> (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. B)
>
> [Then she ran to the church with the child, and asked that he be baptized; it was done quickly and happily.]

The haste with which she baptizes the infant may be ascribed to religious fervor, but it is no less important than her older children's voluntary conversion and baptism (Ms. k, fol. 127v, col. B). In addition, the infant's baptism responds to the mother's desire to keep her family together by effecting their conversion to Christianity. It is also the second time that the Jewish convert reveals her legal acumen. Although this tale is fiction, canon law favored apostate fathers in awarding custody of Jewish children,[60] so it seems likely that the court might also give custody of the baptized infant to his Christian mother. Thus the urgency of the newborn's baptism reflects, in part, the socio-historical realities of Jews who converted to Christianity.[61]

Juive as saint's life

After the baby is recovered, the *Vie des pères* poet ceases to follow any previous variants. In Alfonso el Sabio's *Cántiga* 89, the story ends with the baptism of the Jewish woman, her infant son and an older daughter, followed by the new convert's testimony in the church (vv. 70-84); notably, there is no mention of the episode with the wet nurse. But the author does more than merely expand an existing miracle tale by adding a new character: the hagiographic motifs in his continuation are more reminiscent of a saint's life than a miracle tale.[62]

Having separated from her husband and used the precious garment to ransom her youngest child, 'la bonne converse' (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C; and fol. 128r, col. B) [the good convert] now becomes a beggar at the castle's gates to provide for her family. The poet praises her actions, reminding the audience that 'Et par la povrete du cors/ Est li esperis sains et fors' (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. B) [The spirit becomes strong and healthy through the denial of the flesh]. Just as she had rejected life as a Jewish noblewoman to convert to Christianity, she now leaves the promise of relative ease at the convent to lead the life of a mendicant.

Although the author's remarks on the denial of the flesh briefly invoke the asceticism of early medieval saints,[63] the emphasis on voluntary, if not abject, poverty conforms to the relaxed definition of holiness in the late Middle Ages, particularly as this visible manifestation of devotion reflects the increased theological importance of the mendicant orders. The poet explicitly states that 'Ainsi faitement/ Doit-on les biens des cieus conquerre/ Par souffrir pauvrete en terre' (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. B) [And so it is that one conquers heavenly goods by suffering poverty on earth].

Although it seems evident that the convert expresses her *contemptus mundi* by abandoning the convent and practicing the virtue of poverty, it is equally evident that her poverty is somewhat restrained, precisely because there is no indication of the wasting of the body through starvation that is a hallmark of early saints. In fact, begging is a means to sustain the body, for she begs her bread 'doucement' (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. B) [gently], which differentiates both the Jewish convert and the virtue of voluntary poverty from the extreme asceticism practiced by thirteenth-century saints such as Mary

the Egyptian, Thaïs and Euphrosine. Moreover, while many early medieval saints reject communal life for solitary contemplation, the woman's habit of begging at the castle gate with her children (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. B) specifically recalls Saint Marina, a holy transvestite who was falsely accused of fathering a child and who supported her family by begging at the gate of her former monastery with her adopted son.[64] Thus it is possible to remain in this world while contemplating the next one.

The convert exists on the fringes of Christian society for some time, impoverished by her decision to abandon the economic and social privileges of her former existence as the wife of a politically powerful, wealthy Jewish nobleman. While it is tempting to conclude that she has traded one marginal existence for another, her actions conform to a specific hagiographic plot. The poet vindicates her decision to live as a beggar because earthly tribulations lead to heavenly rewards, and an authorial intervention supports this decision. Not only does God interpret voluntary poverty as an expression of religious devotion ('Dieu ainme nette povrete,' Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. B) [God loves pure poverty], poverty is directly and inextricably linked to salvation:

> Que tout ausi com l'or vaillant
> En la fournaise bien ardant,
> Est esmere et affine,
> Est le bon cuer enlumine,
> Par cestes tribulacions
> En toutes bonnes ac[t]ions.
> Bien le nous demoustra Ihesus,
> Qui s'en volt remonter la-sus
> Ou ciel par sainte povrete,
> Et par sa debonnerete,
> Aus povres les saints cieux promist.
> (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. C)

> [Just as precious gold is purified and refined in a fiery furnace, the heart is illuminated by these trials and by every good deed. Jesus showed us clearly that whoever wants to lift

himself up to Heaven can reach it through holy poverty and
through his goodness; he promised holy heaven to the poor.]

Thus the mother's voluntary poverty is irrefutable proof of her exceptional spiritual character. Nonetheless, her situation remains precarious. The risk of poverty for Jewish converts is well-documented,[65] but apostasy has other risks, so that the social consequences of conversion parallel the physical risks of childbirth that inspired the miracle. Jewish apostates could not associate with Jews without suspicion of recidivism.[66] Despite having left the Jewish quarter to beg at the castle gates, this must have been a very difficult condition of conversion as long as she remained in Narbonne. The narrator resolves this issue by having her move to Montpellier when famine breaks out in Narbonne ('Mes ou païs vint .i. herbaut,' Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. B), a narrative detail that is both confirmed by the historical record and which provides further evidence of *Juive*'s fourteenth-century context.[67]

Although she remains in Narbonne for an unspecified period of time, it is likely that she moved to Montpellier within a few years since her eldest child is described as 'ioennes' (Ms. k, fol. 128r, col. C) [young]. In Montpellier, the local bishop is the only character in the narrative to merit a name, and he is identified as 'sains evesques Hues' (Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A) [Holy Bishop Hugues]. Although the character is fictional, the use of the name "Hugues" in a tenth-century Latin variant of this miracle helps the author establish the veracity of his new ending,[68] and the bishop serves an important function in advancing the narrative. Being particularly interested in the welfare of the poor ('des povres gens de la contree;' Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A) [the poor people of the region], news of 'la bonne converse' (Ms. k, fol. 127r, col. C and fol. 128r, col. B) [the good convert] soon reaches him:

Cil a ouï la renonmee
De la converse de Nerbonne,
Qui tant est gracieuse et bonne;
De ses .iiii. ioennes enfans
Conment il erent me[n]dians,

Com de son derrenier enfant,
Ci volt ot non fu delivrant.
(Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A)

[This [bishop] heard of the reputation of the convert from Narbonne, who is so good and gracious. [He heard] of her four young children [and] how they traveled as beggars, [and] of her last child, who was delivered whether she willed it or not.]

A generous charitable donation to ease the family's poverty soon follows:

Tantost com oï le renon
De cele noble compaingnie.
Il leur a sa main emploië,
Et envoie tres largement
Precieus ioiaus et argent
Pour l'amour du dous Ihesucrist.
(Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A)

[No sooner had he heard the fame of this noble company than he set about helping them. He sends [them] a very generous [gift] of money and precious gems for the love of sweet Jesus Christ.]

This second donation of alms, which is far more valuable than the luxurious *peliçon*, introduces another hagiographic motif: the temptation of the saint. Although it could easily serve to restore her family to financial security, she rejects the bishop's charity as worldly temptation, preferring a life of poverty:

La converse qui Dieu amoit,
Quant si grans biens mondains avoit,
Ne veult pour richesce mondainne,
Des souverains biens estre mains plainne;
En penitance vouloit vivre.

(Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A)

[When she had all of these worldly goods, the convert, who loved God, didn't want to have her hands full of earthly riches or worldly goods; she wanted to live in penance.]

In a period where the rejection of wealth and social rank constitute measurable proofs of holiness, the renunciation of the bishop's gift is more significant than the initial gift of the *peliçon*. This second rejection of 'richesce mondainne' ('earthly riches;' Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A) highlights the notion of voluntary poverty as a Christian virtue, even as it recalls earlier, more radical expressions of the *contemptus mundi* motif. In the fourteenth century, standards of women's sanctity had relaxed to include imitable models of virtue; as a corollary, extreme asceticism and social isolation are no longer essential to demonstrate the saint's rejection of worldly values, having been replaced by voluntary poverty. When the mother used the luxury garment to ransom her infant from the Jewish quarter of Narbonne and thereby purchase the miracle child's salvation, the nobleman's charitable donation was less a temptation of the saint than a fortuitous act of providence. The first act of giving away her possessions indicates the convert's degree of commitment to her new religion as well as the capacity of holy mothers to save sinners because in baptizing her youngest child, she continues the conversion of her family. In the context of hagiographic discourse, her initial rejection of worldly goods also depicts the protagonist's aptitude for sanctity, since it contrasts with the wet nurse's un-Christian greed.

Given the practical uses of the *peliçon*, the rejection of this second, larger gift can in no way be misconstrued as anything other than evidence of *contemptus mundi*. Although she could have used the bishop's donation to set up a Christian household as a respectable divorcee, or used it as a dowry to remarry (and thereby ensure her children's financial security),[69] the Jewish convert once again puts Christian alms to a different purpose. This time, she will use the bishop's the cash and jewels to finance a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with the miracle child.[70] Poverty may have superseded virginity as the key to women's salvation, but there is no need to give away one's

wealth when it can be put towards a laudable spiritual purpose. Moreover, given that the motif of pilgrimage is a hagiographic commonplace, the author successfully transforms the miracle tale into a saint's life by positing a pilgrimage to the Holy Land as the final episode in the convert's spiritual journey. Taken alone, the mother's concern for the spiritual well-being of her family and her practice of voluntary poverty are merely examples of religious devotion; it is the poet's knowledge, use and placement of hagiographic tropes that encourage the audience to read this tale as a saint's life.

Unfortunately, the manuscript record is ambiguous about which family members accompany their holy mother on pilgrimage. Both Mss. i and d report that the entire family went on pilgrimmage ('ses filz;' Ms. i, fol. 126v, col. C ; and 'ses enfans;' Ms. d, fol. 152r, col. A), whereas Ms. k implies that only the miracle child undertook the journey with his mother ('son filz,' fol. 128v, col. A). Without a consensus, it is difficult to determine which manuscript is correct, but we might assume that since Ms. k is the first manuscript in this branch, it is the most accurate. If the miracle child did indeed go on pilgrimage with his mother, this episode conforms to the hagiographic motif of the longed-for (or only) child who is predestined for greatness, a motif which is common to hagiographic literature and that is echoed in other tales from *La Vie des pères*.[71] It also suggests an affiliation with another saint's life, Paula. A fourth-century saint, Paula was a Roman widow who rejected her property and position and abandoned her adult children to travel to lead a monastic life in Bethlehem together with one of her daughters, Eustochium, who was committed to virginity.[72] Thus the author evokes the broad outlines of a well-known saint's life in creating additional material for the Old French version of *Juive*, particularly with respect to the pilgrimage episode.

The narrative concludes when the poet informs us that the mother and son's 'saintes vies' (Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A) [holy lives] have earned them a place in heaven, but the poet reminds us that grace that is the most important factor in salvation:

Par ce conte est apparisable
Ne non pas pour nostre deserte,

Mes par sa courtoisie aperte,
Nous envoie sa grace chiere,
La sainte glorieuse mere,
Qui veult que li pechierres vive,
Onques encor cele iuive.
(Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A)

[It is evident from this story that it is not by our merit that the glorious Holy Mother sends us her dear grace, but by her manifest courtesy. She desires that the sinner might live, even unto this Jewish woman.

As an *exemplum*, *Juive* demonstrates the admirable qualities of faith, penance and the rejection of worldly goods in favor of heavenly rewards. The saintly woman's primary spiritual virtue is that of poverty, and as a Jewish apostate in the early fourteenth-century, that may be all that is necessary to achieve sainthood. However, the narrative's insistence on the mother's suffering suggests a saint's life because it is combined with a *contemptus mundi* motif that highlights both social separation and voluntary poverty. *Juive* is not a woman of inimitable virtue, but a woman whose journey from Jewish apostate to Christian saint reflects both socio-historical realities and fourteenth-century notions of holiness. Her story lacks the drama of early medieval female saints' lives because it is so mundane; the sin of disbelief is particularly lackluster, and the miracle is accomplished by a personal vision, but many of the details of the convert's life can be verified as contemporary social practices, from the accusations of the attendants present at the child's birth to the Christian charity extended to the Jewish convert.

All things considered, *Juive* tells the story of an ordinary miracle and a recognizable saint, but it is likely that this story resonated with its audience precisely because of its modesty; the mother's sanctity promotes a type of spirituality that can be practiced rather than merely aspired to. Unlike *Juitel*, which indicts the Jewish community as a whole and where the father's violence is doubly inscribed in the tradition of Jewish violence towards Christians and Christian children because of extended authorial commentary, the Jewish community of

Juive is virtually ignored and the Jewish father is markedly absent from the narrative. Although *Juive* does engage in anti-Semitic rhetoric that promotes the notion of Jews as the enemies of Christians, these sentiments are primarily voiced through the characters themselves, notably the midwives and the wet nurse, and apart from the occasion and perfunctory reference to the 'orde iuierie' [filthy Jewry],[73] the author refrains from the overt anti-Semitic invective that characterizes *Juitel*.

In spite of the historical context of Jewish expulsions from France, the *Juive* poet uses the saint's Jewishness primarily as an ornament; he insists upon the essential goodness of Christians and the prominent exercise of Christian virtues, focusing on the integration and acceptance of the Jewish woman into Christian society by praising her exemplary spirituality and highlighting the practical uses of the alms that she receives, first to effect her infant's baptism into her new faith, and then to undertake a pilgrimage. She even lives on the fringes of Christian society as a beggar for some time, which illustrates both the virtue of voluntary poverty and the continued generosity of the Christians who support her and her children; even the *contemptus mundi* motif contrasts the modesty of the convert's sanctity with the expression of Christian virtues.

Nonetheless, if the former Jewish woman's realistic portrayal of holiness maintains her status as Other, her transformation from reviled unbeliever to Christian saint renders her an inspirational model of women's spirituality. The relative neutrality of the author, who refers to the Jews' state of disbelief as a spiritual and moral flaw that separates them from Christians, implies that conversion is the catalyst that allows integration into Christian society. Grace may triumph over the Law, but the perils of poverty and isolation that the new Christian faced are reflected in contemporary accounts of Jewish apostates.

Both *Juitel* and *Juive* promote the supremacy of Christ's grace over the Law, and they both tell the story of converted Jewish families who go on to lead successful lives as good Christians, but their resemblance is largely superficial. *Juitel* recounts the story of a child removed unharmed from a fiery furnace, the mass conversion of all those who witness the miracle, and a post-conversion idyll in which the

converted family continues in their new faith. Apart from a few minor details such as the geographic location and the father's profession, *Juitel* is an unabashed fiction that borrows its miracle from Daniel and keeps its contemporary details to a minimum to better sustain the audience's willing suspension of disbelief. Like most miracle tales, its sole purpose is to demonstrate the powerful of divine intercession on behalf of the undeserving, and to inspire faith and hope. Like the crowd who witnesses the miracle, the family's conversion is a glorious anomaly that fails to resonate among the vagaries of daily medieval life, Christian or otherwise. In contrast, *Juive*'s blend of literary genres starts as a modest miracle and ends as a realistic saint's life. It may be the tale of a Jewish mother who becomes a Christian saint because of the intercession of Virgin, but unlike *Juitel*, this miracle remains grounded in the realities of contemporary medieval society.

Notes

1 David Flory, 'The Social Uses of Religious Literature: Challenging Authority in the Thirteenth-Century Marian Miracle Tale,' *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 13 (1996): 61-69 (64).

2 In *La Vie des pères*, ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris, Société des anciens textes français, 1987- 1999), vol. 1, 14-26.

3 *De la juive qui apela la mere Dieu a son enfantement*, Bibliothèque national de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (Ars.) 5204 (Ms. d) , fols. 150v-152r; Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) 71 A 24 (Ms. k), fols. 127r-128v (Ms. k); and Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles (KBR) 9229-30 (Ms. i), fols. 125v-127r (Ms. i), henceforth referred to as *Juive*. Unless otherwise noted, all citations refer to KB 71 A 24, fols. 127r-28v, henceforth known as Ms. k; all translations are my own. I wish to thank Douglas Kelly for his reading of an early draft of this essay and Keith Busby for his comments on the transcription.

4 The Old French *Vie des pères* should not be confused with William Caxton's Middle English translation, which is based on the Latin *Vitae Patrum*, even though Caxton claims kinship with the Old French collection.

5 Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 5-7.

6 *Alfonso X, el Sabio: Cántigas de Santa Maria*, ed. Walter Mettman, 3 vols., (Madrid, Clásicos Castalia, 1986-89), vol. I, no. 89, 278-81.

7 Kati Ihnat, *Mother of Mercy, Bane of the Jews: Devotion to the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Norman England* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press), p. 13.

8 Sara Lipton argues that miracle tales were not a straightforward reflection of contemporary attitudes towards Jews, but rather the author's expression of Christian values and religious practice in *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2014), p. 84.

9 To distinguish the original collection of 42 tales from its later expansions, Edouard Schwan divided this work into the First, Second and Third *Vie des pères* at the turn of the twentieth century, ('*La Vie des anciens pères*,' *Romania*, 13 (1884): 233-63). Lecoy's 'Introduction' dates the Second *Vie des pères* to ca. 1241-1250 and the Third *Vie des pères* to 1252, and notes marked instability in the order and content of Second and Third *Vie des pères* (in *La Vie des pères*, ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris, Société des anciens textes français, 1987- 1999), vol. 1, ix-xxiv (xxiii)). For additional discussion on the composition of *La Vie des pères*, see Adrian Tudor, 'The One That Got Away: The Case of the Old French *Vie des pères*,' *French Studies Bulletin*, 55 (1995): 11-15.

10 Cf. Adgar's *Gracial* (ed. P. Kunstmann (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1982), Mir. 14, 109-11 (c. 1165-80)) and Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame* (ed. V. F. Koenig, 4 vols. (Geneva, Droz, 1961), I Mir. 12, vol. II, 95-100), in which this tale is an unequivocal miracle of the Virgin. Note that *La Vie des pères* is contemporary with Gautier de Coinci's miracle collection (early thirteenth century), as is the variant by Vincent de Beauvais (*Speculum historiale*, c. 1217).

11 The Jew of Bourges, or the Murdered Jewish Boy, dates from the sixth century and is included in a number of medieval miracle collections, including Gregory of Tours (sixth century), Honorius of Autun (twelfth century), Johan of Garland's *Stella Maris* (1248-49), Jacques de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* (c. 1260), Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (thirteenth century), Nigel of Canterbury (1200), William of Malmesbury (early twelfth century), and the *Anglo-Norman Miracles of the Virgin* (1230-50), among others. See Note 10 for its representation in Old French literature.

12 hnat, p. 135.

13 Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) fr. 2094 (Ms. u), Ars. 5204 (Ms. d), KB 71 A 24 (Ms. k), KBR 9229-30 (Ms. i), BnF fr. 1544 (Ms. E) and BnF fr. 25440 (Ms. F). The manuscript sigla and the order of *La Vie des pères* were first established by Schwan, and are used to this day in literary

studies; Lecoy's 'Introduction' adds new manuscripts and sigla, but otherwise follows Schwan. See also J. Morawski, 'Mélanges de littérature pieuse,' *Romania,* 61: 3-4 (1935): 145-209 (147, 175-78, 194-205).

14 The first to observe this anomaly, Morawski refers to this group of manuscripts (Ars. 5204, KB 71 A 24 and KBR 9229-30) as Interpolation B (pp. 147, 194-205). More recent scholarship reveals that this branch of the *Vie des pères* was produced in the same atelier, by the same scribe, the same rubricators and the same illuminators during a two-year period, 1327-28 (Mary and Richard Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris 1200-1500*, 2 vols. (London, Harvey Miller, 2001), vol. 1, 191-202).

15 Morawski, pp. 203-04. A Latin version of the miracle identifies the setting as the city of Narbonne. Morawski also cites Wilhelm Gumppenberg's *Atlas Marianus* (no. 80, 1657) for a 930 analog that takes place in Seville (Note 1, p. 204). Here, the father murders the baptized infant, who is subsequently revived by the Virgin. This alternate ending suggests that at least one variant of *Juive* not only deviates from the basic plot, but also engages in the use of conversion miracles to promote the notion of Jews as the enemies of Christians in general, and as murderers of Christian children in particular. The author of *La Vie des pères* would have had access to several Latin versions of the miracle of the Jewess Helped in Childbirth, notably those by Vincent de Beauvais (*Speculum historiale*, 1217), John of Garland (*Stella Maris*, 1248-49), the *Miraculorum B. Mariaie* (libri III) (Reims 1400) (c. 1210) and Jean Gobi (*La Scala Coeli*, fourteenth-century).

16 In contrast, Clarissa Atkinson insists that miracle tales exist primarily to demonstrate the mercy and power of Mary, even when the stories end with the sinner's reform. *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell UP, 1991), p. 134.

17 Gilbert Dahan's discussion of Gautier's sources for *le Petit Juitel* encompasses five Greek versions, fourteen Latin versions and eight Old French variants. ('*Les juifs dans* les Miracles *de Gautier de Coinci (I),*' *Archives Juives,* 3 (1980): 41-49 (42-43)). See also Notes 10 and 11.

18 See Note 15 for a summary of *Juive*'s Latin sources. Alfonse X's *Cántiga* does not include any hagiographic motifs.

19 Like the other tales in *La Vie des pères*, the interpolation poet provides a tripartite structure for each of these miracles that imitates the established format of the collection: 1) Each tale begins with a prologue and proverb that explains its meaning and relevance, 2) followed by a story

that illustrates the aforesaid proverb, 3) and concludes with a brief epilogue containing additional moralizing content. See Tony Hunt's succinct analysis of the narrative structure of *La Vie des pères* in 'Conclusion,' *Miraculous Rhymes: The Writing of Gautier de Coinci* (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 187-202 (188).

20 Atkinson, p. 143.

21 See Atkinson, Ch. 5, pp. 144-93. Although it post-dates *Juive*, a pertinent secular example is that of Griselda, a wife and mother whose literary debut dates to Boccacio's *Decameron* (1353).

22 Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Gautier de Coinci and Medieval Childbirth Miracles,' in *Gautier de Coinci: Miracles, Music and Manuscripts*, eds. Kathy Krause and Allison Stones (Turnhout, Brepols, 2006), pp. 176-214 (200-202). Blumenfeld-Kosinski cites Pierre-André Sigal's study of miracle tales in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where .5% of the miracles featured reversed sterility or facilitated childbirth as well as André Vauchez's study of thirteenth- and fourteenth–century miracle tales, where the fourteenth century accounts for 3.3% of childbirth miracles (p. 200). See Pierre-André Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale* (XIe-XIIe siècle) (Paris, Cerf, 1985), p. 265, and André Vauchez, *La sainteté en occident aux derniers siècles du moyen âge* (Rome, Ecole Française de Rome, 1981), p. 547.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 202-03. Abraham and Sarah constitute the prototype of the infertile couple, whereas Genesis 3:16 predicts painful labor for all women as a result of the Fall of Man.

24 Flory is referring to the ecclesiastical reforms of Gregory VII 1073-85), Urban II (1088-99) and Innocent III (1198-1216) (pp. 61-62).

25 Rubin, p. 72.

26 Philippe le Bel had expelled the Jews from France in 1306, but they were recalled in 1315 by Louis X; there was an additional expulsion in 1322. For a full discussion, see Elizabeth A. R. Brown, 'Philip V, Charles IV, and the Jews of France: The Alleged Expulsion of 1322,' *Speculum*, 66:2 (1991): 294-329.

27 Ihnat reports that legends of a Jewish prince in Narbonne began to circulate c. 1000 (p. 164).

28 Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, Augustine's *De Bono Conjugali*, and the *Decretals* of Burchard of Worms and Gregory IX, among others. Sylvie Laurent, *Naître au Moyen Age: De la conception à la naissance: La Grossesse et l'accouchement (XIIe –XVe siècle)* (Paris, Le Léopard d'Or, 1989), pp. 12-14.

29 Atkinson cites M.D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 245-61 (153).
30 E.g., Saint Alexis, Sainte Euphrosine, etc.
31 Adrian P. Tudor, 'La Légende de l'enfant juif: peinture des personnages, mouvance d'épithètes,' in *Les Lieux Interdits: Transgression in French Literature*, eds. Larry Duffy and Adrian Tudor (Bedford, University of Hull Press, 1998), pp. 31-63 (34).
32 Tudor cites Benjamin de Tudèle ('La Légende de l'enfant Juif,' p. 39).
33 Adrian P. Tudor, *Tales of Vice and Virtue*: *The First Old French* Vie des pères, Faux Titre 253 (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2005), pp. 55-56.
34 Rubin, p. 30.
35 Tudor points out the biblical reference of the father's statement: Psalm 22:17-18, 21 and Philippians 3:2 (*Tales of Vice and Virtue*, p. 56). *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart, Württembergergische Bibelantstalt, 1969-75).
36 The social and commercial activities of both communities were codified by the separatist policies of the Fourth Lateran Council. See Raymonde Foreville, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV* (Paris, Editions de l'Orante, 1965) and Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews, Documents: 492-1404* (Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988).
37 'Local councils ... forbade the public appearance of Jews during Holy Week, from Friday to Sunday inclusive. They also forbade Jews to do any public work on Sundays and holidays, for the work itself was interpreted as a blasphemous infraction of the day sacred to Christianity.' (Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia, Dropsie College, 1933), p. 34.)
38 Gautier de Coinci is quite critical of the father's punishment of the new Christian, and later refers to him as 'l'enragié chien' (v. 84) [the rabid dog].
39 See Rubin for extensive discussion on the varieties of host desecration and the widespread acceptance of this belief. For specific details on the notion of Jews as child killers, see Geraldine Heng, 'England's Dead Boys: Telling Tales of Christian-Jewish Relations Before and After the First European Expulsion of the Jews,' *Modern Language Notes*, 127:5 (2012): 54-85.
40 Rubin suggests that this type of conversion tale privileges the innocent witness of children (p. 77).
41 Ironically, the miracle both inverts and recreates an Old Testament miracle.

42 The father's fate is vividly detailed in contemporary vernacular versions by Gautier de Coinci and Gonzalo de Berceo, among others.
43 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Gautier de Coinci and Medieval Childbirth Miracles,' pp. 197-98.
44 Atkinson, p. 241.
45 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
46 Margaret and Catherine of Alexandria. See Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Gautier de Coinci and Medieval Childbirth Miracles,' pp. 204-05.
47 Atkinson, p. 155. See also Blumenfeld-Kosinki's chapter on saintly obstetricians in *Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 120-42.
48 In addition to the virgin birth, Jewish theologians also disputed the Incarnation of Christ, the Trinity, and the transubstantiation of the Eucharist (Rubin, p. 93).
49 Ruth Mallinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the later Middle Ages*, 2 vols., California Studies in the History of Art 32 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1994), vol. 1, 147-48. Citing Fritz Neubert, Alice Colby purports that red hair signifies "deceitfulness or general moral turpitude." See *The Portrait in Twelfth-Century French Literature: An Example of the Stylistic Originality of Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva, Droz, 1965), p. 73, and 'Die volkstümlichen Anschauungen über Physiognomik in Frankreich bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters,' *Romanische Forschungen*, XXIX (1911), p. 624. Although the quintessential examples in art are Esau and Judas, examples of suspicious redheads in literature include the Hideous Squire in Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* (*Le Conte du Graal ou le Roman de Perceval*, ed. and trans. Charles Méla, in *Chrétien de Troyes: Romans*, ed. Michel Zink, (Paris, Librairie Générale Française, 1994), pp. 937-1211 (v. 6988)) and the protagonist of Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* (*The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), vv. 552-56).
50 Rubin, p. 71.
51 Paula Tartakoff, 'Jewish Women and Apostasy in the Medieval Crown of Aragon, c. 1300-1391,' *Jewish History*, 24 (2010): 7-32 (8). See also Elisheva Baumgarten's analysis of Latin childbirth conversions in *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 49-52.
52 Laurent, p. 177. Midwives gave expert testimony in cases involving virginity, pregnancy and impotence.

53 Tartakoff, pp. 9-10.
54 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11. The official French position on this practice is unclear.
55 Atkinson, p. 60.
56 'Pour le jour de Noël,' in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris, Desclée, 1960-73), vol. 7, pt. 2, no. 385 (953).
57 Brenda M. Bolton, '*Mulieres sanctae*,' in *Sanctity and Secularity*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford, Blackwell, 1973), pp. 77-95 (81-86).
58 Atkinson, p. 151. The Beguines are particularly instructive because they included widows, wives and virgins. In contrast to the mendicant orders, the Beguines stressed the importance of manual labor.
59 *Ibid.*, p. 241.
60 Tartakoff, p. 9.
61 Infant baptism was of the utmost theological importance because of the high rate of infant mortality. In medieval childbirth, the primary concern was for the child's spiritual well-being, so much so that it was not uncommon to perform post-mortem Caesarian sections for the specific purpose of baptizing the infant, and thereby saving the newborn soul from eternal damnation. See Laurent, pp. 221-28.
62 *Juive* expands this tale to 442 lines of octocyllabic verse. The poet uses 299 lines to recount miracle tale, excluding a brief prologue (11 verses) in praise of Mary's intercessory power to dispense grace to her faithful; the hagiographic section of the narrative comprises the next 120 verses, which constitutes roughly a quarter of the text. The tale concludes with a brief epilogue (12 verses) that reiterates the theological elements of the prologue.
63 The most notable example is Mary the Egyptian, who survives on 'troiz petit painz' [three [loaves] of bread], grass and stream water in the desert; Thaïs is assigned a similar diet by her spiritual mentor. See Peter Dembowski, 'La Version T selon le ms. Paris Bibl. nat. fr. 23.112 [A],' in *La Vie de Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne: Versions en ancien et en moyen français* (Geneva, Droz, 1977), pp. 25-111 (vv. 566, 673-78) and Lecoy, vol. I, 72- 90 (vv. 2161-2742 and vv. 2467-68).
64 Léon Clugnet, *La Vie et office de Sainte Marine* (Paris, Picard et Fils, 1905), p. 157.
65 Tartakoff, pp. 10-11.
66 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
67 Prior to the production of the *Juive* manuscript branch in 1327-28, the famines that had begun in Europe in the late thirteenth-century were particularly severe. From 1309-1325, 'people starved on a regular basis and, in some years, [and] certain regions saw significant demographic

decline.' William Naphy and Andrew Spicer, *Plague: Black Death and Pestilence in Europe* (Gloustershire, Tempus Publishing Limited, 2000), pp. 21-26 (24).

68 The historical Hugues served as bishop from 928-973 and roughly corresponds to a Latin variant of the miracle that dates to ca. 930 and is set in Seville; see also Note 15. In addition, Hugues Mascaron was Bishop of Toulouse from 1286-1296, and although the real bishop is not contemporary with this tale, the author's choice of familiar names and allusion to historical events is suggestive of its composition in the early fourteenth-century. For further discussion on the Bishops of Maguelone, see Patrice Cabau, 'Les Evêques de Toulouse (IIIe-XIVe siècles et les lieux de leur sépulture),' *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique du Midi de la France*, LIX (1999): 115-118 (117).

69 Tartakoff, p. 9.

70 Their itinerary includes Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Nazareth (Ms. k, fol. 128v, col. A).

71 Miraculous pregnancies usually signify the singular destiny of the child, not the mother; see Note 30. Another *Vie des pères*' tale, *Abbesse grosse*, aptly illustrates the exceptional character of children who experience miraculous births after the Virgin grants a painless delivery to the eponymous abbess (Lecoy, vol. 1, 300-16 (vv. 9268-9763)).

72 The principal source of Paula's life may be found in the correspondence of Saint Jerome. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latinae*, ed. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, Garnier Frères, 1844-1901), vol. XXII, Letter CVIII.

73 The three epithets are as follows: 'celle folle iuierie' (Ms. k, fol. 127r col. B); 'd'ordure de iuiuerie' (Ms. k, fol. 127v col. B); and 'cele orde iuiuerie' (Ms. k, fol. 127v col. C).