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Pope Innocent III, Christian Wet Nurses, and Jews: A Misunderstanding and Its Impact

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THE PONTIFICATE OF INNOCENT III spanned the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century (1198–1216), when, according to numerous historians, Innocent's personality and policies helped bring the ecclesiastical establishment of medieval Christendom to the acme of its power and influence. His policies reflect a clerical ideology and a program for implementing an ideal order in Christian society. They testify to the successes of a reform papacy at the peak of its development, all as medieval Christendom stood at the height of a period of expansion and prosperity—a peak from which it was soon to give way to entrenchment, regimentation, fragmentation, and, ultimately, decline.¹

I presented earlier versions of this essay at Princeton University, the Institute for Advanced Study, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, and I thank my colleagues at these various venues for their valuable comments and suggestions. Special thanks are due David Berger, Judah Galinsky, Chanokh Goldberg, Ephraim Kanarfogel, and Elsa Marmursztejn for the time and patience with which they formulated most helpful responses to my queries. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Institute for Advanced Study—where my fellowship in 2011–12 was underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities—the Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 683/13), and the Abraham and Edita Spiegel Family Foundation Chair for European Jewish History at Tel Aviv University.

1. Among the many recent scholarly works on Innocent III, see Raymonde Foreville, *Le pape Innocent III et la France* (Stuttgart, 1992); Thomas Frenz, ed., *Papst Innozenz III: Weichensteller der Geschichte Europas* (Stuttgart, 2000); Andrea Sommerlechner, ed., *Innocenzo III: Urbs et orbis* (Rome, 2003); John C. Moore, *Pope Innocent III (1160/61–1216): To Root Up and To Plant* (Leiden, 2003); Markus Hirte, *Papst Innozenz III., das IV. Lateranum und die Strafverfahren gegen Kleriker: Eine registergestützte Untersuchung zur Entwicklung der Verfahrensarten zwischen 1198*

The years of Innocent's pontificate also marked an important stage in the history of medieval Jewish-Christian relations. Over thirty of Innocent's extant letters, and canons 67–70 of the Fourth Lateran Council—truly one of his crowning achievements—concern the Jews, most of them marked by a fervent, even zealous tone. They bespeak a determination to eliminate perceived abuses of the limited toleration for and harsh discrimination mandated against the Jews of Christendom in canon law and patristic theology—abuses whereby Jews enjoyed superiority over Christians in everyday life and, more infuriating still, flaunted their thankless contempt for Christianity and the Catholic Church to whom they owed their survival. Some historians have actually labeled Innocent's bulls and canons concerning the Jews a turning point in the history of medieval European Jewry, although these judgments tend, at times, toward the excessive. In tone, Innocent's correspondence and legislation surely display an uncompromising impatience that approaches the fanatical. In their substance, however, they reaffirm a commitment to the Augustinian doctrine of Jewish witness and the Gregorian legal principle of *sicut Iudeis*: Innocent seeks not to eliminate the presence of Jews and Judaism from Christendom but rather to enforce their inferior, subjugated, and enslaved status. Notably, while Innocent bemoans the damages and insults that Jews cause Christians, he refrains from meddling in the inner religious lives of European Jews, and he does not indict contemporary talmudic Judaism as a postbiblical heresy, as his successors Gregory IX and Innocent IV would do two to three decades later. Similarly, he does not call for organized, ecclesiastically sponsored efforts to convert the Jews to Christianity; this too would follow after the legitimacy of contemporary European Jewry had been undermined. Meticulously scrutinizing the realities of Jewish-Christian interaction, and displaying zero tolerance for divergence from patristic or canonical norms, Innocent nonetheless planted seeds for such developments that would soon ensue. Even if some recent historians have allowed his vitriolic tone to blur their understanding of his intent, he himself expressed a resolve to restore traditionally prescribed balances, not upset them.²

und 1216 (Tübingen, 2005); and Olivier Hanne, *De Lotbairre à Innocent III: L'ascension d'un clerc au XIIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence, 2014).

2. On Innocent and the Jews, see Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century: A Study of Their Relations during the Years 1198–1254* (Philadelphia, 1933); Edward A. Synan, *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1965), chap. 6; Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: History* (Toronto, 1991), 17–21; Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte (11.–15. Jh.)* (Frankfurt, 1997), 400–433; Robert Chazan, "Pope Innocent III and the Jews," in *Pope Innocent III and His World*, ed. J. C. Moore (Aldershot,

This essay will not offer a systematic review of the statements of Innocent III concerning European Jewry but will focus on an instructive example of his approach to the Jews and Judaism of his day—and its subsequent treatment by more recent investigators. The idea for this essay originated several years ago in Jerusalem, as I listened to a conference paper on the letters of Pope Innocent III protesting that the Jews fare too well in Christendom and offend Christian sensitivities, contrary to ecclesiastical norms. As the lecturer read to us from Solomon Grayzel's translation of the bull *Et si Iudeos*—the last of three such letters issued in 1205, and the first of three longer bulls bemoaning Jewish perfidy and its repercussions—dispatched by the pope to Peter of Corbeil, Archbishop of Sens, and Odo of Sully, Bishop of Paris, on July 15 of that year, my eyes wandered to the Latin original on the handout before us. I realized that Grayzel's English did not convey an accurate sense of a frequently cited Latin passage, and that this error might well be responsible for misguided conclusions on the part of later historians of medieval Jewry.

Innocent begins his missive by proclaiming that Christians piously and mercifully accept the Jews—who are consigned to perpetual servitude because of their crucifixion of Jesus—into their midst (*in nostrum misericorditer familiaritatem admissi*), when even the Saracens cannot tolerate their perfidy. But the Jews repay this kindness of their hosts with characteristic hostility and treachery, as the popular proverb has it, like “a mouse in one's pocket, a serpent in one's lap, and fire in one's bosom.”³ To exemplify the Jews' lack of gratitude for the gracious toleration afforded them by the Jews, Innocent then writes as follows:

Accepimus autem, quod Judei, quos gratia principum in suis terris admisit, adeo facti sunt insolentes, ut illos committant excessus in contumeliam fidei Christiane, quos non tantum dicere, sed etiam nefandum cogitare. Faciunt enim Christianas filiorum suorum nutrices, cum in die Resurrectionis Dominice illas recipere corpus et sanguinem Jesu

1997), 187–204; and, most recently, John Tolan, “Of Milk and Blood: Innocent III and the Jews, Revisited,” in *Jews and Christians in Thirteenth-Century France*, ed. E. Baumgarten and J. D. Galinsky (New York, 2015), 139–49. On Tolan's essay, see also below, n. 20.

3. Cf. the entries in Ede Margalits, ed., *Florilegium proverbiorum universae Latinitatis: Proverbia, proverbiales sententiae gnomaeque classicae, mediae et infimae Latinitatis* (Budapest, 1895), 158 (s.v. dispendium); and Ida von Düringsfeld and Otto Freiherrn von Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, eds., *Sprichwörter der germanischen und romanischen Sprachen vergleichend*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1872), 1:154.

Christi contingit, per triduum, antequam eos lactent, lac effundere in latrinam.⁴

I would translate thus, as literally and simply as possible:

We have received word that the Jews, whom the kindness of rulers/princes has admitted into their territories, have become so very arrogant that they commit excesses in insulting the Christian faith— [excesses that are] impious not only to mention but even to contemplate. For when it happens that on the day of the Lord’s resurrection the Christian wet nurses of their children receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, for three days they make them express milk into the latrine before they may nurse them [the children].

Grayzel’s translation differs substantively from my own only in the last seven words of the Latin in question. Instead of reading “for three days they make them express milk into the latrine before they may nurse the children,” Grayzel read, “the Jews make these women pour *their* milk into the latrine for three days before they *again* give suck to the children” (emphases mine).⁵

The differences might appear slight at first, but they prove significant. According to the Latin original, Innocent charged that for three days after receiving the sacrament, the Jews compel their Christian wet nurses to express milk into the latrine before they can nurse the Jewish children. In Grayzel’s reading, inasmuch as it adds the words “their” and “again,” which do not appear in the Latin, for three days these wet nurses may not nurse the Jews’ children at all but must express all of their milk into the latrine, before they may resume nursing after the three days have passed.

Several questions immediately come to mind: Why the difference in translations? Does this truly matter? To what does the Pope refer? Did Jews in fact do what the pope accused them of doing?

We will return soon to these questions, but a historiographical detour to consider how modern writers have related to this passage in Innocent’s bull should prove eye-opening and contribute to our inquiry. Scholars who could not yet adopt or subsequently would not have adopted Grayzel’s 1933 English translation did not dwell at length on Innocent’s

4. Shlomo Simonsohn, ed., *The Apostolic See and the Jews: Documents*, 6 vols. (Toronto, 1988–90), 1:87.

5. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, 114–17.

heinous charge when they discussed *Etsi Iudeos*. This group of historians includes Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnow, Moritz Güdemann, Emmanuel Rodocanachi, Georg Caro, Johann Scherer, Guido Kisch, Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, and Willehad Paul Eckert.⁶ In their eyes the bull exemplified Innocent's inability to tolerate deviation from the norms of a properly ordered Christian society, as well as his determination to redress his grievances, in this case with measures ensuring that the Jews "not have Christian wet-nurses or servants in the future, so that the children of the free woman not be used in the service of the slave woman."⁷ Yet for many other scholars, especially (but not only) those writing in English, Grayzel's translation became nearly canonical. Very many have relied on it in good, nearly implicit faith. And among historians like these, Innocent's charge now (only after Grayzel) evoked considerable interest, attention, and controversy. Among others, Salo Wittmayer Baron, Ben Zion Dinur, Edward Synan, Walter Pakter, Ivan Marcus, Gavin Langmuir, Kenneth Stow, Shlomo Simonsohn, Israel Yuval, Miri Rubin, Elisheva Baumgarten, Robert Chazan, and, I confess, the present writer have all incorporated Grayzel's reading/misreading of Innocent's accusation into their narratives of Jewish-Christian relations during the Middle Ages, arriving at interesting, far-reaching, at times astounding conclusions.⁸

6. Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, 11 vols. (4th ed.; Leipzig, 1897–1911), 7:5–6; Moritz Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden, während des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, 3 vols. (Vienna 1880–88), 2:88; Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *Le Saint-Siège et les Juifs: Le ghetto à Rome* (Paris, 1891), 165, n. 1; J. E. Scherer, *Die Rechtsverhältnisse der Juden in den deutsch-österreichischen Ländern* (Leipzig, 1901), 85–86; Georg Caro, *Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Juden im Mittelalter und der Neuzeit*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: 1908–12), 1:307, 499; Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews*, 5 vols. (New York, 1967–73), 3:19–29; Guido Kisch, *Forschungen zur Rechts- und Sozialgeschichte der Juden in Deutschland während des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1955), 68–69; Willehad-Paul Eckert, "Hoch- und Spätmittelalter-Katholischer Humanismus," in *Kirche und Synagoge: Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden*, ed. K. H. Rengstorf and S. Kortzfleisch, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1968), 1:221; Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 485.

7. Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: Documents*, 1:87.

8. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. (2nd ed.; New York, 1952–83), 9:26; Ben Zion Dinur, *Israel in the Diaspora*, 2 vols. in 10 pts. (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1958–1972), 2,1:1, n. 36; Synan, *The Popes and the Jews*, 94; Walter Pakter, *Medieval Canon Law and the Jews* (Ebelsbach, 1988), 135; Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: History*, 59; Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority? The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 245; Gavin I. Langmuir, "The Tortures of the Body of Christ," in *Christendom and Its Discon-*

In order to gauge its ramifications, I turn to five examples (in chronological order of their publication) of this reliance on Grayzel, all from works of prominent scholars, all of them works that make valuable contributions to our understanding of the medieval Jewish experience.

(1) In his important book *Alienated Minority* (1992), Kenneth Stow drew from Grayzel's translation, both explicitly and implicitly, in addressing *Etsi Iudeos*:

The pope said, "they threaten us with . . . retribution." Specifically, he had just learned that at Eastertime, Jews were forcing Christian wet-nurses to spill their milk into the "latrine." The canons, to begin with, forbade Jews to employ these nurses. But the violation was now compounded, since these nurses had just received the Eucharist, as medievals did just once during the year. The Church was also specially arguing at this time that the wine of the Eucharist was literally transformed into Christ's blood. It was this claim that must have perturbed the Jews. Medievals believed that mother's milk was a derivative of blood. Should Jewish children suckle the milk of these communicant Christian nurses, would they not via this milk become unwitting participants in what Judaism considered to be an idolatrous ritual? From the Jews' point of view, it was better to let their infants go hungry. Innocent III disagreed. The Jews were snubbing Christianity's most

tents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion, 1000–1500, ed. S. L. Waugh and P. D. Diehl (Cambridge, 1996), 297–98; Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven, Conn., 1999), 33; Israel Jacob Yuval, "They Tell Lies: You Ate the Man': Jewish Reactions to Ritual Murder Accusations," in *Religious Violence between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives*, ed. A. S. Abulafia (New York, 2002), 96–97; Ivan G. Marcus, "A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis?: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz," in *Cultures of the Jews*, ed. D. Biale (New York, 2002), 480; Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J., 2004), 139; Robert Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000–1500* (Cambridge, 2006), 48; Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (New York, 2007), 107–8; Monica H. Green and Daniel Lord Smail, "The Trial of Floreta d'Ays (1403): Jews, Christians, and Obstetrics in Later Medieval Marseille," *Journal of Medieval History* 34 (2008): 201; Rosa Alvarez Perez, "Next-Door Neighbors: Aspects of Judeo-Christian Cohabitation in Medieval France," in *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. A. Classen (Berlin, 2009), 327; Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000–1500: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom* (Harlow, 2007), 198; Stefan K. Stantchev, *Spiritual Rationality: Papal Embargo as Cultural Practice* (Oxford, 2014), 96.

holy sacrament and taunting the resiliency of the Christian social order.⁹

The assertion that the Jews deemed it “better to let their infants go hungry” relies both on Grayzel’s understanding that the wet nurses had to spill all of their milk into the latrine over the course of three days and on Innocent’s own accusation. Stow presents them both as historically correct: this is precisely how the Jews compelled their wet nurses to behave. No less significant, Stow attributes to both the pope and the Jews a concern for contemporary eucharistic theology: “that the wine of the Eucharist was literally transformed into Christ’s blood,” and that this claim “must have perturbed the Jews.”¹⁰

(2) Two years after Stow, Denise Despres opened her essay “Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer’s *Litel Clergeon*” (1994) by positing a similar linkage between our passage in *Etsi Iudeos* and belief in transubstantiation:

In 1205, ten years before he would respond to the theological debate over the Real Presence by promulgating the dogma of transubstantiation, Innocent III sent to Peter de Courbeil, archbishop of Paris, a directive containing a curious accusation: “whenever it happens that on the day of the Lord’s resurrection the Christian women who are nurses for the children of the Jews take in the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Jews make these women pour their milk into the latrine for three days before they again give suck to the children.” The passage mingles powerful associations of purity and pollution with bodily images of ingestion and evacuation, of infants like Christ nourished by breast milk with bodies resurrected and purified at the Last Day. Perhaps unknowingly, Innocent articulated the symbolic convergence of eucharistic symbols that would inform late medieval devotion to the Host . . . Viewed from another perspective, however, Innocent’s letter

9. Stow, *Alienated Minority*, 245. See also Kenneth R. Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters* (Stanford, Calif., 2006), 135: “Jews, in turn, conferred a magical and idolatrous cast on the Eucharist, especially the eucharistic ‘blood,’ which was to be meticulously avoided. Innocent III and the dominant thirteenth-century canonist Hostiensis were no doubt justified in censuring Jewish mothers whom they charged with making (actually illegal) Christian wet-nurses ‘pour their milk into the latrine’ for three days after they had received communion.”

10. Such a statement presumes that Christian laypersons would still have received communion in two kinds (bread and wine), which was not necessarily the case.

foreshadowed a cultic anti-Judaism grounded in fears of eucharistic desecration that would be given impetus for Christians by the 1215 legislation of the Fourth Lateran Council.¹¹

In her interpretation of Innocent's bull, Despres ventures further than Stow. Although she refrains from assuming that the Jews in fact behaved in this manner, she uses Grayzel's translation in claiming that the pope thereby articulated eucharistic ideas and premises underlying Christian devotion to the host and the cultic anti-Judaism nourished by that devotion—blatantly evidenced in tales of alleged desecration of the host.¹²

(3) In his essay "The Tortures of the Body of Christ" (1996), Gavin I. Langmuir voiced very similar conclusions concerning *Et si Iudeos* and eucharistic devotion:

Theologians had devoted a century and a half of disputation to producing a refined argument that Christ was substantially present in the consecrated wafer; Innocent III was about to proclaim the dogma of transubstantiation; and the host was beginning to be venerated in a way that would engender the feast of Corpus Christi. Great attention was now focused on the host in and of itself. Just how concretely sophisticated people could think of the host is apparent from a letter of Innocent III to the archbishop of Sens and the bishop of Paris in 1205. Innocent reported that he had heard, possibly from the archbishop of Sens, that when Christian wet-nurses for Jews received the body and blood of Jesus Christ at Easter, the Jews forced them to empty their milk in the latrine for three days. The pope therefore prohibited Christians from serving Jews as wet-nurses or servants. What is interesting here is the implication that even Jews believed there was more to the host than mere bread.¹³

Langmuir, remembered for his claims that modern anti-Semitism has its roots in "chimerical" behaviors attributed to Jews in the Christian libels of the thirteenth century,¹⁴ makes the connections drawn by Stow and

11. Denise L. Despres, "Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer's *Litel Clergeon*," *Modern Philology* 91 (1994): 413.

12. That Despres does not cite Grayzel as translator here, even though the English in her quotation from *Et si Iudeos* is his, perhaps testifies to the nearly canonical status of his translation in the eyes of many scholars.

13. Langmuir, "The Tortures of the Body of Christ," 297–98.

14. See, above all, his *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley, Calif., 1990).

Despres more explicit still. He discerns in our passage “the implication that even Jews believed there was more to the host than mere bread”—a Christian assumption, he goes on to explain, undergirding the logic of the host desecration libels that begin in Paris in 1290. For Langmuir, Innocent perceives the Jews as subscribing to the doctrine of transubstantiation even before the Fourth Lateran Council rendered it incumbent on all Christians in 1215!

(4) And in “‘They Tell Lies: You Ate the Man’—Jewish Reactions to Ritual Murder Accusations” (2002), Israel Yuval finds evidence in our passage that, yes, the Jews did internalize the Christian mentality nourishing eucharistic theology and devotion, and that this in fact resulted in the ritual practice described and decried so bitterly by Innocent:

The ritual murder libel or blood libel is based on the victim being perceived as a sacrifice. The murderer “eats,” the sacrifice is “eaten.” The Jewish language internalized the Christian notion of the Eucharist as it is expressed in the eating of the host by the congregation and the drinking of the wine by the priest. This process of internalization is also evident in a bull issued by Pope Innocent III . . . He claimed that, during the three days following the Lord’s Resurrection (Easter), when the wet-nurses receive the host, the Jews pour their milk into the latrine so that their children would not drink milk derived from the host . . . It seems there is truth in the Pope’s claims regarding Jewish customs in his day. In the Talmud there is discussion as to whether one is permitted to employ a gentile wet-nurse in order to suckle a Jewish baby . . . In Ashkenaz, the opinion allowing the employment of wet-nurses was accepted, and the custom of employing Christian wet-nurses was widespread with no restriction on what they ate. However, in the second half of the thirteenth century, this situation changed. Rabbi Yitzhak ben Moshe “Or Zarua” (1180–1250) was the first to impose restrictions on food eaten by the Christian wet-nurse: “The [Christian] wet-nurses should be warned not to eat unkosher food and pork, certainly not unclean things.” It is more than likely that “unclean things” are foods that are considered idolatrous, i.e., the host. The proximity in time between the pope’s claim and Rabbi Yitzhak Or Zarua’s new ruling proves that a new practice had indeed become current among Jews at the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁵

Yuval builds on Despres’s and Langmuir’s reading of the papal concern and seeks to justify it. He accepts Grayzel’s translation, asserts that there

15. Yuval, “They Tell Lies,” 96–97.

is truth in the pope's accusation (which, I reiterate, the pope never made as such), then finds validation for such an assertion in the rabbinic compendium *Or Zarua* of Rabbi Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (d. ca. 1270), which he quotes: "The [Christian] wet-nurses should be warned not to eat unkosher food and pork, certainly not unclean things," and finally concludes that "it is more than likely" that unclean things refer to the host. Yuval then presents his understanding of Innocent and the *Or Zarua* as a prime example of the cultural "process of internalization" whereby Christian eucharistic symbolism and language spawned a weapon that Jews used to retaliate against anti-Jewish hostility. In this instance, "the Christian language infiltrated far beyond the peripheries of the Jewish populace. Indeed, a prohibition which emanated from a religious sentiment became the legal ruling of a renowned Halachist."¹⁶

But these inferences and the translation on which it is based do not comport with a careful reading of the *Or Zarua*. Three times does Rabbi Isaac's work state that the wet nurses (who lived in Jewish homes) must be warned not to feed the children nonkosher/unclean food. In this particular instance cited by Yuval, the *Or Zarua* writes that Jews "must warn the [Christian] wet-nurse not to eat meat not ritually slaughtered and pork, and, how much the more so, not to feed them [that is, the children] unclean foods." In view of the similar statements elsewhere in the *Or Zarua*, one fails to see a reference to the host.¹⁷ Grayzel's misreading has

16. *Ibid.*, 97–98.

17. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, *Sefer Or Zarua*, ed. Jacob Farbstein et al., 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 2010), 4.146, 3:604: אע"פ שהוא מותר כדפרישית אעפ"כ צריכין להזהיר את המינקת שלא לאכול נבילות וחזיר וכ"ש שלא להאכילן דברים שמיאם, דאמ' רפרק אין את המינקת שלא לאכול נבילות וחזיר וכ"ש שלא להאכילן דברים שמיאם. דורשין ירושלמי נבי אחר מה גרם לו. . . . Yuval cites M. M. Kasher, *Torah Shelema* 8, 9, *Exodus* (Hebrew; 2nd ed.; New York, 1954), 247, to argue that שלא להאכילן דברים שמיאם means that one may not feed the wet nurses nonkosher foods—and not that the wet nurses ought not to feed the Jewish children such foods. While the Hebrew syntax might appear ambiguous, the plural objective suffix of שלא להאכילן and the reference to the Palestinian Talmud's account of the heretical Elisha ben Abuya *in utero* (yHag 2.1, 76b) indicate that the children are in fact the object of concern—especially inasmuch as twice elsewhere does Rabbi Isaac reiterate his position to support this latter reading. See *Or Zarua* 2.48, 2:60: וצריך להזהיר את הצריכין להזהיר את המינקת כדי שלא יאכילו התנוקות דבר איסור כדי שיהיו יהודים טובים וצריכין להזהיר 2.279, 2:350: המינקת כדי שלא יאכילו התנוקות דבר איסור כדי שיהיו יהודים טובים ובמינקת גויה שלא תאכיל להניק בשר חזיר מפני שמה שאוכל בקטנותו מפעפע בו בוקנותו ומוציאו להתרבות רעה; see also the parenthetical note inserted into the text of the *Or Zarua* in Simcha Emanuel, "The Christian Wet Nurse during the Middle Ages: Halakha and History" (Hebrew), *Zion* 73 (2008): 33. One finds further confirmation of this reading in Chaim ben Isaac (*Or Zarua*), *Derashot u-fiske balakbot* 34, ed. M. Avitan (Jerusalem, 2002), 67: וצריך להזהיר את המינקת גויה שלא תאכיל את התנוקה בשר חזיר מפני שמה שאוכל בקטנותו מפעפע בו בוקנותו ומוציאו להתרבות רעה. In any case, Yuval's claim (p. 96) that "it is more than likely" that דברים שמיאם refers specifically to the host remains unsubstantiated.

here triggered a series of unjustified assumptions that bear extensively on our appreciation of Jewish-Christian interaction in late medieval Christendom.

(5) Finally, if Israel Yuval used the *Or Zarua* to validate the misreading of Innocent, Simcha Emanuel uses that misreading to understand the *Or Zarua*. Northern European rabbinic jurists characteristically permitted the employment of Christian wet nurses in Jewish homes and, with the exception of the Rabbi Isaac, did not restrict their diet to kosher food; most did not even show much concern for the foods they might feed the small children in the household. Samson ben Zadok, student of Meir of Rothenberg, ruled that one needn't object to the nursemaids giving the children gentile wine (*yen nesekh*, lit., the wine of libation) to drink—or any other forbidden food, for that matter.¹⁸ How then to understand the *Or Zarua*? Emanuel reasons that the bull of Innocent III, as translated by Grayzel, establishes that in fearing their children's ingestion of an impure substance in the wet nurses' milk, the Jews of Sens and Paris had a more stringent local custom, and that Rabbi Isaac, who himself had studied in northern France, must have adopted their stringency.¹⁹

To recapitulate briefly: One *could* learn from these scholarly investigations (1) that the Jews preferred to let their infants go hungry for three days rather than participate, by extension, in the “idolatrous ritual” of the communion; (2) that the symbolic convergence of purity, pollution, ingestion, and evacuation in *Etsi Iudeos* informed eucharistic devotion of the later Middle Ages; (3) that Christians like Innocent believed that even Jews believed that the consecrated host was more than mere bread; (4) that the Jews evidently did what Innocent charged—witness the *Or Zarua*; and (5) that this northern French Jewish ritual supposedly documented in Innocent's bull explains Rabbi Isaac of Vienna's halakhic stringency. Yet should one rightly draw these conclusions?

Here we must return to square one: Innocent's accusation, read plainly and simply in the original Latin, indicates neither that the Jews let their infants go hungry (by abstaining from the wet nurses' milk) for three days out of fear of being parties to idolatry nor that the Jews were believed to “buy into” eucharistic theology; and it finds no confirmation

18. Samson ben Zadok, *Sefer Tashbetz* 382, ed. Shlomo Engel (Jerusalem, 2011), 216–17: “אין למחות, או שאר דברים של אסור, אין למחות: ומה שהמניקות גויות נותנות יין נסך לתינוקות לשתות, או שאר דברים של אסור, אין למחות: דקמן אוכל נבילות אין בית דין מצווין להפרישו. אמנם אסור לומר לגויה להאכילו ולהשקותו דבר אסור דלא ספינן להו.”

19. Emanuel, “Christian Wet Nurse,” 21–40, who cites and collects the relevant passages from talmudic and medieval sources, obviating the need to cite them here.

in the *Or Zarua*.²⁰ And this brings us back to the key questions posed earlier: What was the pope talking about? And did the Jews actually do this?

While various ecclesiastical documents both before and after Innocent's bull returned to the matter of Jews employing Christian wet nurses,²¹ Innocent's specific accusation reappears but occasionally—as in the canons of the Councils of Prague (1346 and 1355) and in Gregory XIII's *Antiqua Iudaeorum improbitas* (1581).²² Inasmuch as *Etsi Iudeos* made its way into the *Decretales* promulgated by Pope Gregory IX in 1234, it also elicited the comments of the famed thirteenth-century Decretalist commentator, Henry of Seguccio, Cardinal Hostiensis:

For—it is heinous to mention—there are those who, having Christian wet-nurses, do not permit them to nurse their children when they have

20. I am gratified that John Tolan, whose unwarranted reliance on Grayzel's translation—see above, p. 115—prompted my revisiting *Etsi Iudeos*, accepted my correction (offered him privately, once he concluded his talk)—albeit without acknowledging its source. In the volume that emerged from that Jerusalem conference, Tolan now understands Innocent's accusation more accurately: "Jews oblige their Christian wet nurses to extract some milk into the latrines for three days after they have taken communion." Curiously, however, not even Tolan has appreciated the extent to which Grayzel's misunderstanding of Innocent's Latin influenced his judgment. For as one reads further in the same paragraph of Tolan's paper, one finds that misunderstanding reiterated: "The supposed fact that Jews oblige their wet nurses to express *their* milk into the latrines after they have taken communion shows (for the pope) that Jews recognize the power of the Eucharist." See Tolan, "Of Milk and Blood," 147 (emphasis mine, highlighting Grayzel's addition to the Latin original).

21. See the various documents cited in Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, s.v. nurses; Pakter, *Medieval Canon Law and the Jews*, 132–37; Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: History*, 163–68; and Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 211, n. 30.

22. Joannes Dominicus Mansi et al., eds., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio*, 54 vols. (Florence, 1759–1927), 26:97, 403; *Magnum bullarium romanum a Beato Leone Magno usque ad S.D.N. Benedictum XIII*, 19 vols. (Luxemburg, 1727–53), 4,4:6. While the Prague decrees echo Innocent III almost verbatim, Gregory's late sixteenth-century bull proves much less specific, indicating that the wet nurses are compelled to express milk "into latrines, sewers, or other places," and that "for one or several days" after they have received the sacrament: "qua sanctissimum Eucharistiae Sacramentum sumpserint, lac, uno vel pluribus diebus, in latrinas, cloacas, vel alia loca effundere coegerit." Green and Smail, "The Trial of Floreta d'Ays," 201, have contended that Innocent's accusation underlay the indictment of a Jewish midwife held responsible for the death of her Christian patient in the first years of the fifteenth century.

received the body of Christ, unless over the course of three days they shall first pour off milk into the latrine. It is as if they understand that the body of Christ is incorporated [in the milk] and goes down the drain.²³

Admittedly, Hostiensis's somewhat ambiguous description of the practice of the Jews does credit them with a sense that the wet nurses ingested the body of Christ when they received the sacrament; indeed, by the time he wrote his *Summa aurea* in the middle of the century, notions of transubstantiation had certainly begun to permeate medieval society and culture.²⁴ Curiously, Ioannes Andreae made no mention of any such Jewish practice or its rationale when commenting on *Etsi Iudeos* in his gloss on the *Decretals*.²⁵

No less significant, I have found no confirmation of such a Jewish ritual in any Jewish source. But I believe that if there were any truth to Innocent's charge, the pope more conceivably alleged what the simple reading of the Latin entails: that the Jews made their Christian nursemaids express *some* milk into the latrine before nursing their children for three days after receiving the sacrament—rather than what Grayzel imagined. It is no less grotesque or offensive, but it would not result in depriving the Jewish infants of their regular nurses' milk for three days, nor would it attribute to the Jewish parents the presumption that the host in their nurses' bodies had become the flesh and blood of the crucified Jesus.

Whether or not French Jews had such a ritual, can we at all understand its inner logic? Even before the Fourth Lateran Council supposedly defined the dogma of transubstantiation in 1215, Jews would have understood the central importance of the mass as a sacrifice of bread and wine commemorating the crucifixion. From a medieval Jew's perspective,

23. Henricus de Segovia, *Hostiensis summa aurea* (Venice, 1574), 1518: "nam sunt quidam, qui ad nephandum est dicere, nutrices Christianas habentes non permittunt lactare filios, cum corpus Christi sumpserunt, nisi primo per triduum lac effuderint in latrimam, quasi intelligunt, quod corpus Christi incorporetur, et ad secessum descendat." Cf. the slightly, albeit significantly, different translation of Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 99.

24. Among others, see Gary Macy, *The Theology of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period* (Oxford, 1984); Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (New York, 1991); and, more recently, Ian Christopher Levy et al., eds., *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2012), esp. pts. 3–4.

25. Ioannes Andreae, *In quinque Decretalium libros novella commentaria*, 6 vols. in 5 (Venice, 1581), 5:42rb.

what might revile, satirize, and parody that sacrificial offering of the Catholic mass with its consecration of wine and wafer—the exemplary instance of *avodah zarah* (foreign, idolatrous worship) and “the wine of libation” *yen nesekh* in that Jew’s milieu—more pointedly than a libation (*nisukh*) of the now sacramental milk into the latrine?²⁶ Could anything in the Halakhah have nourished the thought-process underlying this folk ritual? I have had a suggestion or two from colleagues, but I have yet to come upon a Jewish law or practice that strikes me as a sufficiently good fit.

Nonetheless, one does find confirmation for our understanding of Innocent’s accusation in the nearly contemporary *Dialogus miraculorum* (Dialogue of miracles) of the Cistercian monk Caesarius of Heisterbach (d. ca. 1240). In suggestively similar terms, Caesarius relates how the mother of a young Jewish woman who converted willingly to Christianity lured her daughter back to her roots. A few days after her baptism,

her infidel mother met her and urged her to come back to Judaism. “I cannot,” she replied, “for I have already been made a Christian.” Then said the mother, “I can easily undo your baptism.” The girl, wishing to find out what her mother meant by this, asked how she would do it. “I would draw you,” said the Jewess, “three times through the opening of the latrine, and thus the virtue of your baptism would be left behind.”²⁷

Like the letter of Pope Innocent III, Caesarius’s exemplum depicts the Jews as enacting a latrine-focused parody of a Christian sacrament.

26. On medieval Jewish law and practice pertaining to non-Jewish wine, see the magisterial study of Haym Soloveitchik, *Wine in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2008); and, more recently still, Neomi Silman, *Wine as a Symbol in Jewish Culture* (Hebrew; Bene Berak, 2013).

27. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum* 2.26, ed. Josephus Strange and J. M. Heberle, 2 vols. (Cologne, 1851), 1:98–99; trans. H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, 2 vols. (London, 1929), 1:109–10. On Caesarius’s depiction of the Jews, see Ivan G. Marcus, “Jews and Christians Imagining the Other in Medieval Europe,” *Prooftexts* 15 (1995): esp. 217–22; and “Images of the Jews in the ‘Exempla’ of Caesarius of Heisterbach,” in *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. J. Cohen (Wiesbaden, 1996), 247–56. On this exemplum in particular, see especially Elsa Marmursztejn, *Le baptême forcé des enfants juifs: Question scolastique, enjeu politique, échos contemporains* (Paris, 2016), esp. 300–312. I am very grateful to Dr. Marmursztejn for sharing her book with me in advance of its appearance in print. And on Caesarius’s book and its significance, see, most recently, Victoria Smirnova et al., eds., *The Art of Cistercian Persuasion in the Middle Ages and Beyond: Caesarius of Heisterbach’s Dialogue on Miracles and Its Reception* (Leiden, 2015), with additional bibliography.

According to these reports, both the remnants of the bread of the Eucharist and the very person of the newly baptized Christian are consigned to the filth of the privy, in the first case for three days, in the second case in mockery of the threefold immersion (or affusion) in the baptismal ceremony.

Does Caesarius's exemplum of the baptized Jewish girl thereby assist in our efforts to make sense of Innocent's anti-Jewish accusations in the matter of Christian wet nurses? As recent investigators have noted, the *Dialogus miraculorum* repeatedly groups impurity, sin, the devil, and the Jews with the latrine and its filth; the grouping of Jews, Jewish ritual, and Jewish hostility toward Christ and his church in a scatological framework thereby exemplifies what one writer has termed "the excremental libel" in medieval Christian anti-Judaism.²⁸ And in a bull (*Etsi non displiceat Domino*) issued exactly six months before *Etsi Iudeos*, Innocent himself charged the Jews with killing Christians in secret whenever they could and reported that the body of a slain Christian student had recently been found in their latrine.²⁹ One might conclude that a widespread Christian mentality frequently associated Jews and Judaism with latrines and excrement, on the one hand, and imagined Jews engaging in insidious rituals to undermine the efficacy of Christian sacraments in overcoming the sin and impurity, on the other hand.³⁰ The convergence of such associations in Innocent's complaint concerning wet nurses would thus appear to be a trope, perhaps militating against the assumption of various Jewish historians that Innocent's must derive from contemporary Jewish practice.

I emphasize the word "perhaps." All this hardly suffices to put our questions to rest, but, as David Nirenberg emphasized twenty years ago in his important study *Communities of Violence*, we ought not to expect everything to fit. Nirenberg wisely cautioned the historian of minority groups and their persecution not to "insist on continuities of meaning";

28. Merrall L. Price, "Medieval Antisemitism and Excremental Libel," in *Jews in Medieval Christendom: Slay Them Not*, ed. K. T. Utterback and M. L. Price (Leiden, 2013), 177–87; see also Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. B. Harshav and J. Chipman (Berkeley, Calif., 2006), 197–98; Alvarez Perez, "Next-Door Neighbors"; and Martha Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture: The Devil in the Latrine* (New York, 2012).

29. Simonsohn, ed., *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, 1:83; Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, 108–9.

30. Cf. the important observation of Marcus, "Jews and Christians Imagining the Other," 220: "Caesarius assumes that Christians thought Jews understood what went on in church and that Jews mocked the liturgy consciously."

and he pointed to scholarship on medieval Christian anti-Judaism as an important case in point. “In Jewish historiography, for example, scholars have drawn a line of mounting intolerance from the Rhineland massacres of the First Crusade . . . to Kristallnacht and the concentration camps.”³¹ In the present context, one should heed this good advice. While the concerns of Pope Innocent III in *Etsi Iudeos* may somehow have nourished the mentality that eventually undergirded the host desecration libels of the end of the thirteenth century and beyond, we may not read the fears and accusations expressed in those libels into this papal letter. It meant what it said, not something else.

31. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), 6–7. With direct reference to Nirenberg’s more recent *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York, 2013), see the thoughtful discussion in Elsa Marmursztejn, “La hantise de la téléologie dans l’historiographie médiévale de l’hostilité antijuive,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 62.2–3 (2015): 15–39.