



PROJECT MUSE®

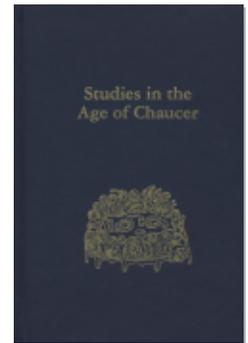
Jews and Saracens in Chaucer's England: A Review of the Evidence

Henry Ansgar Kelly

Studies in the Age of Chaucer, Volume 27, 2005, pp. 129-169 (Article)

Published by The New Chaucer Society

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sac.2005.0036>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/587202/summary>

Jews and Saracens in Chaucer's England: A Review of the Evidence

Henry Ansgar Kelly
University of California, Los Angeles

MUCH ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN to Chaucer's treatment of Jews in *The Prioress's Tale* and to Chaucer's own attitudes toward Jews and the attitudes of others of his time and place.¹ But it would profit us, in my view, to expand our focus beyond Jews to other non-Christians,² and beyond literary influences to the actual presence of "in-

I observe the following procedures in my citations: I use modern punctuation and capitalization; regularize *u/v*, *ij*, and *ily*; and I convert *edh*, *thorn*, and *yogh* into modern values. I treat medieval Latin like the vernacular of the author of each passage (which is the way the author spelled and pronounced it); and in citing classicized editions, I convert *ae* and *oe* to their medieval form (namely, *e*). This is in keeping with my manifesto, "Uniformity and Sense in Editing and Citing Medieval Texts," published in the *Medieval Academy News*, Spring 2004, and my supplementary letter in the Spring 2005 issue.

¹For a review of bibliography, including older works, see Larry D. Benson's edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p. 438. Among recent noteworthy studies are: Lawrence Besserman, "Chaucer, Spain, and the Prioress's Antisemitism," *Viator* 35 (2004): 329–53; Jeffrey J. Cohen, "The Flow of Blood in Medieval Norwich," *Speculum* 79 (2004): 26–65; Roger Dahood, "The Punishment of the Jews, Hugh of Lincoln, and the Question of Satire in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*," *Viator* 36 (2005); the various articles in Sheila Delany, ed., *Chaucer and the Jews: Sources, Contexts, Meanings* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Denise Despres, "Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer's Litel Clergeon," *MP* 91 (1993–94): 413–27 (Despres's "The Protean Jew in the Vernon Manuscript" is in Delany, pp. 145–64); Elisa Narin van Court, "Socially Marginal, Culturally Central: Representing Jews in Late Medieval English Literature," *Exemplaria* 2 (2000): 293–326; Lee Patterson, "The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption: Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*," *JMEMSt* 31 (2001): 507–60; Sylvia Tomasch, "Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew," *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), pp. 243–60 (repr. in Delany, pp. 69–85).

²Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Pagans, Tartars, Moslems, and Jews in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), has made a good start in this direction; and see Gila Aloni and Shirley Sharon-Zisser, "Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Lyne Oriental': Mediterranean and Oriental Languages in the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16:2 (December 2001): 69–77; and Sheila Delany, "Chaucer's Prioress, the Jews, and the Muslims," in Delany, *Chaucer and the Jews*, pp. 43–57.

fidels” or ex-*infidels* in England. Most of us, I think, have assumed that there were laws against allowing non-Christians, especially Jews, into England, and that such laws were successfully enforced. We sometimes see it argued that the absence of Jews from England made an important difference to Chaucer’s understanding of the tale told by the Prioress. Not many Chaucerians, it seems, are aware of the presence of the *Domus Conversorum* in London or of its history, even though the basic facts have long been available. However, some of the alleged facts need to be corrected, and new data concerning not only Jews but also Muslims and northern pagans need to be added. Hence my present review of documentary evidence for the presence of non-Christians and ex-non-Christians (converts) in England. At the end of it, I hope that we will be in a better position to assess all proximate and remote influences upon beliefs and prejudices in Chaucer’s day.

The House of (Jewish) Converts

I will begin with the Jews and will focus on the *Domus Conversorum*, or House of Converts, in London. The only thorough account of it is that of Michael Adler in 1939,³ and before him the most informative discussion of the institution is in the first volume of the *Victoria History of London*, by an author who signs herself modestly as M. Reddan.⁴ The *Domus Conversorum* was established in 1232 by King Henry III on New Street, which by the time of Chaucer’s birth had come to be called Chancellor’s Lane,⁵ as a “hospital” or hospice for converted Jews. When the Jews were expelled in 1290,⁶ it was assumed that the hospice would eventually come to an end. In 1292, there were ninety-seven members,

³Michael Adler, *Jews of Medieval England* (London: Jewish Historical Society, 1939).

⁴M. Reddan, “*Domus Conversorum*,” *The Victoria History of London*, ed. William Page, vol. 1 (London 1909, repr. London: Dawsons, 1974), pp. 551–54.

⁵Eilert Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954), p. 118. It is the present Chancery Lane.

⁶For a recent account of the expulsion, and the circumstances of Jews before the expulsion, see Robin R. Mundill, *England’s Jewish Solution: Experiment and Expulsion, 1262–1290* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); he gives a summary account in “Medieval Anglo-Jewry: Expulsion and Exodus,” *Judenvertreibungen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Friedhelm Burgard et al. (Hannover: Hahn, 1999), pp. 75–97. The official decree of expulsion was issued on 18 July 1290; it has since been lost (p. 92). See also Mundill’s essay, “Edward I and the Final Phase of Anglo-Jewry,” *The Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary, and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Skinner (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), pp. 55–70. See also note 118 below.

and in 1308 the membership was down to fifty-two, according to Reddan,⁷ though Adler finds ninety-six in 1280 and fifty in 1308.⁸ But the Domus was given new life under Edward III, who assigned to it some children of converts. We know of two in 1336, another two in 1337, and one in 1344, and we hear of another in 1349.⁹

By the last dates, the Keeper was a prominent priest, John St.-Paul ("Seynpol," "Seintpol," "Seintpoul," etc.), who received his life-interest in the Domus in 1339.¹⁰ His surname (in Latin, "de Sancto Paulo") is identical to that of certain converts. Eleanor St.-Paul was sponsored before the expulsion, in 1289, by Edward I's eldest daughter, Eleanor (1264–97).¹¹ Then there was Isabel St.-Paul, probably to be identified with the Isabel la Converse who was baptized in France in the presence of Edward II's queen (widow), Isabel, who thereby became her god-mother, and who granted her a pension.¹² Isabel St.-Paul and Eleanor St.-Paul (possibly, though just barely, the same as the earlier one) are among the converts living in the House in 1344 and 1345.¹³ However, though John St.-Paul himself has rashly been called a convert,¹⁴ he seems to have been born after the expulsion, around 1295, to a Yorkshire family, which probably came originally from Guienne, and which

⁷ Reddan, "Domus Conversorum," p. 552.

⁸ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 308.

⁹ Reddan, "Domus Conversorum," p. 552 n. 25.

¹⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls (CPR)*, 1338–40, p. 256: 7 June 1339: "Grant for life to John de Sancto Paulo, king's clerk, keeper of the Chancery Rolls, of the custody of the *Domus Conversorum*, London." See *Calendar of Close Rolls (CCR)*, 1339–41, p. 313 (entry of 20 April 1344), where it is stated that the king granted St.-Paul the keepership of the House of Converts for life on 7 June in his fourteenth year (i.e., 1340); but in the entry for 14 January 1345 (p. 489) it is stated as having been in the thirteenth year (1339).

¹¹ *CCR*, 1288–96, p. 27: 8 November 1289: "Eleanor de Sancto Paulo, formerly a Jew of London, now converted to the Catholic faith, is to have restored to her all the goods she possessed on the day of her conversion, by order of the king at the instance of his daughter Eleanor." See Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 300, 309.

¹² *CPR* 1330–34, p. 122: 13 April 1331, Pont Ste. Maxence: "Confirmation of a grant for life by Queen Isabella to Isabella la Converse, her god-daughter, of a daily allowance of 8 pence of Paris out of the issues of Ponthieu, payable half-yearly." See Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 309. Queen Isabel deposed her husband Edward II in 1327 and acted as regent of her son Edward III until she was arrested in 1330; she lived in semiretirement until her death in 1358.

¹³ In the *CCR* entries cited above, note 11, and see also the entry for 14 April 1345, pp. 559–60.

¹⁴ By E. J. Burford, *Bawds and Lodgings: A History of the London Bankside Brothels, c. 100–1665* (London: Owen, 1976), p. 71. Burford's work is filled with erroneous conclusions.

shows no signs of having been Jewish.¹⁵ But one of the early Keepers who had a similar name, John St.-Denis (appointed in 1270),¹⁶ may have been a convert. There were, in fact, convert priests, but they may have been fairly rare, and they are difficult to trace, because they would have been thoroughly integrated into the general clergy. They were, however, sought after for the Domus. In 1280 provision was made to hire a suitable convert priest to assist the priest who served as proctor for the Domus.¹⁷

The position of Keeper of the House of Converts, as well as being a secular appointment in the gift of the king, may have entailed an ecclesiastical benefice of some sort, since St.-Paul relinquished the post just before becoming archbishop of Dublin in February 1350. The same thing had happened in 1325, when the current Keeper, William Ayermin, was made a bishop.¹⁸ While St.-Paul was Keeper, he was an especially generous benefactor of the Priory of St. Leonard at Stratford-at-Bow, the monastery associated with Chaucer's Prioress, to whom Chaucer gave the tale of the little boy killed by Jews.¹⁹

We have seen that Isabel St.-Paul was a foreign convert, and others appear later: Edward of Brussels, a Jewish convert, in 1339,²⁰ Janettus of Spain in 1344,²¹ and Theobald of Turkey in 1348.²² Since the latter

¹⁵E. I. Carlyle, "St. Paul, John de (1295?–1362)," *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB). The entry by Philomena Connolly in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) is much less informative. See also A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957–59), 3:1629–30: "Saint-Pol, John of."

¹⁶Reddan, "Domus Conversorum," p. 553 n. 48.

¹⁷Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 349. See Robert Stacey, "The Conversion of Jews to Christianity in Thirteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 67 (1992): 263–83, who says that he has not been able to trace any convert priests (p. 276).

¹⁸Reddan, "Domus Conversorum," p. 553 n. 60.

¹⁹H. A. Kelly, "A Neo-Revisionist Look at Chaucer's Nuns," *ChauR* 31 (1996–97): 115–32 at 123–24, and "Bishop, Prioress, and Bawd in the Stews of Southwark," *Speculum* 75 (2000): 342–88 at 350–51. It is suggested in these articles that St.-Paul may have kept his position until his death in 1362, but this was not the case, since his successor, Henry Ingleby, was appointed Keeper for life, succeeding St.-Paul on 28 January 1350. See *CPR* 1348–50, p. 475.

²⁰Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 317–18; see *CPR* 1338–40, p. 400: 3 December 1339

²¹Reddan, "Domus Conversorum," p. 552 n. 26: *CPR* 1343–45, p. 190: 28 January 1344.

²²PRO C66/225 m. 43 (cf. *CPR* 1348–50, p. 87: 24 April 1348): "Rex omnibus ad quos, etc., Salutem. Volentes Theobaldo de Turkie, qui ad fidem catholicam conversus et baptizatus existet et non habet unde vivat nec scit se ipsum juvare aliunde de sustentacione congrua providere, de gracia nostra speciali et caritatis intuitu concessimus ei

two converts are not identified as having been Jews, could they have been Muslims? Janettus is specifically assigned to the *Domus Conversorum*, while Theobald is not; he is, however, included in the foundation that King Henry made for "our converts in London," the provisions of which seem rather lavish, referring to houses in the plural and not only wages from the Exchequer but also rents, revenues, and "other things."²³ If this means that he was assigned to the *Domus*, and if the *Domus* was restricted only to Jewish converts, as seems to have been the case, then he was of course definitely Jewish. The same can be said of Thomas de Acres, mentioned below, who, if he came from Acre in the Holy Land, could have been either Jewish or Muslim.

Even in Chaucer's time, the House of Converts was still known as having been established for the maintenance of converts "from Jewish depravity," *de Judaica pravitate*. This is stated in the account, dated 14 January 1388, of the suit between the present Keeper, John Burton, and John Brampton, parson of the parish church of Saint Dunstan in the West, which, Burton says, had been assigned with its revenues by Henry III to the *Domus*.²⁴ It is confirmed in later patents that the *Domus* was only for Jews: the payments specified are like those paid "to other converted Jews" ("as autres Jues conversez") in the House.²⁵ The Burton-Brampton dispute is also important for explaining the function of the *Domus*: the converts could come and go at their pleasure, "but

tales statum et sustentacionem quales unus de conversis nostris in civitate nostra Londoniis commorantibus, et de fundacione clare memorie domini Henrici quondam Regis Anglie progenitoris nostre existentibus, habet et percipit ibidem, ut in domibus pro inhabitacione sua et vadiis ad Scaccarium nostrum percipiendum ac redditibus et proficuis et aliis rebus quibuscumque ad totam vitam prefati Theobaldi" ("The king to all to whom, etc., Good health. Wishing to provide for Theobald of Turkey, who now is converted to the Catholic faith and baptized and has not the wherewithal to live and knows not how to help himself from elsewhere for his fitting sustenance, we have granted of our special grace and charitable intent such state and sustenance as one of our converts living in our city of London and existing from the foundation of Lord Henry of illustrious memory, sometime King of England, our progenitor, has and receives there, as in houses for his habitation and wages to be received from our Exchequer, and rents and revenues and other things whatsoever for the whole life of the said Theobald").

²³See the record cited in note 22.

²⁴*CPR* 1385–89, pp. 397–98.

²⁵PRO E101/251/15 m. 2; Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 369 (16 December 1413); see also E101/251/11 m. 12 (11 Henry IV, 22 April 1410): "grantez a William de seint Jakes nadgaurs Ju . . . coms sont acustumez a ester paieiz a autres Jues convers qont este receuz illoques" ("granted to William of St. James, recently Jew . . . as are wont to be paid to other converted Jews who are received there").

their maintenance was at the expense of the funds of the Domus, whether they lived within the walls of the institution or not."²⁶

The records of the Domus are missing from 1359 to 1386, but Adler has been able to find records of converts from other sources. For instance, on February 25, 1368, a grant was made by Edward III to John of St. Mary "in Ispanum," recently a Jew, because he is now converted to the Christian faith, "of having such wages and houses for his sustenance and dwelling in our House of Converts in London as other such converts in the same House before this time have had by our grant, along with the profits of the gardens and other commodities and easements pertaining to such a convert according to the foundation of the said House of Converts from our alms for the whole life of the said John."²⁷ Adler over-reads this grant to infer that John was appointed the gardener of the Domus, whereas it clearly states that all of the converts of the House were to share in the proceeds of the gardens. He also says that his name was "John the Convert of the Annunciation of St. Mary" and that he was baptized in London in 1371.²⁸ But he would have to have been baptized before February 1368, and there is no indication whether he was baptized in England or Spain. The *Calendar of Patent Rolls* takes the addendum to his name, *in Ispanum*, for *in Hispania*, perhaps on the assumption that he received his name from a Spanish church named Santa Maria. But it may simply be the equivalent of "from Spain," as with Thomas Levyn, who appears briefly in the records of the Domus in 1393, identified as recently a Jew "from the parts of Spain," "de partibus Ispanum."²⁹ Here it is clear that *Ispanum* is an indeclinable noun for *Hispania*.

Adler calculates from later records that John of St. Mary was at the Domus for a total of thirty-four years³⁰—which presumably should be

²⁶ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 322, commenting on CPR 1385–89, pp. 397–98.

²⁷ This letter of Edward III survives only in the confirmation given to it by Richard II, 18 January 1384: PRO C66/317 m. 337 (cf. CPR 1381–85, p. 366). The pertinent part of Edward's grant reads: "Sciatis quod de gracia nostra speciali concessimus Johanni de Sancta Maria in Ispanum, nuper Judeo, nam ad fidem Christianum converso, talia vadia et domos pro sustentacione et inhabitacione suis in Domo nostro Conversorum Londoniis qualia alii hujusmodi conversi in eadem Domo ante hec tempora ex concessione nostra habuerunt habendi, una cum proficuis de gardinis et aliis commoditatibus et aisiamentis ad hujusmodi conversum juxta fundacionem dicte Domus Conversorum pertinentibus de elemosina nostra ad totam vitam ipsius Johannis."

²⁸ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 321.

²⁹ PRO E101/251/1, text in Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 366.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

recalculated to thirty-seven years, starting with 1368 rather than 1371. From other sources he finds a total of six arrivals during the gap in the record, including John: "John of St. Mary, a Spaniard; Laurence of St. Martin, probably also of Spain; John of Kingston, Thomas of Acre, Edmund, and Peter."³¹ Both John St.-Mary and Laurence St.-Martin were already present in the Domus when "John de Kyngeston" and "Thomas de Acres" arrived on March 22, 1380.³²

John St-Paul's successor as Keeper of the Domus was Henry Ingleby, who resigned in 1371. He was followed by William Burstall (1371–81) and John Waltham (1381–86). John Burton took over in 1386, and was followed by John Scarle in 1394 and Thomas Stanley in 1397; the latter was reappointed in 1399 by the new king, Henry IV.³³ St.-Paul had been appointed Keeper of the Rolls of Chancery two years before his appointment as Keeper of the House of Converts, and the two posts normally went together. Then, under Burstall, just two months before the death of Edward III, the Keepership of the Domus was formally annexed to the Keepership of the Rolls.³⁴ Burstall was still in charge of the Rolls when Cecily Champain enrolled her release of Chaucer from any further action concerning her rape, on 4 May 1380.³⁵ And, of course, any business that Chaucer himself had at the Chancery would have brought him into close proximity of the House of Converts and, perhaps, any inmates who were there at any given time, like John "Seintmarie," who may or may not have worked the gardens as well as sharing in their profits.

Burstall's successor, John Waltham, who was appointed not for life but at the king's pleasure, sought and received a confirmation of this juncture of offices in 1383. As Keeper of the Rolls of Chancery, he extended the jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery by introducing the writ of subpoena. After becoming archdeacon of Richmond early in 1385, he was given leave to exercise his Rolls office by deputy when he visited his

³¹ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 320.

³² PRO C54/220 m. 33 (cf. *CGR* 1377–81, p. 409): 5 October 1380, referring to the previous 22 March.

³³ Reddan, "Domus Conversorum," p. 554.

³⁴ W. J. Hardy, "The Rolls House and Chapel," *Middlesex and Hertfordshire Notes and Queries* 2 (1896): 49–68 at pp. 58–59 (date of 11 April 1377).

³⁵ Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, *Chaucer Life-Records* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 343. See my "Meanings and Uses of *Raptus* in Chaucer's Time," *SAC* 20 (1998): 101–65, repr. in *Inquisitions and Other Trial Procedures in the Medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashfield, 2001), chap. 10, esp. pp. 102–3, 115–18, 142.

archdeaconry, but he resigned his joint offices on October 24, 1386. Two years later, he became bishop of Salisbury.³⁶

John St.-Mary was alone in the *Domus Conversorum* when he was joined in 1386 by a pair of French Jewish converts, Aseti Brianti and his wife Perota. Then, in 1393, as mentioned above, there appeared a man named Thomas Levyn, recently a Jew in Spain (“nuper Judeus de partibus Ispanum”), and now, it was claimed (“et jam, ut dicitur”) a convert of the Christian faith. But after drawing the convert stipend for a month, he disappeared.³⁷ Other converts of Chaucer’s time show no signs of being foreign, as far as the extant records are concerned, for they are referred to only by their baptismal names, like Edmund and Peter in Adler’s list,³⁸ or by their new name and a local toponymic surname, like John Kingston.

The next convert to appear in the *Domus Conversorum* was a woman named Elizabeth, who entered in 1399. The most intriguing thing about her is her father, who is identified as Rabbi Moses, Bishop of the Jews. A grant of 1403 in her favor was printed long ago by Thomas Rymer:

Rex omnibus, ad quos, etc., Salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus Elizabethhe, filie Rabi Moyses, episcopi Judeorum, converse, unum denarium per diem, ultra unum denarium quem eadem Elizabeth, ut una Judeorum ad fidem Christianorum conversa, per manus custodis Domus Conversorum Londoni[is], de summa pro hujusmodi conversis ad Scaccarium percipienda assignata, singulis diebus percipit; habendum et percipiendum dictum denarium diurnum per nos eidem Elizabethhe tenore presentium concessum, una cum dicto altero denario diurno quem, ut est dictum, percipit de dicta summa predictis conversis assignata, per manus custodis domus predicte pro tempore existentis ad totam vitam ipsius Elizabethhe.

In cujus, etc. Teste Rege apud Westmonasterium, decimo die Aprilis. Per ipsum Regem.³⁹

³⁶ Hardy, “The Rolls House and Chapel,” pp. 59–60; Mary Tout, “Waltham, John,” *DNB*.

³⁷ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 321–22, 366.

³⁸ See *CPR* 1381–85, p. 491, 7 December 1384: “Peter the Convert,” “Edmund the Convert.”

³⁹ Thomas Rymer, *Foedera*, 2nd ed. (London: Tonson, 1726–35), 8:299; 3rd ed. (The Hague: Neaulme, 1739–45), 4:1:44.

(The King to all those to whom, etc.: Good health.

Know that of our special grace we have conceded to Elizabeth, daughter of Rabbi Moses, bishop of the Jews, a convert, one penny a day, in addition to the penny that the same Elizabeth, as one of the Jews converted to the Christian faith, receives every day from the hands of the Keeper of the House of Converts, from the sum to be paid at the Exchequer assigned to such converts. This daily penny, conceded by us to the said Elizabeth by the tenor of these present letters, is to be had and received along with the other daily penny, which, as was said, she receives from the said sum assigned to the said converts by the hands of the Keeper of the aforesaid House, from the present time through the whole life of the said Elizabeth.

In whose, etc. Witnessed by the King at Westminster, the tenth day of April. By the King himself.)

When Elizabeth first arrived, four years earlier, she received the usual stipend of a penny a day, and it was doubled in 1403 by the above-cited grant. Later on, her stipend fell in arrears, and in 1410 it was ordered to be paid up.⁴⁰ The stipend was confirmed in 1413, when Henry V took over from his father.⁴¹ From 1409 on, she identified herself as "Elizabeth Pole, convert, wife of David Pole," who was a London tailor. She continued to draw her income for the next seven years, and Adler assumes that she remained an inmate of the Domus during that time; but her receipts only specify that she received her stipend from the Keeper, not that she lived there.⁴²

We will discuss Elizabeth's father, Rabbi Moses, after we finish our survey of the Domus. Two years after Elizabeth first came to the House of Converts, there arrived, in 1401, another convert, who, though he was known by an English name, William (of) Leicester, signed his first two receipts in Hebrew characters that identify him as Spanish. He stayed a total of sixteen years.⁴³

In 1409 King Henry IV sent to the House of Converts two converts from Dartmouth, a mother and daughter named Joan and Alice, who do not seem to have been recent arrivals in England. At any rate, they

⁴⁰ PRO E101/251/11 m. 7, given in Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 368–69.

⁴¹ PRO E101/251/15 m. 2; Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, p. 369 (16 December 1413).

⁴² Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 323, 370.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 323–24. For one of the two receipts signed in Hebrew, see p. 367, with a photo opposite p. 374; on both pages, however, the date is mistakenly given as "1410" instead of "1401."

were definitely not baptized abroad but in Dartmouth itself, as testified by letters sealed by the mayor and burgesses of the city, after they had yielded up all of their goods and chattels on arriving “en port de notre dite ville”—the gate (or, possibly, the port) of Dartmouth. Forfeiture to the king of all possessions by converts was the law, or at least the practice, of the land since at least the time of King John (1199–1216), one not designed to encourage conversions. This procedure was in direct violation of church law, ever since the Third Lateran Council of 1179. Eventually, beginning with Edward I after 1280, converts were allowed to keep half of their property.⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that the rule of total forfeiture was the one being enforced in the fifteenth century. In this case, since the king was informed that they did not have the wherewithal to support themselves (a normal consequence of giving up all of one’s goods!), he ordered them to be received into the House of Converts and the usual convert stipend paid to them for the rest of their lives.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For the English practice, see Stacey, “Conversion of Jews,” pp. 266, 279. According to the Third Lateran decree, *Judei sive Saraceni*, confiscation of possessions is strictly prohibited, “since converts to the faith should enjoy better conditions afterwards than they had before they received the faith”; and all rulers are ordered to make full restoration of all such property, under pain of excommunication. The decree was incorporated into the *Decretales Gregorii IX* (= *Liber Extra* = X) of 1234, 5.6.5 (book 5, title 6, chap. 6): *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Emil Friedberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1879–81), 2:773. According to the Ordinary Gloss to this decree, even when the goods are ill-gotten through usury, they are to be sold and the money paid out in restitution: *Corpus iuris canonici* [CJC], 3 vols. (Rome, 1582; repr. Lyons, 1606), 2:1657, v. *a possessionibus*.

⁴⁵ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 370–71, from PRO E 101/251/11 m. 13: “Henri par la grace de Dieu Roy d’Engleterre et de France et Seigneur d’Irland. A notre tres cher clerc Johan Wakeryng, Gardein de notre Maison de Convers en la Suburbe de Londres, saluz. Come noz bien amees Johanne, conversee de notre ville de Dertemuth, et Alice sa fille, nadgairs esteantes Juwesses mescreantes, et desirantes d’estre de la secte Christiene, refuserent touz lour bons et chateulx que eles avoient et arriverent en port de notre dite ville et y feurent convertees et baptisees, sicome par lettres testimoniales eut faces et sealees desouz les sealx de Maire et autres Burgeys de mesme la ville il poet assez apparon; et, n’aient les dites Johanne et Alice dont lour mesmes susteigner ne gouner, sicome nous avons entenduz, si nous, aiantz a ce consideracion a la reverence de Dieu, volons et vous mandons que les dites Johanne et Alice facez admettre et recevoir en ycelle Maison pur terme de leur vies, donnant et ministrant a elles, et a chacune de eles antieux, vivre et sustinance come autres femmes de leur condicion ont eues et prinses en mesme notre Maison par les mains du Gardein d’ycelle pur le temps esteant avant ces heures.”

(Henry, by the grace of God King of England and France and Lord of Ireland, to our most dear clerk John Wakering, Warden of our House of Converts in the Suburb of London, good health. Since our well beloved Joan, convert of our city of Dartmouth, and her daughter Alice, recently being unbelieving Jewesses, and desiring to be of the Christian sect, yielded up all of the goods and chattels that they possessed and presented themselves at the gate of our said city, and there they were converted and baptized, as can sufficiently appear from letters made and sealed under the seals of the Mayor and

This turned out to be forty more years for the mother and forty-five for the daughter.⁴⁶ The stipend by now seems to have been a penny and a half a day, since another arrival of 1409, a recent convert (*nuper conversus*) named William St.-Jakes, was given an extra halfpenny a day in addition to the usual penny and a half for a convert from the Jews.⁴⁷

Three converts who arrived in 1413, Henry Woodstock and his sons Martin and Peter, were definitely foreigners, since Henry and Peter were allowed to return to their country of origin. Martin, however, stayed, for fifty-five years.⁴⁸

Finally, let me take note of Henry Stratford, whom King Henry V identifies as the godson of his father, Henry IV ("Henri de Stratford, convers, filioli a nostre treschier seigneur et pere le Roy"). Stratford's baptism must have taken place near the end of the king's life (he died on March 20, 1413), and it seems to have fallen to Henry V to establish the pension of 1 1/2d a day at the House of Converts—making it probable that Stratford was Jewish (we will read below of non-Jewish converts sponsored by Henry IV before he became king).

Henry V made good on his obligation to his father's godson on January 29, 1416, a few months after returning from his victory at Agincourt. Henry rehearses this history in a further letter of January 19, 1422, in which he orders the Keeper of the Domus, Simon Gaunsted (appointed 1415, died 1423), to pay the said pension, which was in arrears.⁴⁹ It is probable that the Stratford from which the convert took his name was not Stratford-at-Bow in Middlesex, but rather Stratford Abbey in Essex, a bit farther out from London, where Henry sometimes stayed during the last year of his life.⁵⁰

No other converts are mentioned in the records for the reign of Henry

other Burgesses of the same city; and, the same Joan and Alice not having wherewithal to sustain and clothe themselves, as we have heard, therefore we, having in this matter regard to the reverence of God, desire and command you to admit and receive the said Joan and Alice in that House for the rest of their lives, giving and ministering to them, and to each of them together, living and sustenance, as other women of their condition have had and received in that same House of ours by the hands of its Warden during the time before the present day.)

⁴⁶ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 324, 370–71.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 325, 371. Adler makes the total 2 1/2 d rather than 2d.

⁴⁸ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 325–26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 326, 373–74. Adler misreads the order to say that the convert was Henry V's own godson.

⁵⁰ James Hamilton Wylie, *History of England under Henry the Fourth*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, 1884–98), 2:403 n. 2.

V, and not much is known about the handful recorded in the subsequent reigns of the fifteenth century.⁵¹

Now, then, back to Rabbi Moses. Who could he have been? There is clear evidence that the Latin “*Episcopus*” and French “*L’Eveske*” were used to translate the Hebrew surname *Cohen* of a prominent Jewish family in thirteenth-century England. H. P. Stokes is of the opinion that by this time the term did not designate an office (if it ever did), but only the surname. However, there is a deed dating to the time of Henry III witnessed by a series of Jews, beginning with Benedict, bishop of the Jews (*episcopus Judeorum*), followed by Joceus, priest (*presbiter*), Manser, cleric (*clericus*), and others, including Benedict Crispin.⁵² But the title given to the head of the English Jews by the Exchequer of the Jews was not “Bishop” but “Priest”—*Presbyter Judeorum*, who was said to hold “the Presbyterate of all of the Jews of all of England.”⁵³ But this was a secular title imposed by the English officials, not a religious office of the Jews themselves.

So it may be that Elizabeth’s father really was a bishop of the Jews, that is, the religious head of a congregation of Jews. None of the early records of payments to his daughter Elizabeth make any further elaboration upon the identity of her father. It is only when her grant is confirmed in the first year of the reign of Henry V that we find any speculation about him. Elizabeth is called the “daughter of a Rabbi Moses, the bishop of the Jews of France and Germany” (“*file dun Raby Moyses, l’evesque des Jues de France et d’Almaigne*”). But the accompanying Latin record refers to her only as “the daughter of a certain Rabbi Moses” (“*Elisabeth filie cujusdam Raby Moyses*”).⁵⁴ Adler is clearly justified in thinking that the writer of the patent was only improvising.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 326–27.

⁵² *A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office*, 6 vols. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1890–1915), 5:509, no. A 13423. This deed is undated, but the previous deed, A 13422, says that Benedict Crispin died between 1250 and 1252. For a later Benedict L’Eveske, see note 74.

⁵³ See, for example, the appointment of Elias L’Eveske in 1243 by Henry III: “*Sciatis nos concessisse et presenti carta nostra confirmasse Elye Episcopo, Judeo Londiniensi, Presbiteratum omnium Judeorum totius Anglie habendum et tenendum quamdiu vixerit*” (“Know that we have granted and by this present charter have confirmed to Elias L’Eveske, Jew of London, the Presbyterate of all of the Jews of all England, to have and to hold for the rest of his life”); H. P. Stokes, *Studies in Anglo-Jewish History* (Edinburgh: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1913), p. 245; cf. pp. 30–33. The title of “Arch Presbyter,” which even Stokes uses, was invented by modern historians.

⁵⁴ PRO E101/251/15 m. 1.

⁵⁵ Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 323, 369; PRO E101/251/15 m. 2.

But it is also clear that there was no memory of who he actually was. If in fact he had been a resident of England and in charge of a community of Jews living there, it would seem rather unlikely that this fact would not be known in 1413. On the other hand, it is possible that he was French, and that he came to England from France when the Jews were expelled from there in 1394.⁵⁶ We will hear below of a Spanish rabbi who spent some time in England in 1388–89.

An Alleged Jewish Convert, and Sundry Visitors

A man who claimed to be a convert from Judaism was John Berkyng or Barking, not mentioned by Adler and not recorded as associated with the House of Converts. He fell afoul of the Mayor and other authorities of the City of London in 1390.⁵⁷ On Tuesday, March 1, "John Berkyng, who was lately a Jew, as he said, was attached to make answer as well to the Mayor and Commonalty of the City of London as to William Shedewater, serjeant of the Duke of York, in a plea of falsehood and deceit." Shedewater complained that on the previous Friday Barking had been consulted by the Council of the Duke of York about a pair of silver dishes that had been stolen from the duke some weeks earlier, on February 2. Barking claimed to be an expert in magical arts and incantations, and by these alleged means he falsely accused Shedewater of the theft, whereupon Shedewater "was arrested and imprisoned, and in his body much injured, and on the point of being forced to swear that he would never come within ten leagues of the hostels" of the king and the dukes of York and Gloucester. But somehow (we are not told how) Shedewater managed to get his complaint to the Mayor. Then another complaint was made against Barking, by Robert Mysdene and John Geyte; they said that, after a furred mantle had been stolen from Lady

⁵⁶See Roger Kohn, *Les Juifs de la France du Nord dans la seconde moitié du XIV^e siècle* (Louvain: Peeters, 1988), pp. 251–75; William Chester Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 248–50; Gilbert Dahan, ed., *L'expulsion des Juifs de France, 1394* (Paris: Cerf, 2004). All the recorded destinations of the exiled Jews lay to the east and south of France. Delany, "Chaucer's Prioress, the Jews, and the Muslims" (n. 3 above), p. 51, thinks that Chaucer would have known of the expulsion, and she promises (57 n. 42) a study suggesting that Chaucer was influenced by the case of Jews condemned to death by the Provost of Paris in 1395 for trying to persuade a convert, Denis Machaut, to return to Judaism. This incident may have been a factor in precipitating the expulsion of the Jews. See Kohn, *Les Juifs de la France du Nord*, pp. 253–59.

⁵⁷The whole entry is translated from the Latin original by Henry Thomas Riley, *Memorials of London and London Life* (London: Longmans, 1868), pp. 518–19.

Despencer on January 18, they were falsely accused of the theft by Barking, and, being arrested, they received the same injurious treatment as Shedewater. Barking pleaded guilty to the charges of malicious defamation, and, on March 4, because "such soothsaying, art magic, and falsities are manifestly against the doctrine of Holy Writ and a scandal and disgrace to the whole Commonalty of the City," he was sentenced to an hour on the pillory, with the reasons for the punishment posted. He was then brought back to remain in prison until the Mayor and Aldermen gave order for his release. They did so on March 19, making him swear never to return to the liberty of the City, and to forswear all future soothsaying.

We note that John Barking claimed to be a converted Jew, but it may be that his claim was false, made only to enhance his reputation as a diviner (on the supposition that Jews possessed the sort of occult knowledge that would assist in the magic arts). He did not, it seems, make a claim for the convert pension to which he would have been entitled. Even if he had done so, he still could have been faking his Jewishness and conversion, and this may likewise have been the case with Thomas Levyn a few years later, who, as we saw, was also only "said" to be a convert. We have seen from the case of Joan and Alice of Dartmouth that at least some converts carried sealed testimonies of their conversion.

Another convert in England during this time who avoided contact with the House of Converts was Charles Converse (Charles the Convert), who was not a charlatan but, it seems, an acknowledged practitioner of both medical and surgical arts. On June 11, 1391, he was given a five-year special protection for himself, his servants, and his goods, to practice his arts and gain a livelihood. He did not arrange for such protection beforehand, but only after his arrival in England, and the permit took no notice of his being a convert, apart from the fact that he called himself such, without specifying what religion he was converted from.⁵⁸

⁵⁸PRO C66/332 m. 4 (CPR 1388–92, p. 430), 11 June 1391: "Sciatis quod cum Karolus le Convers, phisicus et sururgicus, regnum nostrum Anglie ad dicta artificia sua inibi exercendi et sustentacionem suam pro exercicio hujusmodi artificiorum suorum ibidem lucranda sit ingressus, suscepimus ipsum Karolum in eodem regno nostro jam existentem infra dictum regnum morando et hujusmodi artificia sua exercendo necnon servientes et bona sua quecumque" ("Know that since Charles Converse, physician and surgeon, has entered our kingdom of England for the exercise of the said arts and for earning his sustenance here for the exercise of such arts, we have received the said Charles, already present in our said realm, to stay in the said realm and to exercise these arts of his, and also his servants and all his goods whatsoever"). The patent goes on to

A few years before this, in 1388, an unconverted Jew arrived in England, namely, Solomon ha-Levi, the chief rabbi of Burgos in Castile. While he was there, in February 1389, he wrote a humorous letter bewailing the lack of wine for celebrating the feast of Purim.⁵⁹ It is likely that he came to London as one of the sixty-some hostages sent to guarantee the payment of 600,000 French francs to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, as part of the settlement for Gaunt's relinquishing of his claim to the Spanish throne.⁶⁰ They were given safe-conduct for a year in England by Richard II on August 26, 1388.⁶¹ Gaunt's claim of course came through his marriage to Constance of Castile, for whom Chaucer's

say that he will be in the king's protection for the next five years. Noted by Cecil Roth, "The Middle Period of Anglo-Jewish History (1290-1655) Reconsidered," *Jewish Historical Society of England Transactions* 19 (1960): 1-12 at 2 n. 7.

⁵⁹For an English translation of the Purim letter, see Judith Gale Krieger, "Pablo de Santa María: His Epoch, Life, and Hebrew and Spanish Literary Production" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1988), pp. 245-61, and see pp. 43-47 for a commentary. Krieger accompanies her translation with a Hebrew text that does not mark the line and stanza divisions of the verse sections; these can be found in the edition of I. Abrahams, "Paul of Burgos in London," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 12 (1900): 255-63.

⁶⁰Francisco Cantera, "Selomó ha-Leví, rehén en Inglaterra en 1389," *Homenaje a Millás-Vallcrosa*, 2 vols. (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954-56), 1:301-7; Roth, "Middle Period," p. 2. See the account of Pero López de Ayala's history of King Juan I, year 10 (1388), chap. 2, *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla*, ed. Cayetano Rosell, 3 vols., Biblioteca de Autores Españoles 66, 68, 70 (Madrid: De Sancha, 1875-78), 2:118-20; *Crónicas*, ed. José-Luís Martín (Barcelona: Planeta, 1991), pp. 634-39. While the hostages were in England, Ayala himself was serving as King Juan's ambassador to Gaunt in Bayonne, around the end of February 1389. See P. E. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), pp. 522-23. Among the hostages that López names is Juan Rodríguez/Ruiz de Cisneros. For a discussion of an attempt to identify the author of the *Libro de buen amor* with an earlier Juan Ruiz de Cisneros, see H. A. Kelly, *Canon Law and the Archpriest of Hita* (Binghamton: MRTS, 1984), pp. 68-70, 119-20. If the *Libro* was composed later in the fourteenth century, as suggested here, the younger Cisneros (the 1388-89 hostage) would be in the running for authorship. But more likely, perhaps, is the Juan Ruiz/Rodríguez of Salamanca, doctor of laws, who was Juan I's ambassador to the pope in Avignon in 1389, or his son of the same name, a student in canon law at Salamanca, for whom Dr. Ruiz asked a benefice at this time. See Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, *Bulario de la Universidad de Salamanca (1219-1549)*, 3 vols. (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1966-67), 1:472-73; H. A. Kelly, "A Juan Ruiz Directory for 1380-1382," *Mester* 17 (Fall 1988): 69-93 at pp. 87-88. Both father and son were active during the first two decades of the fifteenth century, when the Salamanca manuscript of the *Libro* was copied.

⁶¹Rymer, *Foedera*, 2nd ed., 7:603; 3rd ed., 3:4:31; reproduced in Cantera, "Selomó ha-Leví, rehén en Inglaterra en 1389," pp. 304-5. Safe-conducts were also required for the sixty or so persons charged with escorting the money; see Edouard Perroy, *L'Angleterre et le grand schisme d'Occident: Etude sur la politique religieuse de l'Angleterre sous Richard II (1378-1399)* (Paris: Monnier, 1933), p. 256.

wife, Philippa, was a lady-in-waiting (she may have died in 1387); Chaucer's son, Thomas, was also a member of this Spanish entourage.⁶² Rabbi Solomon in the next year, 1390, back in Burgos, converted to the Christian faith and took the name of Paul of St. Mary, and he was eventually appointed bishop of Burgos. His learned super-commentary on Nicholas of Lyre's biblical commentaries became part of the ordinary apparatus of the Latin Bible.

We do not hear of another Jewish visitor until 1409, when there arrived in England, by the invitation of the celebrated merchant and civic leader Richard Whittington, a Jewish doctor, who, unlike Dr. Charles in 1391, was not a convert. Whittington received permission from King Henry IV to invite Master Samson of Mirabeau to attend on his ailing wife. Dr. Samson's place of origin was probably the Mirabeau located in Vaucluse, in the southeast of present-day France.⁶³ Later on, in 1417, Samson is found to be practicing in Northern Italy.⁶⁴

In the next year, 1410, Henry IV himself summoned a celebrated Jewish doctor to attend to his own ills. He gave a safe-conduct for two years to Dr. Elias Sabot and his large entourage (ten mounted servants) to practice his science or *mistera* anywhere in the kingdom. He is identified as "Magister Helias Sabot, Hebrewe de Boleyne la Crase, doctor in artibus medicinarum."⁶⁵ The Boleyne in question is Bologna, called *Crassa* or *Grassa* from the fertility of its soil.⁶⁶ It has been suggested that Elias took such a large number of persons with him to provide "a private *minyán*," that is, "the number of adult males requisite for public worship."⁶⁷ He remained only a year in England, after which he returned to

⁶²Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (London: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 142–43.

⁶³A. Weiner, "A Note on Jewish Doctors in England in the Reign of Henry IV," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 18 (1906):141–45 at p. 145. Whether this Mirabeau was under the control of the King of France at the time is not clear, but we do know that Jewish doctors were still to be found in France after the expulsion of 1394. See Kohn, *Juifs de la France du Nord*, pp. 273–74.

⁶⁴Roth, "Middle Period," p. 2.

⁶⁵Rymer, *Foedera*, 2nd ed., 8:667 (3rd ed., 4:1:184); not calendared in *CPR*. His full name was Elijah Be'er ben Sabbetai. He was the son of Sabato of Fermo. See A. Milano, "Beer, Elia," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 7 (1965): 526–28.

⁶⁶Wylie, *History of England under Henry IV*, 3:231 n. 5.

⁶⁷Weiner, "A Note on Jewish Doctors," pp. 142–43; cf. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), p. 133; and Roth, "Middle Period," p. 2. Another imported physician, David de Nigarellis of Lucca, who attended on Henry IV in 1412, is conjectured by Weiner to have been a Jew, but Roth says that there is no evidence for it except his biblical name (*History*, p. 133 n. 4). Weiner admits that he is relying on Wylie, who calls him a Jew without further ado, and who says that Henry made him Warden of the Mint in 1408 (Wylie, 3:231 n. 7).

Italy. In 1417 he was named the chief physician of the new pope, Martin V, and it is thought that he inspired the pope's bull in favor of the Jews, dated February 20, 1422.⁶⁸

Saracens and Saracen Converts

Whether or not there were in fact any Muslims or ex-Muslims in London, in or out of the *Domus Conversorum*, it is beyond a doubt that there was a suspicion that Saracens as well as Jews were living in England under false pretenses. In the "Good Parliament" of 1376, the Commons asserted that some of the alleged Lombards living in England were really Jews and Saracens and privy spies, who had recently introduced into the country a dreadful unmentionable vice:

The Commons petition that all of the Lombards who have no other occupation than that of broker be made to quit the land within a short time, since evil usury and all sorts of subtle plottings connected with it are practiced and maintained by them; understanding, most noble Lords, that there is in the land a much greater multitude of Lombard brokers than merchants, who do nothing but mischief, and many of those who are held to be Lombards are Jews and Saracens and secret spies, and they have recently brought to the land a very horrible vice that is not to be named, through which the Kingdom cannot fail to be destroyed within a short time if strict corrective measures be not quickly taken.⁶⁹

Why the covert non-Christians in England were suspected of practicing sodomy is not known, though Saracens were associated with the vice in canon law, both as perpetrators and punishers.⁷⁰ As for the allegation

⁶⁸ Milano, "Beer, Elia," p. 527.

⁶⁹ *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, 6 vols. (London, 1767–83), 2:332 no. 58: "Item, supplie la Commune, qe touz les Lombardz queux ne usent autre mestier fors cele de brokours, q'ils soient deinz brief faitz voider la terre; issint come male usure et touz les subtils ymaginations d'icell sont par eux compassez et meyntenuz. Entendantz, tres nobles Seigneurs, q'il i ad deins la terre moult greindre multitude de Lombardz brokours qe marchantz, ne ne servent de rien fors de malfaire. Issint come plusours de eux qi sont tenuz Lombards sont Juys et Sarazins, et privees espies, et ont ore tard menez deins la terre un trop horrible vice qe ne fait pas a nomer. Par quoi le Roialme ne poet failler d'estre en brief destruyte, si redde corrigement ne soit sur icell hastivement ordeignez." The Commons have other complaints against Lombards and other foreigners, especially the French. See below at notes 72, 121, and 122.

⁷⁰ In a decretal of Alexander III to the archbishop of Palermo, *In archiepiscopatu*, X 5.31.4 (Friedberg, 2:809), he tells him how to deal with the Saracen rapists who abuse Christian women and boys (they can be fined and flogged). The Ordinary Gloss to this

that Italian usurers were harboring Jews and Saracens in their midst, Cecil Roth comments, "Though religious toleration was not conspicuous in the Italian mercantile centers at this period, there may have been some justification for the statement."⁷¹ I should note that in another petition the Commons compare foreign Christians unfavorably to Jews and Saracens,⁷² and they consider some Englishmen to be as bad as the Jews who crucified Christ.⁷³

As an example of a Lombard who might have aroused the Commons' suspicions, let me cite the vintner Benedict Zachary, who had a given name much in favor with the Jews⁷⁴ and a patronymic more suggestive of the Old Testament prophet than the father of John the Baptist. When he received London citizenship in 1365, his place of origin was given simply as "parts of Lombardy."⁷⁵ He acted as a broker,⁷⁶ and he was in the business of lending money.⁷⁷ Whether or not his activity

decretal, *CJC*, 2:1728, v. *abuti*, cites another connection, in which Saracens were sent as a divine punishment of sodomy: in Gratian's canon *Si gens Anglorum*, *Decretum* D. 56 c. 10 (Friedberg 1:222), Saint Boniface warns the king of England about reports that the English are indulging in sexual vices like the Sodomites ("ad instar gentis Sodomitice"), noting that God punished similar behavior in Spain, Provence, and Burgundy by allowing the savage invasion of the Saracens.

⁷¹Roth, *History*, p. 133.

⁷²*Rot. Parl.* 2:337–38 nos. 96–97: Benefices are in the control of brokers in the sinful city of Avignon, and aliens, enemies of our country, have rich benefices but never fulfill their spiritual duties; such bad Christians do more harm than all of the Jews and Saracens of the world. Cf. p. 338, no. 104: The Papal Collector, a French subject, and many other open enemies and spies of English secrets live continually in London, and they and their English and Lombard proctors and "explorers" constantly report on vacant benefices to the Court of Rome and the cardinals, mainly enemies of the English, so that they can purchase the benefices from the pope.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 2:338, no. 99: Lay patrons of churches, imitating the greed and simony of the clergy, sell their churches to people who destroy them, just as God was sold to the Jews, who put him to death.

⁷⁴See the discussion of Benedict, Bishop of the Jews, and Benedict Crispin, at note 52 above. In one document of 1297, *CCR* 1296–302, p. 27, there is reference to three Jewish Benedicts of Oxford: Benedict Levesque, Benedict Caus, and Benedict of Winchester (Benedict Levesk is mentioned again on p. 343), and in 1301 we hear of another Benedict, who used to live in Lincoln (p. 482). The form "Benner" is also found: *Cal. Ancient Deeds* 2:511, C 2362: Bennet son of Master Elias, Jew of London.

⁷⁵Alice Beardwood, *Alien Merchants in England, 1350 to 1377: Their Legal and Economic Position* (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy, 1931), pp. 66–67, 185, 199.

⁷⁶*Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guild-Hall*, ed. A. H. Thomas, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926–61), 2:103: 18 August 1369, "Letter of Attorney from William de Nerny, merchant of Genoa, to William de Strete and Benedict Zacarie, vintners."

⁷⁷*CCR* 1364–68, p. 290: 11 July 1366; *CCR* 1369–74, pp. 477–78: 12 November 1372; *CPR* 1370–74, p. 229: 14 December 1372.

constituted "evil usury," we should remember that, even though usury might be deemed sinful, if one agrees to it one is obliged to pay up.⁷⁸

A possible candidate for an Italian—in fact, Sicilian—Muslim in England is to be had in the 1380s in the person of Richard of Sicily, who was baptized by Robert Braybrooke, bishop of London, at the manor of Langley in the presence of King Richard II. The king obviously served as sponsor, that is, godfather, for him and gave him his baptismal name. He has been brought to the attention of medievalists in recent years, notably by Lee Patterson.⁷⁹ But Patterson is misled by Adler, who in turn was misled by Frederick Devon, the editor of the Exchequer calendar, in identifying him as a Jew.⁸⁰ Adler also has him baptized in 1390, whereas the baptism must have occurred in 1386. The Exchequer record, dated December 14, 1389, states that at the time of his baptism he was granted an annuity of £10, which was in arrears, to the amount of 50 marks, which comes to more than £33. The king orders this sum to be paid to him, and he authorizes the convert to trade "Catholically" with certain Christians outside the realm of England.⁸¹ The entry on the

⁷⁸This is brought out in the standard papal crusader-letter exempting crusaders from usuries otherwise due, such as that issued to John of Gaunt by Pope Urban VI in 1383 to take arms against the schismatics (those who sided with the Avignonese pope, Clement VII). He does not have to pay interest ("usuries") to money-lenders, and, if the lenders are Jewish, the principal does not have to be repaid until he has died or returned home. Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, 7 vols. (Toronto: PIMS, 1988–91), vol. 1 (*Documents: 492–1404*), no. 437 (Urban VI to John of Gaunt, 8 April 1383, pp. 464–65). For a fuller text of a crusader privilege, with explanation, see Simonsohn, no. 143 (Gregory IX, 13 April 1235, pp. 153–54): "Creditors of the crusaders, including Jews, are to free them from their oaths, desist from the exaction of interest, and return that already collected. Crusaders who are unable at present to pay their debts to Jews shall not incur interest until their death or return is known. Jews are to add to the principal the income from the pawn, after deduction of expenses." Christian creditors are to be constrained by ecclesiastical censure (excommunication), and Jews by threat of being shunned (subtracting the communion of the faithful from them).

⁷⁹Lee Patterson, "Living Witnesses" (note 2 above), p. 541.

⁸⁰Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 322–23, citing Frederick Devon, *Issues of the Exchequer . . . from King Henry III to King Henry VI* (London: Murray, 1837), p. 242, the Issue Roll for Michaelmas, 13 Richard II, 14 December 1389). Devon's summary reads: "To Richard de Cicilia, a converted Jew, baptized by the Venerable Father Robert, Bishop of London, at the manor of Langeley, in the presence of the Lord the King, on account of which the said Lord the King granted to the said Richard a certain annuity of £10, to be received at the Exchequer for term of his life in aid of his support. In money paid to him by assignment made this day in discharge of 50 marks which the said Lord the King commanded to be paid him as a reward, because that, as yet, the aforesaid Richard had received nothing of the annuity aforesaid, and also to qualify him as a Catholic to traffic with certain Christians out of England. By writ, etc., £33 6s 8d."

⁸¹London, Public Record Office, E 403/527 m. 12 (14 December 1389): "*Ricardus de Cicilia, conversus*. Ricardo de Cicilia converso, jam raro per venerabilem patrem Robertum Episcopum Londoniensem apud manerium de Langeley in presencia Domini Regis bap-

Patent Rolls, which was made a month before this, on 14 November 1389, is a notification to all and sundry that Richard of Sicily, having recently received baptism at Langley from the bishop of London in the presence of the king, now proposes to go abroad and engage in Catholic trading with other Christians, and the king wishes to broadcast these circumstances in order to allay any "sinister suspicion" that might arise concerning the convert.⁸²

On the face of it, it would seem strange for a Sicilian of any sort to be in England, and stranger still for him to be either a Jew or a Muslim. There were plenty of Jews in Sicily, but their businesses and trading were mainly internal, and they appear only rarely in maritime trade; and the only Muslims or other non-Christians in Sicily at this time in any significant numbers were slaves purchased in the slave market.⁸³

titato, ob quam quidem causam dictus Dominus Rex concessit dicto Ricardo quandam annuetatem decem librarum ad Scaccarium ad terminum vite sue in auxilium sustentationis sue. In denariis etc. liberatis per assignationem etc. factam isto die in persolucionem L marcarum, quas predictus dominus Rex etc. liberare mandavit, in recompensationem, et pro eo quod hucusque predictus Ricardus nichil receperit de annuetate predicta. Et ipsum disponit ad Catholice mercandisandum cum quibusdam Christianis extra partes Anglie," etc. ("*Richard of Sicily, convert.* To Richard of Sicily, convert, now recently (?) baptized by the venerable father Robert, Bishop of London, at the manor of Langley, in the presence of the Lord King, for which reason the said Lord King granted to the said Richard a certain annuity of £10 at the Exchequer for the term of his life to aid in his sustenance. In pence, etc., delivered by assignment, etc., made this day in payment of 50 marks, which the foresaid Lord King ordered in recompense, and because up until this time the foresaid Richard had received nothing of the foresaid annuity. And he disposes him to trade in Catholic fashion with certain Christians outside the parts of England").

⁸²PRO C66/329 m. 29 (CPR 1388–92, p. 158: 14 November 1389): "*Pro Ricardo de Cicile, converso.* Rex omnibus ad quos, etc., Salutem. Quia Ricardus de Cicile, conversus, nuper in presentia nostra apud manerium nostrum de Langeley recepit sacramentum baptismi per venerabilem in Christo patrem, carissimum consanguineum nostrum, episcopum Londoniensem, et est in proposito proficiscendi ad diversas partes ad mercandisandum Catholice cum aliis Christianis, ut dicit, nos, ob reverentiam Dei, ne de prefato Ricardo sinistra suspicio futuris temporibus habeatur, vobis omnibus et singulis hoc innotescimus per presentes" ("*For Richard of Sicily, convert.* The King to all to whom, etc., Good health. Because Richard of Sicily, convert, recently in our presence received the sacrament of baptism through the venerable father in Christ, our dear kinsman, the bishop of London, and because he proposes to go to various parts to merchandise Catholically with other Christians, as he says, we, out of reverence for God, make this known to you, all and singular, by these present letters, lest sinister suspicion be had concerning the aforesaid Richard in future times"). The CPR calendarer, wrongly assuming that Richard is wishing to conduct such trade within England itself, paraphrases the text thus: "he proposes to go to divers parts [of the country] to trade *catholice* with other Christians."

⁸³My informant here is Professor David Abulafia, Professor of Mediterranean History at Cambridge University, and author of *Italy, Sicily, and the Mediterranean, 1100–1400* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987).

Even the Jews who ventured onto the waters seem to have restricted themselves, like other traders, mainly to Mediterranean ports.⁸⁴ The slave trade at this time was in the "Tartar cycle," roughly 1360–1400.⁸⁵ The Tartar slaves came mainly from the Crimea (the northern shores of the Black Sea).⁸⁶ Only a third of the Tartar slaves in Sicily in the period 1370–1400 were men, and most of them seem to have been baptized.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, in spite of the small number of available candidates, it seems no more unlikely that Richard of Sicily was a manumitted slave⁸⁸ than a Jewish mariner, and, since the Genoese were the most active traders in importing slaves from the Black Sea,⁸⁹ and since the Genoese regularly visited England, he may have hired on as a seaman or merchant apprentice on one of their ships and arrived in London in that way.⁹⁰

All that we really know about Richard of Sicily is that he received the high honor of being adopted as Richard II's godson and was baptized by the bishop of London at one of the king's manors and given a lavish annuity. But three years later he returned with a complaint, or perhaps

⁸⁴ See Henri Bresc, *Arabes de langue, Juifs de religion: L'évolution du Judaïsme sicilien dans l'environnement latin, XII–Xve siècles* (Paris: Bouchène, 2001), esp. pp. 228 (Jews on a Catalan galley go to Syria, 1448), pp. 245–46 (products come from Alexandria, Turkey, Genoa, Catalonia, Naples, Gaeta, Amalfi, and Saracen countries), p. 253 (trade in the fourteenth century with Majorca, Catalonia, even Cyprus), p. 255 (trade with Tunisia).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 257. Earlier there was the Saracen cycle, 1280–1310, and the Romanian Greek cycle, 1310–60, while the subsequent cycle, 1400–1440, was of Blacks and unbaptized Saracens. See also Bresc's paper, "Une société esclavagiste médiévale: L'exemple de la Sicile," *Sardegna, Mediterraneo e Atlantico tra Medioevo ed età moderna: Studi storici in memoria di Alberto Boscolo*, ed. Luisa d'Arienzo, 2 vols. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1993), 2:297–314.

⁸⁶ To judge from the slave trade in Florence at this time, "Tartar" had quite a wide range of meaning, since the slaves, so designated, were classified as being in six different colors. Of a group of 242, 2 are black, 18 brown, 161 olive, 11 blond (*flavus*), 5 reddish, and 45 white. See Steven A. Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 108.

⁸⁷ Out of a series of deeds concerning 78 slaves listed by a notary in Palermo between 1378 and 1384, 29 are male and 49 female; for 7 of the males and 9 of the females, there is no indication about whether they are baptized, but of the 22 males for which the information is given, only two are unbaptized. See Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 2 vols. (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1955–77), 2:179–83, 239, 1017.

⁸⁸ For formulas of manumission, see Matteo Gaudio, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni: Legislazione, dottrina, formule* (Catania: Galàtola, 1926), pp. 115–30: "Il formulario degli atti de manomissione."

⁸⁹ Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 2:184.

⁹⁰ Verlinden gives examples of a freed Black who obtained a job in 1360 as a muleteer, and a freed Bulgarian in the same year who worked as a household handyman (2:246).

two complaints, and a request. In the first place, his annuity had never been paid. In the second place, he was concerned about his ability to engage in trade as a Christian abroad, fearing that other Christians would suspect him of not really being a Christian. Perhaps he had already experienced such a reaction, whether because of his foreign appearance (dark skin?) or for other reasons. The Commons of 1376 of course would have also suspected him of fostering sodomy.

Another likely Muslim convert is William Piers, to whom a payment was made on January 9, 1393, in keeping with a grant of two pence a day made by Richard II in the previous May, because he had been “converted to the Christian faith and recently baptized in our law.” Once again, he is identified in the modern Exchequer calendar as a Jew,⁹¹ but not in the original enrollment.⁹² This convert undoubtedly came from the Iberian peninsula; there were Portuguese and Spanish shipmen and merchants in England of this name, which also appears as Peres, Perez, Peritz, Periz, Pers, Perytz, and Pieres.⁹³ A prominent example was Lope Piers, knight of Spain (*Lupus Piers, miles Ispannie*), one of John of Gaunt’s Castilian retainers, who in 1386 was given a grant to pay off his debts in London.⁹⁴ As claimant to the Spanish throne, Gaunt maintained a chancery and had a large following in England, not only numerous knights and their retinues, but also “a number of Castilians of lesser rank and of various trades and professions. . . . Among them were Cas-

⁹¹ Devon, *Issues*, p. 250: Issue Roll, Michaelmas, 16 Richard II, 9 January (1393): “To William Piers, a converted Jew to whom the present Lord the King by his letters patent granted 2d daily, to be received during his life at the Exchequer, etc., because the same William was converted to the Christian faith and lately baptized into our law. In money paid to him, viz., to his own hands, in discharge of £1 10s 4d, etc., for 182 days, etc., by writ, etc., £1 10s 4d.”

⁹² PRO E 403 / 541 m. 11 (9 January 1393): “*Willielmus Piers conversus*. Willielmo Piers, converso, cui Dominus Rex memoratus secundo die Maii proximo preterito ii d. denarios [*sic*] ad Scaccarium ad totam vitam suam ad terminos sancti Michaelis et Pasche per equales porciones percipiendos, pro eo quod idem Willielmus ad fidem Christianam conversus et in lege nostro nuper baptizatus fuit, per has litteras patentes conceditur. In denariis sibi liberatis, videlicet per manus proprias in persolucionem xxxs iiid sibi liberandorum [. . .] videlicet pro rato a secundo die Maii proximo preterito usque ultimum diem Octobris termino proximo sequentem, per C iii-xx ii [= 182] dies utroque die computato,” etc. (Devon’s entry in the previous note gives an adequate translation except for calling William a Jew).

⁹³ *Index of Ancient Petitions of the Chancery and the Exchequer Preserved in the Public Record Office*, rev. ed., Public Record Office, Lists and Indexes, no. 1 (New York: Kraus, 1966), p. 244. One of the persons listed here, John Piers de Saruspe, is a shipmaster from Berneo in the Bay of Biscay, near Bilbao. See the CCR entries for 16 June 1384 (1381–85, p. 381) and 21 November 1385 (1385–89, p. 92).

⁹⁴ Russell, *English Intervention*, p. 414 n. 3.

tilian sea-captains, sailors and merchants, friars, and a variety of non-descript persons, including agents from Castile, about whom we know nothing more than their Peninsular names."⁹⁵ One of the latter is Martin Piers, said to be exiled from Castile by "le Batard" (Henry of Trastámara, that is, Enrique II) because of his loyalty to Gaunt.⁹⁶

"Perez" is usually to be taken as the Christian patronymic, meaning "of Peter."⁹⁷ If that was the case with William Piers, it would mean that he adopted it along with his Christian baptismal name, or, even more likely, that he had adopted it before his conversion, since it was customary for Castilian Jews and Moors to use Christian names.⁹⁸ Given these naming practices in Spain, therefore, it is not evident from Martin Piers's Christian name whether he was Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, or an ex-Jewish or ex-Muslim Christian. As discussed above, the fact that neither Richard of Sicily nor William Piers were to be paid by the Keeper of the House of Converts may be an indication that they were not Jews, but rather Muslims.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 176–84, esp. 182.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182 n. 4, citing PRO Chancery Warrants (Signets): C81/1730, no. 59. The name appears as "Martin Piers" in the French text of the warrant, which Russell simply gives as "Martín Pérez."

⁹⁷ Another possibility to be considered is that William Piers's name was the Hebrew name Perez or Peretz, from Genesis 38.29, but I have as yet found no sign of its use in Iberia. My UCLA colleague Herbert Davidson informs me that the given name Peretz was used in the Middle Ages and into modern times among the Ashkenazic Jews, and that Peretz as a family name appears after European Jews took surnames—e.g., Y. Peretz, a celebrated Yiddish writer, who lived in Warsaw in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Shimeon Peres has a different name, with an "s," not a "tz."

⁹⁸ Shortly after the downfall of King Pedro ("the Cruel") in 1369, which Chaucer describes as the tragedy of "Petro, glorie of Spaine" (*The Monk's Tale*, 2375), the new king, Enrique II, in the Cortes of 1371 ordered that the Jews, who were Peter's "warm supporters," could no longer use Christian names (Russell, 165 n. 1). But, in fact, Enrique was responding to a petition of the nobles and proctors against the power exercised by "the enemies of the faith, especially the Jews." The complaint about taking Christian names came at the end, and the king in his answer took it up first, saying that neither Jews nor Moors were to have names of Christians: *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1863), Córtes de Toro, 1371, petition 2, pp. 203–4.

⁹⁹ Another Spanish retainer of Gaunt's who was to receive an income of two pence a day from the duke's great wardrobe, by an order of 10 December 1374, might strike us as having a Jewish name: Emanuel of Spain. See Sydney Armitage-Smith, ed., *John of Gaunt's Register*, 2 vols., Camden Society 3.20–21 (London 1911), 2:274 no. 1591, and Besserman, "Chaucer, Spain, and the Prioress's Antisemitism," pp. 346–47. But Emanuel, or Manuel, seems to have been only a Christian name in this era; it was first used by the Greeks and then became popular in Spain and Portugal; see E. G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 102.

When we look at the entry on the Patent Rolls, made at the time of the original grant (May 2, 1392) to William, we find an interesting reason given for action: the grant of two pence a day to William Piers, described as in the later entry as “a convert to the Christian faith and recently baptized in our law,” was made in order “to attract and induce the unbelieving to accept the Catholic Faith.”¹⁰⁰ This sounds very much as if there are other “infidels” living in England who are expected to take note of the pension awaiting them if they convert; and, additionally (or, alternatively), it can be seen as an invitation for other non-Christians to come to England and convert.

A convert who was certainly an ex-Muslim was a godson of Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, whom he doubtless brought back with him from Rhodes on his return trip from the Holy Land. He probably arrived with him in England at the end of June 1393. He is variously called “the baptized Henry,” “Henry of Rhodes,” “Henry the Turk,” and “Henry the Saracen.”¹⁰¹ But just as we should be alert to the possibility that “Lombards” refers to all Italians or all bankers, so too we should remember that under the name of “Saracens” it was common at this time to include all non-Jewish non-Christians. I need only refer to the *Middle English Dictionary* entries “Sarasin,” “Sarasin,” and so on. In other words, “pagan,” “heathen,” and “Saracen” were often interchangeable words designating infidels, and Saracens of various sorts had long been the enemy in romances.¹⁰² We should also recall that the followers of Mahomet were readily classed with heathens and idolators

¹⁰⁰PRO C66/334 m. 15 (CPR 1391–96, p. 50: 2 May 1392): “*Pro Willielmo Piers, converso*. “Rex omnibus ad quos, etc., Salutem. Sciatis quod de gracia nostra speciali, ac eciam ad incredulos ad fidem catholicam trahendos et inducendos, concessimus Willielmo Piers, ad fidem Christianam converso et in lege nostra nuper baptizato, duos denarios per diem percipiendos singulis annis ad Scaccarium nostrum pro termino vite sue ad terminos sancti Michaelis et Pasche per equales porciones” (*For William Piers, convert*. The King to all to whom, etc., Good health. Know that, of our special grace, and also for the purpose of attracting and inducing the unbelieving to the Catholic faith, we have conceded to William Piers, a convert to the Christian faith and recently baptized in our law, two pence per day to be drawn every year at our Exchequer for the term of his life, at the terms of St. Michael and Easter, in equal portions”).

¹⁰¹Lucy Toulmin Smith, ed., *Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land Made by Henry Earl of Derby (Afterwards King Henry IV) in the Years 1390–1 and 1392–3; Being the Accounts Kept by His Treasurer During Two Years*, Camden new series 52 ([London] 1894), pp. lxvi, 230, and 254 (“Henricus baptizatus”), 233 (“Henricus Turk”), 240 and 284 (“Henricus de Rodez”), 287 (“Henricus Sarasin”).

¹⁰²See Diane Speed, “The Saracens of *King Horn*,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): 564–95, and Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale, 1977), esp. chap. 6, “History and Romance,” pp. 117–219.

(see the *MED* entries on “maumet” and “maumetrie”). Chaucer does this in *The Parson's Tale* (749–50), though not in *The Man of Law's Tale*, where it is recognized that “Makomete” claimed to be a messenger of God (MLT 333).¹⁰³

From his reading of Nicholas Trevet's *Chroniques*, Chaucer learned of the “pagan merchants from the Great Saracen” (“marchantz paens hors de la grande Sarazine”) who came to the court of the Roman emperor; they were converted to the Christian faith through the preaching of the emperor's daughter Constance, and when they went home to their own land and revealed their faith to their Saracen neighbors and relatives, they were brought before the high sultan.¹⁰⁴ The Man of Law claims to have heard this story from a merchant (ProlMLT 132–33), and Chaucer may have been thinking of similar foreign merchants in his own day who were not Jewish but pagans of the Mohammedan variety, like, presumably, the “Lord of Palatie,” for whom the Knight fought in Turkey against “another hethen” (GP 65–66).

The Heathens of the North

What about pagans of the polytheistic variety encountered in the Knight's other forays into “hethenesse”? We are told (GP.54–56),

Ful ofte time he hadde the bord bigonne
 Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;
 In Lettow hadde he reised and in Ruce,

referring to Prussia, Lithuania, and Russia. One well-publicized foray of English knights into Prussia was led by Henry of Grosmont, Earl of Derby, and Duke of Lancaster, in 1351.¹⁰⁵ According to John Capgrave's *Liber de illustribus Henricis*, Henry was accompanied by a number

¹⁰³ My citations of Chaucer are from *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Larry D. Benson, and, for his other works, from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas Trevet, history of Constance in *Les Chroniques ecrites pour Marie d'Angleterre*, ed. Margaret Schlauch, *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 165–81, at 165.

¹⁰⁵ Toulmin Smith, *Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land*, pp. xv, xvii; Kenneth Fowler, *The King's Lieutenant: Henry of Grosmont, First Duke of Lancaster, 1310–1361* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969), pp. 105–6.

of other earls: Northampton, Suffolk, Salisbury, and Stafford.¹⁰⁶ A late fifteenth-century report says that yet another English earl, Thomas of Warwick, not only went to Prussia but captured the son of the king of Lettow and brought him back to London to be baptized with his own name, Thomas.¹⁰⁷ Warwick's sojourn in Prussia is not mentioned by English writers, but the Prussian chronicler Wigand of Marburg tells us of his presence there in 1365, and his account allows us to conclude that his Lithuanian godson was a prince named Surwillo. Surwillo later returned to Prussia (if it is true that he was taken to England to be baptized), and, as Thomas Surwillo, joined the Teutonic Knights and was among the forces launched against the Lithuanians in 1390.¹⁰⁸

The terms of the conflict should have been very different in 1390, since the Lithuanians had converted en masse to Catholic Christianity in 1387. But, as is evident from the reports of the chroniclers, not only Wigand in Prussia but also Thomas Walsingham in England, the allies of the Teutonic Knights in the 1390 campaign were under the impression that the Lithuanians were still pagan. This was also the report of the biographer of the celebrated French knight Boucicaut, who calls the adversaries Saracens.¹⁰⁹ Walsingham at this point calls them simply *pagani*,¹¹⁰ but when he reports on the battle of Tannenberg twenty years later, he too refers to the infidels of the area as Saracens. But now, at this point, in 1410, Walsingham knows that the Lithuanians are neophyte Christians, but he believes that they were only recently converted.¹¹¹

One of the English knights who participated in the 1390 campaign against the Lithuanians was Henry Bolingbroke, who purchased and cared for several Lithuanian boys, one of them called Henry Lettowe. Lucy Toulmin Smith assumes, no doubt rightly, that Henry's purpose

¹⁰⁶Theodor Hirsch in his edition of Wigand of Marburg, *Cronaca nova prutenica*, in *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, vol. 2, ed. Hirsch et al. (Leipzig 1863, repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1965), pp. 429–800, collects the reports of Prussian campaigns in English sources in appendix 9, pp. 788–96 (the account of Capgrave referred to is on p. 794; he gives Scottish reports in appendix 10, pp. 796–800).

¹⁰⁷*Pageant of the Birth, Life, and Death of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, K.G., 1389–1439*, ed. Viscount Dillon and W. H. St. John Hope (London: Longmans, 1914), pp. 43–44.

¹⁰⁸Wigand, chap. 61 (p. 549); chap. 63a (pp. 550–51); chap. 149 (p. 640).

¹⁰⁹*Le livre des fais du bon messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Jennes*, ed. Denis Lalonde (Geneva: Droz, 1985), 1.11, p. 40.

¹¹⁰Thomas Walsingham, Oxford, MS Bodl. 462, fol. 203v (an unpublished section of his early abbreviated chronicle).

¹¹¹Walsingham, *Historia anglicana*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley, 2 vols., Rolls Series 28.1 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863–64), 2:284.

was to make Christians out of the boys, and that he was the godfather of young Henry; but Toulmin Smith's assumption is based partly on a misreading of Thomas Walsingham's report of the siege, to say that eight Lithuanians were captured and converted, whereas he should be read to say 8,000.¹¹²

Probably, then, Bolingbroke had the boys baptized, whether or not they had been baptized before, either not knowing about their christening or accepting the word of the Teutonic Knights that the Lithuanian conversion was bogus. As with his Rhodian godson a bit later, it is likely that he brought these converts back to England with him,¹¹³ and the same may have been true of other Englishmen who served in the area, as Chaucer's Knight was said to have done.

In 1393, shortly after Bolingbroke's return from his second foreign tour, which started out in the summer of 1392 in Prussia, we hear of a Prussian convert, Peter Prus, to whom a Londoner named Paul Salesbury was licensed to give an annual income for life of forty shillings. The income is to come from Salesbury's properties, but the grant makes it sound as if the king is doing him a favor ("by our special grace to Paul he can pay Peter").¹¹⁴ What Salesbury's involvement with the con-

¹¹²Toulmin Smith, *Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land*, p. xix, citing Walsingham, *Historia anglicana*, 2:197–98: "Facti sunt Christiani de gente de Lettow octo, et Magister de Lifland duxit secum in suam patriam tria, millia prisonum." This is the long version of Walsingham's chronicle. The abbreviated version makes the meaning clear: "De gente de Lettowe octo millia Christianitatis ritum susceperunt, preter eos quos Magister de Lyfland secum duxit in patriam, ad tria millia captivorum" (loc. cit. MS Bodl. 462). I treat these matters more fully in another essay, "Chaucer's Knight and the 'Northern Crusades': The Example of Henry Bolingbroke," in *Medieval Cultural Studies in Honor of Stephen Knight*, ed. Helen Fulton, David Matthews, and Ruth Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005, forthcoming).

¹¹³Toulmin Smith, *Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land*, p. xxxi.

¹¹⁴*CPR* 1391–96, p. 323, 22 October 1393. The record reads (PRO C66/338 m. 18): "Sciatis quod de gratia nostra speciali concessimus et licenciam dedimus dilecto nobis Paulo Salesbury quod ipse dare possit et concedere Petro Prus, converso, quandam annuum redditum quadraginta solidorum percipiendorum de terris et tenementis prefati Pauli in Civitate nostra Londoniense ad totam vitam ipsius Petri" ("Know that we of our special grace have granted to our beloved Paul Salesbury that he can give and grant to Peter Prus, convert, an annual income of forty shillings to be received from the lands and tenements of the said Paul in our city of London for the said Peter's whole life"). The text of the king's warrant to the chancellor throws no further light on the matter: PRO C81/543 no. 9051: "Richard, par la grace de Dieu Roy d'Engleterre et de France et Seigneur d'Irlande, a l'onnable Piere en Dieu, nostre treschere cousin, l'Ercevesque d'Everwyk, Primat d'Engleterre, nostre Chancellor, saluz. Come de notre grace especiale eous [sic] grantez et donez congie a nostre bien ame Paul Salesburi qil puisse doner et granter a Petir Prus, convers, un annuee rent de quarante soldz a prendre des terres et tenementz du dit Paul en nostre Citee de Londres a toute la vie du dit Petir, vous

vert was is not known. He owned a quay near the Tower, and during the uprising of 1381 he had tried to take advantage of the tumult to get back some properties that had eluded his hands.¹¹⁵ It is possible that Peter Prus was not a “prize of war” but rather a Baltic seaman or merchant.

Summary: The Documentary Evidence

Enough has been said to put Chaucer’s lifetime into context, and to indicate the sort of direct knowledge of Jews, Muslims, and other “Saracens,” including those from the Baltic regions, that could have been available to him in his own country. Of course, we must suppose that Chaucer would have encountered non-Christians and converts on his trips outside England, especially Jews and Muslims in Spain in 1366 and Tartar slaves in Italy, particularly in Genoa.

If the above evidence does not justify our concluding that the general attitude of Chaucer’s time was one of easy toleration of non-Christians, attended by the hope of converting the unbelievers to the true faith, we should at least be able at this stage to modify the opinion of Nigel Saul: “Exceptionally among English rulers, [Richard II] was vigorous in sponsoring the conversion of unbelievers: on two occasions he was present when Jews were received into the faith in the chapel of his manor at King’s Langley.”¹¹⁶ He is referring to Richard of Sicily and William Piers, but, as explained above, they were probably both Muslims, and only the former was baptized before the king at Langley. Moreover, as we have seen, both Richard’s immediate predecessor, Edward III, and his immediate successor, Henry IV, were active in supporting converts; Henry in fact had pagan, Muslim, and Jewish godchildren. Furthermore, we must be wary of W. D. Rubenstein’s assessment that “medie-

mandons qe sur ce facez faire noz lettres desous nostre grand seal en due forme. Dousouz nostre prive seal a Westm. le xxii jour d’Octobre, l’an de nostre regne dys et septisme” (“Richard, by the grace of God King of England and France and Lord of Ireland, to the honorable Father in God, our most dear cousin, the Archbishop of York, Primate of England, our Chancellor, good health. Since of our special grace we have granted leave to our well loved Paul Salesbury that he can give and grant to Peter Prus, convert, an annual rent of forty shillings to be taken from the lands and tenements of the said Paul in our City of London, for the whole life of the said Peter, we order you to have our letters made on this matter under our great seal in due form. Under our privy seal at Westminster, the 22nd day of October, the year of our reign ten and seventh”).

¹¹⁵*CPR* 1381–85, p. 30, pardon to Paul Salesbury, 22 July 1381. See pp. 149, 299.

¹¹⁶Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 449.

val England was among the least tolerant and most anti-semitic of European states of the day, even by the standards then prevailing."¹¹⁷

It is absolutely certain that Richard of Sicily was in England in 1386 as a non-Christian, since he was baptized at Langley. It is probable, too, that William Piers, recently baptized in 1392, was also in England before his conversion (especially since his pension was given as an example to other infidels to convert), and the same is definitely true of the ex-Jews Joan and Alice, baptized at Dartmouth in the next decade. There appears to have been, then, at least a transient population of non-Christians in the realm, and possibly even a permanent community of resident Jews who were attended by "bishops" like Rabbi Moses.

It may have been common knowledge that pensions were available for converts. To judge from that data we have seen, the going rate for a Jewish convert was a penny a day, to be received at the House of Converts. It seems to have been decided in 1392 to make conversion more attractive for non-Jews, by promising a pension of 2 pence a day, beginning with William Piers. That came to 60s a year, far less of course than the pension of 200s (£10) a year received by the king's godson, Richard of Sicily in 1386, but more than the 40s per annum that Peter Prus was awarded in 1393. The rate for Jews was still a penny a day (about 30s) when Rabbi Moses's daughter Elizabeth entered in 1399. As a special concession to her, it was doubled in 1403 to 60s, and then, a few years later, the stipend was increased for all Jewish converts to a penny and a half a day (45s).

By the latter part of the fourteenth century, there seems to have been no call to renew the old expulsion order of 1290 against the Jews. This expulsion did not take the form of a statute in the first place but was simply an *ad hoc* measure dictated by a temporary crisis.¹¹⁸ Although there were some place names that recalled the previous Jewish population, as with London's Old Jewry,¹¹⁹ and occasional references to the

¹¹⁷ W. D. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain* (London, 1940; repr. New York: St. Martin's, 1996), p. 40.

¹¹⁸ See Stacey, "Conversion of Jews," p. 282: "Officially, the expulsion was justified as punishment for the Jews because they allegedly had continued to lend money at interest despite the prohibitions pronounced in the king's 1275 Statute of Jewry [citing *CCR*, 1288-96, p. 109]. In fact, the expulsion was the unpremeditated outcome of a four-month-long parliamentary negotiation in which the financially indebted Edward sought permission to raise a tax from his Christian subjects without being able to claim any ongoing military necessities that would have justified one. He was therefore compelled to bargain, and in the bargaining that followed the king was forced to concede a variety of legal and administrative reforms as well as the expulsion of the Jews."

¹¹⁹ See below, pages 164-5.

expulsion in regard to property once owned by the Jews,¹²⁰ there is no sign of regarding Jewish exclusion as a continuing policy. *A fortiori*, there was never an articulated policy about keeping out Muslims and polytheists. In fact, it is hard to imagine how such a policy could have been put into effect. There could hardly have been a faith-based interrogation (Christian? Jewish? Other?) administered to all hands and passengers on every vessel entering English ports. We note that the Commons in their effort to rid the realm of infiltrated Jews and Saracens did not refer to any such kind of passport controls, or suggest a rounding up of suspects for grilling, but instead came up with a new expulsion plan: cut short the visits of all Lombards who are not gainfully employed. In the same Parliament of 1376, the Commons also wished to have all Frenchmen ejected while hostilities with France continued, but this petition was summarily rejected by the king.¹²¹ Their complaint against foreigners' staying as long as they pleased in England, holding hostels, acting as brokers, and selling retail met with a bland response.¹²² However, their further petition to deny all Church benefices to foreigners received a pledge of action; and, sure enough, six years later, in the Parliament of 1383, a statute was passed prohibiting all present and future holding of benefices by aliens.¹²³ So, of all the concerns of the Commons in 1376, it was not non-Christian foreigners or Frenchmen that the government was most concerned about, but rather foreign clergymen who were taking over benefices. I should note that earlier on, in 1369, the Commons

¹²⁰See, for instance, two patents of Henry IV, issued in 1402 and 1406. The first, calendared in *CPR* 1401–5, pp. 90–91: 2 April 1402, is a grant for life to one William Wyghtman of 29s yearly from the issues of certain lands, specified thus (in the calendar summary): “the citizens of Canterbury owe to the king 10s yearly from the houses late of the Friars of the Sack in Canterbury which the king recovered as escheat in the eyre of Henry [*lege* Hervey] de Staunton; they owe 10s yearly from a house in the city late of John Bord who abjured the realm, which the king recovered as escheat in the said eyre; the bailiffs of Canterbury owe 8d of rent of houses late of the Jews in the city,” and so on. The Eyre of Kent was held by Justice Staunton in 1313–14: *Year Books of Edward II: The Eyre of Kent, 6 and 7 Edward II, A.D. 1313–1314*, ed. Frederic William Maitland et al., 3 vols., Selden Society 24, 27, 29 (London, 1910–13). The second patent, calendared in *CPR* 1405–8, p. 281, 23 November 1406, is a grant to king's clerk Richard Gabriell “of all lands late of Nicholas de Wodegrave in the town of Cheltesward *alias* Chollesworthy, in the king's hands by the exile of the Jews,” and so on.

¹²¹*Rot. Parl.* 2:343 no. 128 (1376).

¹²²*Ibid.*, 2:347 no. 143.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 3:162: 7 Richard II (1383) no. 49; *The Statutes of the Realm*, 12 vols. (London 1810–28, repr. London: Dawsons, 1963; Buffalo: Hein, 1993), 2:34–35. See Keechang Kim, *Aliens in Medieval Law: The Origins of Modern Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 83. Kim thinks that the statute was never enforced (pp. 85–86).

intervened to kill a fact-finding mission concerning foreigners living in England: "After commissioners had been appointed to make a census of aliens living in the country, they were recalled at the request of the Commons, because they were annoying to the foreigners."¹²⁴

If there was any likely time to revive an official anti-Jewish stance, it might seem to have been during the later years of Chaucer's life, when there was increasing concern over the Wycliffite threat to orthodox religion, which culminated in the statute *Contra Lollardos* (which modern historians wrongly call *De heretico comburendo*) in 1401.¹²⁵ The statute was made at the request of the clergy, and the language of their petition was incorporated into it.¹²⁶ The present king's progenitors are praised for their zeal in preventing any perverse doctrines from gaining ground, and the bishops now appeal for royal help in combating the new sect that has arisen against the faith.

Would this not have been a good opportunity to increase vigilance against anti-Christian religions as well? The standard term for heresy was *heretica pravitas*, and we have seen that the Jewish religion was referred to as *Judaica pravitas*. It is quite clear that there had been laxity in the recent past, especially concerning the latter depravity. There is, however, no indication that any such reaction was to be found. Moreover, it is unlikely that any visiting or resident non-Christians would have been bound to wear distinctive garb, though the Fourth Lateran requirement to do so was still on the canonical books.¹²⁷ Spanish Jews

¹²⁴ Alice Beardwood, *Alien Merchants in England, 1350 to 1377: Their Legal and Economic Position* (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy, 1931), p. 39.

¹²⁵ *Statutes of the Realm*, 2:125–28: *Contra Lollardos*. The rubric *De heretico comburendo*, if it can be found at all, would be applicable to the writ that authorized the burning of specific heretics. The first such writ, issued against William Sawtrey just before the passing of the statute, is titled (as usual, in the left margin), *De comburendo Willielmum Sautre, capellanum*. PRO C54/247 m. 6. This title for the writ is not recorded in *Rotuli Parliamentorum* 3:459, or in Rymer, *Foedera*, 8:178 (3rd ed., 3:4:197), or in CCR 1401–5, p. 265: 26 February 1401.

¹²⁶ A. K. McHardy, "De heretico comburendo, 1401," *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), pp. 112–26.

¹²⁷ Innocent III, *In nonnullis*, canon 68 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), X 5.6.15, Friedberg 2:776–77: noting that in some provinces diversity of dress distinguishes Jews and Saracens from Christians, the pope orders a similar practice to be instituted everywhere, for both sexes. This obligation is to be enforced by the secular princes of each region, to prevent inadvertent sexual mixing. Raymund of Pennafort in editing this decree for X left out the pope's explanation that this policy was also enjoined by Moses in the Old Testament. The Ordinary Gloss explains that such miscegenation is condemned because there can be no marriage between Jew and Christian: *CJC* 2:1665 v. *commixtionis*. The *Casus* to this decree explains *commiscentur* ("they mingle [with women]") as *carnaliter commiscentur* ("they mingle sexually") (*ibid.*).

and Moors were supposed to wear a yellow or red circle on their breasts, but exemptions seem to have been relatively numerous, at least until Enrique II attempted to enforce the law in Castile in 1371.¹²⁸ However, it would hardly have been observed outside the realm. Thus, there is no reason to think that, when Rabbi Solomon of Burgos came to England in 1388, he was wearing anything that would single him out as a Jew or Moor. And he seems to have been able to practice his religion without trouble, except for the matter of finding adequate wine for Purim. Was Rabbi Moses in a similar situation?

Rich and Poor Jews in London?

Let us move to different kinds of evidence that may indicate the presence of unconverted non-Christians, specifically Jews, in the London in Chaucer's day.

First, we will consider two sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester from 1373 to 1389, in which he speaks to the English clergy as if there were a wealthy community of Jews living in England at this time.¹²⁹ Brinton is well known to students of *Piers Plowman* for having introduced the fable of the rats into his sermon to Convocation during

¹²⁸Ulysse Robert, *Les signes d'infamie au Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1891), pp. 58–65. The reference is to the Cortes of 1371, mentioned above, in which both Jews and Moors were ordered not to use Christian names (“que los Judios nin los Moros non ayan nonbres de Christianos”). He responded to the other request by speaking of “los dichos Judios,” but this expression seems to have done service for “los dichos Judios e Moros.” The purpose is to be able to recognize them among Christians (“porque se conozean entre los Christianos”), and so they are to wear the signs that he commands them to wear (“e plaze nos que anden senalados de la sennal que nos acordaremos e mandaremos que trayan”). He does not refer to past laws commanding this, but when he goes on to conclude his response, he says that, as regards the other points in their petition, all these matters are to continue as they did in the time of his predecessors and his father King Alfonso: Cortes de Toro (1371), petition 2 (*Cortes*, 2:203–4). Petition 18 addresses privileges that have been given to “los Judios e Moros,” and the king responds by speaking of “los dichos Judios” (p. 210). In 1385 Enrique II's son Juan (who was to marry Gaunt's daughter in 1388) in the Cortes of Valladolid responded to a petition to prohibit Christian men and women from living with Moors and Jews (“con los Moros e con los Judios”) by only prohibiting Christian women from living with Jews and Moors (“Mandamos a todas las christianas que non bivan con los Judios nin con los Moros”) or nursing their children: Córtes de Valladolid (1385), petition 3 (p. 322). Among the much stricter laws of 1387 given by the king in the Cortes of Briviesca (see Russell, p. 497) is one that prohibits all Christians from having nonslave Jews or Moors in their houses, and Jews and Moors likewise are not to live with Christians, or have their office, or have them living in their households: Cortes de Briviesca (1387), law 3.1 (p. 369).

¹²⁹See Emden, *Bio. Reg. Oxford*, 1:208–9.

the Good Parliament of 1376.¹³⁰ We recall that during that Parliament there was a complaint on the part of the Commons that Jews and Saracens were surreptitiously living in England under the guise of Italian brokers. However, their petition expressed no sign of worry about false religion, but only concern about the introduction of the unnamable vice into England. The government's reply paid no attention to this aspect of the complaint and only indirectly addressed the main charge of troublesome brokering: "As for the brokers of foreign countries, there is a partial response in the bill concerning the liberty of London."¹³¹

Brinton said nothing about Jews and Saracens in his sermon on that occasion, but he did in other sermons. Often his comments do not concern England, but listen to what he says in Sermon 91, one of the sermons he preached on the feast of the Translation of Saint Thomas of Canterbury (July 7), perhaps in 1375 or 1377.¹³² He begins with the tradition that Thomas's mother was a non-Christian princess; after telling of her arrival in London, and her baptism and marriage to Thomas's father, he moves on to the following:

Why in this glorious city, in which a firm faith should flourish the stronger, are so many "faithless Jews" favorably permitted? And why are they not "translated" from their errors to the faith of Christ by the persuasions and doctrines of so many holy fathers, so many prelates, so many doctors? The opinion commonly preached is clearly that many Jews would very willingly become Christians, if they did not fear the dispersal or loss of their wealth after their conversion.

But far be it that the Roman Church, the ruler and teacher of other churches, should boil with such avarice that the pursuit of money would shine forth more readily and avidly than zeal for souls! But if this were true, I would be inclined to declare that those by whom the Jews should be converted will, in the age to come, be found deserving to die as many deaths as precious souls have been lost because of their negligence, souls that had been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

¹³⁰Thomas Brinton, *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester, 1373–1389*, ed. Sister Mary Aquinas Devlin, 2 vols., Camden 3rd ser. 85–86 (London 1954), Sermon 69, 2:317–21, esp. 317, and see 1:xxiv–xxv. Much of Sermon 69 is translated in Francis Aidan Gasquet's study of Brinton, "A Forgotten English Preacher," in *The Old English Bible and Other Essays* (London: Nimmo, 1897), pp. 63–101, on pp. 71–78.

¹³¹*Rot. Parl.* 2:332: "*Responsio*: Quant a les brokours d'estraunge pays, est en partie responduz en la bille touchant la fraunchise de Londres."

¹³²Devlin dates it 7 July 1375 (p. xxxvii), while it is dated 7 July 1377 by Eleanor H. Kellogg, "Bishop Brunton and the Fable of the Rats," *PMLA* 50 (1935): 57–68, p. 62.

Therefore, let them meditate, and meditate again, my fathers, you who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that, since the band of Apostles went forth into the whole world so that infidels, even those far away, might publicly confess the faith of Christ, how much more should those who have "come up to the place of the Apostles" labor with one mind in their own neighborhoods, in order that our enemies the Jews might be translated by the doctrines of the faith "into the kingdom of the Son of God," so that the words of Job might be verified of each of them, "A rock is moved from its place" (likening the Jew to a very hard rock), when a Jew is converted.¹³³

He has a similar but shorter treatment in Sermon 84, preached *ad clericos* in honor of Saint Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, canonized in 1317. His feast day was established on the date of his death, August 19, and Brinton may have ordered it observed in his diocese.¹³⁴ He says:

Moreover, this saint taught the saving knowledge so ardently that, once he was made bishop of Toulouse (out of obedience to the pope), he was girded round

¹³³Brinton, Sermon 91, pp. 413–14:

Cur in hac civitate gloriosa, in qua debet florere forcius fides firma, tot "perfidi Judei" favorabiliter sunt permissi, nec persuasionibus vel doctrinis tot patrum sanctorum, tot prelatorum, tot doctorum ad fidem Christi a suis erroribus transferuntur? Cum tamen vulgaris opinio predicet evidenter quod multi Judei libentissime fierent Christiani, si post conversionem non timerent diviciarum suarum dispendium vel jac-turam.

Set absit quod Romana ecclesia, aliarum ecclesiarum domina et magistra, tanta avaricia estuaret quod questum pecuniarum potius quam zelum animarum et avidius auclaret [sic]. Quod si esset verum, forte dicerem quod ipsi per quos Judei essent convertendi, in futuro tot mortibus digni erunt quot preciose anime per Christi sanguinem redempte eorum negligencia perierunt.

Cogitent igitur et recogitent, patres mei, sal terre et lux mundi, quod si turba apostolica in omnem terram exivit ut infideles, et longe positi, faterentur publice fidem Christi, quanto magis ipsi qui "loco apostolorum surrexerunt" (D. 22, *In Novo*), laborarent unanimiter in vicino, ut hostes nostri Judei per documenta fidei transferentur "in regnum filii" Dei (ad Col. 1), ut de unoquoque eorum, Judeum, tamquam saxum durissimum, convertente, verificetur quod scribetur, Job 14, "Saxum transfer[etur] de loco."

He is quoting Gratian's canon *In Novo Testamento, Decretum* D. 21 c. 2 (Friedberg 1:69–70: "in locum eorum surrexerunt episcopi"); Colossians 1.13 ("Transtulit in regnum filii dilectionis sue"), and Job 14.18 ("Et saxum transfertur de loco suo"), and also referring to the prayer for the Jews in the liturgy for Good Friday: "Oremus et pro perfidis Judeis, ut Deus et Dominus noster auferat velamen de cordibus eorum, ut et ipsi agnoscant Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum" ("Let us pray also for the faithless Jews, that our God and Lord may lift away the veil from their hearts, so that they too may acknowledge Jesus Christ our Lord"): *Missale ad usum insignis et praeclarae ecclesiae Sarum*, ed. Francis Henry Dickinson (Burnt Island; Oxford, 1861–63), col. 327.

¹³⁴Kellogg, p. 62, assigns it to 1377, probably on August 19.

with such great zeal and fervor for the faith that by sound doctrine he sedulously induced Jews and Gentiles, who abounded at that time in those parts, towards baptism, and baptized many of them, remembering the words that our Savior said, "Go and teach all Nations," and so on. But, saving the due favor of whomever, no little wonder impels me to ask why, in this glorious city, in which a firm faith should flourish the stronger, are so many "faithless Jews" favorably permitted? And why are they not converted from their errors to the faith of Christ by the persuasions and doctrines of so many holy fathers, so many prelates, so many doctors?

I dare say that if any of us in his own degree were as diligent and intent on instructing and saving souls as for multiplying benefices and assembling riches, he would immediately and effectually fulfill the words of the Psalmist, "Lord, I will teach the wicked your ways, and the impious will be converted to you."

Therefore, let them meditate, and meditate again, my fathers, you who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that, since the band of Apostles went out into the whole world, so that infidels, even those far away, might publicly confess the faith of Christ, how much more should those who have "come up to the place of the Apostles" labor with one mind in their own neighborhoods, in order that our enemies the Jews might be converted to the faith of Christ, "instructed in the words of faith and doctrine"?¹³⁵

What are we to make of this? Brinton had been appointed a papal penitentiary in 1362, two years before he received his doctorate in canon

¹³⁵ Brinton, Sermon 84, pp. 383–84:

Immo scienciam salutarem iste sanctus docuit tam ardentem quod, ex obedientia papale factus episcopus Tholosanus, tanto zelo et fervore fidei est accinctus quod Judeos et Gentiles, qui pro tunc in illis partibus habundabant, per sanam doctrinam inducabat sedule ad baptismum et plurimos baptizabat, recolens Salvatoris sententiam sic dicentis, "Ite et docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos," etc. [Matt. 28.19]. Sed salva pace debita cujuscumque, admiratio non modica me percellit cur in hac civitate gloriosa, in qua debet florere forcius fides firma, cur "perfidi Judei" tot favorabiliter sunt permissi, nec persuasionibus vel doctrinis tot patrum sanctorum, tot prelatorum, tot doctorum, a suis erroribus convertuntur.

Audeo dicere quod si quilibet nostrum in gradu suo esset ita diligens et intentus pro animabus doctrinandis et salvandis sicut est pro beneficiis multiplicandis et pecuniis congregandis, statim impleret effectualiter illud Psalmiste dicentis, "Domine, docebo iniquos vias tuas, et impii ad te convertentur" [Ps. 50.15].

Igitur cogitent, immo recogitent, patres nostri, sal terre et lux mundi, quod si tu[r]ba apostolica in omnem terram exivit, ut infideles, eciam longe positi, faterentur publice legem Christi, quanto magis illi qui "in loco apostolorum surrexerunt" (D. 22, *In Novo*) debent laborare unanimiter in vicino, ut hostes nostri Judei converterentur ad fidem Christi, "Eruditi verbis fidei et doctrine" (1 ad Tim. 4[.6: "Enutritus verbis fidei et bone doctrine"])?

law at Oxford, and by 1366 he was at the pope's court in Avignon, and he probably accompanied Urban V to Rome in 1368 and stayed there until he was appointed bishop of Rochester in January 1372, or even until he was consecrated bishop in March 1373. At one time there was extant a volume of the sermons that he gave before the pope, which is presumed lost.¹³⁶ It seems likely that the "glorious city" passages in the two Rochester-era sermons cited above are a relic of his papal sermons and originally referred to Rome.¹³⁷ However, it is significant that he does not think it incongruous to preach it to the English clergy, where it would be natural to apply it to London. But in England, of course, the danger to converts' wealth came not from the Church but from the Crown, with its uncanonical practice of confiscation, noted above.

If we cannot conclude, on the basis of Brinton's words, that there really were some wealthy Jews living openly in London at this time, we can nevertheless take his words as aimed at inculcating a positive attitude toward non-Christians, which would be important in itself.

We look now at a different kind of evidence, namely, that of proper toponyms. The district where the Jews had congregated before the expulsion was called "Jewry," *Judaismus* in Latin. It was a large area in Cheap Ward and Coleman Street Ward, and it extended as far west as St. Lawrence Parish—"St. Lawrence Jewry." After the Jews were expelled, it came to be called "Old Jewry" (*Vetus Judaismus*), meaning "The District formerly held by the Jews." In 1327–28 there is reference to the church of St. Olave in "Olde Jiuwerie"—referring to the street between Poultry and Gresham Street. In 1336 it is called "Elde Jurie."¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Devlin, *Sermons of Thomas Brinton*, 1:xii–xiv. In conjecturing the date of Sermon 92, which was on a feast of Saint Thomas's translation (7 July) that fell on a Sunday, which happened in 1370, 1381, and 1387, Devlin chooses 1370 as the most likely (1:xxxvii, 2:420); but that would be before he became bishop and before he presumably returned from Rome.

¹³⁷ Later on in Sermon 91, Brinton contrasts the virtuous practices of England in former times with those of the current papal court. He tells the story of an abbot who tried to expedite a case in the curia of Saint Thomas by handing out money, but, to his edification, all gifts were refused. This is in great contrast, Brinton says, to what happens in the Roman Curia. Sermon 91, p. 417; see Devlin's translation of the second part, dealing with the Roman Curia, 1:xxii. Brinton introduces the story of the abbot by citing the decretal *Etsi questiones*, X 5.3.18 (Friedberg 2:754–55); why he does so is not clear, but the decretal does say that the *Romana ecclesia* does not consider certain gifts by recipients of benefices to be simoniacal.

¹³⁸ Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London*, p. 201. I should note, by the way, that when names appear in Latin documents preceded by *la* or *le* or *les*, as with "la elde Jurie" here, or "le Jeu," and so on, it is not a sign that the text is breaking into French and using the definite article ("the Old Jewry," "the Jew," etc.). Rather, the particles *le*

There was, however, another district where Jews lived in London, which is first heard of in the fourteenth century, namely, "Poor Jewry," or *Pauper Judaismus*. In the will of William Stanford in 1349, he describes his tenement and shops, which he had acquired from his father, Thomas Beldstede, as located in Poor Jewry (*apud Pauperum Judaismum*) in the Parish of St. Olave near the Crutched Friars.¹³⁹ This parish, with its church on Hart Street, is to be distinguished from that of St. Olave Old Jewry.¹⁴⁰ Henry Harben says that "the Jews after their return to the country seem to have congregated in this eastern portion of the City and not to have returned to the western portion, 'the Old Jewry,' from which they were expelled temp. Ed. I,"¹⁴¹ and he may be right. He is, of course, thinking about the return of the Jews in the seventeenth century, but it may be that they started to come back earlier, since the name first appears some sixty years after the expulsion. Harben, however, believes that the Jewish settlement there was earlier. He says, speaking of "The Jewry": "It would seem that the Jews not only had quarters in and around the present Old Jewry, but also further east in and about recent Jewry Street, Aldgate, as well as within the precincts of the Tower Liberties and St. Katherine's. They do not seem to have re-established themselves in the western quarter after they were banished from the land by Edward I, but upon their return to have congregated more in the eastern districts, as at the present time."¹⁴²

In 1366, we find that a specific lane is called "Pore Jewerie." It is described as being in the Parish of Holy Trinity by "Algate."¹⁴³ It was

etc. are a signal that what follows is in English. It is the medieval equivalent of italicizing. See my "Bishop, Prioress, and Bawd," p. 351.

¹³⁹ Ekwall, loc. cit.; *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688*, ed. Richard R. Sharpe, 2 vols. (London: Francis, 1889–90), 1:553.

¹⁴⁰ See the map of the parishes of London, ca. 1520, in *The City of London from Prehistoric Times to c. 1520*, gen. ed. Mary D. Lobel, mapping ed. W. H. John, *The British Atlas of Historic Towns*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). There is another map showing the wards of London, as well as a series of four maps showing the streets (referred to below). Chapter 6, "The Later Middle Ages: 1270–1520," is by Caroline Barron, pp. 42–56.

¹⁴¹ Henry A. Harben, *A Dictionary of London: Being Notes Topographical and Historical Relating to the Streets and Principal Buildings in the City of London*, ed. I. I. Greaves (London: Jenkins, 1918), p. 322.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 321.

¹⁴³ *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds* (note 53 above), 2:31: A 2047. The reference is doubtless to Holy Trinity Priory (Austin Canons) on Alegate Street, which was in the parish of St. Katharine Cree, as was most of the present Jewry Street. The first modern synagogue was established in 1656 in Cree Church Lane, to the west of the priory precincts, and the first permanent synagogue was built on nearby Bevis Marks, in 1701.

the road that paralleled the city wall, coming from Crutched Friars' Street on the south and merging into Alegate (modern Aldgate) Street at the Gate on the north.¹⁴⁴ We recall that Chaucer lived above the Gate from 1374 to 1386. The name continued to be associated with the road, though in modern times it was shortened to "Jewry Street."¹⁴⁵

However, there is a record of 1390 that identifies a district in this same area not as Poor Jewry but as "Little Jewry," *Parvus Judaismus*. It mentions four messuages in Little Jewry in Alegate Street.¹⁴⁶ The name might be taken as supporting the idea that this Jewry was contrasted with the main Jewry, and that it too goes back to the time before the expulsion. We cannot stake too much on the fact that it is not referred to as "Old Poor Jewry." We see Old Jewry Street in 1348 being called "Jewerie Lane," with the "Old" omitted.¹⁴⁷ Another pre-expulsion Jewish site shows up in London about the same time without an "Old" designation, namely, "Jews' Garden," in St. Giles (Cripplegate Ward Without): "Jeues Gardyn," 1341; "Jewes Gardin," 1349; "Jewen Gardyn," 1405–6, and so on.¹⁴⁸ The garden took its name from the site of the former Jewish cemetery.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

Much has been made in the past of the absence of the Jews from England in the fourteenth century. H. G. Richardson says, "As their mem-

¹⁴⁴ See this street in the *City of London* series of large maps, Map 4. These maps are laid out with coordinates in Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 399–430. For The Poore Jurie, see 25 C4.

¹⁴⁵ John Stow, *A Survey of London, Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 1:149, does not associate the name with the road, which he leaves nameless, but with buildings on it: "At the east [1598 ed.: west] end of this lane ['] a lane that leadeth downe by Northumberland House towards the Crossed Friers", in the way from Aldgate toward the Crossed Friers, of old time were certaine tenements called the Poore Jurie, of Jewes dwelling there."

¹⁴⁶ PRO C66/332 m. 11: "quatuor messuagia cum pertinenciis in parvo Judaismo in Algatestrete in eadem civitate." See CPR, 1388–92, p. 417: 14 February 1391.

¹⁴⁷ *Calendar of Wills*, 1:653; so Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London*, p. 201. Harben, *A Dictionary of London*, p. 322, identifies this street as referring to Poor Jewery, but there is nothing to indicate that this is so.

¹⁴⁸ Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London*, p. 18 n. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills*, 1:452 n. 1, identifies it as "a plot of ground formerly appointed for a burial-ground for Jews, and continued to be so used until their expulsion, when it was [in the words of Stow] 'turned into fair garden plots and summer houses for pleasure.'" In 1349 the garden is said to be owned by Reymundy Burdeaux (*Calendar of Wills*, 1:620).

ory faded from the minds of Englishmen, they became an evil thing, unknown, dreaded and accursed." But the only indication he can cite for this attitude is the parliamentary complaint of 1376 about disguised Jews and Saracens.¹⁵⁰ In fact, there was an abundance of positive characterizations of Jews in the realm, as well as negative ones. As well as being denigrated, Jews, like Saracens, were often praised as having morals and characters superior those those of Christians. These latter themes are particularly evident in the sermons of Bishop Brinton, and his lessons, and also his zeal for converting the infidel, undoubtedly influenced William Langland.¹⁵¹ "Good" and "bad" themes (showing Jews and Saracens as moral and well intentioned, on the one hand, and as evil and deserving of death, on the other) are often found mixed together in the same works or in the same collections—for instance, miracles of the Virgin.¹⁵²

Bishop Brinton's exhortations to the clergy raise the possibility that not only were there some Jews and Saracens residing in England without being recognized as such, but also that there were other Jews who lived there openly as Jews. We can definitely say that English churchmen

¹⁵⁰H. G. Richardson, *English Jewry under Angevin Kings* (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 232.

¹⁵¹I take these matters up in "The Prioress's Tale in Context: Good and Bad Reports of Non-Christians in Fourteenth-Century England," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, New Series, vol. 3: *Nation, Ethnicity, and Identity in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (forthcoming, 2006). Good work has been done by Denise Despres ("The Protean Jew in the Vernon Manuscript") and Elisa Narin van Court ("Socially Marginal, Culturally Central: Representing Jews in Late Medieval English Literature"); see note 2 above. Narin van Court also deals with the topic in "The Hermeneutics of Supersession: The Revision of the Jews from the B to the C Text of *Piers Plowman*," *YLS* 10 (1996) 43–87. In this article she shows that the C text adds a reference to the enmity of Jews and Saracens to Christianity. But though the B text passage in which the Jews are praised as being more charitable to each other than Christians are (B 9.80–88) is omitted in C, in both B and C texts Jews and Saracens are characterized as being predisposed for conversion, if only Christians would preach the Trinity to them.

¹⁵²Other combinations can be found. For instance, in *L'Apparicion maistre Jehan de Meun* by Honorat Bovet (formerly known as Bonet), composed in 1398, Jews are bad, but not as bad as Christians, whereas Saracens are cast in an altogether favorable light. The first interlocutor of the spectral Jean de Meun, a "false Jew," is asked how he dares to return, after the wicked and useless Jews were expelled by the king. He responds that he has been sent there secretly by the Jews to negotiate a return, on the guarantee that their practice of usury will be more moderate than the outrageous form practiced by Christians since they left. The next interlocutor, a "Saracen black as coal," is an accomplished ambassador who travels openly through France on his way to Spain. He wishes to study the *mores* of the French, and he describes their failings at great length. See Michael Hanly, *Medieval Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Dialogue: The APPARICION MAISTRE JEHAN DE MEUN of Honorat Bovet. A Critical Edition and English Translation* (Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2005).

were encouraged to be on the lookout for potential converts. And perhaps some of Brinton's listeners took the cue and welcomed Rabbi Solomon of Burgos, the future Bishop of Burgos, when he arrived in 1388, and prepared the way for his conversion, which took place in 1390, just a year after he returned home from England. Perhaps others accorded a similar treatment to Bishop Moses and any congregants that he had in England; if so, they succeeded at least with his daughter Elizabeth.

Lee Patterson has taken note of the crusade expeditions of Henry Bolingbroke and others in the 1390s, which we have dealt with above to some extent, and he thinks that "there are signs of an interest in making sure England was *Judenfreie*." But his evidence is not convincing, especially as it concerns crusading efforts.¹⁵³ Such efforts would of course be directed against the Saracens of the East and the "Saracens" of the North, and not against the Jews.¹⁵⁴ But I can partially agree with his statement that Richard II's sponsoring of Richard of Sicily "suggests a response to the demand that he extend the borders of Christendom in a world that was in fact fast becoming far more heterogeneous, and far more dangerous to Christians, than ever before."¹⁵⁵ That is, this sponsorship indicates to me that Richard II, like his cousin-german Henry Bolingbroke, was interested in welcoming non-Christians into the Christian fold. The fact that a Sicilian merchant (whom I believe to have been, as I argued above, not a Jew but a manumitted Tartar Muslim) was baptized in England and that the king stood as his godfather, and that Bolingbroke's multiple and ecumenical proselytizing—adopting a Northern pagan, Henry Lettowe, an Eastern Muslim, Henry Turk, and, later on, as king, a Jewish convert, Henry Stratford—show that this

¹⁵³Patterson, "Living Witnesses," p. 540. His evidence is as follows: the chronicle of Gloucester Abbey, compiled between 1382 and 1412, tells of the martyred boy Harold; relics of two of the Holy Innocents were brought to England in 1396; and in the 1420s Lydgate wrote a poem about the martyred Robert of Bury. Moreover, Richard II in the winter of 1385–86 gave a huge pension to King Leo of Armenia, who had been driven from his kingdom by the Turks, and who tried to interest Richard in crusading; the Wilton Diptych may have been a "crusading icon"; Richard and Anne were devoted to Lincoln cathedral, and in 1387 they enrolled in its confraternity; and Richard sponsored the conversion of Richard of Sicily (pp. 540–41).

¹⁵⁴Delany, "Chaucer's Prioress," notes the "constant appeals to the English government for support of anti-Islamic crusades, to which appeals English knights and nobles flocked in response, despite the reservations of their government" (p. 46), at a time when John of Gaunt was attempting to make alliances with the Muslim rulers of Granada (pp. 45–46). Gaunt had committed to a crusade against the schismatic Christians of Spain (see note 78 above), and he was enlisting Moorish support for it.

¹⁵⁵Patterson, "Living Witnesses," p. 541.

approach was encouraged by the highest secular authorities, and the actions and words of bishops Braybrooke and Brinton show the backing of the ecclesiastical establishment.

There was a widespread belief in Chaucer's day that Saint Thomas Becket was half-Saracen—we saw that Bishop Brinton told the story in one of the sermons cited above¹⁵⁶—and it is obvious that having a pagan princess for a mother only enhanced his appeal. In a more disreputable way, a claim to Jewishness must have enhanced the reputation of the thief-finder John Barking, until he was sent packing by the London authorities. But he was in no way punished for being Jewish. The exotic may of course give rise to suspicions of unspeakable sins, but sometimes it may also, especially when present in small doses, banish prejudice and leave only fascination.

As for Chaucer, at the very least we can conclude that he could have laid eyes with some regularity on one or other converted Jew on his visits to Chancery, which was next door to the *Domus Conversorum*, and he may even have found Jews living at his own doorstep, in Poor Jewry. If there were no longer Jews living there, the name of the area would still of course have reminded him the Jews used to live there, Jews that were impoverished rather than grown wealthy from “foule usure and lucre of vileynye,” as with the Jewry among Christian folks in the great city of Asia described by the Prioress. It is highly likely that he could have encountered other converted and unconverted non-Christians elsewhere in the city, whether knowing it or not, what with the crews of trading vessels on shore leave and the troops of piepowders (“dusty-footed” traveling salesmen) in the streets and at fairs. Such probable or possible encounters must be taken into consideration in our own attempts to understand Chaucer in his time and place.

¹⁵⁶Brinton, Sermon 91, p. 413. He treats it also in Sermon 4, pp. 3–4. I discuss it fully in my “Prioress's Tale in Context.”

