

Introduction

Equality, Supersession, and Anxiety

On March 26, 2000, Pope John Paul II placed a prayer in a chink between the stones of the Western Wall. This is the Wailing Wall, the last remnant of the Temple destroyed by the Romans in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Referring to “Abraham and his descendants,” yet carefully refraining from specifying the precise identity of Abraham’s children, whether Jews, Christians, or Muslims, the prayer and its message bespeak traditional Christian theology.¹ Christians may easily see this prayer as applying to them. Yet thanks to its intentionally opaque wording, Jews and Muslims may see the prayer as applying to them as well. However, much more was at stake here than the identity of Abraham’s offspring. The real importance of the event was the site where it took place: a Jewish holy site, to the extent that Judaism recognizes sites as being holy.² What is holy for Jews, the pope was saying, is independently, and unconditionally, holy unto itself. After 2,000 years of dissension, Pope John Paul had accepted Judaism as incontrovertibly valid. Theologically, for Catholicism, as espoused by the pope, Judaism’s continuity was no longer justified by the expected ultimate fusion of the Jews into the Catholic fold, as St. Paul had said in Romans 11. The pope was working a revolution, and many within the Church share the sentiment.

However, this papal turn has not been universal. The *Christus dominus* or *Dominus Iesus* text, issued on August 6, 2000, by the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (and afterward Pope Benedict XVI) implies the opposite, reiterating the supremacy of Catholicism as the “only true Church” and decrying “a religious relativism that leads to the belief that one religion is as good as another.”³ Non-Catholic faith is wanting.⁴

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This does not rule out temporary, or what might better be named temporizing, tolerance, the kind most commonly read into the preaching of St. Paul (in Romans) and espoused by the Vatican II Council of 1965 in the encyclical *Nostra aetate*, “In Our Times;” it is temporizing, for even *Nostra aetate* looks forward to the time when there will be one flock and one pastor (John 10:16), the conversion of all to Catholicism. Yet the willingness of those for whom the Catholic structure is preeminent to abide with teachings that are consonant with Church doctrine and history does not imply a willingness to abide with much else. And this creates a contradiction. One cannot espouse inter-religious dialogue, or respect for other religions, as Pope Benedict (when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger) said he does, yet continue to defend supersessionism by saying: “The Pope has offered respect, but also a theology: Christ is the fulfillment of Abraham.”⁵ Moreover, almost by definition, initiatives for change must originate in the Catholic camp. Recent attempts to point to negative Jewish attitudes or to minimize suspicions about Catholic motives, however worthy, obscure the fundamental problem.

Besides, there are, and always have been, those who wish for no peace at all. Concern for Catholic preeminence has often led in far less accommodating directions than even the one taken by Cardinal Ratzinger. Catholic integralists have been preoccupied with forces they presume capable of weakening Catholic purity and unity, and their preoccupation has bred repugnance for even the slightest deviation.⁶ It has also made Catholic integralism perennially uneasy about Judaism, which is assumed to stimulate an ever-present Judaizing potential that eventually corrupts both the individual Christian believer and the Church as a body. Both ancient and, as we shall see, modern Catholic theologians have sometimes argued precisely this. They have also lumped Jewish acts, real and imagined, together, as one with the supposed designs of the Church’s (other) alleged enemies, whether external or internal. Jews and these other “enemies” have been censured and sometimes cursed in the same breath. The reasons have been as politic—centered on the struggle for ecclesiastical power—as they have been religious or theological.⁷

This pattern is still alive, especially on the Internet. The anxiety-driven web site Holywar.org (there are many others like it) openly

links and applauds virulently expressed hatred of Jews, hatred of Zionism, denial of the Shoah, and charges of ritual murder. Yet it does so hand in hand with condemnations of internal theological “error” *within* the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁸ The late Pope John Paul is accused of over one hundred heresies, one of the most notable being his espousal of “freedom of conscience,” attributed to a (regretfully unconfirmable) statement the pope is said to have made in the official Vatican newspaper, the *Osservatore romano*, on September 1, 1980. John Paul’s defense of this freedom is then juxtaposed with its rejection by Gregory XVI—and its repetition by Pius IX, in 1864—who said that to espouse freedom of conscience and religious belief as fundamental human rights was a “delirium.”⁹

Sentiments like these are often masked and sometimes expressed unawares. Nevertheless, these sentiments exist, as the following quizzical riddle, part of a children’s game, reveals. This riddle provides the leitmotif underlying the entire study, pithily epitomizing the darker side of the relationship between the Jews and the Church during the past two millennia.

A Parable: The Dogs and the Bread

¿Quién robó los panes del horno?
Los perros judíos, los perros judíos.

Who has stolen the loaves from the oven?
The Jewish dogs, the Jewish dogs.

This unsettling riddle, or refrain, sung by Chilean schoolchildren (my example is from the 1960s, but I am told it is still sung today),¹⁰ is none other than a disguised Host libel, the charge of intentionally desecrating the eucharistic Host. The bread in the refrain is the Eucharist, the sacrament whose ritual and communal ingestion, as put by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, creates a union of all Christians in the true body and blood of Christ.¹¹ This same union features throughout the New Testament. In Matthew 15:36, it appears in reverse order, in the miracle of the loaves, in which Christ’s body, for which the loaves stand, is infinitely divisible. The loaves move outward from Christ the

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person to feed the throng. However, Christ's body provides a banquet only for those whose identity we learn ten verses earlier (15:26), when Matthew reports Jesus to say: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."¹²

For Matthew himself, these children were the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" to whom Christ had referred in verse 15:24. Yet thanks to Paul and subsequent Christian exegesis (especially of Gal. 4:21–31), the Jews shed their original identity. No longer "the children," they have become "carnal," "carnal Jews," as Paul calls them in 1 Corinthians 10:18. Their place as "children" has been taken by the new true and spiritual Israel, "the children of the promise" (Rom. 4, 8, and 9, and Gal. 4:28).¹³ It is the "carnal Jews" who are now "the dogs." The late fourth-century John Chrysostom says this outright in the commentary on Matthew 15:24–26 in his *Homilies Against the Jews*:

Although those Jews had been called to the adoption of sons, *they fell to kinship with dogs; we who were dogs received the strength, through God's grace*, to put aside the irrational nature, which was ours, and to rise to the honor of sons. How do I prove this? Christ said: "It is not fair to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." Christ was speaking to the Canaanite woman when He called the Jews children and the Gentiles dogs. But see how *thereafter the order was changed about: they became dogs, and we became the children.*¹⁴

Chrysostom's insistence was born of anxiety. The bulk of his homilies against the Jews reveal how much he dreaded the Jews, who were persistently refuting his teachings. They were bent, as he saw it, on reclaiming both the "bread" and the title of being the "children" for themselves. Daily, he said, Jews seduced Christians (in his city of Antioch) into Jewish practice. The Chilean refrain is this anxiety's final evolution. Its origin may also be traced to Paul, at least as Paul had come to be interpreted.

In Galatians 5:1–9, Paul called for the ostracism of Judaizers—he meant Gentile Christians, not Jews—whose weak faith led them to circumcise themselves. But what Paul said of Judaizers would soon be applied to Jews. So would a similar denunciation in Philippians 3:2. The commentary on Matthew 15:26 by the English Protestant divine Matthew Henry (1662–1714) is unambiguous:

The Gentiles were looked upon by the Jews with great contempt, were called and counted dogs; and, in comparison with the house of Israel, who were so dignified and privileged, Christ here seems to allow it, and therefore thinks it not meet that the Gentiles should share in the favors bestowed on the Jews. But see how the tables are turned; after the bringing of the Gentiles into the church, the Jewish zealots for the law are called dogs, Phil. 3:2 [and 3, where Paul says: “Beware of those dogs and their malpractices. Beware of those who insist on mutilation—‘circumcision’ I will not call it; we are the circumcised [he means, of the heart], we whose worship is spiritual”].¹⁵

The metaphor of the Jewish dog and its accompanying anxiety, which pictured this dog as a threat, had taken hold. What ensured its continuity, not to mention its facile incorporation into the Chilean refrain, was catholicity of belief—alongside the catholicity of the metaphor’s invocation, regardless of whether the context was social, intellectual, ecclesiastical, popular, or a combination of all four.¹⁶ Examples abound. The tenth-century Pope Leo VII is (apocryphally) credited with having spoken of Jews citing Matthew 7:6, saying: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.” And Gregory the Great (followed by various Church councils) spoke of forced converts “returning to their vomit [like a dog].”¹⁷ So common did the image of the “Jewish dog” become that the *Life* of Herman the Jew, a convert to Christianity about the mid twelfth century, has Herman, while still a Jew, berate a “fictitious” Rupert of Deutz (whom we shall meet speaking his own words below) denouncing the Christian custom of calling Jews “dog carcasses.” Herman’s objection went unheeded. The transcript of a mid sixteenth-century Roman trial cites a young woman scolding a Jewish customer in her father’s store, calling him a *cagnaccio sciattato*. “You ritually slaughtered little dog,” she says, the insult compounded by her resort to Judaeo-Romanesco, colloquial Roman Jewish speech; *sciattato* is a transformation of the Hebrew *shehitah*, the kosher slaughtering of meat.¹⁸ Whether spoken or unspoken, the metaphoric image of the Jew as the ravaging dog—by itself, or as some transposed equivalent—seems to have been on the tip of many tongues. Eventually, one could speak

with secular ease, as does Shakespeare, of the “dog Jew” and the “currish Jew.”¹⁹

The image of the Jewish dog surfaced especially in the context of “the children’s bread” and those who endangered it or its recipients: those who might abscond with this food, leaving the children to hunger, or those who might rip it apart, as dogs are wont to do with food. Exegetically, the Jew had become, and would continue to be seen as, the hungry thief, the “trampler” of the true Christian food. We are reminded of the dog in the Hittite text, cited in the Preface, consuming the altar-bread. But the allusion is also more ominous, to the various libels directed at Jews, the charge of desecrating the Host, the rightful diet of the “children,” and the accusation of killing Christian children and draining the “eucharistic blood” that flowed when the “dogs” mutilated the victim’s body. This last would literally be said as part of the accusation that Jews had murdered Simonino of Trent in 1475. Jews were also accused of befouling and contaminating their surroundings, like dogs, which, as we shall see below, they were said to do even through sight and raucous noise. Their presence itself was contaminating, and that contamination they transferred to others.

Moreover, the Body of Christ that the Jewish dogs were said to pursue was more than the Host itself or the individual ritual murder victim. It was also, if not principally, the Christian collective, the *Corpus Christi*, in what we shall come to see were that body’s political and social guises, both of which were often pictured eucharistically, just as Paul himself had pictured them in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17; the centrality of this passage cannot be overemphasized. Thus the earlier ninth-century cleric Amalric of Metz elaborated on Paul in his *Liber Officialis*, a book of instruction on how to perform the mass and other ritual: “We are one bread in Christ that must have one heart” (Sicut unus panis [the term is Paul’s] sumus in Christo, sic et unum cor debemus habere). This seamless unity Amalric contrasted with the body of the Jews. We are, he said, expanding on his words elsewhere in the tract—and citing verbatim the Venerable Bede (d. 735)—a *convocatio*, a “unity” and a “harmonious accord.” This is wholly unlike, and in distinction to, the synagogue, a *congregation*, which is (literally, from the Latin *con* and *grex*) a gathering place of “sheep and inanimate objects.”²⁰ By (interpreted) Pauline definition, an attack by the

Jewish dogs—the sheep of the synagogue—on a Christian individual was an attack on the Christian *convocatio*, the whole, the sum of the articulated Christian parts.²¹ Individuals were not to be neatly distinguished from the broader Christian *corpus*, the earthly embodiment of the *Corpus Christi*. This point is cardinal, and the reader is urged to keep it constantly at the back of his or her mind.

Pauline Unity and Purity in Christ

Powerfully enhancing anxiety about the potential Jewish threat was the Pauline image of leaven and fermentation. This second image complemented and, eventually, melded with that of the dog, especially with the notion of the dog's noted filth. Paul speaks most memorably of this leaven in Galatians 4 and 5, referring to the Judaizing of Gentile Christians. But leaven as an image is not exclusively Pauline. Matthew 15 and 16, too, speak of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, a perception that certainly facilitated redirecting Paul's remonstrations about leaven to the Jews (which chronologically preceded those of Matthew). Specifically, Paul speaks of the "little leaven," the fermentation, that can spoil the whole lump (of dough) (Gal. 5:9), the leaven of corruption and wickedness that ruins the true unleavened Passover matzoh. The one corrupted is at once the individual Christian, whom Paul calls "unleavened Passover bread," and, by implication, Christ himself and Christ's entire social body. Amalric echoes and elaborates on Paul by calling Christian society, not only Paul's fellowship of believers, *unus panis*, one loaf with a single heart, in Christ—"for indeed our Passover has begun; the sacrifice is offered, Christ himself" (1 Cor. 5:6–8). It was only to be expected that the canons, from earliest times, would—as they did—prohibit Christians from consuming Jewish unleavened bread.²²

Paul's extrapolation in 1 Corinthians 6:15–19 (on the basis of the leaven image of chapter 5) makes the point more forcefully yet; and through proximity, the two chapters—both of which deal with sexual immorality and its effects, and, hence, with carnality and its rejection—become thematically one. "Do you not," asks Paul, "know that your bodies are limbs and organs of Christ? Shall I then take from

Christ his bodily parts and make them over to a harlot? Never! You surely know that anyone who links himself with a harlot becomes physically one with her, but he who links himself with Christ is one with him spiritually. Shun fornication.”

Eventually, throughout canon law and ecclesiastical thinking, this shunning came to mean flight from all things Jewish; Paul’s original intention of Judaizers was wholly transposed. Like union with the harlot or any forbidden sexual union, contact with Jews and Judaism was deemed corrupting. Both were a fermenting leaven. Paul himself, therefore, may have demanded that Christians avoid “loose livers,” with whom Christians “should not even dine” (1 Cor. 5:11), but people like John Chrysostom began to apply Paul’s language and terms like “loose living” and “harlotry” to Jews. Calling upon the reserves of his hyperbolically pernicious rhetoric, Chrysostom repeatedly named the synagogue a bordello and its doings prostitution, just as he invoked these same affronts to preach the horrors awaiting Judaizers who frequented synagogues and participated in Jewish rites.²³

However, the origins of the figure of leaven and carnality are not Pauline. This figure was invented by the rabbis; and this is significant in the context of Christianity’s, and particularly Paul’s, claim that Christianity had superseded Judaism. Paul’s figure may derive from a saying that would eventually be inserted into the Talmudic tractate *Berakhot* 17a: “Our will is to perform Thy will, and what prevents us [from doing so] is the yeast in the dough of our nature,” the *yezer har’aa*, by which rabbinic teaching means the “bodily drive.”²⁴ Paul would remake this saying, or one very much like it, into the idea of the leaven that is the carnality against which man’s spiritual drive wages a constant war. This is just as the (spiritually driven) Christian fellowship of 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 sits unspokenly, yet patently, contrasted in verse 10:18 with the “carnal [fellowship of the] Jews.” This contrast recurs in the Epistle to the Romans (especially chapters 9 to 11): carnality versus faith, purity versus contamination. It is also reinforced by a second rabbinic teaching, which explains that almost alone of the creatures on Noah’s Ark, the dog dared copulate, promiscuously at that, while waiting out the Flood.²⁵ It was just such a portrait of promiscuity that John Chrysostom was recalling, when, commenting

on Matthew, he said that the Christians, who have become the true children, have shed their “irrational [pagan, carnal, and, in context, doglike] nature.”²⁶ And for Chrysostom, as we have seen, the dogs were now the Jews and their synagogues, kennels.

The pairing of a doglike, animalistic nature, and irrationality would continue to be articulated. It was said in the high Middle Ages that by rejecting Christ, the Jews revealed their irrationality. Yet was not *rationality* humanity’s sine qua non? If so, rational beings were Christian and human. Non-Christians must be irrational and inhuman. Thomas Aquinas summed up this thinking well. The Jews, he said, embody the inverse of Christian virtue: if it is natural (read rational and human) to believe, then unbelief (the state of the Jews) is contrary to nature.²⁷ The Jews’ humanity was in doubt.

Martin Luther displaced this figure onto the Church. It was Catholicism, he implied, that fostered irrationality: “If I had been a Jew [he wrote] and had seen such idiots and blockheads [the Catholics] ruling and teaching the Christian religion, I would rather have been a sow than a Christian. For they have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs and not human beings. . . . If . . . we use brute force and slander them, saying that they need the blood of Christians to get rid of their stench and I know not what other nonsense of that kind and treat them like dogs, what food can we expect of them?”²⁸ Consummate exegete that he was, Luther had upended the dog-children dichotomy of Matthew; to be a Catholic was clearly worse than being a pig, and by allusion, Catholics, not Jews, were the dogs. The pope, he said elsewhere, was the child of Hagar, the bondwoman. Catholics, therefore, not Jews, were those God had rejected. They were not at all the *Verus Israel* they claimed to be.²⁹ Nonetheless, Luther could have expressed himself this way only because Matthew’s canine image as a marker of Jewish identity had become a commonplace—just as had the idea of impurity.³⁰

Luther himself was likely unaware that his comments point to a third rabbinic-pharisaic idea, the brotherhood of the “clean of hands.” This idea, too, influenced Christian thinking about Jews, and that of Paul in particular. “What food can we expect, . . . if [the Jews] are treated as dogs,” Luther asks, figuratively equating Jews (who convert)

with “food.” How, in other words, can we expect Jews to join in the covenant of the clean of hand—to join with those who devour and become (the *unus panis*), one with “the food”—if we treat them as inhuman and unworthy? This thought perfectly reflects Paul’s sense of who might be rightfully “within,” who “without.” In his anxiety to preserve the purity not only of the individual believer but also of the Christian fellowship’s united membership, had not Paul admonished against dining with carnal “loose livers”? It was cleanliness, the purity of hands—and, of course, the purity of the food itself—that was prerequisite to dine at the common (pharisaic or eucharistic) table, to participate in the closed Christian fellowship of 1 Corinthians 10:16–17.³¹ Yet for Luther, too, communion and community were synonymous.³² Ardent student of Paul that he was, Luther equated Jewish conversion with food.

As one might imagine, the epitome of all these ideas was also Jewish, namely, the biblical verse Ezekiel 44:7. The prophet admonishes the priests who were to rebuild the Jerusalem temple: “You have . . . brought the uncircumcised of heart and of body, outsiders, into my sanctuary; they pollute my house by offering the sacrifice, my bread, which is the fat and the blood; their abominations violate my covenant.” This verse (which again recalls Hittite temple prohibitions) demonstrably influenced Paul. Though Paul did not quote it, its words sustain his claim in 1 Corinthians 10:18 (intended to reinforce what he had just said in verses 16 and 17): Jews who sacrifice a sacrifice of fat and blood—which Ezekiel, so providentially for Paul (and then Matthew), calls “bread”—become “members” of the altar. However, this is to the exclusion of all others.³³ Paul considered it essential that Christians emulate this behavior. Only exclusivity would safeguard the purity of the eucharistic “dough” and ward off the “leaven.”

That Paul had borrowed so much from Judaism boded only ill. Resting, as it did, on Jewish intellectual origins, the Pauline vision of purity and exclusivity was destined to compete with that of the Jews, the same Jews whom the Christians, according to Paul, had “superseded,” the Jews, as he had put it in Ephesians 2:14–16, who were destined ultimately to self-destruct by uniting in Christ. United, the two would form “a single new humanity in [Christ] himself.” Moreover,

the borrowings that encouraged such competition did not stop with Paul. The third-century Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, too, leaned heavily on Jewish ideas in fashioning his own special concepts of purity.

Purity According to Cyprian

With respect to Corinthians itself, Paul's immediate context was not Jews, but the threat to Christian purity posed by pagan ritual, which Paul viewed as universally contaminating. In 1 Corinthians 10:21, he elaborated: "You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons," nor of pagan wine as compared to the cup of the Lord, the blood. This challenge would not disappear. Laws from 742 and 769, (wrongly) attributed to Charlemagne, still warned—bishops and priests, in particular—to steer clear of "filthy" gentile practice, "lest God's people finds itself indulging in paganism" (*ut populus Dei paganism non faciat, sed omnes spurcitas gentilitatis abiciat et respuat*). The specific practices the laws prohibited were magic, dismay about which would eventually enter stories of profaning the Host, as well as stories of ritual murder.³⁴

Catholic thinkers would eventually transfer Paul's concerns about idolatry to Jews. However, during the five hundred years prior to these eighth-century laws, it was not pagan magic but pagan sacrifice that became a Christian rallying cry—and in a time of real Christian crisis. The capacity of this sacrifice to pollute was deemed enormous. The one aroused was Cyprian.

Speaking of those had taken part in this sacrifice, especially priests, who had done so in order to escape the Decian Persecution of the year 250—the issue was not Jews or Judaism—Cyprian admonished: "Nor let the people [who participated in pagan sacrifice] flatter themselves that they can be free from the contagion of sin, while communicating with a priest who is a sinner. . . . [As] Hosea the prophet [9:4] forewarns: 'Their sacrifices shall be as the *bread* [emphasis added] of mourning; all that eat thereof shall be polluted.'³⁵ Cyprian must also have had in mind the proviso of Ezekiel 44:13 that only *pure* Levites may offer the fat and the blood, which is what Ezekiel, only six verses

earlier (44:7), had called “the bread” (of the sacrifice), the “bread” that Paul had equated with the Eucharist. The exclusion of nonadepts from the sacrifice in Ezekiel thus presages what Cyprian would mean, just as Ezekiel’s words came to inform the thinking of Paul. Cyprian’s conceptuality, if not his precise biblical citations, follow Paul to the letter. Yet Cyprian carried the teachings of sacrificial, eucharistic purity to new heights. In the tract “On the Lapsed,” Cyprian enunciated a fully articulated doctrine of purity, which is also heavily Levitical:

Returning from the altars of the devil, they draw near to the holy place of the Lord, with hands filthy and reeking with smell, still almost breathing of the plague-bearing idol-meats; and even with jaws still exhaling their crime, and reeking with the fatal contact, they intrude on the body of the Lord, although the sacred Scripture stands in their way, and cries, saying, “Every one that is clean shall eat of the flesh; and whatever soul eats of the flesh of the saving sacrifice, which is the Lord’s, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from his people” [Lev. 7:19–21]. Also, the apostle testifies, and says, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils” [1 Cor. 10:21]. He threatens, moreover, the stubborn and denounces them, saying, “Whosoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord” [1 Cor. 11:27].³⁶

Cyprian had bundled together the purity concepts of Ezekiel, Leviticus, and Hosea with those of Paul, who in 1 Corinthians 6 says, “touch nothing unclean,” and in 1 Corinthians 11:23–32, specifies: “One should not dine with the unworthy, . . . which is to sin against the body and blood of the Lord.”

For Cyprian, as for Hosea, consuming the sacrifice offered (hence, touched) by a lapsed Christian, or *lapsus*, transmits pollution;³⁷ and for both, this pollution is physical, not spiritual.³⁸ A fourth Jewish concept, therefore, one that concretizes the previous three, has been brought to bear on eucharistic purity. Real physical contact pollutes, not only that of the metaphorical kind, as might be understood of ideas like leaven, fermentation, and animalistic behavior. Touching profane demonic sacrifice renders one unfit to offer sacrifice, or to receive it, and this contagion passes from one communicant to another.

It endangers the contaminated when they approach the eucharistic altar. There is even a hint that the contagion—the “desecration” Cyprian speaks of, by way of “violence . . . [done] to His body and blood,”³⁹—passes to the sacrifice itself (however theologically improbable the idea of contaminating what is held to be God Himself may be).⁴⁰ Cyprian is horrified by forbidden contact, including marriages between Christians and gentiles, which he views as the wedding of Christianity to harlotry (1 Cor. 6:19). The very thought of them prompts him to quote Paul’s warning (2 Cor. 6:14–17) in full: “What has righteousness to do with wickedness? Can light consort with darkness? Can Christ agree with Belial . . . a compact between the temple of God and the idols of the heathen? . . . Separate yourselves, says the Lord: *touch nothing unclean*.”⁴¹

However, despite the location of this passage in Cyprian’s *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, the one who applied it to Jews was not Cyprian but Pope Stephen III, about the year 770, who adopted these verses to warn of the excessive contact with Jews that resulted from domestic service (and, by implication, the concubinage that regularly accompanied it).⁴² Yet, by this time, Pope Stephen was expressing the norm. More than once in this study, we shall see churchmen equating Judaism with “idolatry” and paralleling contact with Judaism and Jews with “idolatry’s pollution.” This was certainly true of John Chrysostom. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 10:16–20, Chrysostom melded idolatrous contamination with that which he pictured stemming from Jews. Christians, he writes, partake of the body of God, Christ; Jews “partake of the altar” of mundane sacrifice. Their altar is pagan. Chrysostom’s rhetorical skills enable him to say this so deftly that one is persuaded without reflecting that the interchangeability of Jewish with pagan altars is self-understood.⁴³ For many, it indeed was. The emperor Gratian’s law *Christianorum ad aras* of 383 c.e., which was contemporary with Chrysostom and reproduced in the Theodosian Code of 438 c.e. (Book 16, title 7, law 3), recalls Paul’s warnings about “leavening” and directs Christians to shun not only pagan ritual but also that of the Jews. The syncopation of this law in the so-called *Monk’s Epitome* of the eighth century is clearer yet: “The crime of Christians passing over to altars and temples”—the law seems to paraphrase Cyprian, directly—“or those who pollute themselves with the

Jewish contagions should be punished.”⁴⁴ The two crimes, as far as the *Epitome*’s author is concerned, are one. So are “Jewish contagions” (rites) and “pagan altars.” Eventually, it became common (ecclesiastical) wisdom to equate Jewish with pagan practice, whether overtly or only implicitly. Both, equally, might pollute and endanger the individual Christian. They threatened the well-being of the entire eucharistic Christian fellowship.

Nor was the issue one of assertive or Jewish behavior or initiatives. Acts as otherwise innocent as (secular) dining in common might be called infectious. This notion was inevitable, thanks to Paul’s picture in Corinthians of the exclusivity of the Christian fellowship and his fear of dining with “loose livers.” Victorinus Africanus’s commentary on Galatians extends Paul’s prohibition against Judaizing through circumcision to embrace mixed dining as early as the second century.⁴⁵ For Victorinus, it was patently obvious: like circumcision, mixed dining cut one off from the faith. To be circumcised or share a Jew’s table was now, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:12, “fornicating against one’s own body.” It was to unite with harlotry rather than with God through the Eucharist received in purity. It was tantamount to reverting to the Christian’s previous, unbaptized state, and it would be considered ever more so as time went on. It was also to behave like a promiscuous dog and to give the dogs the “bread” intended for the “children,” whether that bread be eucharistic or the simple loaf shared during table fellowship. To dine with a Jew was the same as sharing the table and cup of the demon. In 388, shortly after *Christianorum ad aras* was issued, John Chrysostom—who besides the dog, likened Jews to any animal fit for slaughter—said this outright:

Tell me, then: How do you Judaizers have the boldness, after dancing with demons [i.e., Jews], to come back to the assembly of the apostles? After you have gone off and shared [bread or ritual] with those who shed the blood of Christ, how is it that you do not shudder to come back and share in his sacred banquet, to partake of his precious blood? Do you not shiver, are you not afraid when you commit such outrages? Have you so little respect for that very banquet?⁴⁶

The tenth-century Bishop Raterius of Verona was even more decisive. He accuses Christians dining with Jews of violating the admo-

dition of 1 Corinthians 5:11 not to eat with “loose livers” and idolaters, even though Paul neither mentions Jews in this verse nor intended it to apply to them.⁴⁷ For RATHERIUS, dining with a Jew was contaminating.⁴⁸ The same had been said at various Church councils. The ninth-century Agobard of Lyon cites the edicts of these councils repeatedly.

Purity, Jews, and Agobard of Lyon

Agobard considered dining with Jews anathema, and in expressing his fear of impurity transferred by touch, he went beyond even Cyprian. He refers to the stark Haggai 2:12–15, which speaks of a chain reaction in which personal impurity passes from “toucher” to touched; Agobard’s emphasis is on the Christian social body, far more than on the individual. Special care must be taken not to dine with a Jew and then a priest. Agobard also suggested following the lead of Cyprian—Donatistic overtones aside, for the issue is not orthodoxy, but how Agobard viewed the act—that a contaminated priest passed on his impurity to all who received the Eucharist at his hands. Perhaps the altar itself became contaminated.

Agobard is insistent. He returns to the theme on every second page of his lengthy letters excoriating Jewish behavior: Dining with a Jew makes one impure; Jews pollute through food at the table; Jewish company of any kind contaminates; and to eat with Jews is to dine with the anti-Christ.⁴⁹ One must be on constant guard not to accept gifts from Jews at holiday time, especially the Passover matzoh, that surrogate for Christ’s sacrifice, the true matzoh, as Paul calls it in 1 Corinthians 5. There can be no question that Agobard was thinking of 1 Corinthians 10:21 and 11:27 in precisely the same context as Cyprian had centuries earlier. However, Agobard was speaking of Jews, not lapsed priests. It is with reference to Jews that he says: “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:21), for “whosoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:27).

Following Chrysostom, Agobard judged it an offense to know of violations and not speak up. To dine or have any prohibited social

intercourse with Jews, Agobard calls “an act that leads to the yoking of the free to the harness of idolatry” (*idolatriae autem iugo libertatem animi inclinarent*). By linking idolatry with the yoke of servitude, Judaism’s present state as Paul had spelled it out in Romans, Agobard seamlessly fused Judaism with idolatry and its pernicious effects. Socializing with Jews leads to idolatry, which is the loss of Christian liberty. So much the more reason for Christians to beware, lest Jews seduce them “into their errors.” To buttress his arguments, Agobard cites the same texts in Corinthians and Matthew to which Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Pope Stephen resorted, which were also invoked at the councils held at Agde, Clermont, and Laodicea in the fifth century (whose edicts were then reiterated at the important council at Meaux in 845–46, roughly contemporary with Agobard himself). Agobard was bent on making an airtight case.⁵⁰

It remained only for Agobard to cite Matthew 15:26, which he did, and then to contextualize this verse with the verses from Haggai mentioned above, as well as with the warning of 2 Corinthians 6:14–15 against joining light with darkness. This allows Agobard to weave together all his charges in one brief paragraph. Since this people, the Jews, he writes, is “so polluted with impurities,” they see fulfilled in them the prophecy of Haggai, who says that the touch of one who has had contact with the dead defiles all the food or drink it touches, and so “this people. . . whatever they offer [on the altar] is defiled.” “What, indeed,” Agobard goes on, “has light to do with darkness, Christ with Belial?” The Jews must be separated “from all the mysteries of the faithful, . . . and from their society and table.” Did not Christ tell the Canaanite woman that he had come to feed the children, not the dogs, and that what the children ate would be “the bread that descended from heaven”? For good measure, Agobard adds to the citation of Matthew the openly eucharistic John 6:53–58, which speaks of union with Christ through the wine and the blood.⁵¹ In the nexus of contact and impurity, especially at the table, and of the dangers with which impurity threatened his cherished *societas fidei*, as he called it (a term that dates back to at least the second-century Ignatius), Agobard had ascribed to the Jews a potentially destructive role.⁵²

We cannot know whether, in citing Haggai, Agobard was thinking of Leviticus 22:4–8 as well, which also speaks of the need for priests to

be pure (Agobard rarely cites the Hebrew Bible in his writings against the Jews). Priests, this verse says, must be unsullied by contact with the dead prior to partaking of the sacrificial meal. Indicatively, this meal is called in Hebrew *lahmo*, his (the priest's) bread. But if Agobard had indeed been thinking of this passage, his dread would be unmistakable. He would have been anticipating Johannes Buxtorf, who, in 1603, purposefully conflated Leviticus 22:8 with the admonition in Exodus 22:31: "Sanctified, or specially set aside people you shall be unto me and carrion meat you shall not eat, but you shall throw it to the dogs."⁵³ Christians receiving their "bread" must, like priests, distance themselves from the swill that is fit only for dogs, the Jews, and especially from that which the Jews themselves reject. Otherwise, and this was Agobard's ultimate fear, Christians, polluted by sharing a common Jewish table, would revert to what John Chrysostom had call their "original canine state."

This same spirit animates *The Corrector*, part of the *Decretum* of the early eleventh-century Burchard of Worms. Effectively summing up Agobard's thinking, Burchard writes: "Did you eat of the food of Jews or others, pagans, which they had prepared for themselves? If you did, do penance ten days on bread and water" (to cleanse yourself of the sin and restore purity).⁵⁴ No less direct is Agobard's contemporary Rabanus Maurus, who speaks of the need *emundari*, to cleanse, persons who (elsewhere) are said to have become *inquinati*, profaned.⁵⁵ Until they are purified, they must be *compiscendum*, kept away, from Christian *consortio*, or kept back from *communione*. Persons who have been defiled through *convivia*, sharing Jewish food, should not eat bread with a cleric.⁵⁶ Turning matters upside down, but arriving at the same conclusion, Raymundus of Peñaforte wrote in his thirteenth-century *Summa de poenitentia et matrimoniae* (Summa on Penitence and Marriage) that Jewish contempt for Christian food *impugned* the faith.⁵⁷ Raymundus was the principal editor of the *Decretals* of Gregory IX, which from 1234 to the early twentieth century served as the official body of Canon Law.

The problem was not only one of the table. Shades of Paul on harlotry, mixed Jewish-Christian sexuality was also said to threaten. Agobard railed against Jews and Christians sexually uniting. So, too, even more pointedly, did Sicard of Cremona (d. 1215). Both, and, indeed,

so many others after them, may have been focused, not only on Paul, but once again on Leviticus 22:4: “Whoever touches any one that is unclean by the dead; or from whomsoever the flow of seed goes out” is unclean to eat *lahmo*, the sacrificial bread. Tainted food, impure sexuality, and pollution went hand in hand. A married couple, Sicard wrote, in which one spouse had converted, while the other tarried, must refrain from sexual contact until both partners were baptized, lest the taking of the sacrament be compromised. Once again, Jewish contact had to be shunned. It threatened the Christian purity of the individual, and, through him or her, it imperiled the purity of the earthly *Corpus Christi* as a whole.⁵⁸

The sixteenth-century Marquardus de Susannis agreed. These concepts and anxieties were resilient—not to mention that what began as theology had acquired legal standing. “The commingling is obnoxious” (Et est odiosa talis commixtio), whether the Christian be man or woman; “it defames both baptism and Christianity” (quia sit per eam iniuria baptismo et universae religioni Christianae), de Susannis wrote of sexual contact between a Christian and a Jew. It thus endangers the entirety of Christian society, not only the individual offender. Besides, de Susannis added, Jews sometimes commit this offense intentionally, particularly in relations with a prostitute, where they believe the nature of the woman will mask the *contemptum*.⁵⁹ Marriage between a Jew and a Christian is out of the question. Not only does such a marriage possess none of the signification of the marital sacrament—the union of Christ and the Church; by its nature, such a marriage “prostitutes a limb of Christ among the Gentiles.” In support, de Susannis cites Augustine, who, in turn, cites Cyprian. Both say precisely this, basing their thinking, no doubt, on the admonition of 1 Corinthians 6:15: do not join the limbs of Christ with harlotry.⁶⁰

The legal collection known as the *Schwabenspiegel*, compiled by a German cleric in about 1275, went to the point directly. “If a Christian lies with a Jewess, or a Jew with a Christian woman, they are both guilty of superharlotry [*überhure*],” and they must be burned, “for the Christian has denied the Christian faith [by joining his limbs to harlotry and so alienating himself from Christ’s body].” One French judge in the fourteenth century added that sex with a Jew merited

burning as “bestiality,” since “to have sexual relations with a Jewish woman is to have sexual relations with a dog.”⁶¹ In sexuality of this kind, as it was put in Catalayud, in Spain, there was concern lest “these faithless dirty people infect the purity of Christians.”⁶² Purity, canine bestiality, and harlotry—one and interchangeable—endanger the *societas fidei*. “Bestiality” is also the word Christian witnesses used to describe Jewish life in testimony before the Modenese Inquisition in 1602.⁶³ These witnesses were all servants, lower-class laity. The view of Judaism, if not of Jews themselves, as bestial was no clerical monopoly.

Fears for Christian purity, we have noted, extended to domestic service. De Susannis, citing 2 Corinthians 6, writes that servitude to Jews is to join light with darkness. The *Summa Coloniensis* of 1169 explains more precisely: through servitude, Christians are stained (*maculati*), and so, too, is Christianity.⁶⁴ Fear of “pollution” is the reason why the age-old but never applied restriction on domestic service began to be reemphasized about the time of this *Summa*. The restriction applied to employing both Christian men and women. Charters issued to Jews by bishops and secular rulers through the thirteenth century reveal that previously Jews had regularly been exempted from this rule. The Third Lateran Council of 1179 renewed it, and Pope Alexander III made strenuous—and successful—efforts to have this edict applied. The culmination would be the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 ordering distinct Jewish dress—it, too, intended to avoid pollution. About these councils and especially about Alexander III’s initiative, I shall have more to say below.⁶⁵

Concern about the contamination effected by servitude to Jews was ancient. Gregory the Great had already spoken out on the subject, and so had Stephen III. Pope Stephen, as noted, pressed the case perhaps even more strongly than had Gregory by citing the inflammatory language of 2 Corinthians 6:14–15, why “should a believer unite with an unbeliever,” which he linked to Matthew 7:6: why should “the holy be given to dogs.” Gregory the Great, however, had been especially clear, twice in fact. His special fear was the damage that servitude to Jews did to Christ himself: “Were not all Christians the members of Christ? Do we not know that Christ is the head of the members, whom we honor? . . . So how can we honor the head and permit his enemies

[literally] to boot the members around?” To diminish Christ’s members was to diminish Christ himself.⁶⁶ Because of the unity of all members in Christ, to diminish one of them was to diminish the entire *Corpus Christi*. There were those who saw the danger of contamination as so great that it justified expulsion.

Surprisingly, Agobard had not considered this possibility. At one point, he backtracks, recalling Paul, to say that Jews should be treated piously.⁶⁷ Yet, as though responding to Agobard’s stricture, a text (falsely) ascribed to Pope Leo VII in 938 defended its call to expel recalcitrant Jews who resisted preaching and refused to convert, citing Matthew 7:6 and 2 Corinthians 6:14–15.⁶⁸ The threatened expulsion, like the text itself, was imaginary, not fact. Nonetheless, it—and especially the citation of Matthew 7:6—exemplify how persistent were the metaphors of Jewish identity and, in particular, the metaphor of the dog and its noxious acts.⁶⁹

Impurity Through Servitude and Touch

Jews rendered things unclean, especially through touch. This was much as did the *lapsus*, and we recall Agobard’s citation of Haggai with respect to dining with Jews. Amplified through the prism of 2 Corinthians 6:17—“one should touch nothing unclean”—the fear that the Jewish touch polluted led to some startling legislation. Laws passed by lay councils in southern France and Perugia in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries prohibited Jews from touching all food in the marketplace and required them to purchase food they did touch.⁷⁰ These prohibitions likely originated much earlier, and they were apparently more widespread than we know. So common were they, it seems, that voiding them required special privilege. The 1264 charter of Boleslaw the Pious to Jews in Poland decreed: “We also order that Jews may sell and buy all things freely and *may touch bread* as do Christians.” The 1388 charter to the Jews of Brest issued by Grand Duke Witold Alexander of Lithuania said the same.⁷¹ Notably, it was specifically bread, with its ever-present eucharistic overtones, that these charters authorized Jews to touch.