

Two Cistercian Monks turn Jews (before 1200)

A certain monk of the same order, or rather a certain demoniac in our own times, being as it were tired of the Catholic faith and worn out with the sweet and light burden of Christ's yoke, and scorning, at the instigation of the devil, any longer to walk in the way of salvation. . . . as if phrenetic and mad, and truly turned to insanity, fleeing to the synagogue of Satan. And to cut short the whole wretched story which we have dilated upon at great length to show our detestation, at last he caused himself to be circumcised with the Jewish rite, and as a most vile apostate joined himself, to his damnation to the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Also on the northern borders of England, in a house of the same order called Geroudon, a certain brother, likewise in our own days, by a similar error, or rather madness, presuming to set at naught the part of Christ and reconciling himself with Satan, opposing and exciting the mind to depravity by his depraved and pestiferous rites which he, the monk, had renounced with sacred laver and baptismal oath, and again put on his chains from which he had been freed, subjecting himself to eternal slavery as well as the punishment of hell. For he, too, fled with ruinous and ruin-bearing ways to Judaism, the home of damnation and the asylum of this depraved reprobation.

But when that man, known for his distinguished fame and extent of writings, as well as gifted with wit, Walter Mapes, Archdeacon of Oxford, heard of these two having apostatised out of that order alone, wondering, he broke out in public into these words: "It is remarkable," said he, "that those two wretches, since they wished to leave their former faith, as being so perverse and infested with so many poisonous vices, did not become Christians, adopting a safer and more salubrious plan," as if he would say and hint, though indirectly and by sidelong words, that men of this order, on account of the stains of deliberate vice and cupidity, and their faults so manifest and so clearly unchristian, were not worthy to be called Christians.

But I myself am persuaded that those two wretches did not leave the truth and fly to a vain shadow with damnable exchange out of mere devotion or desire of increasing their religion. . . . but because they could no longer bear the harshness and rigour of that order, and instigated by the spirit of fornication they committed this crime.

Source: Gerald of Wales, *Opera* (Rolls Series), iv. 139, ed. Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England: Documents and Records* (London, 1893), pp. 283-85)

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