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Introduction

SOMETIME IN THE AUTUMN of 1302, Adolph van Waldeck, the bishop of Liège, girded himself with the robes and insignia of his office, gathered his retinue, and marched out of his episcopal palace toward the house of the city's moneylenders. A year earlier, in one of his first decisions as bishop, Adolph had prohibited the moneylenders from plying their trade within his diocese, but they secured a reprieve through a well-placed bribe to the city's aldermen. With his initial efforts thwarted, Bishop Adolph took matters into his own hands. As later chroniclers recounted, "armed not with shield and helmet, but with mitre and staff, he broke down the doors to the usurers' house" and expelled them from the city "like dogs."¹ The event would long be remembered as one of the most memorable features of Adolph's brief episcopate, alongside his zealous concern for justice, his quick temper, and his penchant for drunkenness.² But the bishop's triumph was short lived. Adolph died within weeks—poisoned, some whispered, by his vengeful victims—and with their adversary gone, the moneylenders soon returned to the city and resumed their business.³

For many modern readers, this episode likely brings to mind the bitter travails of medieval Jews. By the turn of the fourteenth century, there was already a thousand-year tradition of hostile Christian rhetoric likening Jews to dogs.⁴ Moreover, within only a few decades of the events in Liège, similar allegations of poisoning would start being leveled against the Jewish communities of western Europe.⁵ Most salient of all is the episode's association between usury and expulsion, and for good reason: from the late twelfth century onward, as kingdoms and communities throughout western Europe banished Jews from their midst, accusations of usurious lending became a tragically familiar refrain.

Yet the targets of Bishop Adolph's wrath were not Jews. Rather they were Christians, natives of the town of Asti in northwestern Italy who had left their homes and crossed the Alps in search of economic opportunities. In establishing credit operations in Liège, they were emblematic of a broader historical



MAP 1. Expulsions of Jews, 1100–ca. 1350. The shaded areas show the regions in which temporal authorities ordered the expulsion of Jews (above) or Christian foreigners accused of usury (map 2) from the twelfth century until the advent of the Black Death. (Not all of these expulsion orders were ultimately enforced; for an annotated roster, see Appendix A, *Timeline of Expulsions*.) As the two maps make clear, the geography of expulsion was nearly identical for both groups during this period. *Source*: Administrative boundaries adapted from EurAtlas Georeferenced Historical Vector Data © Christos Nüssli, 2008.

phenomenon, namely, the rapid spread of professional Christian moneylenders across much of western Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Commonly known as “Lombards,” these foreign moneylenders also found themselves insultingly labeled as dogs by contemporaries, most famously in the opening pages of Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*.⁶ In the later Middle Ages, Lombards would also be maligned as experts in poisons and other dark arts.⁷ And as Bishop Adolph’s efforts reveal, they would likewise be expelled on charges of usury—and not only from Liège. Within the kingdom of France alone, a fluctuating blend of moral opprobrium, political expediency, and fiscal



MAP 2. Expulsions of Foreign Usurers, 1100-ca. 1350. *Source:* Administrative boundaries adapted from EurAtlas Georeferenced Historical Vector Data © Christos Nüssli, 2008.

concerns spurred rulers to order the expulsion of Lombard usurers on at least ten occasions before the middle of the fourteenth century. Furthermore, at the insistence of the church hierarchy, which issued a conciliar decree in 1274 urging all Christian authorities to expel foreign usurers from their lands, similar expulsion orders found their way into statute-books from Portugal to Poland.

Thanks to the painstaking work of generations of scholars, we know a great deal about the recurring expulsions of Jews that scar the history of late medieval Europe. Entire books have been devoted to the circumstances and aftermaths of individual expulsions, while other studies have explored the dynamics of successive expulsions within particular regions.⁸ Historians studying the Jewish diaspora have meticulously retraced the pathways of exile and the destinations of refugees, while specialists in literature and liturgy have movingly evoked the impact of such forced dislocations on the shared rituals and cultural life of Europe's Jewish communities.⁹ Until the late fifteenth century,

many of those responsible for ordering such expulsions—indeed, the vast majority—justified them by invoking the specter of Jewish usury and the evils that supposedly followed in its wake. By contrast, the recurring expulsions of Lombards and other foreign moneylenders have attracted scant scholarly attention, and what little has been written about them is frequently wrong. Even the very existence of professional Christian moneylenders is often overlooked, an oversight that reflects modern misconceptions rather than medieval realities.

As is clear from the geographical and chronological overlap depicted in maps 1 and 2, the recurring medieval expulsions of Jews cannot be fully understood without taking into account the wider association of usury and expulsion in contemporary rhetoric and practice. From the beginning of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth, every major European polity that ordered the expulsion of its Jewish community also ordered the expulsion of foreign Christian usurers. In some cases—such as the duchy of Brabant and the county of Anjou—the expulsions were ordered simultaneously. Elsewhere the banishment of foreign usurers often preceded the deportation of Jews. English kings, for instance, had already been expelling Italian merchants on charges of usury for half a century when they began to entertain the possibility of doing likewise to their Jewish subjects. In the lead-up to his ill-fated final crusade, the saint-king Louis IX of France sought to purge his kingdom of usury by expelling Lombard pawnbrokers, while at the same time refraining from his earlier threats to expel Jews. In the fifteenth century, influential authorities would insist that the canonical demands for the expulsion of foreign Christian usurers ought to apply to Jewish usurers as well, a position that others would flatly deny. Embracing this broader comparative framework thus reveals not only unnoticed parallels and precedents, but also roads not taken and choices not made.

The following chapters trace the association between usury and expulsion over the course of the Middle Ages, from its earliest attestations in the middle decades of the twelfth century to its sharp resurgence in the fifteenth. They explore how the same idea of expelling usurers emerged in different places from differing configurations of anxieties and traditions. They track how this idea spread across the intellectual and legal landscape of late medieval Europe, and how it mutated and evolved along the way, shifting back and forth across Christian and Jewish targets. They look too at how this idea expressed itself in practice, and how the ensuing expulsions were enforced or evaded. Finally, they show how individual episodes of expulsion inspired and shaped those that followed, such that what was once considered exceptional could at last become entrenched.

For expulsion *had* been exceptional—and not only where usurers were concerned. This might seem surprising. After all, for the men and women of medieval Europe, and for many others before and since, history itself began with a banishment: that of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Although human

societies have developed a roster of other techniques of exclusion, from imprisonment and legal infirmities to disfigurement and death, practices of expulsion continue to feature prominently in the arsenal of modern politics. The twentieth century has rightly been called the “Century of Expulsions,” while debates over deportation blaze with renewed urgency in the United States and beyond.¹⁰ Under these circumstances, it is easy to imagine expulsion as common to all periods and places.

As historian Benjamin Kedar first observed, however, it was during the high and later Middle Ages that mass expulsion—here understood as the enforced removal of entire categories of persons from the boundaries of the expelling authority—emerged as a characteristic feature of European political practice. This is not to deny the existence of similar expulsions in earlier periods, in particular the occasional driving out of foreigners from the city-states of the ancient Mediterranean (typically in times of war or famine). Among ancient empires, however, the prevailing practice was to relocate subject populations to other places within their dominions, rather than outside of them. While Roman authorities frequently banished offending groups from the precincts of the capital or even from peninsular Italy as a whole, the expulsion of whole classes of people *beyond* imperial boundaries was almost unknown under Roman rule, and it remained equally rare in the successor kingdoms that followed.¹¹ In contrast to the penal banishment of individuals and the exile (or remote confinement) of political opponents, both of which are widely attested in early medieval Europe, the proliferation of mass—or more precisely, “corporate” or “collective”—expulsion was a new development in the High Middle Ages.¹² The absence of contemporary parallels in the Byzantine and Ottoman empires or even further afield underscores the comparative novelty of this phenomenon: only in medieval western Europe did rulers widely embrace the practice of driving entire classes of people from the lands under their control.¹³ The survival and spread of this practice in subsequent centuries surely ranks among the unhappiest legacies of the European Middle Ages.

Given the weight of scholarly attention to the banishment of Jews (and, to a lesser extent, of heretics), explanations of expulsion as a medieval phenomenon often emphasize religious divides and the quest for spiritually purified polities.¹⁴ Such explanations are all the more persuasive in light of the central importance of religious conflicts to the early modern forced migrations in Europe and the Mediterranean, whether of Jews and Moriscos or Anabaptists and Huguenots.¹⁵ But while religious divides will play a recurring role in the pages that follow, their importance will be somewhat tempered by an attentiveness to more sublunary concerns, even as mundane as administrative habits and scribal slips. The reason for this is simple: if the collective expulsion of classified groups is taken not as a timeless and inevitable feature of human societies, but instead as a novel practice that emerged and spread within a

particular set of historical circumstances, then it is crucial to reconstruct both the conditions under which it emerged and the mechanisms by which it spread. It is equally crucial to recognize that ideas and practices that emerged in one context could be imitated and repurposed in others, or could even lie dormant for a time, only to suddenly erupt anew. Here the importance of law and legal commentaries looms large, for the embedding of the usury-expulsion nexus within the shared legal culture of Latin Christendom allowed it to be copied, recopied, and ultimately revived in periods and places very different from those in which it first arose.

Those looking for a simple answer as to why expulsion became so widespread in late medieval Europe will not find it here. Before we can understand *why* expulsion became widespread, it is first necessary to understand *how*—and to date, this question has not even been asked, let alone answered. Here the association between usury and expulsion offers a particularly illuminating case study for four reasons. First, it is during the twelfth century that one first encounters the argument that usurers deserved to be not only spiritually excluded from their communities, but physically expelled from them. Unlike for other targeted groups, there were no direct biblical or late antique precedents to serve as inspiration or legitimation for expelling usurers. Medieval readers knew, for instance, that the Bible had called for lepers to dwell “outside the camp.”¹⁶ Some medieval authorities (especially in Italy) also drew inspiration from late Roman legislation ordering that heretics be driven from cities.¹⁷ In contrast, the association between usury and expulsion was a novel development in the Middle Ages, which makes it all the more revealing to explore the matrix of precedents and pressures from which it arose. Second, the motivations underpinning this association straddled both secular and ecclesiastical contexts, thus showcasing their mutual role in fostering expulsion’s rise. In a similar fashion, the medieval classification “usurer” could encompass Jews and Christians alike, which serves as a reminder of the need to look beyond conventional categories in charting the shifting contours of expulsion’s domain. Finally, the novelty and ubiquity of these expulsions provoked theoretical quandaries and practical conflicts, all of which left behind a rich trail of written evidence for historians to explore.

In grappling with ideas and practices of expulsion in medieval society, this book builds on decades of research that has sought to explain the apparent rise in outbreaks of violence, repression, and persecution from the twelfth century onward. For some scholars, these events reflect the systematic transformation of medieval Europe into a society where difference was perceived as deviance, and deviance was seen as dangerous—with terrible consequences for those classed as heretics, homosexuals, prostitutes, lepers, and beggars, to say nothing of the fate of Europe’s Jewish communities. Others have vigorously

contested the explanatory power of such a pan-European framework, insisting instead on the vagaries and varieties of local contexts for understanding outbreaks of hostility against those construed as “others.”¹⁸ While partisans of each approach have often framed them as being in opposition to one other—a choice between overarching paradigms and local specificities—it should already be clear that this book eschews such a false dichotomy. One cannot explain local instances of expulsion without considering how the association between usury and expulsion first came to be thinkable, and eventually normative. Conversely, one cannot account for the spread of this association without considering why it clusters in some places and not others, is discussed in some genres and not others, is applied to some targets and not others, and so forth.

The resulting historical canvas is necessarily broad, stretching across much of western Europe over nearly four centuries. Broad, too, are the themes that will be encountered along the way: from the circulation of manuscripts to the migrations of merchants; from contests over political jurisdictions to the ambiguities of commercial practices; from the resilience of biblical exegesis to the flexibility of legal logics; and from competing definitions of foreignness to the distinction between moneylenders and usurers. Most of these themes will be introduced in due course, but given the central importance of the latter, the following overview of medieval moneylending and usury (and the relationship between them) offers necessary groundwork for the chapters to come.

Moneylenders and Moneylending in Medieval Europe

In 1336, a Burgundian count welcomed a family of Piedmontese moneylenders into his lands. In return for a fixed annual fee, the new settlers, whom the charter describes as “Lombards, citizens and merchants of Asti,” were to enjoy for fifteen years the right to “lend their money” (*prester lour pecune*) within the territory of Montbéliard. The count bolstered this privilege with a litany of immunities, exemptions, and safeguards, among them an explicit promise that he would ignore any orders from the pope or any other prince to arrest the newcomers or seize their property. The count further assured them that he would allow “neither any merchant of Ypres, Cahors, Provence, or Tuscany, nor Jews or other Lombards, nor anyone else who lends money,” to settle in his lands, save a certain “Sanche the Jew” and his associates, who were present already.¹⁹

This charter exemplifies many of the characteristic features of late medieval professional moneylending, an occupation whose practitioners fell at the center of contemporary debates over the moral and religious implications of a rapidly expanding credit economy. In many parts of western Europe, publicly carrying out such activities required a formal license from a local authority, which the lenders secured with the promise of lucrative regular payments. The

charter's assurances of protection against the forcible intervention of other ecclesiastical or secular authorities reflects a caution born from experience and so too do the many other privileges and exemptions that the moneylenders negotiated for themselves. In addition, the Montbéliard charter's monopoly clause, with its enumeration of potential competitors, highlights the degree to which professional moneylending in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was the preserve not only of Jews, but also of Christians originating from particular regions, especially southern France and northern Italy.

Recent scholarship has stressed the pervasiveness of credit-debt relationships across the entire social spectrum of medieval Europe. Highlighting the wide variety of credit arrangements and the centrality of local lending networks, historians have pushed back against a vision of the late medieval economy that saw monetary credit as a scarce commodity, with Jews and Lombards its only—and much maligned—providers.²⁰ Even where lending at interest is concerned, close studies of administrative records have revealed widespread clandestine interest taking among nonprofessional lenders, amply bearing out the theologians' fears that such sinful behavior was running rampant in all sectors of society.²¹ Taken collectively, this scholarship has made it clear that the landscape of medieval credit extends far beyond professional moneylending.

Even so, there is little question that professional moneylenders—Jewish and Christian alike—were vital nodes within the social and economic systems of the towns and regions they served.²² A trio of interlocking trends underpinned their rising presence in high medieval Europe: the surging growth of trade and commerce; the increasing ease of mobility and migration; and the expanding fiscal needs of princes and prelates (and the taxes imposed to meet them). Together these generated a rampant need for economic services that the moneylenders were poised to fulfill—for a price. The nature of these needs and services varied enormously across time and place. Often the same moneylenders lent to borrowers from a wide variety of social classes, though in some regions they lent extensively to local elites, while in others their borrowers were mostly poor. In twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, Jewish loans were often backed by landholdings as collateral, with assurances of government support for the recovery of outstanding debts. In many parts of Europe, loans were backed by pledges of movable goods (that is, pawnbroking), though often they rested simply on oral promises of repayment and the creditors' faith in the borrowers' solvency. In some places, public moneylending was heavily regulated, with fixed ceilings on interest rates (commonly 43.3% *per annum*) and formal mechanisms of governmental oversight; elsewhere the arrangements were left to the discretion of the parties themselves. Professional moneylenders in any period face the dangers of defaulting debtors and a measure of

popular resentment, but their medieval counterparts faced a raft of additional occupational hazards. Preachers regularly reminded Christian lenders of the threat of eternal damnation should they fail to make amends for their sinful practices, while cash-strapped princes were quick to see moneylenders as ready sources of revenue, whether through forced loans, arbitrary fines, threats of expulsion, or worse. Yet it is a testament to the centrality of these moneylenders within their local economic systems that their enforced departure often prompted popular laments, bemoaning the sudden scarcity of credit and coin.²³

North of the Alps, Jewish moneylending—and indeed, Jewish settlement more generally—appears in earnest from the late tenth century onward. The two phenomena were often interlinked, with Christian authorities frequently welcoming Jews to settle in their towns with the aim of expanding both commerce and credit. There is little doubt that moneylending's potential profitability played a significant role in spurring many to take it up as a profession. That said, it is worth emphasizing that neither during this early period nor in later centuries was moneylending the sole economic activity of these young Jewish communities in northwestern Europe. Notwithstanding contemporary accusations and modern misunderstandings, in many of these communities it was probably only a minority of Jews who made it the core of their business affairs. (This is even truer of Jews in Mediterranean Europe, who, through to the end of the Middle Ages, drew their livelihoods from a wide range of activities.) By the thirteenth century, however, the repeated fiscal exactions levied on the Jews of northwestern Europe (especially in England and France) and the increasing restrictions on their legal and economic freedoms rendered moneylending almost obligatory for those with sufficient means to engage in it, since few other economic activities could generate profits substantial enough to satiate princely greed.²⁴

In the latter decades of the twelfth century, Christians likewise began moving to other parts of western Europe for the purposes of supplying credit. In the early stages, these migrating Christians often hailed from Flanders and southern France, but it was northern Italians—those from Tuscany and Piedmont above all—who proved the most successful, the most far-reaching, and the most enduring. Often building on existing mercantile networks, these Italian newcomers quickly established themselves within the kingdom of France, the Low Countries, Burgundy, the Rhineland, and Savoy. As the Montbéliard charter suggests, the newcomers often set up operations in places where Jewish moneylenders were already active, sometimes competing directly with them for clients, sometimes building new networks of borrowers. Elsewhere (in many parts of the Low Countries, for instance), they competed against robust existing networks of Christian lenders.²⁵ In addition, the middle years

of the thirteenth century saw Tuscan lenders—many of them driven into exile on account of factional divides in their native cities—setting up operations across central Italy, followed by northeastern parts of the peninsula, where they were joined by others from Piedmont and Lombardy.²⁶ By the year 1300, Italian moneylenders had established themselves across vast swaths of western Europe, both in Italy itself and across the Alps.²⁷ The impact of their geographic diffusion is still visible in the urban topographies of twenty-first-century Europe: London's Lombard Street is merely the most famous of the many streets and districts that bear the name by which these Italian moneylenders were commonly known. Even more striking, and a touch ironic, is the fact that *lombard* eventually came to serve as the word for pawnshop in several European languages, among them Yiddish.²⁸

If the very existence of these professional Christian moneylenders is largely forgotten, it is due in part to the stubborn (and often pernicious) narrative according to which medieval Jews held a near-monopoly over medieval moneylending. This narrative is often accompanied by facile assumptions about the nature and efficacy of the medieval church's condemnation of Christian usury, which (among other weaknesses) ignore the simple fact that repeated condemnations are usually a sign of persistent practices. Moreover, the narrative is so entrenched that even some distinguished modern scholars have effaced medieval records of Christian moneylenders by mistakenly assuming that these concerned Jews.²⁹ But the limited awareness of these professional Christian moneylenders also stems from both the highly localized nature of most relevant studies, and their absence from the canonical studies of medieval economic history.³⁰ Throughout much of the twentieth century, vigorous debates over the rise of modern capitalism and the development of modern commercial techniques led scholars to focus on the great banking firms of Siena and Florence, rather than on the “pawnbrokers” whom they saw as disconnected from the animating force of international finance.³¹ Yet the analytical clarity of such distinctions poorly captures the complex medieval realities, in which members of the Malabaila family of Asti could serve as the principal bankers and wool merchants for the fourteenth-century papacy, even as their cousins continued to run the family's longstanding pawnbroking operations in Savoy.³²

Beyond such scholarly sidelining, three features of the surviving sources further contribute to lingering uncertainties about the spread and activities of these Italian moneylenders. The first is the challenge of identifying them. The term “Lombard,” for instance, could be equally a geographical or occupational designation, and in both cases the meaning is often ambiguous.³³ Administrative records from thirteenth-century France use “Lombard” (*lombardus/lombart*) to designate any Italian within the kingdom, whatever his occupation

or origin, whereas in fourteenth-century England, the term could describe any Italian who was active in commerce. Meanwhile, the associated term “Cahorsin” (*Caorsinus/Caorsin/Kawertschen*) gradually shed its association with moneylenders from the French town of Cahors. North of the Alps, the term came to refer to foreign (Christian) moneylenders in general, while in Italy it developed into a pejorative epithet for bankers.³⁴ Throughout this book, the use of the terms “Lombard” and “Cahorsin” will mirror the language of whatever sources are being discussed; where the terms are invoked more generally, it is in the sense of Christians (usually from northwestern Italy) who were operating public, professional moneylending operations outside of their own native communities.

As a second complicating factor, contemporary sources (especially in the thirteenth century) often describe these foreign moneylenders simply as “merchants” (*mercatores/mercheanz*). In some cases, this might hint at a willful caginess concerning the nature of their activities. On the whole, however, the fact that this is more common in the thirteenth century than afterward suggests that the definition of “merchant” was more capacious in this earlier period, and that it could embrace the nascent category of “moneylender” rather than simply being in apposition (let alone opposition) to it. This certainly aligns with intellectual trends: in the late thirteenth century, theologians and other learned commentators were only just beginning to articulate a vision of Christian economic ethics that distinguished “virtuous” merchants from usurers and other suspect classes.³⁵ The same ambiguity applies to economic realities. There is considerable evidence showing that many of the Jews and Christians who were professionally active as moneylenders did not shy from engaging in other commercial pursuits. The converse is also true: many of those whose principal commercial interests lay elsewhere nevertheless lent money at interest on a regular basis.³⁶ (That commerce often depended on credit is a further complicating factor.) Moreover, it is clear from the language of many thirteenth-century sources concerning Lombards—not least the Montbéliard charter quoted above—that their moneylending was often seen as a branch of mercantile activity, rather than a different class of activity altogether. Only in later centuries, and even then only in specific towns and regions, do more clear-cut divisions arise.

The third challenge of the sources concerns Jewish and Lombard moneylenders alike: given the near-total disappearance of their account-books, it is only through oblique evidence that one can reconstruct their networks of borrowers and the internal working of their financial operations.³⁷ The loss of these sources is due in part to the repeated disruption and dislocation of the lenders themselves; even more destructive was the indifference of later generations, to whom such musty volumes seemed hardly worth preserving. On

occasion the moneylenders themselves took active measures to suppress these materials: having used their newfound wealth to purchase their way into the feudal nobility of their native regions, some Lombards deliberately purged their family archives of all evidence concerning their mercantile origins.³⁸ In Mediterranean Europe and the cities of the Low Countries, these losses can partly be compensated by the notarial registers and urban charters that survive in vast numbers from the late thirteenth century onward.³⁹ Elsewhere scholars must rely on the extant records of governmental and judicial oversight: the registrations of Jewish debts in thirteenth-century England, the reports of royal investigators in contemporary France, the sentences of late medieval ecclesiastical courts, and so forth. These records are necessarily distorting, insofar as much lending activity necessarily escaped official notice. So rich are the surviving materials from the Exchequer of the Jews in England, for instance, that scholars have largely overlooked the hints of widespread Jewish pawnbroking carried out beyond the Exchequer's gaze.⁴⁰

These records are distorting for another reason too: many of them (especially those resulting from investigations and judicial proceedings) owe their existence to allegations of usury, with all the preconceptions and prejudices that implies. In modern English, the term "usury" generally refers to exorbitant rates of interest on a loan. In contrast, medieval Latin writers often referred to usury in the plural (*usurae*), and much of the scholarship on the topic would be clearer if modern scholars followed suit, for despite the strenuous efforts of rigorist theologians, there was no uniform medieval definition of usury. Rather, multiple definitions were in competition, shifting in rigor and reach over time. While straightforward moneylending could easily fall afoul of ecclesiastical and secular sanctions against usury, so too could many other mercantile activities in late medieval Europe—depending on the definition of usury in play. In other words, a given transaction might be usurious to one observer but not to another, and what one authority might blithely allow might be vociferously condemned by another. To make this clearer, it is worth taking a closer look at medieval ideas about usury and how these mapped onto social and economic realities.

"You Are All Usurers!":

Modern Approaches and Medieval Ambiguities

If thirteenth-century theologians, following Aristotle, denounced usury as inherently sterile and unproductive, the same charge cannot be laid against the modern scholarship that the topic has generated. From the late nineteenth century onward, scholars interested in the history of economic thought have delved into the abundant scholastic and canonistic materials in order to

reconstruct the development of the medieval church's teaching on usury. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, debates over the impact of these teachings on medieval commercial techniques (which themselves were part of larger conversations about the rise of capitalism) injected additional vigor into this line of research. Recent work on the history of usury in the Middle Ages has carried further these early frameworks and expanded in four new directions. The first treats usury within the more general context of credit and debt. The second focuses on the rise of anxieties over usury, their interaction with other contemporary concerns (simony or heresy, for example), and their diffusion from learned clerical elites into popular contexts through art, preaching, literature, and other genres.⁴¹ The third approach explores these anxieties as a driving force in the elaboration of a systematic vision of economic ethics on the part of theologians and other late medieval intellectuals.⁴² Meanwhile, a fourth strand of scholarship has revealed the existence of contemporary Jewish debates over the permissibility of lending among Jews, and even over the licitness of Jewish lending to Christians.⁴³

Within the Christian tradition, the effort to define usury exercised the ingenuity and learning of many of the most towering figures of medieval intellectual life, theologians and preachers whose words frequently carried well beyond the confines of the classroom or the reaches of the pulpit. Patristic authorities had bequeathed to their medieval successors a set of sweeping definitions of usury, namely, "whatsoever is added to the principal," "wherever more is required than has been given," and other variations on these themes. Building on these foundations, twelfth- and thirteenth-century theologians erected a rigorist framework in which almost any form of return beyond the principal of a loan qualified as usurious, and hence both sinful and forbidden. Exceptions were gradually articulated, but none of these disturbed the fundamental principle that seeking certain profit from a loan was a sin. Yet this is only part of the story. By limiting the church's legal sanctions against usury to those who were considered "public" or "notorious" usurers, canon lawyers effectively adopted a less stringent standard than did the theologians. In addition, Roman civil law had permitted moderate levels of interest, and in the Middle Ages many secular jurisdictions followed suit, banning as "usurious" only interest rates that exceeded a certain threshold.

In effect, this meant that for a medieval Christian engaging in moneylending, the same actions might count as usurious in a theological context of sin and repentance even as they did not fall afoul of canonical sanctions; they might equally count as usurious in the eyes of the church while remaining licit under secular law. The situation was somewhat more straightforward for medieval Jews, who were relatively (though not entirely) immune from the sanctions of church courts, as the next chapters will show. But whatever the formal

definition of usury in theology and law, its expression in practice depended on a host of factors, from the perceived social status of the moneylenders, to the strength and nature of their relationships within their communities, to the intensity of fears about indebtedness and otherness (whether geographic or religious), or all of these together. Notwithstanding the threat of divine judgment, the return on a loan became “usurious” only when it was condemned as such.⁴⁴

This equivocality is even more pronounced where the definition of usurer is concerned. One was not simply a usurer because one engaged in usurious practices; here too the meaning of the word lay very much in the eye of the beholder. Just as one could hold views that some might consider heretical without necessarily being denounced as a heretic, so too could one engage in practices that some might consider usurious without necessarily being condemned as a usurer.⁴⁵ The opposite was also true, such that one could be labeled a usurer simply by association, or by profiting indirectly from practices that an observer deemed usurious. It was this expansive conception that underpinned thirteenth-century arguments that all Jews were usurers, or that led the Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena to berate a Florentine audience in 1425 with the chastising claim, “You are all usurers!” (*tutti siete usurai!*)⁴⁶ Over the course of the Middle Ages, moreover, the figure of the usurer came to embody qualities that extended far beyond mere moneylending. To call someone a usurer was less a representation of their practices than a claim about their identity. In short, it was an accusation rather than a description, and it is in this sense that the term will be used in the chapters that follow. To be sure, the Lombards and Jews who were engaging in public moneylending were especially vulnerable targets for such accusations. But the category of “usurer” was essentially relational, rather than abstract; one therefore cannot speak of someone being a “usurer” without implying the question “To whom?”

This disjuncture between moneylending as a practice and usury as an accusation is necessary to understand a central paradox in the history of medieval European Jews. Even where they carried out their moneylending in accordance with secular regulations, and even where the returns on their loans did not exceed the traditional limits as accepted (however grudgingly and nebulously) in church doctrine, Jews were nevertheless widely accused of usury. Meanwhile, Christians who engaged in activities that church doctrine condemned as illicit—and which in some cases were also forbidden under secular law—regularly went unpunished. In the case of Jews, contemporary arguments that the taint of usury could extend even to those who did not directly profit from it enabled hostile voices to condemn all Jews as usurers, regardless of their individual activities. Only much more rarely—as in the case of Bernardino of Siena lambasting his Florentine listeners—did critics level similarly

broad charges against entire Christian communities. Here the Lombards offer a valuable comparison case: outsiders within their host societies, they engaged openly in moneylending in defiance of church strictures and sometimes even in winking contradiction of secular laws as well. Unlike Europe's Jews, however, the Lombards were unburdened by centuries of theological hostility and its attendant fears. Their experiences therefore help to gauge the specific weight of usury within the larger constellation of fears and accusations that ultimately led to the disappearance of Jewish communities from much of western Europe over the course of the later Middle Ages.

However misguided such fears might now appear, the sense of alarm, even hysteria, that usury provoked among many late medieval churchmen is undeniable. So too is the impact of these fears on commercial practices and economic life more broadly. Yet as the following chapters will repeatedly argue, the intensity and impact of these fears differed markedly across space, time, audiences, and authorities. Even in modern specialist works, there is a worrisome tendency to subsume the complexities of medieval attitudes beneath the strident claims of the most vocal critics. Allegations made by a twelfth-century French cleric about the "judaizing practices" of Christian moneylenders thus become representative of all subsequent clerical thought, while the harsh strictures of a local church council are taken as an expression of canon law as a whole.⁴⁷ In a similar fashion, the subtle reasonings of scholastic thinkers are too often made synonymous with church teachings writ large, ignoring the much cruder formulations that circulated among priests and their parishioners.

Even more distorting is the scholarly tendency to treat northern France as paradigmatic rather than exceptional, especially where attitudes toward Jewish usury are concerned. In part, this reflects the abundance of superb scholarship focusing on Paris and surrounding regions, as well as on neighboring England, where French influence was strong.⁴⁸ For anglophone readers, moreover, this tendency is reinforced by the fact that the careful studies of Jewish and Christian moneylending (and associated ideas about usury) in other parts of western Europe—Germany, the Low Countries, Catalonia, Italy, and beyond—have largely appeared in languages other than English.⁴⁹ As these studies make clear, the presence of moneylenders did not necessarily overlap with concerns about usury, or at least not always according to the same chronology.

This is not to deny the influence of Parisian ideas or the impact of northern French practices. To the contrary, the reconstruction of their diffusion across regions and genres is one of the threads that ties together all of the chapters in this book. Rather, it is a reminder that the relationship between moneylending and usury did not play out the same way everywhere in medieval Europe, just as the figure of the usurer did not always map onto the same targets. It is for this reason that the first part of the book is heavily weighted toward England

and France, for it is in these two kingdoms that anxieties about usury first began to be articulated most strongly—and where the association between usury and expulsion first emerged. Over time these anxieties and this association began to spread, and the book's later chapters broaden their scope accordingly.

As these later chapters will show, new ideas circulated unevenly, and old ones could be unexpectedly rediscovered. The same was true of repressive practices. As a result, the expulsion of usurers was not a phenomenon confined to those who lived permanently in the margins or beyond the edges of medieval Christian society. Its reach was much greater than that, and much less predictable too, such that even those who had lived comfortably amidst their host societies for decades could suddenly find themselves recast as usurers and driven from their homes. But this in turn raises a new question, namely, of all the possible responses to usury, how did expulsion become so accepted and so widespread?

Toward a Connected History of Expulsion

This same question could be asked of many other groups in medieval Europe, for beggars, foreigners, heretics, lepers, and prostitutes all faced contemporary threats of collective expulsion, and this list is hardly exhaustive. Expulsion was even more ubiquitous in its individual penal form: by the early fourteenth century, judicial sentences of banishment were being imposed for contumacy, debt, heresy, leprosy, petty crime, political missteps, prostitution, sodomy, vagabondage, and a host of other misdeeds. Although the chronology and context vary considerably, as does banishment's frequency relative to other sanctions, the ubiquity of expulsion in late medieval society is indisputable.

To date, this characteristic of late medieval Europe has attracted little sustained attention, even though it stands in marked contrast to the relatively restrained use of expulsion in other premodern cultures. Even rarer is scholarship that encompasses the variety of practices that the English language divides up (quite arbitrarily) among the terms banishment, exile, deportation, and so forth. Studies of individual episodes and specific practices abound, but comparison and synthesis are rare.⁵⁰ This pattern extends well beyond scholarship on the European Middle Ages. Expulsion is usually treated either as the archetypal expression of exclusion and hence devoid of historical specificity, or else its varied forms are examined in isolation from one another, obscuring their potential connections and shared influences. In a 1972 article, the distinguished legal anthropologist Sally Falk Moore observed that “though expulsion is often mentioned in ethnographies, too little attention has been given to the theoretical implications of expulsion as a legal measure in pre-industrial

society.”⁵¹ Only recently have historians and social scientists begun to grapple with the shifting dynamics of expulsion from archaic times to the present.⁵²

To be sure, there are important distinctions between practices of expulsion, even if these map awkwardly onto modern and premodern vocabularies. An expulsion might be temporary or permanent, individual or collective, legally mandated or arbitrarily imposed. The target might be banished to a particular place, or the space of expulsion might be left open-ended. Expulsion might be a penalty in and of itself, or it might be an institutionalized means of avoiding a still-graver penalty. As one recent scholar has stressed in a provocative study of modern deportation and its historical analogs, “there is no singular expulsion.”⁵³ Yet all of these practices, as with any social practice, have their histories, and it is worth considering that many of these histories may be shared—or at least connected.

The general lack of scholarly attention to the forms and implications of expulsion is all the more striking when compared to the explosion of studies on confinement.⁵⁴ Over the past half century, scholars of nearly every place and period have mapped the emergence, growth, and global dissemination of practices of confinement, tracing how we have moved from a premodern world in which incarceration was exceptional, or even unknown, to one in which it is endemic.⁵⁵ Many of the resulting studies have also sought to illuminate the historical connections between different forms of confinement, such as the influence of monastic discipline on later European models of imprisonment, or the Nazi appropriation of British colonial institutions for the development of concentration camps.⁵⁶

So far as the Middle Ages are concerned, only the expulsion of Jews has been the subject of such a comparative and connective approach.⁵⁷ In linking together each of the medieval expulsions—from the late twelfth century to 1492 and beyond—modern scholars are mirroring (or in some cases, invoking directly) a venerable tradition of Jewish historiography and commemoration, in which each successive expulsion is added to the long chain of forced dislocations that together constitute the Exile. The resulting insights are powerful, not least because this approach aligns so closely with the ways in which the victims themselves made sense of these events.⁵⁸

As this book argues, however, there are further insights to be gained by following other common threads that tie together individual episodes of expulsion, even if this often means seeing these events through the eyes of their perpetrators rather than the experiences of their targets. There is a meaningful difference between an expulsion that allowed Jews to remain only if they agreed to abandon their moneylending, and an expulsion that allowed them to remain only if they agreed to abandon their faith. Although the end results were sometimes the same, their motivating logics were not. A similar point

might be made about an expulsion order that banished Jews outright versus one that forcibly relocated them from smaller communities to larger ones within the same jurisdiction. And there is likewise a difference between an expulsion that cited usury to justify expelling Jews and Lombards alike and one that targeted Jews while leaving Christian usurers untouched (or vice versa). Such distinctions might have mattered little to those who were being forcibly driven from their homes, but they surely illuminate the aims of those demanding expulsion.

Even in those cases where Jewish usury served merely as a pretext for expelling Jews, it matters that authorities saw fit to invoke this pretext rather than others. In seeking to recover the precipitating causes of medieval expulsions, modern historians have been rightly wary of lending too much weight to official rhetoric; rulers were unlikely to announce that a particular expulsion was a means of asserting their authority amidst internal power struggles or that they were chiefly interested in replenishing their coffers. (As for deeper social, economic, and intellectual trends, these were unlikely to be recognized by contemporaries, let alone publicly acknowledged by the expelling authorities.) But one can be skeptical of stated motives without denying their contemporary salience. According to longstanding church doctrine, rulers could not licitly expel Jews simply because they refused to become Christian, or because they otherwise held to their traditional practices. Down to the end of the Middle Ages, this remained a powerful (if far from insuperable) deterrent to arbitrary banishments. As a result, few medieval authorities ever framed expulsion as resulting simply from anti-Jewish animus, and most instead took pains to proffer nominally credible (and sometimes compelling) justifications for their decision.⁵⁹ To trace the arguments that made such expulsions legitimate in the eyes of contemporaries is therefore, in a very real sense, to understand the circumstances that made them possible.⁶⁰ Much recent scholarship has aimed to reveal the motivations that authorities did *not* articulate when ordering the expulsion of Jews; the following chapters will devote renewed attention to those that they did.

Recovering the underlying logics of expulsion, along with their internal contradictions and their inconsistent applications, is one of the central tasks of this book. Doing so means leaving aside much of the scholarly edifice that has grown up around historian R. I. Moore's influential characterization of medieval Europe as a "persecuting society."⁶¹ As the first part of this book will show, for example, the initial emergence of expulsion in England bears little sign of the anxieties that drove the expansion of repressive practices elsewhere. This is not to deny the power and prominence of such anxieties in other contexts, not least in the escalation of anti-Jewish rhetoric, or in ecclesiastical efforts to link usury with heresy. Moreover, many of Moore's key

insights—especially about the ambiguities of classification and learned anxieties over social contamination—will be echoed in the pages that follow. But as an explanation for the general rise and spread of expulsion, the resort to persecution is insufficient. The reason for this is simple. For all that Moore's model has inspired scholars to seek out connections linking the repressions of various marginalized groups, including Jews, heretics, and lepers, its language of "persecution" leaves little room for those whose suffering does not elicit modern sympathies. Although we are less likely to mourn the vicissitudes of wealthy Flemish merchants and Piedmontese moneylenders, they too faced repeated expulsions in the high and late Middle Ages. To understand how expulsion could be normalized, it is therefore crucial to consider the experiences not simply of those who fall within our modern definitions of the persecuted, but of the many others who similarly fell within expulsion's reach.

This reach had its limits. In light of the Deuteronomic prohibition, by which one could lend at usury only to a stranger (נכרי/*alienus*) and not to one's brother (אח/*frater*), there is a certain irony to the fact that medieval rulers never punished with expulsion their Christian subjects who were engaging in usury, instead expelling only Jews and foreigners accused of doing the same.⁶² As might be expected, this differentiated treatment is due in part to the vulnerability of these latter groups to allegations of usurious wrongdoing. But it also aligns with two emergent strands of medieval thinking about usury and its resulting evils. First, secular rulers were increasingly considered to be personally responsible for the usurious activities of Jews and foreigners within their domains, in contrast to local Christian usurers, who fell exclusively under the purview of the church. The focus of secular repression was therefore on those—to wit, Jews and foreigners—who enjoyed secular protection. Second, for all that medieval theology held usury to be destructive of wealth in general, the usurious activities of Jews and foreigners prompted specific concerns, insofar as they appeared to funnel local wealth either out of Christian hands or away to foreign lands. Exploring the evolving connections between expulsion, foreignness, and usury thus reveals pathways and roadblocks that otherwise lie hidden if one considers only the connection between expulsion and Jews.⁶³

Structure and Sources

This book starts from the assumption that shifts in social practices correspond not only to larger shifts in social structures and patterns of thought, but also to the repetition and emulation of the practices themselves.⁶⁴ As new reports of expulsion spread across communities and genres, they made thinkable what had previously never been contemplated. Expulsion—like any other social

practice—could be contagious. It was also protean, with its forms and targets shifting as it spread. But as the following chapters will emphasize, understanding the spread of a phenomenon also requires an attentiveness to the limits of that spread. In other words, under what circumstances was the association between usury and expulsion resisted, rejected, or ignored? Where were the false starts, the dead ends, and the places where it failed to take root at all?

The book is accordingly divided into three parts, with the first part exploring the different paths by which the expulsion of usurers first arose as a possibility and a practice; the second part examining how this phenomenon was normalized and disseminated across Latin Christendom; and a final part tracing how it was enforced, resisted, and redirected over the course of the late Middle Ages.

Part I opens with an overview of the twelfth-century church's teachings on expulsion, Jews, and usury, before showing how these three themes became increasingly entangled in theology and canon law over the course of the thirteenth century. The following two chapters explore these same themes within the kingdoms of England and France, respectively, focusing in particular on royal policies toward Jews, the regulation and repression of moneylending, and the rising resort to expulsion from the middle decades of the twelfth century to the closing decades of the thirteenth. It was in these two kingdoms that secular and ecclesiastical authorities first began to order expulsions on grounds of usury, but in strikingly dissimilar contexts. Where a strong tradition of expelling foreigners proved a driving factor in England, royal concerns about purity and purgation proved determinative across the Channel. Together, these three chapters establish how the association between usury and expulsion emerged in western European thought and practice over the course of the thirteenth century.

Part II opens with the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, where the assembled church leadership drew on French royal precedent in ordering all Christian authorities to drive foreign usurers from the lands under their jurisdiction. This conciliar decree—known by its incipit *Usurarum voraginem* (“*The Abyss of Usury*”)—universalized, at least in theory, the normative connection between usury and expulsion. Chapter 4 analyzes both the drafting of the decree and the subsequent academic debates over its interpretation. Chapter 5 then turns to the decree's dissemination, looking at the many channels through which *Usurarum voraginem's* canonization of expulsion reached a wider audience within western Christendom. Resting on the systematic analysis of more than two thousand texts, ranging from legal compendia to sermon collections and even vernacular poetry, this chapter traces how a new legal norm could circulate to its intended audiences across late medieval Europe. As this broad survey reveals, awareness of the decree ebbed and flowed over the course of

subsequent centuries, while its scope and meaning transformed dramatically as it moved into new textual contexts.

Part III then charts the shifting course of the usury-expulsion nexus from the late thirteenth century onward, showing how it was alternatively instrumentalized, emulated, ignored, or reworked down to the end of the Middle Ages. Chapter 6 examines the immediate response to the Lyonese decree, with early royal action in England and France contrasting markedly with widespread non-compliance elsewhere in western Europe. Secular authorities gradually found ways to wield the decree's provisions in service of local aims, while earlier traditions of expulsion continued to develop and spread, with devastating results for long-established Jewish communities.

Meanwhile, as revealed in Chapter 7, ecclesiastical implementation of the new decree proved markedly uneven. For all the heated clerical rhetoric around the evils of moneylending, and notwithstanding the threat of severe sanctions for non-compliance, many bishops were reluctant to enforce expulsion within their dioceses—a finding that challenges persistent assumptions about the dynamics of the medieval church's campaign against usury. Through a series of case studies drawn from the Low Countries, the Rhineland, and Italy, the chapter explores the reasons for this widespread episcopal reluctance, as well as the continuing secular opposition to expulsion across most of western Europe.

Building on these foundations, Chapter 8 explores how late medieval legal scholars and ecclesiastical authorities began to question the limits of the church's traditional opposition to the expulsion of Jews in light of new ideas about Jewish usury and new interpretations of legal doctrine. Could canon law—long a bulwark against expulsions of Jews—instead require them? By the fifteenth century, with calls for expulsion resurgent throughout Germany and Italy, the popes themselves would begin to weigh in on this topic. Their conflicting responses vividly reveal the role of law and legal reasoning in both furthering and impeding expulsion's expanding embrace. Moreover, the impact of these shifts would be felt even in the halls of the Alhambra in 1492, as the Catholic Monarchs deliberated over the fate of Spain's Jews.

As these brief summaries suggest, the book draws on a wide array of high and late medieval sources, including unpublished material from 150 archives and libraries scattered across sixteen countries. This breadth reflects in part the geographic range of Jewish and Christian moneylenders in late medieval Europe, as well as the wide variety of genres in which ideas about their expulsion could circulate. But this breadth is also an attempt to overcome specific methodological challenges. Even a minor expulsion could have a catalyzing effect on others, for instance, and it is therefore only through an expansive survey that chronological and spatial patterns can emerge. In a similar vein, to trace

the shifting thresholds of possibility one must look beyond the expulsions that were ultimately enforced and consider too those that were merely mooted or else thwarted early on. The chapters that follow (and their accompanying notes) therefore reference every known instance in which Christians were expelled on charges of usury from the late twelfth century until the middle of the fourteenth; they likewise cite every attested expulsion of Jews for the same period, whether or not accusations of usury were at play; and they finally consider many instances in which such expulsions were urged or threatened, even where such efforts led to naught.

As anyone who has broached this topic can attest, to hunt for expulsions is constantly to encounter phantom episodes resulting from earlier misdatings and misreadings, inadvertent conflation, or even just the inevitable uncertainty over whether a threatened expulsion was indeed carried out.⁶⁵ This is especially true for the expulsions of Lombards and other Christian moneylenders, since these have never before been studied in detail.⁶⁶ For this reason, the accompanying notes seek—wherever possible—to cite the specific medieval evidence for these events, while also paying tribute to the careful labors and compelling arguments of earlier scholars.

In attempting to trace the association of usury and expulsion over the course of nearly four centuries, the book necessarily gives only a passing glance to many other related themes. Foreign merchants and moneylenders suffered sudden confiscations and arrests, forced loans and indemnity payments, and innumerable petty insults and injuries that went mostly unrecorded. Threats of banishment often served simply as a means to extort further revenues, and banishment itself was often preceded by imprisonment and accompanied by despoliation. The Jews of Latin Christendom faced all of these menaces, and often much, much worse. From the late twelfth century onward, false accusations of child murder, host desecration, and well poisoning spurred violent assaults against Jewish communities throughout much of western Europe. While expulsion occupies center stage in this study, other repressive practices lurk in the wings.

The voices of the expulsions' victims also go largely unheard in the pages that follow, which focus instead on the rhetoric of those denouncing usury and demanding expulsion. This reflects above all the aim of this book, which seeks to explain the spread of this phenomenon, not the sufferings that followed in its wake. It reflects as well the achievements of other scholars, who have already evoked the laments and legacies of the Jews' repeated expulsions with remarkable insight and learning. But for the Lombards, at least, it also reflects the surviving sources, which—for all their richness—are inescapably partial and incomplete. For all the tens of thousands of surviving references to the activities of these migrating moneylenders, their private world is largely

obscured: their business records are lost or destroyed, their letters to each other and to their families are all but non-existent, and the chronicles of their native regions are largely mute on the experience of expulsion. As a result, their responses to expulsion must instead be reconstructed mainly from the patterns of their movements and the safeguards they sought from their official protectors.

Finally, it bears emphasizing that this book is not intended as a history of credit and debt in the Middle Ages, nor as a study of the evolution and enforcement of the medieval church's usury doctrine, nor as a general account of the expulsions of Jews between the twelfth and fifteenth century. Those books all remain to be written. Nor does this book pretend to offer a comprehensive account of mass expulsions in the high and late Middle Ages. Although it aims to shed light on the pathways by which expulsion came to entrench itself in medieval thought and practice, many contemporary manifestations of expulsion are alluded to only briefly, or not at all. Yet just as "certain exclusionary ideas had a snowballing effect" in medieval society, to borrow Barbara Rosenwein's vivid formulation, so too did exclusionary practices.⁶⁷ The practices of expulsion, like all social practices, could be observed, repeated, taught, and imitated—across space, across time, and across different categories of targets. Administrative procedures, intellectual categories, and linguistic habits molded and reinforced one another. With each successive expulsion serving to further disseminate and normalize the practice, the expulsion of any one group made it more likely that others would suffer the same fate. If the following chapters seek to illuminate one particular set of associations and logics that propelled expulsion's spread, it is in full knowledge that many others remain to be explored.

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