PART I

STAGES OF CONVERSION
CHAPTER ONE

‘FAIR AND FRIENDLY, SWEET AND BEAUTIFUL’:
HOPES FOR JEWISH CONVERSION IN SYNAGOGA’S
SONG OF SONGS IMAGERY

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The iconography of Ecclesia and Synagoga is perhaps best known through Crucifixion scenes that allude to the Christian Church’s birth on earth and Judaism’s demise. Medieval artists in the Latin West frequently juxtaposed the two personifications at the base of the cross according to the concept, famously articulated by Augustine, that the New Law reveals and perfects what the Old Law conceals: “For what does the term Old Covenant imply but the concealing of the New? And what does the term New Covenant imply but the revealing of the Old?” The Christ’s sacrificial death inaugurates a New Law, often symbolized by Ecclesia’s collecting of Christ’s blood in her chalice in an enactment of the Eucharist. At this same moment Synagoga, the embodiment of God’s Old Covenant with the Jews, is rendered obsolete. The Crucifixion miniature from a luxurious gospel book commissioned by duke Henry the Lion of Saxony (d. 1195) and his wife Matilda (d. 1189), for example, typifies this antithetical relationship. Underneath the Flagellation, which occupies the folio’s upper zone, Ecclesia, in a sumptuous

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1 This paper has profited from the suggestions of Christopher Heuer, Carolyn Malone and Diane Reilly, who critiqued earlier drafts. I dedicate this essay to Helen, dilecta mea, in honor of her third birthday.


3 This folio is one of eight, full-page miniatures that accompany the text of John’s Gospel, the last book in the manuscript, and lead up to the Easter celebration. For a facsimile edition, see Evangeliarium Heinrichi Leonis: autorisiertes vollständiges Faksimile des Codex Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2° der Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, und zugleich CLM 30055 der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, München (Frankfurt, 1988). Also see Sotheby Parke and Bernet & Co., The Gospels of Henry the Lion. Sales cat. London, December 6, 1983 (with an analysis by Christopher de Hamel); and Elisabeth Klemm, Das Evangelistar Heinrichs des Löwen (Frankfurt am Main, 1988).