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BETWEEN HAGIOGRAPHY AND PREACHING.
THE HOLY CROSS IN THE WORKS OF JAMES DE VORAGINE*

James de Voragine is one of the most influential and authoritative medieval writers. His importance in European culture and his *Fortleben* in contemporary literature and arts is witnessed even today through thousands of existing manuscripts and by continuous editorial and philological projects. Beside the *Golden Legend*, that was (and still remains) the main reference text for all hagiographical studies since the 13th century, other texts by James (such as his sermon collections and the *Chronicle of Genoa*) had a noteworthy place in the culture of the time, stressing the importance of the Dominican author.

Two of the most authoritative works of James, the famous *Golden Legend* and the less known, but equally important, collections of *Sermones de sanctis* are complementary texts that take together part of a complex communication system created for contemporary preachers. In this system, the communication is formed using themes or images (like dragons) or legends (like histories of the origin of the wood of the Holy Cross) that were more or less usual at the time. These themes and tales can seem naïve to us today, but in the structures of the Dominican preaching they acquired special communicative value, becoming effective and forceful illustrations used for teaching ethical precepts and doctrinal instructions, that were directed not only to simple people, but also to the learned laymen of the Italian society of the 13th century. In this system, the leg-

* I am very grateful to George Ferzoco, who has revised this paper for me.

end of the Holy Cross is considered in presenting its literal sense and, above all, its allegorical senses. Outside this system, for example in another contemporary text of the same author, the *Chronicle of Genoa*, the Cross seems to be merely an historical relic that on the hand is obviously a sign of God's favour but on the other can also be stolen by a simple thief.

THE GOLDEN LEGEND: CHANGES OF AN AUTHOR, OF A TEXT, OF A PUBLIC

The *Golden Legend* is a huge repertory of hagiographic material for preachers and the *Sermones de sanctis* are a sort of users' guide, presenting useful models for an effective preaching. We can speak here of a direct target (the friars who read the abridged legends and the model sermons) and a final public (preachers' audiences listening to vernacular words about saints). The sources collected by James were normally well known and widespread, but sometimes these were very rare and occasionally unknown for greater part of Western culture, showing an effort to follow the recommendations about the *multiplex scientia* by Humbert of Romans, whose words encourage the knowledge of history, or more simply of stories, that every Dominican must have¹. James inserted a larger number of legends to add more colour to the preachers' palette, allowing them to isolate the images and the themes most appropriate to their public.

At the end of the 13th century, the sheer size and the comprehensive coverage of the *Golden Legend*, without equal in the former hagiographic collections, attracted a new public. For instance, knowledge of hagiographic texts is evidenced in the background of the northern Italian didactic poets², and the affinity of their themes can suggest that the *Golden Legend* influenced these

1. *De eruditione Praedicatorum*, ed. J. J. Berthier, Romae 1889, II, pp. 400-2.

2. On 13th century didactic poetry in Northern Italy, see as starting point C. Bologna, *La letteratura nell'Italia settentrionale nel Duecento* in *Letteratura italiana, I Le origini, il Duecento, il Trecento*, Torino 2007, pp. 109-228, especially pp. 155-73. Bologna also mentions (p. 129) the presence of the *Golden Legend* and of the other works of Iacobus in laymen's libraries: 'presenze costanti [...] non solo nelle biblioteche dell'Ordine dominicano, ma altresì in quelle laiche (dove la *Legenda* figura spesso in un assai felice e diffuso volgarizzamento)'. The better modern edition of the texts is still the anthology collected by G. Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, Milano-Napoli 1960, I, pp. 513-761 (texts), 2, pp. 837-48 (philological notes).

compositions. This new literary milieu grew in northern Italy – but not only there³ – in the second half of the 13th century and was generally formed by laymen, often belonging to tertiary orders⁴. They were also writers, but they are first of all examples of people that read Latin works, without (apart from few exceptions) being clerks, monks or friars. For instance, the writer called ‘Anonymous of Genoa’ (the same city where James was archbishop) was a layman, but read Latin devotional books and wrote hagiographical texts in vernacular language; also the Milanese Bonvesin de la Riva can be taken as example of this public, as well as can Dante Alighieri himself. These were men who read and wrote in Latin but also in vernacular language. For such laymen, James added some ‘warning notes’, since the readers lacked preachers’ words that could explain the different senses of the text and could transform interesting tales in edifying stories.

We can note that this evolution of the *Golden Legend* mirrors the development of the Italian society and the changes of the categories of book readers at the time. The main steps of this evolution can be summed up in the following way:

- The first version of the *Golden Legend* was written in Latin and had the Preachers as its direct target and the common people (who would be listening to the preachers) as a final, indirect, target.
- The later versions of the *Golden Legend*, still written in Latin, included some additional parts that had a more narrative (or historical) interest than an edifying function: chronological data, historical connections and integrations of the hagiographic material, and many narrative *excursus* were added in the

3. For instance, some prose texts, like the *Conti morali* of an Senese anonymous and the *Novellino*, share with the collection of *exempla* and the *Golden Legend*, the edifying, sometimes nearly hagiographical, content and the pedagogic intention. For the *Conti morali*, see the edition of R. Köhler in «Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie», 1 (1877), pp. 365–75. For the *Novellino*, see the pages of C. Segre in *Prosa del Duecento*, cur. C. Segre – M. Marti, Milano-Napoli 1959, pp. 793 sg.

4. Bonvesin della Riva was a tertiary of the Humiliati and arguably also of the Franciscans, the ‘Anonym of Genoa’ belonged to congregation of St. Catherine. For the rule of the laymen in the medieval religious life, see A. Vauchez, *Les laïcs au Moyen Âge. Pratiques et expériences religieuses*, Paris 1987.

1270s. All these additions seem to apply to another public than the audience of the Dominican Friars: learned laymen, who clearly were able to buy and to read Latin books.

- Finally, at the end of the century, vernacular versions of the *Golden Legend* as, for instance, the Pisan translation transcribed in the prisons of Genoa (edited by F. Cigni)⁵, or the Tuscan text witnessed in the Codex Riccardianus 1254⁶ are implicitly addressed to laymen.

THE DOUBLE NATURE OF THE «GOLDEN LEGEND»

At the time of its first appearance, the *Golden Legend* was an useful instrument for preachers who used the devotion for the saints to educate their audience. This popular devotion⁷ was a convenient starting point to teach more educational concepts: for example the practice of Christian virtues in everyday life or how it was possible to recover the intrinsic coherence between divine Providence, Holy Scriptures and human life, often not readily discernible to the common people in the complex and turbulent society of the 13th century, where the Evil of political struggles seemed to be everywhere (even in Genoa, where James was archbishop in 1292). But in the development of Italian culture at the end of the 13th century, the *Golden Legend* acquired also another nature: it was still a repertory for preachers, but it was also a collection of interesting stories for readers in search of fascinating tales.

For preachers, the simple literal sense didn't exhaust all the possibilities of interpretation of the hagiographic material that could be disassembled and

5. F. Cigni, *Un volgarizzamento pisano della Legenda aurea di Iacopo da Varazze*. (Ms. Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale, n. 1008), in «Studi Mediolatini e Volgari», 51 (2005), pp. 59-129.

6. S. Cerullo recently edited complete survey of the different traditions of vernacular versions of the *Golden Legend* in her Ph. D. thesis, discussed in Florence in March 2012. A critical edition of the Tuscan version witnessed through the Riccardianus codex and other manuscripts is now the goal of a teamwork directed by Lino Leonardi.

7. For the importance of the popular devotion in 13th century society, see the pages of the *Chronica* of Salimberne de Adam (ed. G. Scalia, Bari 1966, pp. 733-6) and the ultimate studies of A. Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age*, Rome 1981 and *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires. Le pouvoir surnaturel au Moyen Age*, Paris 1999.

reassembled in the frames of 13th century new predication. For them the plot of the hagiographic narrative was not the main part of the communication between preacher and audience, but it was only an element of a complex system which, aiming at the edification of the audience, followed the sophisticated techniques of the *artes praedicandi*. In this perspective, every element of the hagiographic legend could be interpreted, underlining the allegoric (moral, anagogic) sense. In those days for some preachers a simple repertory of main widespread hagiographic legends was not enough: I mentioned earlier the *multiplex scientia* recommended by Humbert of Romans and indeed the same James de Voragine in a sermon⁸ addressed to his Dominican brothers warned them to always consider the *diuersitatem audientium*, the difference between audiences.

In this perspective, James collected a large number of unusual histories: for example, the rare legends transcribed in the chapters *de sancto Georgio* and *de sancto Iuliano* or, in the chapters about the Cross, the rare history of Seth and the branch of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that was probably an addition to a Crusaders' chronicle. This huge repertory allowed to choose more interesting stories for the audience; moreover, every particular (even the most improbable) and every contradiction with the Scriptures or with the main authorities, could be explained and resolved by the preachers in their sermons. Using a classical image, in this communication system the honey was the interesting collection of rare tales, while the medicine was the doctrine in the preachers' words.

It is clear that James aimed for a much larger audience than those attained by Jean de Mailly⁹ or Bartholomew of Trent, who are his direct forerunners and the main sources of the *Golden Legend*. We can see this new perspective, for instance, in the choice of the *exempla* in the chapter of Saint Bartholomew, or in the chapter of Saint Andrew. The change of the audience requested the

8. *De sancto Barnaba, Miserunt Barnabam ad Antiochiam*. This sermon (n. 462a in the forthcoming edition) is absent in Schneyer's *Repertorium* (see n. 11).

9. Jean de Mailly wrote his *Abbreviatio in gestis sanctorum* between 1225 and 1243. The first critical edition has recently been published: Jean de Mailly, *Abbreviatio in gestis sanctorum*, ed. G. P. Maggioni, Firenze 2013. For Bartholomew, the reference text is the edition of E. Paoli, Bartolomeo da Trento, *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum*, Firenze 2001.

addition of parts more fitted to the complexity of civic society. These additions were associated with a sort of warning for the readers, who were left alone with the text without preacher's words to explain the other edifying senses of the legends. But if the choice to insert 'interesting' or 'narrative' parts to catch the audience attention made the fortune of the collection, on the other hand the text preserved its nature of repertory for preachers and also the new additions were aimed to the edification of the audience. The literal sense of these parts was presented in the *Golden Legend*, while the other allegorical senses would be evidenced in sermons and, obviously, in James's model sermons. The different elements of the hagiographic legend lose their narrative function in the preaching and acquire a new meaning in a new context. In this way, the same element can have different senses in several sermons, depending from the context of the preaching. A good example for this 'multiple interpretation' is the use of the image of the dragon in St. George legend.

THE DRAGONS IN THE «GOLDEN LEGEND», AND THE DRAGONS IN THE «SERMONES DE SANCTIS»

There are many dragons in the hagiographic texts collected in the *Golden Legend*. The dragon in the St. George legend is still present in European collective imagination, but other dragons are important in the Western culture, as the dragon called Tarascurus in the legend of St. Martha or the dragon in the legend of St. Margaret. Two popular rites regarding dragons are mentioned and discussed by James in other chapters as well: the procession of the dragon in France during the Lesser Litanies¹⁰ and the fires lit on St John's Eve to make dragons sterile¹¹. But we can note that the image of the dragon is quoted in the sermons only when it is useful for the hagiographic and symbolic picture which the sermon was presenting and interpreting. In this symbolic context, every hagiographic legend is taken apart and then reassembled in a new structure where only some pieces, useful to form the general picture, find a place.

10. Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, ed. G. P. Maggioni, Firenze 2007, 66, 42-4.

11. Id., 81, 170-8.

We might say that every *distinctio* of the sermon is an outline of an image, where the hagiographic fragments can find their place like mosaic *tesserae* and fill the whole picture and its doctrinal message. The dragons are present also in the legends (among the others) of St. Benedict, St. Philip, St. Dominic, and St. Matthew, but the image of the dragon is fully exploited only in the sermons of St. George where the doctrinal teaching was presented through the symbolic picture of the struggle between Good and Evil. It must be noted that the pieces of the hagiographic legends do not have the same meaning in every episode: for example, in the sermons of St. George, the same image, the elephant, can symbolize holy men (in sermon 425)¹² and the lustful as well (in sermon 424). In the sermons on St. Michael, where the picture of the angels is drawn, the dragon itself symbolizes only the avaricious, as distinct from the devil, who symbolizes the lustful people, while the Prince of Persia symbolizes the proud.

In the legend of St. George in the *Golden Legend*, the dragon is only a dragon and has first of all a narrative function. In these pages there is a narrative plot and, as readers, we can appreciate the satisfaction given by the final victory of the Good against the Evil forces, after the thrilling scene of the beautiful princess left to the mercy of a horrible dragon. In this sense, in the legend there was a good plot that did its job: ancestral and mythological echoes (Perseus and Andromeda, the monster fed with human flesh, the king's daughter devoted to the sacrifice), parallelisms with secular literature (the knight's struggle with the dragon), and the happy ending (the liberation of the princess and the conversion of the city).

For the preachers, the legend of St. George was a useful tool to draw the picture of the *miles Christi*, the soldier of Christ, who fights against Evil. In this context, the narrative plot is disassembled and some elements are used in three different sermons, forming the picture of the soldier (s. 426), of his arms and enemies (s. 424), and of his struggle against Evil (s. 425). In this last sermon, the dragon is an image used for teaching how sin works and how to resist it. Here the process of carrying out an evil deed is depicted in four parts, correspond-

12. The reference number here relates to the numbering in J. B. Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150-1350* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters 43/1-11), Münster 1969-90.

ing to the hiss, the bite, the poisoned breath and the coil of the dragon's tail. First comes temptation (the hiss); then comes pleasure (the bite). Here we can note that for James the pleasure of the sin comes before: after the sin there is only bitterness. Third comes the action (the poisoned breath), followed by the fourth, the habit (the coil). The sermon is written to give here awareness of this complexity and, in the other *distinctiones*, to show how good men can deal with it, proposing the picture of the elephant fighting the dragon: putting up tears of sorrow (the image of the trunk squirting water), eliminating temptation (the image of the elephant's foot squashing the hissing head of the dragon), opposing Christ's passion to the Devil (the image of the elephant that defends his belly by using its hard back) and for holy men, sacrificing their mortal body (the image of the dying elephant that falls upon the dragon, thus killing it).

THE HOLY CROSS IN HISTORY AND IN THE «GOLDEN LEGEND»

In the *Golden Legend* the legends of the Holy Cross occupy two chapters, corresponding to the two major feasts of the Western Church, the *Inventio Crucis*¹³ (3rd May) and the *Exaltatio Crucis*¹⁴ (14th September).

The feast of the *Inventio Crucis* celebrates the memory of the finding of the Cross in Jerusalem by St. Helen, mother of the emperor Constantine I. The allocutions of Cyril of Jerusalem¹⁵ bear witness that even before the midway point of the 4th century some Cross relics were worshipped in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The same patriarch wrote after 331 to the emperor Constantius II that the Cross has been found during the reign of Constantine, without adding any further information, except the description of its miraculous apparition over the area between the Golgotha and Mount of Olives¹⁶.

13. *Legenda aurea* cit., 64, pp. 514-25.

14. *Ibid.* 131, pp. 1038-47.

15. Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Cathecheses* 4.10, 10.19, 13.4, *PG* 33, col. 467 sq., 685-7, 777.

16. Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus *Epistola ad Constantium imperatorem*, 3, in *PG* 33, col. 1168.

Few years after, Julian the Apostate mentioned the veneration of some Cross relics in his pamphlet against the Christians¹⁷. The *Peregrinatio Aegeriae* confirmed the cult at the end of the 4th century, attesting that in Jerusalem the Good Friday liturgy included the adoration of a Cross relic. The legend of the finding of the Cross arose in Jerusalem in the second half of the 4th century as well, and from here it spread quickly. There were several narrations that followed three general traditions, in which the finding was ascribed to empress Helen alone, or to Protonykes, a hypothetical empress of the first century, or again to St Helen, but with the crucial collaboration of a Jew called Judas who later became bishop of Jerusalem with the name of Cyriacus. The legend of St. Helen merged with the legend of Cyriacus which was circulating in the West since 6th century, creating a hybrid tradition which is attested by a large number of sources and gave an historical background to the feast of the 3rd May¹⁸.

In Jerusalem around 340 a feast began to be celebrated on 14th September, commemorating the dedication of the church on Golgotha where a relic of the Cross was worshipped. In this way the feast of the dedication overlap on the *Memoria crucis*. When the relics spread from Jerusalem to the whole of Christendom, their worship lost any reference to Golgotha. The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross was adopted by the Roman Church only in the 7th century, although Rome, like many other cities, claimed the possession of the relics from long time: Honorius II (625–638) added it as an independent feast to the celebration of the *dies natalis* of the saints Cornelius and Cyprianus (on 14th September), maintaining the name *exaltation* for ὑψωσις or σταυροφάνεια referred to the Elevation and the Exposition of Jerusalem relics. The recovery of the relics of the Cross in 631 by Heraclius and the presence in Rome of a large Greek community were decisive for the introduction of the feast which in the 8th century became widespread in the Frankish reign, evidenced by a number of liturgical and narrative texts.

17. Κατὰ Γαλιλαίων ed. W. C. Wright, London–New York 1923, 194c, p. 373.

18. Attestated in Rufinus (345–410), *Hist. Eccl.*, 10.7–8, in *PL* 21, coll. 475–7), Socrates Constantinopolitanus (380–440), *Hist. Eccl.* 1.17, in *PG* 67, coll. 117 sq.), Sozomenus (5th c., *Hist., Eccl.* 2.1–2, in *PG* 67, coll. 930 sq.), Theodoretus Cyrensis (first half of the 5th c., *Hist. Eccl.* 1.17, in *PG* 82, coll. 958 sq.), Ambrose of Milan (*De obitu Theod.*, 40–49, in *PL* 16, coll. 1399 sq.), Paolinus Nolanus (*Epist.*, 31.4–5) and Sulpicius Severus (*Chron.* 2.22–34.)

The two chapters, *De inventione Crucis* and *De exaltatione Crucis*, provide a good example of how James has worked. We can see in them a close connection with the two main sources of the *Golden Legend* (Jean de Mailly's *Abbreviatio in gestis sanctorum* and Bartholomew of Trent's *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum*), but we can also see how James has made his text more complete, more useful and more interesting than these immediate sources. Unlike his forerunners, James has tried to build an exhaustive picture of Western tradition, digging out also marginal and rare texts, at whose roots there were apocryphal books of the Old testament and local traditions of the *Outremer*.

There are two reasons for this: first of all, these additions were made to give more completeness to the preachers, giving them more material for an appropriate choice of *exempla* and hagiographic material in their sermons; secondly we can also consider the hypothesis that James intended to give more interesting possibilities to his readers.

«DE INVENTIONE SANCTE CRUCIS» AND THE ORIGIN OF THE WOOD OF THE CROSS

James approached the question of the origin of the wood of the Cross in an original way, using the works of Jean de Mailly and Bartholomew of Trent as a starting point, quoting them for the origin of the wood (Bartholomew) and the particulars of the *Inventio crucis* (Jean). He organized the chapter following a complex plan, adding a considerable number of new sources which he revised for a better integration in the structure of the text¹⁹.

In the chapter *De Inventione sancte Crucis* James presents three different traditions about the origin of the wood of the Cross²⁰. The first is the apocryphal

19. The structural difference of the chapters in the works of the three hagiographs is visible even in the length of their texts. See Bartolomeo da Trento, *Liber*, ed. cit., pp. 113-4, Jean de Mailly, ed. cit., pp. 176-82, *Legenda aurea*, ed. cit., pp. 514-25.

20. About this argument, see the studies of A. Graf (in a huger context regarding the journeys to Eden) in *Miti, leggende e superstizioni nel medio evo*, first edition Torino 1892-3, last edition Milano 2002, p. 76; W. Meyer, *Die Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus*, in «Abhandl. d. I. Cl. d. k. Akad. d. Wiss.», XVI Bd. II Abth. (1881), pp. 101-66 and A. Mussafia, *Sulla leggenda del legno della croce*, in «Sitzungsberichte der Wien. Akad. d. Wiss., Philos.-Hist. Cl.», 63 (1869), pp. 165-216. See also the entry *Croix (Invention et exaltation de la vraie)* of H. Leclercq in *Dictionnaire*

*Gospel of Nicodemus*²¹, that is expressly quoted here, as in the chapter about the Resurrection. In this source it is said only that Seth asked for some oil from the tree of mercy to hail his father, but it was refused to him.

We read in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* that when Adam became infirm, his son Seth went to the gates of paradise and begged for some oil from the tree of mercy, with which he might anoint his father's body and restore his health. The archangel Michael appeared to him and said: «Waste no toil or tears trying to obtain oil from the wood of mercy, because there is no way you can acquire it before 5,500 years have gone by!» – this, although it was believed that only 5,199 years had elapsed from Adam's day to Christ's passion²².

If we compare the Latin text of the *Golden Legend* with the text of its source, we can appreciate how James has revised the style of the apocryphal gospel and has uniformed the chronological data with more widespread Western traditions. He had quoted them also before, in the chapter *De nativitate domini*²³, and he recalls them implicitly here, using an uncommon form to define the time of the birth of the Lord (5199 years from Adam to the Nativity, plus 33 years more to the Passion)²⁴.

<i>Legenda aurea</i> , 64, 4–6 ²⁵	<i>Evangelium Nicodemi</i> , XIX ²⁶
Legitur igitur in euangelio Nychodemi quod cum Adam infirmaretur, Seth filius eius portas paradisi terrestres adiit et oleum misericordie quo patris corpus perungeret et sanitatem reciperet postulavit. Cui apparens Michael angelus ait:	Et cum haec audisset protoplastus Adam pater noster quia in Iordane baptizatus est, exclamavit ad filium suum Seth <et> dixit: «Enarra filiis tuis, patriarchis et prophetis omnia quae a Michaele archangel audisti quando te misi ad portas paradise ut

d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie, t. 13/2, Paris 1914, *Dictionnaire d'antiquité*, coll., 3131–9. The most recent study is A. S. Napier, *The History of the Holy Rood Tree*, Whitefish MT, 2007.

21. *Evangelium Nicodemi* is the name with which the *Apocryphal Acts of Pylatus* (whose essential nucleus dates back to 4th and 5th c.), were called since the 10th century.

22. *Legenda aurea*, ed. cit. p. 515.

23. *Ibid.*, 6, 19 f., ed. cit., p. 76.

24. *Ibid.*, 6, 1, ed. cit., p. 74: «Natiuitas domini nostri Ihesu Christi secundum carnem, ut quidam aiunt, completis ab Adam V milibus CCXXVIII annis uel secundum alios VI milibus uel secundum Eusebium Cesariensem in chronicis suis V milibus CIC tempore Octauiani imperatoris facta est».

25. *Ibid.*, ed. cit., p. 514.

26. Text edited by H. C. Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus. Gesta Salvatoris*, Toronto 1973, pp. 37–8.

<p>«Noli laborare nec flere pro oleo ligni misericordie obtinendo, quia nullatenus illud assequi poteris nisi quando completi fuerint quinque milia quingenti anni», licet ab Adam usque ad passionem Christi anni tantum V milia CIC et XXXIII fluxisse credantur.</p>	<p>deprecareris Deum, quatenus transmitteret tibi angelum suum, ut daret tibi oleum de arbore misericordiae et perungeres corpus meum cum essem infirmus». Tunc Seth adpropinquans sanctis patriarchi set prophetis dixit: «Ego Seth cum essem orans Dominum ad portas paradisi, et ecce angelus Domini Michael apparuit mihi dicens: 'Ego missus sum ad te a Domino, ego sum constitutus super corpus humanum. Tibi dico enim, Seth, Noli laborare lacrimis orando et deprecando propter oleum ligni misericordiae ut perunguas patrem tuum Adam pro dolore corporis sui, quia nullo modo poteris ex eo accipere nisi in novissimis temporibus quando completi fuerint v milia et d anni.</p>
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The second tradition is introduced with the words *legitur quoque alibi* and relates that the angel gave Seth a shoot from the tree and ordered him to plant it on the Mount of Lebanon. Here the source is the *Liber Epilogorum* of Bartholomew of Trent, but James, as usual for the quotations of the friars of the Dominican Order, does not quote expressly the name of Bartholomew, but writes only a short introductory note²⁷.

<p><i>Legenda aurea</i>, 64, 7²⁸</p>	<p>Bartholomaeus Tridentinus, <i>Liber Epilogorum</i>²⁹</p>
<p>Legitur quoque alibi quod angelus eidem ramusculum quendam obtulit et iussit ut in monte Libani plantaretur.</p>	<p>Adam, morti appropinquans, filium suum Seth misisse legitur ad paradisi locum, ut ab angelo custode exquireret medelam sue sanitatis et salutis. Qui ei ramusculum obtulit et iussit ut in Monte Libani plantaretur.</p>

The third tradition quoted in the *Golden Legend* is introduced with the words *in quadam hystoria graecorum licet apocrypha legitur* and it was rather rare in

27. In the *Golden Legend* there is only an exception to this use in the chapter *De nativitate domini* (6, 19 and 37, ed. cit., p. 76, 78), due to a disagreement about the reliability of the apocryphal gospels. See G. P. Maggioni, *La littérature apocryphe dans la «Légende Dorée» et dans ses sources directes. L'interprétation d'une chaîne de transmission culturelle*, in «Apocrypha», 19 (2008), pp. 146–81.

28. *Legenda aurea*, ed. cit., p. 514.

29. Bartolomeo da Trento, *Liber...*, ed. cit., p. 113

Latin Western Europe in 13th century. According this tale, the angel gave Seth a shoot and told him that when it would bear fruit, his father would be healed. But on his return Seth found Adam dead and planted the branch over the mound where his father was buried.

In a certain admittedly apocryphal history of the Greeks we read that the angel gave him a branch from the tree under which Adam committed his sin, informing him that when that branch bore fruit, his father would be made whole. When Seth went back and found his father dead, he planted the branch over Adam's grave, where it grew to be a great tree and was still standing in Solomon's time. Whether any of this is true we leave to the reader's judgment, because none of it is found in any authentic chronicle or history³⁰.

Among other things, it is very interesting that James, as in the other chapters where he deals with apocryphal materials³¹, inserted his narration in a sort of brackets formed through the opposite terms *apocrypha* / *authentica*. About the source, that here remains uncertain, we can note that here some details are specified: a) it is an oriental tradition; b) it is absent in any 'official' contemporary chronicle or history.

If we consider that in the *Golden Legend* it is a branch that is given to Seth and if we compare the texts, we can define as a possible source the writer called 'Adelphus' (ca. 1180), identified by Adalbert Daniel in his *Thesaurus Hymnologicus*³² and quoted by Adolfo Mussafia – as a source of the 12th century – in his study *Sulla leggenda del legno della croce*³³.

<i>Legenda aurea</i> , 64, 7 ³⁴	Adelphus ³⁵
In quadam uero hystoria Grecorum licet apocrypha legitur quod angelus de ligno	Cum Adam moriturus esset misit filium suum Seth ad angelum custodem para-

30. Translation by W. G. Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, Princeton 1993, I, p. 277.

31. G. P. Maggioni, *Appelli al lettore e definizioni di apocrifo nella «Legenda aurea»*. *A margine della leggenda di Giuda Iscariota*, in «Studi Medievali», 36 (1995), pp. 241–53.

32. *Thesaurus Hymnologicus sive Hymnorum Canticorum Sequentiarum circa annum MD usitatarum collectio amplissima*, cur. H. A. Daniel, Lipsiae 1855, I, p. 80. In this collection the quotation is introduced through the note: «Arbor vocatur crux saepissime apud antiquos: inde fluxit sine dubio fabula perpulchra, quam commemorat Adelphus».

33. A. Mussafia, *Sulla leggenda del legno della croce* cit., pp. 171–2.

34. *Legenda aurea*, ed. cit., p. 514.

35. Ed. in Mussafia, *Sulla leggenda del legno della croce* cit., cfr. n. 32.

<p>in quo peccauit Adam eidem tradidit dicens quod quando faceret fructum pater sanaretur. Qui rediens et patrem mortuum inueniens ipsum ramum super tumulum patris plantauit; qui plantatus in arborem magnam creuit et usque ad Salomonis tempora perdurauit. Vtrum autem hec uera sint, lectoris iudicio relinquatur, cum in nulla Cronaca nec hystoria autentica ista legantur.</p>	<p>disi, ut daret ei lignum scientie boni et mali de arbore vite in quo peccasset. Et angelus dedit ei ramum. Et cum filius portasset ad patrem, ipse erat mortuus. Qui cum reperisset vita functum plantauit ramum super sepulcrum patris. Et decursis multis retro temporibus cum Salomo aedificaret templum domini, abscisda fuit arbor illa, quae non potuit ad aliquam templi partem coaptari: quare ponebatur super flumen pro transitu. Et postea venit regina de Saba, cum donis et muneribus: videns hoc lignum pedibus transire noluit quia cognovit redemptorem mundi passurum in hoc ligno. Post multum autem temporis Iudaei hoc lignum accipientes proiecerunt in lacum putridum, ubi facta fuit piscina; in quam angelus descendit secundum tempus et movebat aquas piscinae et sanabatur ibi qui primo ingressus erat, ut habetur Io.V. Et ibi remansit ad usque tempus dominice passionis</p>
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On the other hand, a derivation from the *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of Saint-Omer is less probable, unless we suppose a contamination to explain the differences with the text of the *Golden Legend* (for instance the fact that Adam is still alive when Seth returns):

Adam cum fere esset nongentorum triginta annorum se asseruit moriturum sed langore detineri grauissimo quoadusque sentiret ligni odorem, quo Deum in paradiso offenderat. Dixitque Seth filio suo: Vade contra Orientem supra ripam Oceani et extensis in celum manibus Deum inuoca, et forsitan inuenies huius rei auxilium. Qui cum patris iussa implisset, asportatus in paradysum ab angelo de ligno supradicto ramo distracto reportatus est et ad patrem ueniens, odore ligni refectus obiit. Deinde Seth ramum plantauit, creuitque in arborem et usque ad Salomonis tempora perdurauit. Architectores autem templi uidentes lignum arboris pulchrum et aptum exciderunt illud sed reprobatum est ab edificantibus, sicut lapis qui factus est in caput anguli, et iacuit ibi uacuum per spatium mille nonaginta annorum, uidelicet usque ad Christum. De quo ligno crux Christi facta est, ut per quod seducti fuimus nos Filius Dei redimeret Ihesus Christus dominus noster³⁶.

36. Lamberti S. Audomari Canonici *Liber Floridus*. *Codex autographus Bibliothecae Universitatis*

Clearly, the definition *hystoria Graecorum* seems to match the *Outremer* reports and the legend of the wood of Cross (probably) originated and (surely) grew in the context of the Crusades. We have also to consider that James used the same definition in the ch. *De passione domini* of the *Golden Legend* (51, 143–4) for the same argument, in a passage where the reference to the *Otia Imperialia* of Gervasius of Tilbury seems clear. Gervasius of Tilbury uses the same form speaking of the Cross and Jerusalem, introducing another narration about the arrival of the branch in the Holy City³⁷. Besides the abbot Adelphus quoted by Daniel / Mussafia, the source of the *Golden Legend* could have been a text akin to the descriptions of the wonders of the Holy Land and, in particular, of the sacred places of Jerusalem as, for instance, *La citez de Jherusalem*. But even this source does not correspond completely to the *Golden Legend*, since the branch is not planted actually over the grave, but it is gripped by Adam with the teeth.

Or vos dirai de cele piece de fust dont ele vint, si con on dist el pais. Il avint chose c'Adans jut el lit mortel, si pria un de ses fix por deu qu'il li aportast un ransel de l'arbre don't il avoit mangé del fruit. quant il pecha. Il li aporta et il le prist, si le mist en sa bouche. quant il l'ot en sa bouche, il estrainst les dens e l'arme s'en ala, n'onques cel rainsel ne lit pot esragier des dens, ains fu enfois atot. Cis rainsiaus, si com on dist, reprist et devint bel arbre, e quant ce vint que li deluives fu, si esraga cis arbres e le mena li diluives el mont Liban. e d'ilueques fu il menés en Jherusalem avec le mairien, dont li temples fu fais, qui fu tailliés el mont de Liban³⁸.

We must also consider that texts as *La citez de Jherusalem* in a manner of speaking were naturally predisposed to be inserted in the Crusade reports, as, for instance, in the William of Tyrus' continuation in the Rothelin manuscript³⁹.

Gandavensis, ed. A. Derolez, Gandavi 1968, f. 2r. See Derolez, *The Autograph Manuscript of the Liber Floridus. A Key to the Encyclopedia of Lambert of Saint-Omer*, Turnhout 1998 (Autographa Medii Aevi 4). I thank here Costanza Luisa Cipollaro for her precious hints.

37. *Otia imperialia*, Dec. III, cap. CV, ed. Leibnitz, cit., p. 1000. See infra, pp. 201–2.

38. Text edited by T. Tobler, *Descriptiones terrae sanctae*, Leipzig 1874, pp. 216–7. Followed by W. Meyer, *Die Geschichte* cit., pp. 118–9.

39. *Continuation de Guillaume de Tyr, de 1229 a 1261, dite du manuscrit de Rothelin*, in RHC Occ, 2, c. IX p. 503: «Or vous dirai de cele piece de fust don tele vint, si comme l'en dit, el paiz. Il avinta chose que Adanz jut on li tmortel, si pria a l'un de ses fiz que, pour l'amor de Dieu, li aportast .i. rainsel de l'arbre de coi il avoit mangié del fruit, quant il pecha. On li aporta, et il le

The current state of the researches, it seems, allows us only to formulate hypothesis: certainty about the exact source seems to be unachievable and maybe Meyer's words about this passage of the *Golden Legend* are still appropriate today⁴⁰: *Wöher Jacobus dies nahm, weiss ich nicht*.

THE TRADITION BEFORE THE «GOLDEN LEGEND»

As Meyer wrote⁴¹, before the 13th century in Latin Europe there is no evidence of the legend of the wood of the Holy Cross, since this tradition grew and probably originated in the context of the Crusades and spread and became prevailing just with James (and, to a lesser degree, with Gervasius of Tilbury and Iohannes de Mandeville).

Three texts, among the 12th century books which were for a long time works of reference for scholastic and ecclesiastical scholars, dealt with the legend of the Cross: the *Speculum ecclesiae* of Honorius, the *Summa de divinis officiis* of Iohannes Belet and the *Historia scholastica* of Petrus Comestor underlie almost all the later developments of the legend.

But Honorius doesn't refer the wood of the Cross to the tree of Knowledge, but rather to the log that God showed to Moses to sweeten the water of Mara in Ex. 15, 23-5, describing also how this piece of wood was transported to Jerusalem and was thrown in the pool of Bethesda.

Cum populus de Aegypto transiret atque in heremo aquam propter amaritudinem bibere nequiret, Dominus Moysi lignum ostendit, quod in aqua missum eam in dulcedinem convertit.

Populus qui per Moysen de Aegypto ad patriam regreditur, est Christianus populus qui per Christum de hoc mundo ad patriam paradysi revertitur. Cui aquam per lignum indulcoravit, quia ei mors per crucem levigatur. Sicut enim aqua cuncta quae rapit gur-

prist et le mist en sa bouche, et quant il l'ost mis dedenz sa bouche, si estraint les denz et l'ame s'en ala. Ne onques quant il fu morz, cel rainssel ne li pot on esraichier des denz. Ainz fu enfouiz a tout cel rainssel, si comme l'en dist. Il reprint, si devint .i. biaux arbres. Et quant ce vint que li deluges, si esracha cel arbre, et le mena cil deluge el monte de Libane. Et d'illeucques fu il menez en Jherusalem oveques le merrien dont il temples fu faiz, qui fu tailliez el mont de Libanne».

40. W. Meyer, *Die Geschichte* cit., p. 124.

41. Ibid., p. 105.

giti involvens post se trahit, ita mors omnia quae rapuit in gurgitem baratri traxit. Unde et priori populo amara erat, quia eos ad amaritudinem poenarum traxerat. Sed Dominus Moysi, quod de aqua assumptus sonat, lignum ostendit, dum populo de aqua baptismatis assumpto virtutem sanctae crucis innotuit. Quo ligno aqua fit potabilis, quia amore crucis Christi fit mors multis optabilis, dum sperant se exutos corpore vestiri stola immortalitatis. Lignum hoc aquae inditur, dum crux morte Christi intinguitur. Ipse tunc de torrente huius aquae in via bibebat, cum in cruce pendens quae non rapuit exsolvebat.

Fertur quod istud lignum Hierusalem sit allatum atque in piscinam probaticam jactatum. Ob cujus reverentiam angelus singulis annis in piscinam descendit, aquam movit, et quicumque languidus primus in aquam descendit, sanus exiit. Tempore autem Dominicæ passionis piscina siccitate exaruit et illud lignum apparuit. Militibus vero quaerentibus lignum ad crucem habile, inventum est per omnia aptabile. Hoc ergo sumpto, crucem inde fecerunt, humeris Christi portandam imposuerunt, eumque ad salvationem populi ut serpentem in deserto in ipso exaltaverunt⁴².

On the other hand, the relation between the wood of the Cross and Paradise is quoted in the *Summa* of Iohannes Beleth, who deals of Seth's journey to the gates of Eden. As the *Golden Legend*, in this short passage Iohannes Beleth defines the branch as originate from the Paradise and writes that it was planted on the ground, but we must consider that here Adam is only suffering from gout and there is no mention of his death.

Legitur quod Adam guttam passus misit filium suum in paradisum, et datum sibi ramum ab angelo detulit et illius arboris cognoscens misterium terre affixit, et in magnam arborem producta est. Postea uero, cum in templi edificatione de diuersis partibus mundi arbores afferrentur, allata est ista et relictam tamquam inutilis. Vnde postea facta est quasi salebra super quasdam foueas ciuitatis, quam cum Saba regina uidisset, noluit transire, sed adorauit⁴³.

The *Historia Scholastica* deals with the Cross in two different chapters and in neither of them the origin of the wood of the Cross is expressly described. But we must note that Petrus Comestor defines the four different woods that formed the Cross and contradicts implicitly the legend of the Tree of Knowledge as origin of its wood. Given the authoritativeness of the *Historia*

42. Honorius Augustodunensis, *Speculum ecclesiae*, in *PL* 174, col. 944.

43. Iohannes Beleth, *Summa de Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, ed. H. Duteil (CCCM, 41-41 A), Turnhout 1976, c. 151.

scholastica, all later ecclesiastical writers – and James among them – would consider the four woods tradition in their work.

The first quotation in the *Historia scholastica* is in *III Reg.* and deals with the recognition of the wood by the queen of Sheba.

Tradunt quidam eam rescripsisse Salomoni, quod praesentialiter ei dicere timuit, se vidisse scilicet quoddam lignum in domo Saltus, in quo suspendendus erat quidam, pro cuius morte regnum Iudaeorum periret, et certis indiciiis illud regi indicavit. Quod timens Salomon in profundissimis terrae visceribus occultavit illud. Pro cuius virtute aqua mota sanavit aegrotos, quod tamen in libris suis negant se habere Hebraei. Sed quomodo circa tempora Christi in probatica piscina superenataverit incertum est (Joan.V), et creditur fuisse hoc lignum crucis Dominicae⁴⁴.

The second quotation is in the Gospel history, where there is the description of the parts of the Cross and their wood:

Dicuntur autem in cruce domini fuisse quatuor ligna diuersa et forte in totidem diversis generibus: lignum erectum, transversum, tabula superposita, truncus quidam, cui infixata erat crux, qui in rupe defossus fuit. Invenitur enim lignum dominicae crucis et palmae et cipressi et, ut quidam tradunt, olivae et cedri⁴⁵.

Earlier than the 12th century and before the magisterial texts of Honorius, Iohannes Beleth and Peter Comestor, there were only few occasional and marginal hints, with one exception, quoted by James in the first part of the chapter: the above mentioned *Gospel of Nicodemus* that dealt with Seth at the Gates of Eden, but also with the angel who refused to give him the oil from the Tree of Mercy. Related to this text there was also an apocryphal text of the Old Testament, the *Vita Adae*, that in a late and collateral tradition⁴⁶, (today attested only through 15th century manuscripts), interpolated some words to describe what Seth had obtained after having moved the angel to pity:

44. *Historia Scholastica*, III Reg. 26, in *PL* 198, col. 1369.

45. *Historia Scholastica*, Ev. 172, in *PL* 198, col. 1630.

46. Edited by W. Meyer, *Vita Adae et Evae*, in «Abhandl. d. k. Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss. zu München», I Cl. 14 (1879). English tradition was studied by J. H. Mozley, *The «Vita Adae»*, in «Journal of Theological Studies», 30 (1929), pp. 121–49. Mussafia, op. cit., p. 169, quotes the MS Wien ÖNB 1628 of the 14th century. The passage in question is quoted by Meyer in *Geschichte* cit., p. 120. See also Graf, *Miti, leggende e superstizioni nel medio evo* cit., p. 49.

Continuo discessit angelus ab eo in paradisum *et attulit ramusculum trium foliorum fractum de arbore scientiae per quam expulsi fuerant Adam et Eva de paradiso* reversusque ad Seth dedit ei dicens: haec porta patri tui ad refrigerium et solatium corporis sui.

But we must consider also that in the same tradition the branch slips out of Seth's hand and fall in the river Jordan:

Et factum est dum Eua et Seth transirent aquam Jordanis, ecce ramus quem dederat ei angelus cecidit in medium fluminis.

Anyway, this legend attested in family III of the *Vita Adae* can hardly be considered to be earlier than the 13th century, when it merged in a particular tradition of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* witnessed in a manuscript family different from the one used as source in the first part of the chapter of the *Golden Legend*.

Other writers at the end of the 13th century dealt with the paradisiacal origin of the wood of the Cross, each with an original approach and referring to different traditions. Apart from the aforementioned Adelphus and Lambertus of Saint-Omer's *Liber Floridus*, one sees for instance that Godfrey of Viterbo wrote of it in his *Pantheon*⁴⁷, but the tradition he reported is so rare and obscure that Arturo Graf defined it as invented *ex novo*. In Godfrey's narration was a son of Noah, Jonitus (or, more probably, Jonicus) who traveled to the Gates of Eden and brought back three branches of three different trees: fir, palm and cypress. Jonitus planted them, and the three shoots joined together in a single tree which had three colours and three kind of leaves, thus symbolizing the Holy Trinity. Many centuries later, the Cross was made with these woods.

Gervasius of Tilbury dealt as well with the Cross and the origin of its woods in two different chapters of his *Otia imperialia*, a work written for the emperor Otto IV to illustrate several wonders of the creation and of the human history. In the initial part of the first passage Gervasius resumes basically the tradition of Iohannes Beleth and Petrus Comestor, but at the end he closes quoting a different tradition:

47. Godofridus Viterbiensis, *Pantheon*, XIV, in *Rerum Germanicarum Scriptores*, II, Ratisbonae 1726, p. 242. Quoted also in Meyer, *Vita Adae* cit. pp. 112–14. See Mussafia, *Sulla leggenda del legno della croce* cit., pp. 177–8.

sed alii dicunt Adam de Paradiso tulisse pomum uel surculum ligni vetiti, ex cuius semente fuit crux ut, unde mors oriebatur, inde vita resurgeret, ut legitur super Matheum in glossa⁴⁸.

But Gervasius doesn't mention the place where the seed (or the shoot) was planted and neither gives any information about Adam's death and burial. Even his quotation of a Glossa on Matthew remains obscure⁴⁹.

In another passage of *Otia imperialia* Gervasius quotes, as does the *Golden Legend*, a *traditio Graecorum*, but he is as vague as the Dominican friar and tells only how the branch was transported to Jerusalem, without explaining the circumstances:

Traditio Graecorum habet, quod de arbore illa, in cuius fructu peccavit Adam, ramus fuit translatus in Jerusalem, qui in tantam excrevit arborem, quod de illo facta est crux domini⁵⁰.

In another of the most important sources of the *Golden Legend*, the *Tractatus de diversis materiis praedicabilibus*, a huge repertory of preaching material, the Dominican friar Stephen of Bourbon combined, with slight modifications, both the traditions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and of Iohannes Belet's *Summa*.

In the *Tractatus* Adam, suffering from gout, sent his son Seth to the Gates of Eden. After a first refusal, the archangel Michael, moved by Seth's tears, gave him a branch from the Tree of the Knowledge to be planted in the Promised Land. A tree grew from this shoot and this tree was rejected during the construction of the Temple, being utilized as a sort of kneeler. The same wood was object of a prediction of the queen of Sheba and consequently buried deep inside the Earth.

Legitur in antiquis historiis et cronicis quod Adam senex guttam patiebatur; et misit filium suum Sethum ad orientalem plagam, ad portam paradisi terrestris, ut rogaret

48. *Otia imperialia*, Dec. III, cap. LIV. The passage is quoted from F. Liebrecht's commented edition of selected pages F, Gervasius von Tilbury, *Otia imperialia*, Hannover 1856, pp. 25-6 (commented at p. 125). In the unabridged text edited by Leibnitz, the passage is at p. 977. See W. Meyer, cit. p. 117-8. See A. Mussafia, *Sulla leggenda del legno della croce* cit., pp. 165-6.

49. See the remark of F. Liebrecht: 'was für eine *Glossa super Mattheum* Gervasius meint, weiss ich nicht zu sagen' (cit., p. 125).

50. *Otia imperialia*, Dec. III, cap. CV, ed. Leibnitz, cit., p. 1000. See Meyer, cit. pp. 117-8. See also Mussafia, *Sulla leggenda del legno della croce* cit., pp. 165-6.

angelum, custodem ejus, ut daret sibi de oleo vel liquore manante de arbore misericordie, quam viderat in paradiso, ut de illo liquore ungeretur et curaretur. Cui respondit angelus quod diceret patri quod expectaret patienter usquequo veniret Christus, qui credentes in se ungeret oleo misericordie sue, per cujus unctionem consequeretur salutem eternam. Instanti autem Seth precibus et fletibus dedit ramum illius arboris, quem pater suus plantavit in terra promissionis, et crevit in arborem mirabilem; que, cum fuisset accisa, Salomone edificante templum, cum non haberet in eo locum, fecit de ea reclinatorium in eo ad orandum; de quo cum diceret regina Saba quod in eo suspenderetur rex Jerusalem sub quo regnum Judeorum deficeret in ejus morte, abscondit illud, ut in terra putresceret sepultus. Et cum, in loco ubi erat, fieret Probatice piscina, superenatavit tempore Passionis; quod invenientes Judei, super humeros Domini imposuerunt; quo bajulante eum, pars crucis de eo facta est in altum erecta⁵¹.

On the other hand, Stephen of Bourbon closes his narration with an elegant expression which uttered his rational doubts, but betrayed also the fascination for this tale:

Quod si verum est, pulcherrimum est.

FORMER «LEGENDAE NOVAE»: JEAN OF MAILLY AND BARTHOLOMEW OF TRENT

The two forerunners (and main sources) of the *Golden Legend*, Jean of Mailly's *Abbreviatio in gestis sanctorum* and Bartholomew of Trent's *Liber epilogorum* are rather concise, trying to formulate the most simple and most coherent synthesis.

A critical and sometime sceptic approach to the traditional sources is one of the characteristics of Jean of Mailly's work. Here he chose to omit the entire tradition about the wood of the Cross, actually based on apocryphal or non authoritative texts, preferring to concentrate his chapter only on the finding of the Cross by Saint Helen. Among the traditional antecedents, he wrote only of the recognition by the queen of Sheba and of her letter to Solomon. But

51. Stephanus de Borbone, *Tractatus de diversis materiis praedicabilibus*, ed. A. Lecoy de la Marche, Paris 1877, pp. 425-6. J. Berlioz e J.-L. Eichenlaub are publishing a unabridged critical edition. So far the first and the third parts have been published (*Prima pars* CC CM 124, Turnhout 2002; *Tertia pars* CC CM 124B, Turnhout 2006).

even so he had to deal with the evident contradiction between the two passages of the *Historia Scholastica*: if the Cross was built with the table recognized by the queen of Sheba, how can it be possible that according to the same text it was formed through four different woods? For Jean, the solution is in the composite nature of the Cross, formed by four different segments:

Vnde mirum quatuor fuisse ligna in cruce domini nisi forte ut dicit hystoria scholastica in totidem diuersis generibus, scilicet lignum erectum et transuersum et tabula superposita et truncus cui infixi est⁵².

In addition, Jean quoted a slight different opinion of Gregory of Tours, who referred in his *Liber miraculorum*⁵³ of the board upon which Christ rested his feet; he also recovered a mnemonic verse, inspired by the *Historia Scholastica*, to help the preachers to remember the four different woods:

Vel ut dicit Gregorius Turonensis tabula que transuersa fuit sub pedibus Christi. Inuenitur enim lignum dominice crucis palme, cypressi, oliue et cedri. Vnde uersus: 'Ligna crucis palma, cedrus, cypressus, oliua'⁵⁴.

Bartholomew has a completely different approach to the tradition. In the *Liber epilogorum* the chapter *De inuentione sanctae Crucis* is tripartite and the part where the origin of the wood of the Cross is discussed is, more or less, equal in length to the description of the finding of the Cross. We can note that Bartholomew chose to close the chapter with a passage about the devotion that was due to the relics of the Cross conserved in so many places of Western Europe: as elsewhere in his *Liber*, he is very far from the historically impersonal approach of Jean and shows here his sincere devotion to the saints and their relics.

Like the Dominican Stephen of Bourbon and, before him, Gervase of Tilbury, in the first part of the chapter Bartholomew deals with the shoot obtained by Seth, presenting the narrative until the emersion in the pool of Bethesda; but he adds to the traditional narration a particular that – it seems – was until then unknown, identifying the place where the shoot was planted

52. Jean de Mailly, *Abbreviatio* cit., 63, 102.

53. Gregorius Turonensis, *Liber miraculorum*, I, 5, ed. B. Krusch, in MGH, *Script. rer. Mer.* I, 2, Hannover 1885, p. 45.

54. Jean de Mailly, *Abbreviatio* cit., 63, 102.

with the Mount of Lebanon. In this text there is no place for perplexity or doubt. On the contrary, the writer explains distinctly that the (apparent) contradiction in the tradition is not so perturbing and describes the motley nature of the Cross. The difference between Bartholomew and Jean de Mailly and his words (*it is rather unbelievable, unless we say...*) is evident.

Adam, morti appropinquans, filium suum Seth misisse legitur ad paradisi locum, ut ab angelo custode exquireret medelam sue sanitatis et salutis. Qui ei ramusculum obtulit et iussit ut in Monte Libani plantaretur. Ex quo arbor oritur, que postea in domo saltus posita et a regina Saba cognita, per eam Salomoni intimatur quod in illa suspendendus esset quidam, pro cuius morte regnum Iudeorum deleteretur. Salomon igitur in profundissimis uisceribus terre illud lignum iubet demergi, ubi aquas Syloe fecerunt; et hac occasione motionem aque et sanitates ibi fieri estimantur.

Tempore uero dominice passionis supernatauit, et uidentes illud aptum, crucem Domini exinde parauerunt. (Nec moueat quemquam si diuersa genera lignorum legerit in cruce fuisse; nam quatuor fuerunt frusta crucis : truncus lapidi impositus, lignum erectum, transuersum, tabula). Post Domini resurrectionem crux Christi et alie latro-num defosse fuerunt, et per ducentos annos et ultra occulte⁵⁵.

The words of Bartholomew defending the countless (possibly too countless) relics of the Cross are noteworthy as well:

Nec mirari oportet si in diuersis partibus de cruce habetur ; ligna enim fuerunt grandia et in multas poterant partes scindi. Fidelibus etiam dico non esse indignandum de reliquiarum certitudine; scio quidem quod qui amore mei honoraret lapidem, michi impensum reputarem honorem⁵⁶.

THE «GOLDEN LEGEND» AND THE REINTERPRETATION OF THE TRADITION

As we have seen, the *Golden Legend* is the point of convergence of all these traditions. First of all, James gathered the work of his Dominican brothers, preserving the particular features (the mnemonic verse from the *Abbreviatio*, the mount Lebanon from the *Liber*) and inserting them in a complex general frame, where there was a place for the Vulgate tradition and also for the apocryphal and marginal tales as well. But we can note as well that he not only

55. Bartolomeo da Trento, *Liber* cit., p. 113.

56. Ibid., p. 114.

recovered from the original texts some details that had been omitted in the synthetic epitomes of his forerunners, but also completed and coordinated the text with particulars that until then were scattered in different and unrelated books. In this coherent and structured frame even the apocryphal tradition of the wood of the Cross found a sort of authoritative acknowledgement. James writes clearly that it is an apocryphal tradition and recommends caution in reading it (and, consequently, in preaching it), but at the same time he transcribes the legend as well and contributes at most to its widespread circulation, giving it an authoritativeness, even if indirectly reflected, that will bring it on the walls painted by Agnolo Gaddi (in Santa Croce in Florence) and by Piero della Francesca (in San Francesco in Arezzo).

THE CHAPTER «DE EXALTATIONE CRUCIS» AND THE VICTORY OF HERACLIUS IN THE «GOLDEN LEGEND»

The same approach to the former hagiographical tradition and the same working method is visible in the chapter *De exaltatione Crucis* of the *Golden Legend*: also in these pages James has used as starting point the work of his forerunners (especially Jean de Mailly), integrating his sources with original texts and marginal traditions very rare in Western Europe⁵⁷. The existing Vulgate tradition, transmitted through the authoritative *Summa* of John Belet and widespread in almost all the former chronicles, described the Jerusalem sack by the Persian king Chosroes, the following campaign of Heraclius, his victorious fight against a son of the king and, finally, the assignment of the Persian kingdom to a younger son of Chosroes. The same Vulgate tradition was collected by the two forerunners of James, who inserted it in the *Golden Legend* together with many other sources.

Like the chapter *De inventione sanctae Crucis*, these pages are also rather elaborate. After an introductory part in the style of the sermons, there is a bipartite section about the recovery of the Cross, followed through a large group of

57. For Heraclius' military campaigns and the recovering of the Cross, see A. Frolov, *La vraie Croix et les expéditions d'Heraclius en Perse*, in «Revue d'Etudes Byzantines», 11 (1953) pp. 88-105.

exempla. The main section is divided into two parts where James deals with the Vulgate story and a very rare tradition, almost unknown in Western Europe.

The first legend⁵⁸ was widespread. The primary source was the text called *Exaltatio crucis*⁵⁹, that had a huge diffusion in the Latin tradition through the authority of John Beleth⁶⁰: according to this legend, king Chosroes stole the Cross and placed it in a tower of gold and silver, where he was honoured as a god. Because of the extreme concision of John Beleth's text, James chose here as main source the *Abbreviatio* of Jean de Mailly, who gave a huge summary of the *Exaltatio*, integrating it with some passage of the original text and some chronological data. We can note that both Jean de Mailly and Bartholomew from Trent considered only the main tradition and added to it two different selections of *exempla* that James transcribed entirely and integrated with other hagiographical material.

On the other hand, the second tradition quoted in the *Golden Legend* is rather rare⁶¹. As the apocryphal tale in the chapter *De inventione*, this passage is closed in a sort of parentheses, between the words *Some chronicles, however, give a different version of these events...* and *So we read in many chronicles*. According to this version, a son of Cosroes rebelled against his father and killed him and his brother, returning voluntarily war prisoners and spoils (the Cross and the patriarch of Jerusalem among them) to Heraclius.

58. *Leg. Aur.*, ed. cit., 131, 15-44, pp. 1038-41.

59. *BHL* 4178. Edited in Mombricitus, *Vitae sanctorum*, I, pp. 379-81.

60. Iohannes Beleth, *Summa* cit., 151: «Exaltatio sancte crucis dicitur: Quia Cosdroes rex Persarum Ierosolimam uenit et lignum dominicum se cum tulit et facta domo celo simili sibi in ea sedem fecit et lignum a dextris posuit loco Filii, gallum uero a sinistris loco Spiritus Sancti posuit et ipse stans in medio se Deum uocari iussit, quod audiens Eraclius imperator Romanus aciem mouit et iuxta Danubium, qui fluuius est Persarum, non hunc, qui in Sueuia nascitur - sed aliquis forte ex his partibus ueniens in illas nomine huius uocauit illum, sicut Troiani fecisse leguntur -, inde uicto filio Cosdroe singulari certamine crucem Domini tulit, et cum appropinquaret Ierosolimam, porte ciuitatis per se clause sunt, ne intraret. Quod cum uehementer admiraretur, audita est uox de celo dicens Regem regum non sic intrasse Ierusalem faleratum, sed humilem et super asinam sedentem. Et statim recognoscens elationem suam de equo descendit et humiliatus est ualde. Et porte sponte ei aperte sunt, et nudis pedibus ciuitatem intrauit. Et in eius introitu multi diuersorum genere morborum detenti per crucem curati sunt. Vnde crucem exaltauit».

61. *Leg. Aur.*, ed. cit., 131, 45-55, pp. 1041-43.

In chronicis autem hoc aliter gestum fuisse narratur. Dicitur enim quod dum Cosdroe uniuersa regna occupans Iherusalem cum Zacharia patriarcha et ligno crucis cepisset et Eraclius cum eo pacem facere uellet, iurauit ille se cum Romanis pacem non facturum donec crucifixum abnegarent et solem adorarent. Tunc Eraclius zelo arma Tesiphontem fugere compulit. Tandem Cosdroe dissenteriam incurrens Merdasan filium suum in regem coronare uoluit. Quod Syrois eius primogenitus audiens cum Eraclio fedus iniit patremque cum nobilibus persequens in uinculis iecit, quem 'pane tribulationis et aqua angustie' sustentans tandem sagittari et occidi fecit. Postmodum autem omnes incarceratos cum patriarcha et ligno crucis Eraclio destinauit. Ille autem pretiosum lignum crucis Iherusalem detulit et postmodum Constantinopolim deportauit. Hec in multis chronicis leguntur⁶².

The text of the *Golden Legend* is more complete than the *Abbreviatio* or the *Liber epilogorum*: the rare tale that is added here to the main tradition comes probably from the *Historia Romana* of Landulphus Sagax. We know today very little about this author: he wrote surely before 1023, probably at Benevento, maybe for a Beneventan prince. It remained a very rare source to the people of the 13th century as well. Landulphus wrote an alternate version of the recovering of the Cross, different from the victory of Heraclius and, so present historians say, more corresponding to the truth. The Cross wasn't recovered through a military campaign by Heraclius, but it was voluntarily offered by Cosroes' son as sign of peace, after having killed his father. Landulphus describes the event in these terms:

Porro misit Syrois ad eum Satrapas hunc iniuriis impetendum et conspuendum, et ductum Merdasan filium eius, quem coronare uolebat, ante se occidit, et reliquos filios eius cunctos in conspectu ipsius interemerunt, et misit omnem inimicum eius iniuriis cumulare et percutere et conspuere illum. Denique per quinque dies hoc facto iussit Syrois hunc arcubus interficere; sicque paulatim in malis nequissimam suam tradidit animam. Tunc Syrois scripsit ad Heraclium euangelizans ei scelerati Chosrois interitum pacemque iugem cum eo ac firmissimam pepigit, omnibus Christianis qui in carceribus et omni Perside captiui tenebantur ei remissis una cum Zacharia Hierosolimitano presule ac pretiosis et uiuificis lignis que fuerunt ex Hierosolimis a Sarbazan cum Hierusalem cepisset ablatam⁶³.

Probably the source used by Landulphus was a text called *Account of the Sack of Jerusalem*, written in Greek by an eyewitness, Antiochus⁶⁴, who explained expressly

62. *Leg. Aur.*, ed. cit., 131, 45–52, pp. 1041–43.

63. Landolfo Sagax, *Historia Romana*, Roma 1912–13 (Fonti per la Storia d'Italia 49–50), II, p. 127.

64. Edited by N. Marr in *Antioch Stratig, Plenitudo Ierusalima Persami v 614 g*, Saint Petersburg

that the recovering of the Cross was related to the big political and religious problems which Heraclius raised marrying the daughter of his father's brother:

But in the 17th year however after the capture of Jerusalem, in the 3rd year after the murder of Khosro, in the 21st year after the accession of Heraclius, the 3rd indication, the Persian general Rasmi. Ozan slew the Persian King Artasir, whom we mentioned above. He seized the kingdom, became an ally of the Greeks, and bestowed on the King Heraclius the lifegiving tree, the Cross of Christ, as the treasure of the whole world, and as the richest of gifts, and he gave it him. But King Heraclius took it to Jerusalem on the occasion of his going there with Martina, who was daughter of his father's brother; and he had married her against the law, and therefore was very much afraid that the high priest would rebuke him on the score of that indecent action⁶⁵.

The number of *exempla* that illustrate the chapter shows once more how much the *Golden Legend* is more complete than its forerunners. In James' legendary we can find both the only *exemplum* chosen by Jean de Mailly (the Beirut crucifix account ascribed to saint Athanasius and translated into Latin by Anastasius the Librarian)⁶⁶ and the series of three *exempla* selected by Bartholomew of Trent (all referable to books which were often used as repertory: the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great⁶⁷, the *Historia Tripartita* of Cassiodorus⁶⁸ and the *Vitae Patrum*)⁶⁹. James added to these four *exempla* other two narrations taken from the *Dialogi* and from the *Historia ecclesiastica*⁷⁰, introducing the whole selection with an *exemplum* that Vincent of Beauvais inserted in his *Speculum Historiale*, having as source the *Liber de miraculis* of Iohannes Monachus⁷¹.

1909, p. 65. English translation in P. Conybeare, *Antiochus Strategos Account of the Sack of Jerusalem in A. D. 614*, in «The English Historical Review», 25 (1910), pp. 502-16. See also Frolow, *La vraie Croix* cit., p. 100.

65. Marr, *Antioch Strategos, Plenenie Ierusalima Persami v 614 g* cit., p. 65; Translation of Conybeare, *Antiochus Strategos Account* cit., p. 516.

66. BHL 4227, See in PL 129, coll. 283-6.

67. Edited by S. Pricoco - M. Simonetti, Gregorio Magno, *Storie di santi e di diavoli*, 2 voll., Milano 2005-2006.

68. Cassiodorus Senator, *Historia scholastica tripartita*, ed. W. Jacob - R. Hanslik, Vindobonae 1952 (CSEL 71).

69. Edited in PL 73.

70. The passage quoted here comes from Rufinus' continuation, *Historia ecclesiastica, Continuatio Rufini*, ed. T. Mommsen, Leipzig 1909 (GCS 9, 3).

71. Iohannes Monachus, *Liber de miraculis*, ed. M. Huber, Heidelberg 1913 (Sammlungen Mittellateinischer Texte 7), App. I, pp. 119 sq.

Jean de Mailly, <i>Abbreviatio</i> , 137, 26 s.	Bartolomew of Trent, <i>Liber</i> , ccxciv, 43-61.	James de Voragine, <i>Leg. Aur.</i> , 131, 56 s.
		VdB <i>Spec. Hist.</i> XXI 92
BHL 4227		BHL 4227
	Greg. <i>Dial.</i> III 7	Greg. <i>Dial.</i> III 7
	Cass. <i>Hist. Trip.</i> VI, 1	Cass. <i>Hist. Trip.</i> VI, 1
	VPV 5 39	VPV 5 39
		Greg. <i>Dial.</i> I 4
		Eus. Caes. Ruf. Aquil. <i>Hist. eccl.</i> XI 29

THE LEGEND OF THE CROSS IN THE «SERMONES DE SANCTIS»

The *Golden Legend* has been often accused of naivety. But we must consider all the possible interpretations of the hagiographical material inserted in the text that are invisible to a reader intended only for the literal sense. As stated above, the *Golden Legend* wasn't originally composed as a book of edifying accounts for laymen, but it was a repertory written in Latin and designed for preachers, especially the brothers of the *Ordo Praedicatorum*. The hagiographical materials included in this repertory are intended to be disassembled and reassembled in the frames of new 13th century preaching, since the simple stories are not the main element of the communication, but only an instrument of transmission that can't be considered alone: it is a part of a complex communication system whose purpose was the edification of the audience, using the refined techniques elaborated in the *Artes Praedicandi*⁷².

In the prologue of one of the two *De sanctis* collections, James himself writes that he was invited to compose the sermons by his Dominican brothers. These model sermons were useful for educating the unlearned who could not under-

72. Four recent miscellanies to which the most important scholars have contributed are a good starting point about this arguments: N. Bériou - D. D'Avray, *Modern Questions about Medieval Sermons*, Firenze-Spoleto 1994; *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, cur. C. Muessig, Leiden 2002; *The Sermon. Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental*, cur. B. Kienzle, Turnhout 2000; *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, cur. R. Andersson, Turnhout 2007.

stand more complex arguments, like the milk is for children while solid food is for men⁷³. In another sermon about Saint Ambrose he compares again the literal sense with children's food, adding that the moral sense is like wine, better in the middle, and the spiritual sense is like honey, better at the end⁷⁴.

James composed two *volumina* of sermons *de sanctis*, defining in the *Chronicle of Genoa* the first as *multum diffusum* and the second *magis breve et angustum*⁷⁵. The calendar, which follows the Dominican liturgy, doesn't change in the two collections, but there is a substantial difference in the extension of any single sermon. For instance, the sermon about the Finding of the Cross considered below⁷⁶ occupies in the manuscripts of the *volume diffusum* an average of seven columns⁷⁷, while in the *volume breve* the same *thema* is developed in a space not much more extended than two columns⁷⁸. On the other hand, the plan of the sermon remains more or less identical, with some exceptions regarding the

73. «Isti [...] non debent superflui reputari cum simplicibus magis sint accepta facilia eo quod nequeant penetrare profunda et in domo dei sic liceat lac propinare paruulis quem admodum cibum solidum licet ministrare perfectis». Text transcribed from the MS München, Staatsbibl. clm 395 (14th century), f. 1r.

74. «Secundo eius doctrina dicitur mel propter profunditatem. Oleum quidem est melius in superficie, uinum melius in medio, mel melius in profundo. Scriptura sacra habet triplicem intellectum, hystoriam, moralem et mysticum siue spirituale. Per oleum, quod est melius in superficie, intelligitur sensus hystorialis, qui est cibus paruulorum, quem etiam apostolus uocat lac dicens I Cor. III: 'Tamquam paruulis in Christo lac potum uobis dedi, non escam'. Per uinum quod est melius in medio significatur sensus moralis, qui est sensus medius inter sensum hystoriam et spirituale. Per mel quod est melius in fundo sensus spiritualis significatur. Sacra enim Scriptura, quanto profundius penetratur, tanto dulcior inuenitur. Istum triplicem sensum sponsa cum suauitate sibi importat dicens: 'Comedi fauum cum melle meo, bibi uinum meum cum lacte meo'. Istum profundum intellectum Ambrosius in scriptura sacra habuit, de quo sic dicit Ieronimus in libro de XII. doctoribus: 'Ambrosius super profundorum pennam raptus et aeris uolucer quamdiu in profundum ingreditur, fructum de alto carpere uidetur'». The text above is an excerpt from the preparing edition of the *volumen breve* of the sermons that will be published in the Edizione Nazionale dei Testi Mediolatini d'Italia. In Schneyer's *Repertorium* the text is classified with the n. 422.

75. In this paper the text of the sermons of the *volumen diffusum*, is transcribed from the MS. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 32 sin. 4-5 and München, Staatsbibl., clm 395.

76. S. 437 in Schneyer's *Repertorium*.

77. From f. 256r to f. 257v in the Florence MS quoted above.

78. For instance in MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 9337, from f. 116v to f. 117r.

inversion of some *distinctio*. The different length is explained with the massive increase of biblical quotations, while sometimes some *distinctio* is more articulated and a more balanced proportion of the discussed points⁷⁹.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WOOD OF THE CROSS BEYOND THE LITERAL SENSE

The model sermons collected by James in the two *volumina* are a sort of exercise in which the hagiographical themes collected in the *Golden Legend* are interpreted. In the *de sanctis* collections the Dominican friar shows how the different and contradictory traditions about the wood of the Cross can become complementary parts of the same plan within the history of Salvation, if the moral and the spiritual senses are examined beyond the literal sense of the hagiographical texts.

For instance, the question of the origin of the wood of the Cross is treated in the third sermon *De invention sanctae Crucis* in the *volumen breve*. The *thema*, as in the *volumen diffusum* as well, is taken from a verse of *Genesis*⁸⁰:

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil⁸¹.

James starts from this *thema*, dividing it in two parts and drawing two guidelines around which he develops the sermon: firstly the praise of the wood of the Cross and secondly its revelation (in the two collections there is the same outline, but with the position of the two guidelines inverted)⁸²:

79. A good example is the bipartite plan of the s. 437 that is more proporzionate in the *volumen diffusum*, where the two parts of the *commendatio Crucis* and the *revelatio Crucis* are equivalent. In the *volumen breve* the part of the *revelatio* is dealt rather perfunctorily.

80. Iacopo de Voragine, *Sermones de sanctis. Volumen breve*, preparing ed., s. 437.

81. Gn. 2, 9: «Produxitque Dominus Deus de humo omne lignum pulchrum visu, et ad vescendum suave: lignum etiam vitae in medio paradisi, lignumque scientiae boni et mali» (*Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. R. Weber, Stuttgart 1969).

82. In these pages will be considered only the sermon inserted in the *volumen breve*, since the parallel sermon in the *volumen diffusum* follows the same plan and the main difference is the number of the biblical quotations inserted in the text.

Deus lignum sancte crucis de humo produxit, quando ipsum de profundis terre uisceribus reuelauit. In uerbis ergo premissis primo ponitur ligni crucis commendatio, cum dicitur: 'Omne lignum pulchrum uisu etc.'. Secundo ipsius crucis commendate reuelatio cum dicitur: 'produxit de humo'

For what concerns the origin of the wood of the Cross, we consider here the development of the first guideline, the praise of the wood itself. The sermon begins with a remark: in Eden there were three different woods: the common wood, the wood of the Tree of Life and the wood of the Tree of Knowledge. Starting from this observation, James demonstrates that, beyond the literal sense of the hagiographical legends, there is a deeper concordance, since everyone of the three woods symbolize the Cross in a particular sense⁸³.

For the first type of wood, the common one, James goes back to the Genesis verse of the *thema*, underlining the words *omne* (every), *pulchrum visu* (pleasant to the sight) and *ad vescendum suauē* (good for food): for this, the common wood symbolizes the Cross. The Cross was formed through different woods and everyone of them had its own property, to signify its powerful effectiveness: as the Cross drives away the bad thoughts, so the cedar chases away the snakes; as the Cross gives steadfastness, so the cypress does not lose its leaves for the fury of winds; the Cross donates the victory symbolized through the palm; the Cross, sweet as the fruit of the olive tree, eases the bitterness of the penance. For these reasons we resort to the sign of the Cross when a bad thought assaults us, or when a sudden danger surprises us, or some vision appears to us, or when a pain torments us⁸⁴.

83. Iacopo da Voragine, *Sermones de sanctis. Volumen breue* cit., s. 437, 5: «Circa primum notandum quod in paradiso terrestri erat triplex differentia ligni, sicut patet Gen. II, scilicet lignum commune, uite et scientie».

84. Ibid., s. 437, 6–16: «De primo autem ligno tria dicuntur, scilicet quod erat diuersum, unde dicitur: 'omne lignum', quod erat pulchrum uisu et quod erat ad uescendum suaue. Erat quidem diuersum ut tolleretur fastidium, pulchrum ut alliceretur uisum, suaue ut attraheret gustum. Per istud ergo lignum commune, lignum sancte crucis significatur. Primo quia fuit diuersum, id est ex diuersis lignis factum. Ibi enim fuit cedrus, cypressus, palma et oliua per que significatur quadruplex efficacia sancte crucis. Prima est quia malas cogitationes fugat, quod significatur in cedro que fugat serpentes. Secunda est quia constantiam prestat, quod significatur in cypresso, que nullius uenti impulsu comam amittit. Tertia est quia de hoste triumphat, quod significatur in palma. Quarta est quia amaritudinem penitentiae dulcorat, quod significatur in oliua. In hiis enim quatuor casibus signo crucis nos munire consueuimus. Vel cum aliqua mala cogitatio se ingerit

After having explained how the wood of the Cross is also pleasant to sight and sweet to taste, James shows how the Cross is symbolized also through the woods of the Tree of Life and of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, solving in the frame of the sermon every apparent contradiction of the literary sense of the legends: the wood of the Cross is symbolized through the wood of the Tree of Life, since there are four types of death (the death inherent in human nature, the one consequent to the fault, the one related to Hell and finally the one transformed through Christ's grace). Christ on the Cross destroyed the first three deaths, and changed the fourth⁸⁵. But the Cross is symbolized through the wood of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. As a man, Christ experienced Good and Evil through the Cross: he felt the Evil of painful punishment and the Good of glorious victory, knowing how big is the difference between the benefit he brought us and the evil he received from us⁸⁶.

THE CROSS OUTSIDE THE PREACHING: JAMES'S «CHRONICLE OF GENOA»

Compiling the *Golden Legend* and composing the *Sermones*, James has interpreted two well defined literary genders and has inserted his texts in a long time tradition, whose canons he has respected. We can recognize a similar approach in the *Chronicle of Genoa*, his last work, where the literary gender is

uel cum aliquod periculum se immergit uel cum aliquod phantasma se obicit uel cum aliquis dolor nos arripit».

85. Ibid., s. 437, 26-31: «Secundo significatur per lignum uite. Erat enim quadruplex mors, scilicet nature, culpe, gehenne et gratie. Crux enim dicitur lignum uite, quia destruxit mortem nature per resurrectionem, 1 Cor. IX: 'Per hominem mors et per hominem resurrectio mortuorum'; mortem culpe per peccati deletionem, Col. II: 'Et uos cum mortui essetis in delictis etc.'; mortem gehenne per inferni expoliationem, Osee XIII: 'Ero mors tua, o mors etc.'. Fecit autem mortem gratie per iustificationem, Col. II: 'Si mortui estis cum Christo quid adhuc tamquam uiuentes mundo decernitis?'».

86. Ibid., s. 437, 32-8: «Tertio significatur per lignum scientie boni et mali. Crux enim scientia boni et mali Christo et homini. Christo, quia sibi expertus est malum penalis angustie et bonum gloriose uictorie. Secundo, quia per crucem didicit quid sit inter beneficium quod nobis contulit et malum quod a nobis recepit. Fuit etiam homini scientia boni et mali. Primo quia per crucem homo didicit quid sit inter malum delicti et bonum doni, sicut dicit apostolus Rom. V. Secundo quia per crucem cognouit quid sit inter bonum quod deseruit et malum quod incurrit».

completely different: an historical text is obviously diverse from an hagiographic one and from its spiritual interpretation. James himself was changed, compared to the author who thirty years before had written the first redaction of the *Golden Legend*: he had been victim of two attempts of murder, he had seen the riots and the destructions caused through internal dissension even in Genoa, he was at that time an archbishop burdened through the responsibilities for his diocese, but also through the duties of the government of his city.

In the *Chronicle of Genoa*, the 13th century begins with the arrival of the Cross in the city. During the sack of Constantinople that followed the fall of the city in 1204, the Cross found by saint Helen was taken by the Venetians, but a Genoan adventurer stole it to them capturing with two galleys the ship that was transporting the precious relic. The Cross was then donated to the common of Genoa and given to the cathedral of Saint Laurent⁸⁷. But later the Holy Wood was stolen again by a skilled thief and more than four hundred Genoan liras were given for ransom to a man in Alexandria⁸⁸.

It is obviously the same Cross that produced so many miracles collected in the *Golden Legend* and that was still honoured with the devotion witnessed with Bartholomew of Trent's words quoted above⁸⁹. But here in the *Chronicle*, there is no explicit spiritual or moral sense, only history. Maybe the Cross recovered by Genoa can be seen as sign of Heaven's favour for the city, but this interpretation is merely underlying. The space for holiness in the last part of the *Chronicle*, that James describes as eyewitness, is very small. There is only one miracle attested here: two thieves were hanged but survived commending themselves to John the Baptist's relics which were conserved in the cathedral⁹⁰. Apart from this miraculous salvation, contemporary history is seen only through an earthly perspective: in this sense, the Cross is more a relic disputed by Genoa and Venice than an active subject that produces miracles witnessing God's glory and, as all the relics, can be stolen by a simple thief. Always in the *Chronicle*, even the recognition of saint Syrus' relics⁹¹ is only an human deed, useful for the harmony of the city and for the settlement

87. *Chron. Ian.*, ed. cit., p. 366.

88. *Ibid.*, ed. cit., pp. 371-2.

89. See p. 205.

90. *Ibid.*, ed. cit., pp. 375-6.

91. *Ibid.*, ed. cit., pp. 406-8.

of the dispute between the cathedral and the homonym monastery: it is an historical event, described in an earthly perspective.

CONCLUSIONS

There was a Cross in the Gospels. There were many hagiographical legends about the Cross. There was a Cross interpreted in several senses in the preaching. There were many relics showing their thaumaturgical power and the glory of God. There was a relic of the Cross in Constantinople, stolen by Venetians, Genoans and even by a simple thief, for which a ransom was paid. All of these were elements inserted in a particular literary genre with its own peculiar traditions, canons, images, symbols, public and, finally, readers. James in his works approached these traditions in two different ways. As a preacher and ecclesiastical writer, he inserted the history of the Cross in a communication system, in which different interpreting senses create a unifying frame where contradictions are solved and a doctrinal and ethical message is transmitted. As historian and politician, he depicted a world in which the Cross's relics mainly are earthly signs of the favour of God and the power of the city: they are more passive objects, subject to economic and military issues, something that can indeed be stolen and redeemed. In such a context, they no longer merely represent active miracle instruments.

ABSTRACT

The *Golden Legend* is a huge repertory of legends, whose hagiographical elements could be disassembled and reassembled by preachers to communicate ethical and doctrinal teachings in their sermons, following the models collected by James of Voragine in his *Sermones de sanctis*. Every legend can be interpreted analyzing its literal sense, but also showing the allegoric senses in background. The interpretation in the sermons of the dragons of the *Golden Legend* is a good example of this communication system. James collected different legends of the Cross, providing preachers with a better documentation, but also offering more interesting texts to readers. Every contradiction between these different traditions is solved in the sermons, where the Cross is used to

transmit moral and didactic teachings. In the *Chronicle of Genoa* of the same author, the holy relics of the Cross, earthly signs of the favour of God and the power of the city, are more passive objects, subject to economic and military issues: something that can indeed be stolen and redeemed. In such a context, they no longer merely represent active miracle instruments.

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