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ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE **EARLY PRINTING PRESS**

**A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF THE PRINTING PRESS ON
JEWISH EXPULSIONS IN GERMANY, 1450-1520**

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2008

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the fifteenth century, the Holy Roman Empire saw a dramatic escalation in anti-Semitism that paved the way for one of the largest waves of Jewish expulsions in medieval history. The Jews were expelled from Endingen in 1470, Mainz in 1473, and following the case of Simon of Trent, the Trent Jews were banished in 1475 and the Jews of Passau in 1479; by the end of the fifteenth century Mecklenburg, Magdeburg, Salzburg and Nuremberg had also succeeded in driving out their Jewish populations. This is only a sample of the cities that lost their Jewish communities on the eve of the Reformation, and almost all of them were a result of the ritual murder or Host desecration allegations that swept through the Holy Roman Empire in the fifteenth century.

Since its occurrence, historians have attributed this widespread activity to a variety of causes, everything from the changing economic environment to the general religious upheaval in the decades preceding the Reformation.¹ Many historians of this period in Jewish history mention in passing the invention of the printing press and the fact that this, as Salo Baron notes, “stimulated the output of polemical pamphlets, biased stories, folk songs and ballads” regarding the Jews, but no one goes beyond that kind of

¹ For the economic argument, see Raphael Straus, *Regensburg and Augsburg*, translated by Felix N. Gerson (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1939) and Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol.12, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967). For a discussion of the religious factors, including ritual murder and host desecration accusations, see Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol.11, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), especially the chapter “‘Demonic’ Alien,” pp. 122-191. See also, R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

blanket statement.² R. Po-Chia Hsia is one of the most active ritual murder historians in recent decades and he does, from time to time throughout his works, comment on the fact that print changed the ways that ideas were communicated. However, even he, as with many other historians in the field, has a tendency to leave that issue up to others to address.

Unfortunately, the same tendency is also true of print historians who are prone to pass over the first seventy-five years of the printing press. As in Robert Scribner's excellent study of Reformation propaganda, the period leading up to the Reformation is discussed only briefly.³ The fact that the first printed products were syntheses of ideas previously presented in manuscripts is almost always taken to mean that the ideas contained within them are not worthy of further investigation. Especially with regard to printed material intended to reflect or even change popular sentiment regarding the Jews, there is virtually no scholarship on the period before Martin Luther. I intend to address this failing with a study of the effect of the printing press on the development of late-medieval anti-Semitism, an exercise that will contribute greatly to the understanding of historians of both print culture and Judaism. I will do this by taking the perspective that the first printed documents had a much greater effect than previously acknowledged in deciding the fate of the Jews of Central Europe.

It is important here to layout and define some of the key terms and ideas that I will address in the course of this essay. The first comment I would like to make regarding terminology is in reference to the use of the terms 'Germany' and 'German'. As is most

² Baron, vol. 11, 123.

³ Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of Simply Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

likely evident to the reader, at the time under discussion there was no German country as it exists today, rather German-speaking lands under the auspices of the Holy Roman Emperor. I use these terms here, however, to discuss both the lands that are contained in modern-day Germany and those areas of the Holy Roman Empire in which German was the primary spoken language. There was at this time an emerging ‘German nationalism,’ mostly a response by German Humanists to the Italian Humanist movement, but in the context of this paper, the definition of ‘German’ is somewhat broader, referring to those people and ideas of the lands where German was the primary spoken language.⁴

The next issue is the question of the time period covered by this study. The seventy-five year period covered spans from the mid-fifteenth century through the first quarter of the sixteenth century. I have chosen to use the term ‘late Middle Ages’ to describe this interval. Different historians in different disciplines use various names for the pre-Reformation years, including Early Modern, Renaissance, as well as late-Medieval, depending on the emphasis of the research. Even though I am addressing the advent of the printing press, which many use as a mark of the beginning of the Early Modern era, as well as the development of printed images (an event often relegated to the ranks of the Renaissance), I have chosen the designation of late-Medieval on the grounds that despite the change rendered by the press itself, the ideas that were assembled and disseminated were almost solely the product of the Middle Ages. For example, the view of the demonic Jew and his close association with the Devil had its roots centuries before the printing press in the post-Crusades period. This basic premise had changed little by

⁴ For an introduction to the rivalries of German and Italian humanists, see Ingrid D. Rowland, “Revenge of the Regensburg Humanists, 1493” in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2. (Summer, 1994), pp. 307-322.

the time of the Reformation, however the emphasis had shifted: the Jews had gone from being a threat to individual Christians to being, as Joshua Trachtenberg says, the “inveterate enemy of mankind” and Christianity at large.⁵ The printing press influenced these ideas, as I shall show in the following sections, but the ideas themselves belong to medieval minds.

This brings me now to my final point of clarification: if the printing press adapted already extant medieval ideas, what was different about the period before the printing press that the rampant anti-Semitism immediately preceding the Reformation was any different? Simply put, the difference was in the fact that, prior to the invention of the printing press, while there was steadily growing resentment of the Jews, isolated events in cities across the Holy Roman Empire remained just that: isolated.⁶ Even with relation to the Black Death that swept through Europe in 1348-49 this can be seen to be true, as the horrendous riots and massacres were the direct result of a single widespread event. No matter how widely the Jews were accused of well-poisoning conspiracies, the fact remains that people did not usually react to the Plague in distant cities based on hearsay, rather responding when the Plague itself arrived. It is also noteworthy that Jews were readmitted to many of these cities, in some cases only a few years after they were expelled.⁷ After the second wave of expulsions around the turn of the sixteenth century, however, in many cases Jews did not hold citizenship in German cities until the middle of

⁵ Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval conception of the Jew and its relation to modern Antisemitism* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 13. This book provides a solid foundation for understanding the medieval perceptions of the Jews, but for a quick overview, see especially the first chapter.

⁶ H. H. Ben-Sasson, “The Middle Ages,” in H. H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 576.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 487.

the nineteenth century.⁸ The ideas of a Jewish conspiracy were developing steadily prior to the mid-fifteenth century, as is evident with the Black Plague massacres, but they were not able to reach their full potential until the arrival of the printing press a century later.

Printing played a decisive role in the two main processes that led to a unified front against the Jews in medieval Germany. It first took the ideas from one region and transmitted them far from their place of origin, often even beyond the boundaries of the Empire. By doing this, a single, homogenized picture of the Jews and their conspiracy to bring down Christianity emerged, as each location responded to nuances of information and ideas to which it was newly exposed. This in turn allowed individual cities in the Holy Roman Empire to act based on this newly unified representation of the Jewish people, using the alleged crimes of the Jews in one place as evidence for both prosecutions and persecutions in another. It was this lethal combination that led to the mass expulsions that swept through Central Europe in the half-century leading up to the Reformation.

For the sake of this study, I have chosen one example of each of the two processes mentioned above. To demonstrate the translation of isolated events into printed media, their transmission across the Empire, and their reapplication in local situations I have chosen a study of the material available regarding ritual murder and Host desecration allegations in the second half of the fifteenth century and first quarter of the sixteenth century. These kinds of accusations had been present in medieval society for centuries before our time frame, but what changed was the common vocabulary that emerged to discuss the supposed actions of the Jews. I have chosen to discuss the events of four

⁸ Andrew Colin Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200-1600* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 126.

cities in Central Europe, and while the material that I present does not cover every facet of each event, it provides an overview of the kinds of printed media in circulation at the time.

To discuss the consolidation of discourse on the Jews from sources near and far I have chosen the example of the Apocalypse myths that came to their most fully developed form in the mid- to late-fifteenth century. The Christian ideas about the Apocalypse and the Antichrist who would come as its harbinger date back to the Scriptures, but by the Middle Ages, the legends had taken on a shape much more sinister with regard to the role the Jews would play. Thanks, however, to the unifying nature of the printing press, all of these ideas were joined into a single tale of the Antichrist and his Jewish supporters who would come, and who were even now plotting, to overthrow Christendom.

I begin, however, with a survey of the development of printing in the first seventy-five years of its existence, focusing especially on the plethora of anti-Semitic material that was produced. This is intended to provide a context for the succeeding sections, both with respect to the overarchingly hostile atmosphere towards the Jews and to the general history of print. This section provides the background necessary to understand the logistics of why print was such a successful method for the transmission of ideas between relatively unrelated locations.

As a final note on the objective of this thesis, I would like to restate that it is not intended as a comprehensive study of the causes of Jewish expulsion during the late Middle Ages, but it instead aims to fill the hole left by other historians of both Jewish history and print history. Therefore, rather than discussing the economic or religious

causes in any depth, I will focus my energy where others have left off, studying the ways in which the creation and spread of print culture shaped medieval Germany in such a way as to make the time ripe for such a devastating wave of expulsions.

PRINTING

The changes wrought by the invention and dissemination of the printing press have been hotly debated. In her authoritative study on the development of printing, Elizabeth Eisenstein raises the question of whether the introduction of the printing press marked an evolutionary or revolutionary change in the circulation and development of ideas, and therefore in history overall.⁹ The evidence that Eisenstein cites on both sides of the argument, however, serves to show that, whether the ideas being transmitted were new or old, the fact remains that more people in Medieval European society could now have access to these ideas. The nature of printing meant that those ideas that made it to the printing press would then be circulated with a greater volume and uniformity than ever before. In an age of rampant anti-Semitism, this broad exposure to many ideas new and old played an active role in the eventual expulsion of the Jews from dozens of German cities.

The sheer numbers created by printing gave these printed books a power that the written word had never before experienced. Although it is impossible to know the number of books printed in pre-Reformation Europe, Michael Clapham makes the assertion that between 1453 and 1503, approximately eight million books were printed in

⁹ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and cultural, transformations in early-modern Europe*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 33.

Europe,¹⁰ and Rudolf Hirsch adds that editions, on average, consisted of between two and three hundred copies.¹¹ John Lenhart, however, places the number of books printed in the fifteenth century significantly higher, with a number nearer twenty million, with the average edition producing 550 copies.¹² Regardless of which of these numbers is most accurate, it can easily be seen that the number of texts circulating throughout Europe increased dramatically after 1450 and greatly exceeded anything that could have been produced by scribes in the same time period.

The power of the press also expanded to include images, a medium that benefited greatly from the printing press's inherent uniformity, and which were printed on their own in the same quantities as the early books.¹³ These images also began to take a greater precedence, and were not only sold in their own right as souvenirs and devotional images from pilgrimage sites and fairs, but they also began to be the focus of books. The rising importance of images created a new, and larger, audience for printed materials as "[t]he very concept of pictures with an explanatory text (instead of a text to which illustrations are subordinated) presumes the existence of buyers with a limited ability to read," a group which had not before been targeted by book-makers with any enthusiasm.¹⁴ It is also noteworthy that images took much greater precedence in the printing of the Holy Roman Empire than it did in Italy or France, and that these images occurred more

¹⁰ Michael Clapham, "Printing," in Charles Singer, et al, ed., *A History of Technology*, vol. 2, *From the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 37, as quoted in Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 45.

¹¹ Rudolf Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading, 1450-1550*, Second ed. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 4.

¹² John Lenhart, *Pre-Reformation Printed Books: A Study in Statistical and Applied Bibliography* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1935), 9.

¹³ Hirsch, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

frequently in books written in the vernacular.¹⁵ It seems likely that this was in response to a growing popular involvement in the affairs about which books were being printed. The same people who were the participants in transmission of ideas through folklore and folksongs were now able to engage with the same kind of information from regions vastly farther away by means of the circulation of printed material.

The power of these printed works was not immediately put to use in the creation and transmission of new ideas. For the first decades of its existence, the printing press served mostly established ideas, but it brought its inherent uniformity to these previously localized, and often disparate, opinions. The printing press was able to take ideas and beliefs locally expressed through manuscripts, folk songs, and plays, and disseminate them to a wider audience. This not only served to spread ideas previously confined to individual locations throughout Europe, but it also served to create a uniformity in the discourse of the Middle Ages. Books like Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Cronicarum*, published by Anton Koberger in Nuremberg in 1493, were widely circulated. The *Liber Cronicarum*, also known as the Nuremberg Chronicle, provided a concise history of the world from Creation until the year of its publication, covering events both within and beyond the borders of Europe and featuring 1,809 images (although only 645 separate wood-cut blocks).¹⁶ Despite both the high cost of production and the not insignificant booksellers' prices, the Chronicle managed to sell extremely well throughout Europe, and

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ John Clyde Oswald, *A History of Printing: Its Development through Five Hundred Years* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1928), 70.

was published in editions of 2,000 in both German and Latin.¹⁷ Although not the first or last book of its kind to be printed, it was viewed as one of the most definitive and popular accounts, providing a relatively standardized history common to all of Christian Europe.

As is apparent above with the mention of the illustrations and wood-cut blocks, individual images in the Nuremberg Chronicle were often used multiple times throughout the text, which had the ability to create a standardization of events in the minds of those reading, or even merely viewing, the book. When the same image, for example, is used to represent Mantua, Naples and Verona, this created the impression of a single archetype for an Italian town (fig. 1). The same can perhaps be said of the image of the burning of the Jews, which is used twice, and cannot help but create a relationship between the alleged crimes of the Jews in one city and those of the Jews in another (fig. 2). This creation of concrete archetypes, whether for Italian towns or Jews, had the effect for readers of creating “uniforms” for those depicted, an act which prevents the readers from seeing the individuality and humanity of those represented, seeing rather an identity prescribed for them by the author or artist.¹⁸

The common history provided by books like the *Liber Cronicarum* was particularly significant with regard to the role of Germanic Jews, both historically and in their contemporary position in society. Dating back to the years of the Black Plague, European Christians had come to view the Jews as part of an extended conspiracy,

¹⁷ Arthur Hind, *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut with a Detailed Survey of Work Done in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1935), 375; Hsia 1988, 48.

¹⁸ Gavin Langmuir, *History, Religion and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 256.

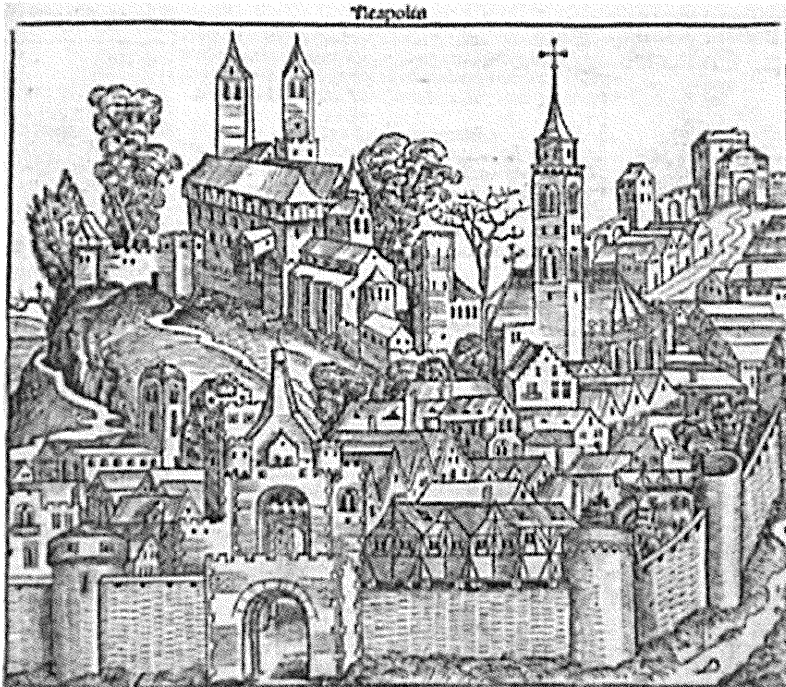


Figure 1. The woodcut from Hartmann Schedel's Nuremberg Chronicle, which served to represent Manuta, Naples and Verona. From <http://ace.acadiau.ca/score/facsim2/nurem1.htm>, Landscapes, Folio XLII.



Figure 2. The burning of the Jews of Cologne, an image repeated again for the Jews of Nuremberg. From <http://ace.acadiau.ca/score/facsim2/nurem1.htm>, Religious Scenes, Folio CCLVII.

manifesting itself in widespread accusations of well-poisonings.¹⁹ The widely disseminated fifteenth-century history books returned to this idea of a broad Jewish conspiracy, making the alleged crimes of the Jews in a single city the common history of both Jews and Gentiles throughout Germany. Returning to the Nuremberg Chronicle, we can explicitly see the ways in which the supposed crimes of the Jews were depicted as crimes against all of Christianity. As mentioned above, the repeated use of the same image of the burning of the Jews for multiple events created the idea of a core level of anti-Christian plots by Jews throughout Europe. An additional image, and perhaps the most important, is the large woodcut depicting Simon of Trent's cruel murder allegedly at the hands of the Trent Jews (fig. 3). The graphic image shows the boy Simon being forcibly bled by the Jews, with the blood being collected in a bowl for use in Jewish rituals. This is a prime example of a localized event that, through printed transmission, became a common historical event to every city with Jews. There are many other depictions of Simon's murder that appeared in the years immediately following his death, all of which show the cruel fate he beheld ostensibly at the hands of the Jews (fig. 4).²⁰ The alleged crimes of the Jews in any given city were undoubtedly supported by their 'previously established record' in murders like that of Simon of Trent.

There were other ways, as well, in which localized events were spread across long distances. Folk songs, whose texts were printed and distributed to be sung to popular folk melodies, were a very effective way to publicize noteworthy events and ensure their communication to other communities near and far. The sheets could be carried easily

¹⁹ H. H. Ben-Sasson, 486.

²⁰ Note the similarities in the positioning between the two images; this shows the uniformity of perception of this event that was created through the dissemination of images.



Figure 3. The murder of Simon of Trent by the Jews as pictured in the Nuremberg Chronicle. Reproduced at <http://ace.acadiau.ca/score/facsim2/nurem1.htm>, Religious Scenes, Folio CCLIV.

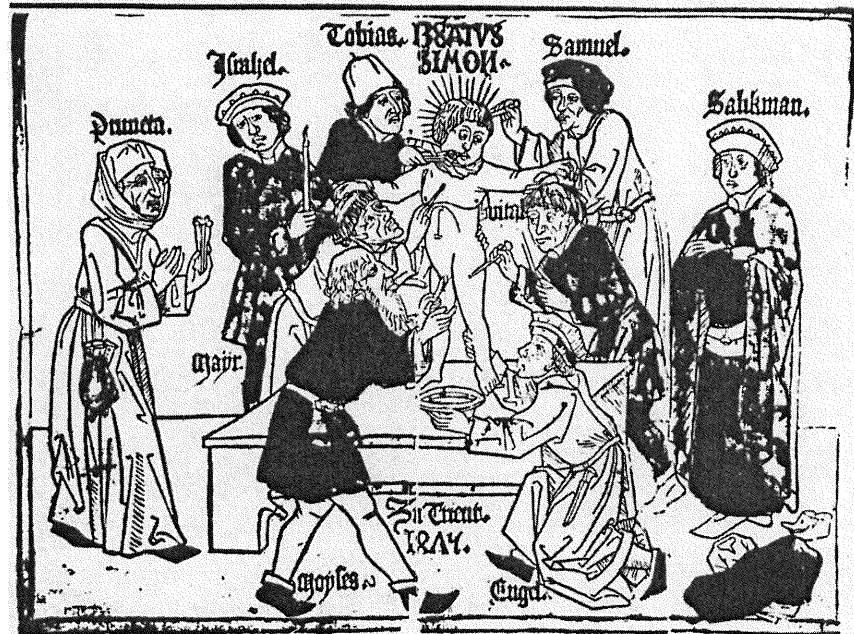


Figure 4. The murder of Simon of Trent as pictured in *Relatio de Simone Puero Tridentino* by Johannes Mathias Tiberinus, physician to the Prince-Bishop of Trent. Reproduced in *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 81, accessed online at ARTstor.

from town to town and sold at low cost at markets and fairs, making them an effective means of reaching the masses. Found later with the play “Das Endinger Judenspiel” (“The Play about the Jews of Endingen”), the folk song “Lied von den eltern und unschuldigen kindern” (“Song of the parents and innocent children”), is a prime example of the ways in which events were communicated across distances.²¹ The same can be seen fifty years later at the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg. Within a year or two of the destruction of the synagogue, there was a folk song detailing the triumph of the city over its Jews in succeeding to ban them from the city, and the terrible misdeeds of the Jews that led the city to this action.²² These songs, which we will look at in closer detail in the following section, and others like them, circulated widely, raising awareness of outside events amongst the populations of other cities.

Localized histories, especially regarding ritual murder accusations and Host desecration allegations also made a quick and widespread appearance in other media in the fifteenth century in Central Europe. The introduction of print, especially broadsheets and vernacular books, helped spread these trials across Central Europe. Each distant account brought the threat closer and closer to home, aptly demonstrated with the greatly publicized trial for the murder of Simon of Trent. Even as far away as Mecklenburg in the north, accounts of Simon of Trent, mixed with accounts from closer Magdeburg,

²¹ Karl von Amira, *Das Endinger Judenspiel* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1883), 100-102.

²² “How the Jews were driven from Regensburg,” Gerald Strauss, trans., *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 124-129. This is a partial translation of “Wie die new capell zu der schönen Maria in Regensburg erstlich aufkommen ist” as found in Rochus von Liliencron, *Die historischen Volkslieder der Deutschen vom 13. bis 16 Jahrhundert*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1867), 319-325.

served to “amplify the perceptions of local events,” inflaming the already stridently anti-Semitic attitudes.²³ This rise in publicity for anti-Jewish trials and events brought a rise in other printed forms of anti-Semitic literature. Now, in addition to publicizing the “recorded” wrongs of the Jews, there emerged another rapidly growing body of printed material dealing with the inherent evil of the Jewish people. This took the form especially of books and plays, although the contribution of images and broadsheets is not to be trivialized.

Hans Folz’s plays from Nuremberg at the end of the fifteenth century were widely popular for their anti-Semitic attitudes, even though they were originally written specifically with Nuremberg’s struggle to expel its Jews in mind. The Jews were classified by Imperial Law as direct servants of the Emperor, and so it was only with his permission that a Jewish community could be expelled. As the Jews were an important source of taxation for the Crown, he was loath to lose such a stable financial resource. This was a frequent scenario throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as one city’s victory served to support another’s cause. Indeed, because other cities were experiencing these same battles, the plays were widely distributed beyond Nuremberg city walls and their ideas and values became widely recognized. Indeed, plays like Folz’s were so popular and stirred their audiences up to such a level that the Frankfurt City Council set up special measures to ensure the safety of its Jewish quarter during the performance of such a piece in 1469.²⁴ What was new with such plays was not the anti-Semitic content, but rather the use of the emerging uniformity of discourse when discussing or portraying

²³ Christopher Ocker, “Contempt for Friars and Contempt for Jews in Medieval Germany” in Steven J. McMichael and Susan E. Myers, eds., *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 123.

²⁴ Trachtenberg, 37.

the ‘nature’ of the Jews. Folz himself wrote at least six plays featuring strident anti-Semitic sentiment based on this consolidated discourse before the turn of the sixteenth century, and there were many other authors who wrote on similar themes throughout Central Europe in the decades leading up to the Reformation.

The works of men such as the Dominican Peter Schwartz (also known as Peter Niger), or anonymous works such as *Der Antichrist (The Antichrist)* or *Seelenwurzgarten (The Garden of the Soul)* were just as widespread and influential as the plays discussed above. Schwartz was a well known anti-Semite, but one of the first to become (relatively) well versed in the Talmud and Hebrew. Indeed, it was his ‘Tractus contra perfidos Iudeos’ that, in 1474, provided the first printed letters in Hebrew. He was especially known for his work in preaching to the Jews, and was sent at the request of the Duke of Bavaria-Landshut to preach in Regensburg. These Regensburg sermons were transcribed into Latin in the afore mentioned work, but this was later translated (with some significant changes) into German in *Der Stern Meschiah (The Star of the Messiah)*, which was printed in Esslingen in 1477.²⁵ This new text was complete with images, including one showing an argument between Jews and Gentiles, where the Jews, with their wrinkled skin and hooked noses, are depicted as the obviously evil side (fig. 5). This image was repeatedly reproduced in other texts, including *Seelenwurzgarten*, representing the traditional medieval idea of discourse and debate between the good and rational Christian clergy and the irrational and blasphemous Jewish rabbis.

²⁵ Hans Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (13. -20. Jh.)* (Frankfurt am Mainz: Peter Lang, 1994), 544-46.



Figure 5. 'A Dispute between Jews and Gentiles.' Taken from *Stern des Meschiah*. Reproduced in *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 81, accessed online at ARTstor.

Images of the perceived inherently evil nature of the Jews were also spread far and wide by the printing press, both in books and as stand-alone sheets. The image of heretics, demons and Jews kissing the anus of an animal or being suckled by it (usually a sow or goat) dates back to antiquity, and it was only shortly after the introduction of the printing press that images like these made it in to print (fig. 6).²⁶ These images featured the Jews engaging in a whole spectrum of lewd behavior with a sow, proving the Jews' unclean nature. Another favorite of the pre-Reformation engraver was the depiction of the blasphemy of the Jews,

²⁶ Langmuir, 262.

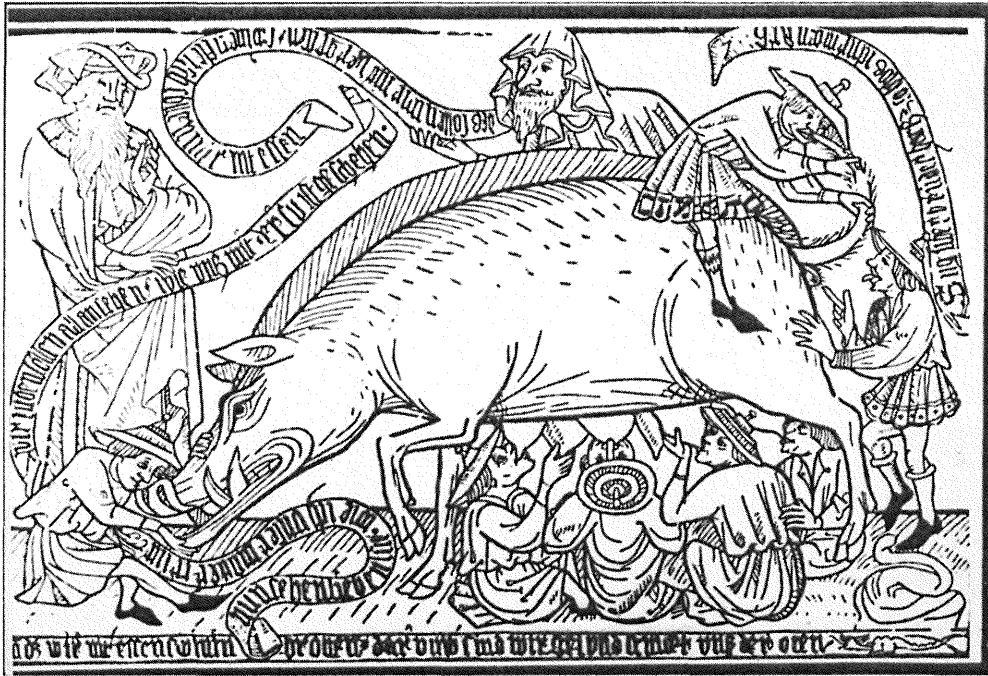


Figure 6. An early broadsheet entitled 'Jewish Sow.' Image from The Image Gallery, University of California, San Diego, accessed at ARTstor.



Figure 7. A woodcut from *Seelenwurzgarten* ('The Garden of the Soul') titled: 'Five Jews Adore an Idol While Two Men Attack a Sixth.' From *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 85, accessed online at ARTstor.

especially the image of the Jews worshipping an idol (fig. 7). This image, as well as many others, served to reinforce the medieval Christian view of the Jews' desire to flaunt Christian morals and values at every turn, particularly when it came to rejecting Christ as the only Lord.

In keeping with the Jews' perceived role in subverting Christianity, the mythology of the Antichrist and the Apocalypse that he would herald grew from local legend to common Central European belief as the ideas were set down on paper in printing-press quantities. While based on ideas about the End Times dating back to the Scriptures, the view of the Jews as servants of the Antichrist grew increasingly popular, feeding on the growing anti-Semitism characteristic of the end of the Middle Ages. The creation of this "legend...articulated apocalyptic fears and participated in demonizing the Jews as a prelude (and then as a post-mortem) to their expulsion or murder."²⁷ *Der Antichrist (The Antichrist)*, first printed in the late 1450s in Germany, provided a fully illustrated version of the story of the End of Days, creating a uniform standard regarding the prescribed role of the Jews in the destruction of Christendom. The added benefit of illustrations detailing the entire story meant that, as discussed above, even the illiterate benefited from these prints, and were therefore included in the growing uniformity of anti-Semitism.

It is perhaps important here, as a means of unifying many of the ideas mentioned above, to discuss the role of printing in what Gavin Langmuir has dubbed the change "from Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism."²⁸ Langmuir argues that there was a change in Europe, emerging around 1150 CE, when the animosity directed at the Jews for their rejection of basic Christian doctrines was transformed into a hatred based on "irrational

²⁷Gow, 21.

²⁸ Langmuir, 275.

fantasies,” including the Jews as cannibals and perpetrators of ritual murder and Host desecration.²⁹ As time progressed, these ideas became a hallmark of medieval thinking, but it was not until the mid-fifteenth century that the printing press enabled them to both disseminate and consolidate, allowing the shift from anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism to reach its most advanced form. The emergence of this consolidated discourse cultivated the creation of the archetype of the evil Jew, bent not only on the destruction of good Christian men, women and children, but of Christendom as a whole.

The works mentioned above illustrate various facets of this emerging picture of European Jews, each one not only helping to paint the picture, but serving to distribute local beliefs in such a way as to ensure a clear, unified message reaching all audiences, whether literate or illiterate. The two kinds of information about the Jews that were disseminated more quickly and effectively by printing were the reports of an isolated event, which reached other cities, near and far, and the development of local legends into standard accepted histories and predictions for the future. We will look at each of these in the following two sections, viewing them as the kinds of information that would have undoubtedly reached most Central European towns during the three-quarters of a century leading up to the Reformation.

I will first look at the material that would have been available regarding the many ritual murder and Host desecration trials that took place in the Holy Roman Empire between 1450 and 1520. I will discuss this primarily from the perspective of the role these trials played in the broader Central European anti-Semitic phenomenon, focusing

²⁹ Ibid., 264. The actual date, and any connotations it may carry regarding the Crusades, is not important to my argument here, but rather it is important that this change occurred well before the advent of printing.

on the background this would have provided for a ‘pattern’ of Jewish crimes against Christianity. We will then turn to the broader legend surrounding the approaching Apocalypse, a belief that greatly increased hostility towards the Jews of Germany. The consolidation of varying beliefs into a single myth of the Antichrist and his Jewish supporters created a much clearer target for the growing turmoil seizing Germany, turning cities against their Jewish communities. The success of many Central European cities at expelling their Jews during the golden age of “Apocalypticism” was no coincidence.³⁰ Each of these aspects of the effects that printing had on the people of medieval Central Europe represents only a part of the massive amount of anti-Semitic material that would have been widely available and is used here to provide a small sample of the kinds of prejudicial forces facing the Jewish communities of the late Middle Ages.

RITUAL MURDER AND HOST DESECRATION ACCUSATIONS

Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, the frequency of ritual murder cases in the Holy Roman Empire increased, and it is no coincidence that the documentation of each of these events also became much more prevalent than ever before. This documentation includes both hand-written sources, such as letters between magistrates and nobility, legal briefs, and judicial records, as well as printed materials encompassing broadsheets, pamphlets, folk songs, woodcuts, and chapbooks.³¹ It is no wonder with this wealth of

³⁰ Gow, 21.

³¹ Hsia 1988, 4.

information that ritual murder and Host desecration accusations against the Jews expanded greatly during the following three-quarters of a century.³²

This body of printed material, intended not just for the literate elite, but for the common masses as well, provides the perfect example of the power of the printing press over local events. The ideas set down in print were intended to be spread far and wide. Indeed, “[t]he physical appearance of this genre of popular print reflects their character as mass commodities: usually printed in small, octavo ‘pocket’ size, the products often featured woodcuts to enhance their aesthetic appeal,” increasing the ease, and with it the likelihood, of events reaching beyond the walls of individual cities.³³ As we began discussing in the previous section, this allowed the ‘crimes’ experienced in one community to be felt almost as strongly in other communities. This in turn provided ‘concrete evidence’ of the crimes of the Jews, which could be used as evidence in the trials of Jews across the Holy Roman Empire.

I will use this section to give a brief overview of a few of the major ritual murder and Host desecration cases in the half-century preceding the Reformation, occurring in Endingen, Trent, Passau, and Regensburg. Each will provide an example of the different

³² It is always a question with issues like this of which came first, the printed material or the events themselves. While it is impossible to know for certain, I think that the influential role of printing must be acknowledged. There were ritual murder cases previous to the fifteenth century, all of which were documented in various forms, but it was only after the invention of the printing press that the number of cases increased so dramatically within such a short time period. Unlike with the accusations in the period directly following the Black Plague, there was no single event that touched all of the German-speaking lands. The distance between the cities where allegations were made was also significant enough in the fifteenth century that it was more than just the work of traders and travelers discussing the local news. For a more complete discussion of the spread of ritual murder and host desecration allegations, see Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, ch. 1, pp.1-13.

³³ Hsia 1988, 58.

kinds of printed material produced in order to illustrate the full spectrum of material that was circulated from town to town. These discussions will go in chronological order by the date that the allegations were made with the exception of our treatment of the Regensburg case. This will be addressed last, even though the ritual murder accusations fall in the middle of our timeline, as I will use this example as a means of discussing the repercussions of a city's success in expelling its Jews, which occurs forty years later on the eve of the Reformation.

Endingen

Endingen is a small city located in present-day Baden-Württemberg on the border with France. During the mid- to late-fifteenth century, Endingen was a town of only about 200 households and served mostly as a market town for the surrounding area. In the spring of 1470, part of the local church collapsed, and as it was being rebuilt, the bodies of what appeared to be a man, woman and two children, all headless, were unearthed. The blame was quickly placed on a Jew living in the town named Elias, who, someone asserted, had taken in a family with two children during Passover eight years earlier, in 1462. The accusation was brought before Margrave Karl of Baden, appointed by Archduke Sigismund to handle the accusations, and Elias and his two brothers, Eberlin and Mercklin, were promptly arrested and, as was typical of the day, questioned under torture.³⁴ Each confessed during the ordeal that Elias, Eberlin, and Mercklin had plotted and committed the murder of the family in the company of other Jews from surrounding

³⁴ Ibid., 16-17.

towns. The three brothers were quickly convicted and sentenced to death by burning.³⁵ The rest of the Jewish population of Eendingen was also arrested and, with the conviction and execution of the brothers, was expelled from Eendingen.³⁶

In addition to the handwritten municipal records from which the above factual account was taken, there were more popular methods by which the events of Eendingen were delivered to towns across the Holy Roman Empire. One of the few which has remained for modern historians is a record of a folk song detailing the crimes of the Jews of Eendingen, which focuses on the martyrdom of the murdered family and the courage of the butcher Jacob in the face of the evil Jews. Folks songs and ballads were a common way to publicize events, as is also evidenced with the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg (which I will discuss in greater depth shortly), as well as later with regard to a 1540 ritual murder case in Sappenfled. Included with the Sappenfled text (“A Pretty New Song of What recently happened between Two Jews and A Child in Sappenfled”) is an indication by the printer that the text had been designed to be sung to either of two previously existing “traditional cheerful” folk tunes, as well as a woodcut image of the murdered boy tied to a pole, while a Jew approached him with a knife.³⁷ Although the Sappenfled case occurs outside of our time frame, it is safe to see the format of the folksong as similar in kind to what would have accompanied any of the others. The ballad of the Eendingen case is reproduced in full in the Appendix (no. 1), but I have highlighted here a few important passages to illustrate some of the facets that would have resounded most clearly across the Empire.

³⁵ Amira, 92-97. This is a version edited by Amira of an account transcribed by the Freiburg city council and found in the Freiburg city archive.

³⁶ Hsia 1988, 17.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

The two main features that I want to point out in this text are examples of the idea introduced earlier, wherein the individual traits of a person are removed or ignored in order to ensure that they lose their humanity, creating an archetype, in this case the archetype of the murdering Jew. The first element of this is the fact that, while the names of the Jews involved with the case were most likely known to the author, the author chose to refer to them only as “the Jew” and “the Jewess.” This is noteworthy in comparison with Jacob the butcher, who gets not only a name, but a profession. The lack of defining features for the Jews is an adroit, if unintentional, way in which the author made it possible for every reader or listener of the song to identify the Jews with the Jews in his or her own community, rather than viewing it as a removed and isolated event.

The picture painted of the murdering Jews is enhanced by the references to the wealth of the Jews and their alleged role in taking wealth from Christians. In stanzas 13-15 the author makes it very clear that the corrupt Jews would gladly have paid Jacob for his silence, but when he refused to yield to their bribery, it was at their hands that he lost his worldly goods:

13.
Jacob Butcher, you are a clever man,
you can just let things be,
they will bring you money, yes money.

14.
Before I will let things lie still,
I will rather lose my possessions,
and my young, fresh life, yes life.

15.
Eight and a half years went by,
Jacob experienced much with the Jews,
his possessions are all gone, all gone.³⁸

³⁸ Ibid., 31-33. This is Hsia’s translation of the German published in Amira, 100-102.

This served to build on and reinforce the medieval Christian fears and condemnation of Jewish usury and money-lending, where it was believed that the Jews would steal money from honest, God-fearing Christians. Widespread familiarity with and belief in these ideas would have made the events of this small town accessible to towns throughout Central Europe. Indeed we know from Regensburg municipal documents that news of the Endingen case reached at least as far as Regensburg and was called to mind when the city began to try its own ritual murder case.³⁹

Trent

A case with an even greater influence on allegations throughout Central Europe was the murder of the boy Simon in Trent, at the southern edge of the Holy Roman Empire. Even though Trent was an Italian-speaking city, the Prince-Bishop of Trent, Hinderbach, was closely associated with the Holy Roman Empire and the Jewish population of the city lived primarily in the German quarter. At Easter 1475, the two-and-a-half year old Simon went missing and his father, Andreas, quickly brought a charge of kidnapping and murder against the Jews when the body was found in the cellar of Samuel, one of the Trent Jews.⁴⁰ Even though there was ample evidence that the murder was committed by Zanesus, a Swiss man who had recently lost a lawsuit against Samuel, six Jews were promptly arrested and imprisoned in the episcopal palace, where they were tortured with unusual cruelty. More Jews were subsequently arrested and

³⁹ Raphael Struass, ed., *Urkunden und Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Juden in Regensburg 1453-1738* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1960), 111 (Document #328).

⁴⁰ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 27; Hsia 1988, 42.

forced under torture to confess not only to the crime at hand, but to the Jewish involvement in other cases across the Empire.⁴¹

In the first round of executions in June of 1475, thirteen Jews were executed for “blasphemy against the Christian faith.”⁴² Another round of executions commenced at the beginning of the following year during which time five more Jews were put to death.⁴³ There was a third trial in Rome in 1477 and 1478, but even though the use of excessive torture was called into question and closely examined by Pope Sixtus himself, the charges were not overturned, and Hinderbach was dismissed with only an injunction “not to cause further harm to the Jews.”⁴⁴

A cult quickly arose surrounding the murdered boy Simon, encouraged especially by Hinderbach himself, who, along with his personal physician, Johannes Mathias Tiberinus, diligently recorded supposed miracles witnessed at Simon’s relics. Tiberinus published heavily on “the holy child and martyr named Simon” (“*dem heyligen Kind und marterer genannt Symon*”).⁴⁵ He not only chronicled the events themselves, and the miracles at Simon’s hands, but also focused heavily on the guilt of the Jews. Sometime shortly after the event itself, Tiberinus began publishing, and provided one of the first images to circulate widely throughout the Holy Roman Empire (see fig. 4). This graphic

⁴¹ Hsia 1992, 104-5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 104-5. It was during this time that the converted Jew, Israel, was put to torture for his supposed role. During his interrogation, he fabricated a case of ritual murder eight years previous in Regensburg, where a Christian boy was tortured during Passover. This was the impetus for the accusations against the Jews of Regensburg the following year.

⁴⁴ Hsia 1988, 43.

⁴⁵ Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Alleged Ritual Murder of Simon of Trent (1475) and Its Literary Repercussions: A Bibliographical Study,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*,” 59 (1993), 132.

image provided a clear explanation for both the literate and the illiterate of the horrible death that the boy Simon suffered at the hands of the Jews. This image was reworked in the early 1490s for Hartmann Schedel's Nuremberg Chronicle, in which it received a full-page printing (see fig. 3). The Chronicle woodcut is of a higher quality, but depicts almost the exact same scene, down to the positioning of the Jews around Simon.

A more popular form of print that was produced by the printer Johann Zainer of Ulm in 1498 was a broadsheet consisting of a single poem on one page, illustrated with a woodcut. Unlike the two works mentioned above, this was meant to be "read aloud and heard" and "related in taverns, at home, in workplaces, and on the road."⁴⁶ The poem, "I am called Simon the child" ("*Simon ain kind bin ich genant*"), was written in such a meter as to make it extremely easy to memorize and repeat, and therefore ensured its repetition wherever it was heard.

The story of Simon spread far and wide, becoming part of the local history of many cities. As I discussed above, the story made it as far north as Mecklenburg, influencing a case against the Jews. It also had a pronounced effect in Frankfurt am Main in what is now central Germany. The city, upon hearing of the murder of Simon of Trent, painted a "warning to visitors" on the wall of the busiest gate in the city, depicting the boy Simon "nailed down on a board, with blood wounds inflicted by awls all over his body."⁴⁷ The case of Simon of Trent was quickly made a part of the identity and history of towns throughout the Holy Roman Empire.

⁴⁶ Hsia 1988, 48-50.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 61-62.

Passau

The case in Passau was very closely related to the accusations against the Jews of nearby Regensburg, as shall be demonstrated shortly, and indeed there was much correspondence between the two regarding the Jews.⁴⁸ Passau is located in modern-day southeast Germany, on the border with Austria. It was not a surprise then, when, in 1478, a Christian servant named Christoph Eisengreishamer was arrested for theft of the Host, that he promptly brought an accusation against a Jew, Süttel, from neighboring Regensburg, as well as against Jews of his own city. Eisengreishamer confessed that in 1477 he stole eight Hosts for two Jews from Passau and seven more Hosts for Süttel. The Passau authorities promptly arrested and tortured many members of Passau's Jewish community, and despite conflicting testimonies, it was decided that the Hosts had been "smuggled...into the synagogue, where two men, Veidl and Vetterl, stabbed Christ's Body with a knife until blood flowed and the Eucharist turned itself into a young boy." All of those convicted of involvement in the Host desecration were put to death on March 10, 1478; of the remaining Jews, forty with their families were baptized, and the others were expelled from the city. In 1479, the synagogue was demolished, and, completed in 1484, the Church of Our Savior was built in its place. The city became the source of many purported miracles and as a result quickly became a major pilgrimage site.⁴⁹

To provide a souvenir for the pilgrims, a broadsheet was printed in 1480 commemorating the crime of the Jews and their resultant punishment, entitled *Ein grawsamlich geschicht geschehen zu Passaw von den Juden als hernach volget*, or "A Horrible Story of what the Jews did in Passau" (fig. 8). This broadsheet was intended for

⁴⁸ Straus 1971, see especially no. 438, but also nos. 441, 443, 445, 446, 448, 453.

⁴⁹ Hsia 1988, 50-51.

the Jews and the erection of the new Church to the martyred Hosts. There was also a longer description under the comic to allow those able to read a fuller account of the Host desecration. The broadsheet itself served to broaden Passau's fame, gaining enough popularity to be reprinted in both Nuremberg and Augsburg at the turn of the 16th century.⁵⁰

It was not uncommon throughout the Middle Ages for sites of Host desecration and ritual murder to become associated with miracles and, as a result, for cults to spring up dedicated either to the Host or to the murder victims, making the sites into pilgrimage destinations.⁵¹ The power of pilgrimage and its associated images is plainly evident in the Passau broadsheet. The woodcut clearly demonstrates the medieval popular "desire for the mysteries of religion to be made visible," demonstrating the transformation of the Host into a young martyr boy.⁵² While many of these images were not new, this broadsheet is a prime example of the new script emerging at the end of the fifteenth century. It demonstrates the newly prescribed series of actions, where a miracle would occur at the site of violence against Christians, the synagogue of the Jewish community would be torn down and a new church for pilgrims erected in its stead.

The popularity of this kind of depiction of a miraculous event is evident in the medium chosen for the story of the Passau Host (that is, a broadsheet) and the fact that it

⁵⁰ Konrad Haebler, *Einblattdrucke des XV. Jahrhunderts: Ein Bibliographisches Verzeichnis* (Halle: Verlag von Ehrhardt Karras G.m.b.H., 1914), 290, nos. 1079 and 1080.

⁵¹ For a more in-depth discussion of Host desecration and ritual murder shrines throughout the Middle Ages, see Miri Rubin's article "Imagining the Jew: The Late Medieval Eucharistic Discourse" in *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile relations in late medieval and early modern Germany*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia; also see *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Medieval Jews*, by Miri Rubin.

⁵² Scribner, 3.

saw at least two re-printings in the years directly following the event. Because of the nature of broadsheets, they most often fell victim to their own popularity, turning into litter, and as a result we cannot be certain of the number of broadsheets that would have been sold at any given pilgrimage site.⁵³ We can, however, get an idea of the popularity of souvenirs like the Passau broadsheet by looking at other pilgrimage souvenirs, especially tokens, where as many as 131,000 were sold in a two year period in near-by Regensburg.⁵⁴ There is no reason why similar numbers of broadsheets would not have been in circulation as well, given the inexpensive and popular nature of woodcut images. This was obviously a commodity that was not only popular, but, in great part because of its simplicity, it was, as Scribner says, “cheap, crude, and effective.”⁵⁵ It is certain that the broadsheet account of the Passau allegations traveled across Central Europe, enabling the crimes ostensibly committed by the Passau Jews to join the ranks of general Jewish crimes against Christianity.

Regensburg

So far we have looked at the records of the purported crimes of Jewish communities with the emphasis on the cruel nature of the crimes themselves. The city of Regensburg had more than its share of Host desecration and ritual murder accusations, with three separate trials between 1470 and 1476. The ritual murder case of 1476 brought about heated debate with the Emperor when, after four years of attempting to expel its Jewish population, the city council was forced to drop its case. As a result of the

⁵³ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴ Leonhard Theobald, *Reformationsgeschichte der Reichsstadt Regensburg* (Nuremberg: Verlag “Die Egge”, 1936), 76, in Scribner, 5; also in David Landau and Peter Parshall, eds., *The Renaissance Print 1470-1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 339.

⁵⁵ Scribner, 5.

tight relationship between the city and the Crown, it was not until the death of Emperor Maximilian I almost forty years later that Regensburg finally succeeded in doing what Passau achieved in one year: the expulsion of its entire Jewish community. Because of the length of time that separated Regensburg's initial attempts to expel its Jews and its success in achieving its goal, the material circulated about Regensburg differs in kind from what we have seen before, but many of the characterizations of the Jews play to the same archetype constructions as the other cases under discussion. The emphasis of the Regensburg material was less on the specific offenses committed by the Regensburg Jews and more on the constructed ideas of the general failings and evil attributes of Jews overall, as well as the holy nature of a city free of Jews.

The two main pieces that were circulated were both disseminated in the same way that the Passau broadsheet was distributed: at the expulsion of its Jews, Regensburg, following the emerging script of action against the Jews, promptly razed the synagogue, building a new Chapel of the Beautiful Mary ('Kapelle zur schöne Maria') on the site, which quickly became a pilgrimage destination. The first way in which the people of Regensburg were able to communicate the hardships they felt they had endured at the hands of their Jewish neighbors was in a folksong completed shortly after the expulsion (see Appendix, no. 2, for full text).⁵⁶ Unlike the Emden folksong, the Regensburg song, "Wie die new capell zu der schönen Maria in Regensburg erstlich aufkommen ist" ("How the new church of the Beautiful Mary in Regensburg came to be"), focused less on the details of the Regensburg ritual murder case than it did on all the other perceived

⁵⁶ I have chosen to insert the whole of the text in the Appendix to demonstrate the context in which the allegations of ritual murder fall. They constitute only a small portion of the whole list of grievances against the Jews, most of which were so general as to have resonated clearly with communities across the Holy Roman Empire.

offences committed against the Christian community. The actual allegations raised in 1476 are painted only as the final straw in a series of events that led the city council to attempt to expel its Jews. The beginning of the folksong gives an overview of the Jews' supposed greed and monetary monopoly, followed by the accusation of blasphemy against the Jews for their rejection of Jesus and the New Testament. It is only at the end that the speaker finally calls to his audience, "Now listen and pay careful heed/ To a horrendous, bestial deed/ Of Christian blood shed without pity/ By murderous Jews in our city."⁵⁷

As the new church in Regensburg became a pilgrimage destination, it is more than likely that copies of this folksong would have been sold as souvenirs of the holy site, the same way that the pilgrimage tokens mentioned above were sold in vast quantities in Regensburg in 1519 and 1520. The depiction of the Jews of Regensburg was general enough and centered enough on the traits broadly associated with Jews so as to ensure that those who heard the song of Regensburg would identify the Jewish community of their own city with the "Jewish dogs" of Regensburg.⁵⁸ The song focuses on the fear held by many medieval Christians that "No craftman's income is too small/ For Jews to demand it all," playing on the widespread belief that the Jews were attempting to steal Christian property through money-lending and pawning.⁵⁹ The song also highlights the Jewish rejection of Christian doctrine by painting the Jews not only as scornful of Christ,

⁵⁷ Gerald Strauss, 128.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

but as blasphemous towards their own Hebrew Bible prophets, a device used throughout the Middle Ages to demonstrate the inherent evilness of the Jews.⁶⁰

To juxtapose themselves with the godless Jews, the city of Regensburg used their expulsion and the construction of the new pilgrimage church as an opportunity to show the world just how holy a city without Jews could be. Michael Ostendorfer, a prominent artist and engraver of the day, cut two hugely successful images of the new church, which, after the arrival of a printer to Regensburg (Paul Kohl) in 1521, circulated in tremendous quantities. One image, complete with both Latin and German texts summarizing the situation, shows the new church, beautifully adorned, with angels blessing the building and the Virgin herself hovering over the apex, a clear demonstration of Regensburg's newly secured state of holiness (fig. 9). The other woodcut dramatically depicts the fervor of the pilgrims arriving at the church, some prostrating themselves before the statue of the Virgin, others on the ground, apparently completely overcome by the entire experience of being in such a holy place (fig. 10). The broadsheet of the church itself, first printed in 1521 with a quantity of 1,500 copies, was accompanied later the same year by a printing of a forty-page pamphlet detailing the supposed "miracles of

⁶⁰ This dates back to the High Middle Ages when it was common for theologians to write confrontations between a Christian and a Jew as a means of proving the falsity of Jewish doctrine. In these debates, theologians would show not only the Christian and his doctrine as victorious, but would prove that the Jew himself both rejected Christian 'truth' and failed even to live by the rules of the Hebrew Bible; these early debates often ended with the Jew yielding to the 'logic' of Christianity and converting. As the end of the Middle Ages approached, however, these debates ended less and less frequently in conversion, and the Jews were increasingly depicted as a pure caricature of evil, deliberately closing their eyes to the 'truth.' For a discussion of the presence of this debate in plays, see John Martin, "Dramatized Disputations: Late Medieval German Dramatizations of Jewish-Christian religious Disputations, Church Policy, and Local Social Climates", in *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 8 (December 1, 2002), 209-227.

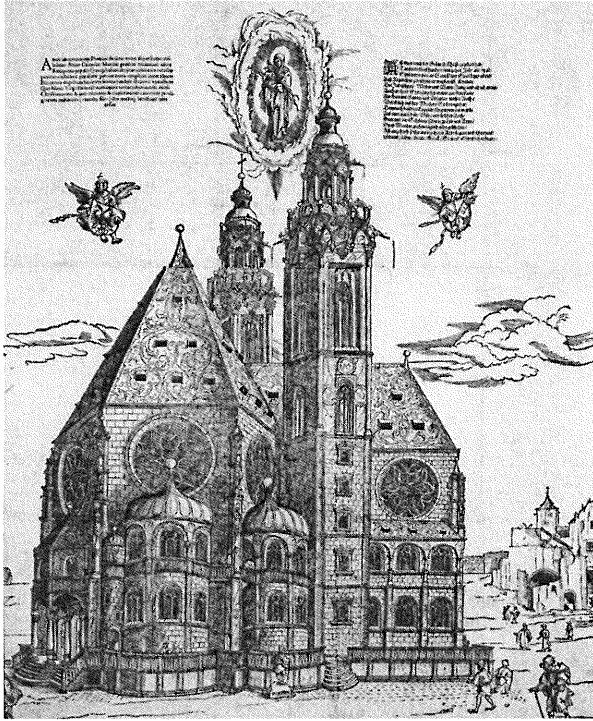


Figure 9. 'New Church of the Beautiful Virgin at Regensburg.'
From The Image Gallery, University of California, San Diego, accessed online at ARTstor.

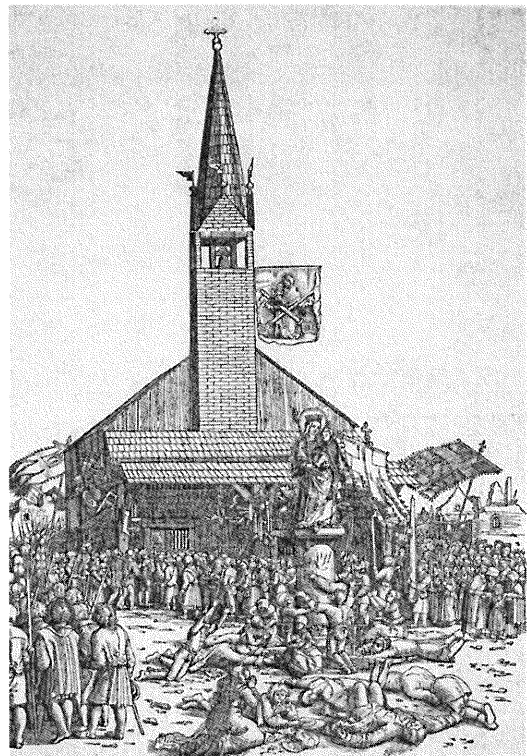


Figure 10. 'Pilgrims at the Church of the Beautiful Virgin at Regensburg.'
From The Image Gallery, University of California, San Diego, accessed online at ARTstor.

the Virgin,” also featuring a woodcut by Ostendorfer, and producing at least 3,000 copies.⁶¹

The crimes of the Jews and the account of a city that had triumphed over the Jews was a popular enough theme to warrant large printed editions detailing both the evils of the Jews and the blessed state of those who resisted the Jews’ corruption. These accounts were produced in such formats so as to allow people of all backgrounds, literate and illiterate, to interact with them, whether through hearing them, as with the folk song, or through viewing them, as with Ostendorfer’s woodcuts. This same method of transmission has now been observed in four of the major ritual murder and Host desecration cases of the late Middle Ages, portraying everything from the details of the alleged crime to the final success of a town able to expel its Jews. We have seen the use of folk songs for Emdingen and Regensburg, and dissemination of books, pamphlets and broadsheets for Trent, Passau and Regensburg. All of these were extremely effective means of distributing information in a way that everyone who came in contact with it would be able to understand and relate to it, as well as ensuring that the largest number of people possible was exposed to the various accounts. This helped to ensure that what were once local histories specific to a small area were expanded, so they became the common history of all of central Europe, establishing a script for other cities to follow when expelling their Jewish communities.

In the next section, we will further explore some of the mediums of communication that we have discussed in this section, but we will view them with the goal of understanding how a local legend could develop into something much more

⁶¹Landau and Parshall, 340.

sinister through its propagation in print. Specifically we will address the development of localized traditions concerning the Apocalypse into a Central European anti-Semitic discourse, wherein the Jews no longer only disbelieved in Christ, but were actively working against him and the whole of Christianity with the aid of the Devil. This irrational portrayal of the Jews was fueled by the spread of ideas through printing. We will look not only at the visual mediums of books and pamphlets, but also at the way this myth was portrayed in the oral performance tradition with the consideration of a printed late-fifteenth century play.

APPROACHING APOCALYPSE

During the late Middle Ages, fear of the Apocalypse encompassed every facet of life, from the religious to the mundane. Unlike the high-minded beliefs held by theologians in the High Middle Ages that the Antichrist was not a person, but the assemblage of the enemies of the Church into a “demonic corporation,” the layperson in the fifteenth century saw the Antichrist as a very real figure who would soon come, heralding the End.⁶² This End Time would be marked by upheavals in the ‘natural’ order of life, when horrible occurrences would trouble the whole of Christendom. The end of the fifteenth century saw an added factor contribute to this spreading alarm in the form of the printing press. The printing press allowed not only the ideas and images surrounding the impending Apocalypse to be transmitted far from the place of origin, but enabled the various myths and legends surrounding the arrival of the Antichrist to be merged into a single narrative. This emerging story featured the Jews in their clearly defined role as the Antichrist’s leading supporters and his primary troops in Europe.

⁶² Gow, 102.

It is worth first looking briefly at the images in circulation as a result of the printing press at the end of the fifteenth century depicting the perceived disruption of natural order. These images, especially due to their bizarre nature, would have circulated widely throughout the Holy Roman Empire, inspiring fear that all of Creation was being turned up-side down. This fear in turn made the possibility of militarily powerful Jews seem not only plausible, but likely. The two images I will highlight in this section were inspired by events in completely different locations, but they would most likely have reached the same audiences in the people of Germany. The first is *The Monstrous Sow of Landser*, an engraving by Albrecht Dürer, one of the most famous artists and engravers of the Renaissance (fig. 11). The sow depicted was reportedly born in Landser, a town

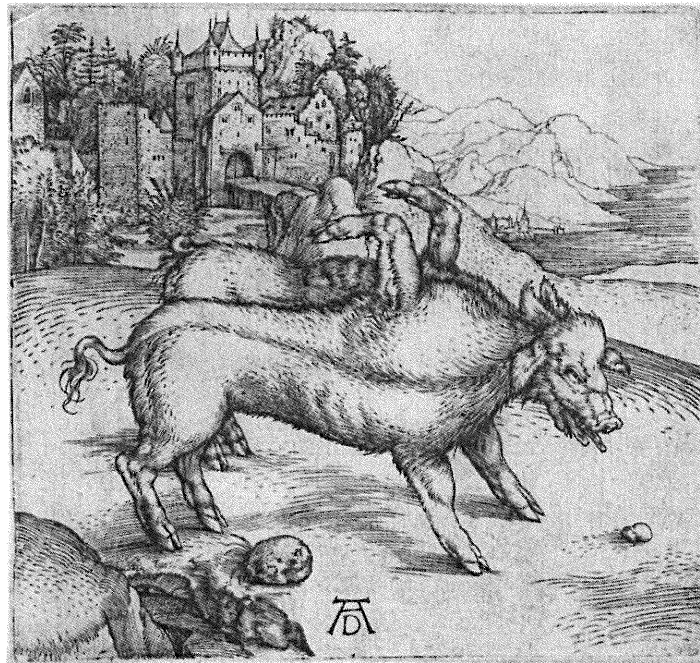


Figure 11. *The Monstrous Sow of Landser*, by Albrecht Dürer. Image from *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 10, accessed online at ARTstor.

located in Sundgau, Alsace (in present-day France) in 1496. It was grossly disfigured, with two bodies, one head, and eight legs, only six of which it stood on.⁶³ There were two broadsheets that circulated, the first of which was printed in Basel immediately following the birth and containing both an image of the pig and a poem in German and Latin. It is most likely that Dürer's engraving was based on this original broadsheet, which would have reached Nuremberg, Dürer's home, soon after. Dürer's broadsheet was completed quickly in order to be ready for the Easter festivities of the same year, at which point it would have been sold and circulated widely.⁶⁴ In an age when people saw omens in everything, news of this kind of strange event, especially the birth of such an 'unnatural' creature, served to reinforce fears that the world as it was known was coming to an end.

The second image, *Roma Caput Mundi* ("Rome, Head of the World") by Wenzel von Olmutz, was engraved sometime shortly after 1496, although the date is uncertain (fig. 12).⁶⁵ The engraving depicts a monster that was supposedly washed ashore when the Tiber River flooded in early 1496. The contemporary historian Malipiero reported that the creature had "a donkey's head, a woman's torso, right arm, one human hand, a cloven hoof, and an eagle's claw."⁶⁶ Like Dürer's *Monstrous Sow*, von Olmutz's rendering of the horrifying creature was further proof to medieval society that the End Times were approaching and the impossibly horrific was becoming possible. Images like

⁶³ Walter Strauss, ed., *The Complete Engravings, Etchings, and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1972), 120.

⁶⁴ Campbell Dodgson, *Albrecht Dürer: Engravings and Etchings* (New York: Da Capo, 1967), 10.

⁶⁵ This same image was used again during the Reformation as a critique of the papacy, but this original image was unrelated to any religious discontent.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Walter Strauss, ed. *The Illustrated Bartsch*, Vol. 9, pt. 2 (New York: Abaris Books, 1991), 169-172.

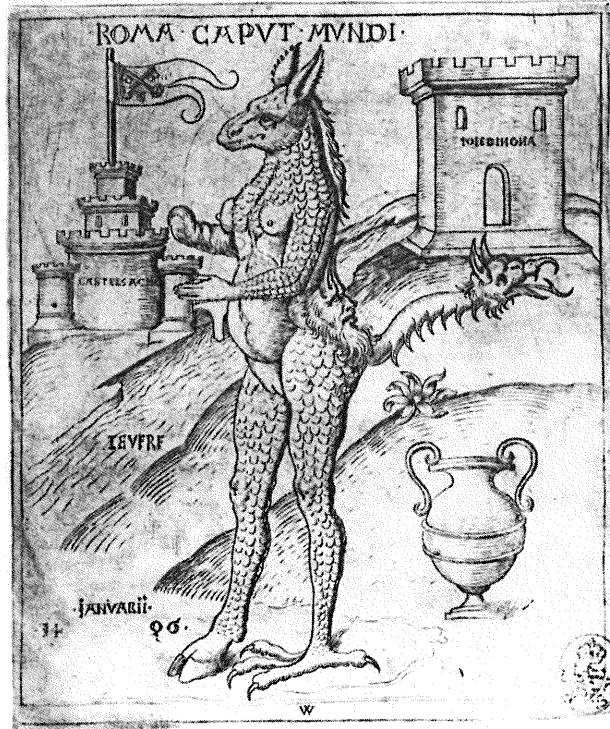


Figure 12. *Roma Caput Mundi*, by Wenzel von Olmutz. From *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 9, pt. 2 accessed online at ARTstor.

these two were not uncommon in the decades approaching the Reformation, and indeed there were many others that painted just as grim a picture for the future. Their rendering in the form of etchings and engravings, however, gave them a unique power to spread isolated events, creating a sense of a Europe-wide calamity as a result of which the natural structure of life was being destroyed.

I will turn now to the development of the Apocalypse myth itself, and its implication for the fate of the Jews of Europe. Beliefs associated with the Apocalypse date back to both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, but a defining feature of the medieval apocalyptic vision was prompted by incorporation of the two with the stories of Alexander the Great and then in turn with the Jewish belief in the return of the Ten Lost

Tribes. Gog and Magog, biblical figures who were to destroy the earth at the Apocalypse, were already associated with Alexander legends by the seventh century, in which they took on the mantle of the “unclean peoples” Alexander had enclosed in the Caucasus Mountains.⁶⁷ The role of the Jews also began to develop at this time when the ideas presented by the Tiburtine Sybil in her prophecy were set down in the Greek *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius. It was here asserted that the Jews would be “deceived and gathered in Jerusalem,” hailing and serving the Antichrist as their Messiah.⁶⁸ These beliefs were further fueled by the Jews own anticipation of the coming of the Messiah and the return of the Ten Lost Tribes so that by the twelfth century the Jews were no longer viewed merely as supporters of the Antichrist, but the Ten Tribes were actually equated with Gog and Magog. The Jews of the East were effectively transformed into a real military power, and one that would threaten Christendom in the ever-nearing Apocalypse.⁶⁹

While these ideas did exist prior to the fifteenth century, it was not until the mid-1400s that these ideas began to reach the broad public with any sense of uniformity. By that time medieval society had not only the myth of Gog and Magog with their invading Ten Tribes, as well as the view of the Jews as the supporters of the Antichrist, but the German-speaking lands had their own name for the apocalyptic Jews: the Red Jews.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Gow, 24-25.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 89. According to Gow, the Germanic-speaking lands were the only group to have a distinct name for the Jews who would supposedly come at the End to support the Antichrist and destroy Christendom. Gow asserts that this was mostly likely because by the time that these myths were emerging, both France and England had already expelled their Jewish populations, so there was not the same need to differentiate between the local European Jews and the Jews who would come from the East. For his discussion of

The development of the printing press allowed all of the ideas accumulated over the previous three centuries to be condensed into a single legend, which was then made available to the public in a multitude of ways: for the learned, there were books written in Latin which served as guides for sermons and speeches; for the semi-literate, there were picture books with short captions in German illustrating the rise and fall of the Antichrist; and for the illiterate there was the production of plays showing the malicious and foolish role the Jews would play. Unlike the broad assortment of ideas extant before the fifteenth century regarding the role of the Jews in the End Times, there was a remarkable uniformity of script and cast for the post-printing press productions of Apocalypse lore.

Despite the rise of the printing press, the main source of information for many citizens of medieval Europe would still have been sermons given in local churches or squares. The printing press, however, took a definitive role in deciding what was said in these sermons. It was common for sermons themselves to be printed and spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire, enabling the same topic to be addressed by preachers in multiple cities.⁷¹ There were also numerous sources intended to provide fodder for sermons and therefore intended for the Latin-reading clergy. One of the most influential of these works regarding the legend of the Antichrist and the role of the Jews was written by the Spanish Franciscan theologian, Alphoso de Espina, completed c.1460, within which “many Christian writers found...a vast compendium of preaching

this, see pp. 69-70. The actual designation ‘Red’ stemmed from the broader medieval association of the color red with evil: in medieval art, for instance, Jews are often painted with red hair, as is Judas in the story of the Passion of Jesus. However, there was an even stronger German connection with the color red, where the word itself (*rot*) had “an important secondary meaning: duplicitous, wicked, faithless, cunning.” For Gow’s discussion of these ideas, see pp. 66-69.

⁷¹ Gerald Strauss, 97; Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 13.

material.”⁷² Titled *Fortalitium fidei contra Iudaeos Saracenos aliosque Christianae fidei inimicos* (*Fortress of Faith against the Jews, Muslims and the other Enemies of the Christian faith*), de Espina’s book was first published in Strasbourg c.1471, and was soon followed by six further editions.⁷³ The fact that the work was printed primarily in German-speaking areas is witness to the unique and powerful position that the Antichrist legend occupied with German Christians.⁷⁴

Fortalitium fidei consists of five books, but it is the third that would have interested those concerned with the impending doom of the Apocalypse. It is entirely dedicated to the evil and ignorant nature of the Jews, evidenced by their persistent battle against the Catholic faith.⁷⁵ De Espina paints the Jews not only as warriors against Christianity, but allies them with the Devil, from whence it is a short leap to portray them as supporters of the Antichrist. Indeed, de Espina argues that the Jews, like the Antichrist, are children of the Devil.⁷⁶ For the literalists of the Middle Ages, it was only logical that those who (allegedly) supported the Devil, the enemy of God, would support the Antichrist, who was assigned the role of the Devil’s servant on earth.⁷⁷ In keeping

⁷² Steven McMichael, “The End of the World, Antichrist, and the Final Conversion of the Jews in the *Fortalitium Fidei* of Friar Alonso de Espina (d. 1464)”, *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 12 (October 1, 2006), 227.

⁷³ Gow, 123. See especially footnote no. 106. Schreckenberg provides a slightly different date for the first publication, setting it in 1470, but the location remains with Johannes Mentelin in Strassburg. See Schreckenberg, p. 536.

⁷⁴ This is most likely a result of the idea I addressed in an earlier footnote that the German-speaking lands were some of the only lands left with any Jews. Both France and England had already expelled their entire Jewish populations. As a result, the extremely anti-Semitic Antichrist legend would have found fertile ground with German Christians who were still struggling to rid themselves of their Jewish communities.

⁷⁵ Schreckenberg, 536. “...es handelt vom Krieg der Juden gegen den katholischen Glauben und von deren schlimmen Missetaten und Bosheit.”

⁷⁶ Trachtenberg, 42.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

with the medieval tradition, de Espina has the ‘enclosed Jews’ (formerly referred to as the Ten Tribes and Gog and Magog) serving as the military power behind the Antichrist, but in the change that marks the new unity of the fifteenth century, the rest of the Jews of Europe also flock to Jerusalem to serve as his supporters, heralding the Antichrist as their long-awaited Messiah. With this text serving as “a popular and well-harmonized guidebook to the ‘Jewish peril’ in the Last Days” it is no wonder that the role of the European Jews was so clearly defined from the viewpoint of medieval Christianity.⁷⁸

One of the most popular books printed before the Reformation was a German vernacular book with sixty-eight illustrating wood-cuts detailing in layman’s terms the events that would lead up to the rise of the Antichrist and then to his downfall. This book, titled simply *Der Antichrist (The Antichrist)*, was first printed c.1456 in what is now southern Germany.⁷⁹ The first printings were completed using the earliest form of the press, chiro-xylographic (wood-cut images with hand-written text), but was also subsequently completed using xylographic (woodcuts of images and text) and then typographic (moveable type with woodcut images) printing methods.⁸⁰ The book itself was popular enough to remain in print for well over fifty years (it saw its last printing in 1516), and it is not unreasonable to conclude that by the time the book was being printed

⁷⁸ Gow, 125.

⁷⁹ Anonymous, *Der Antichrist und die fünfzehn Zeichen: Faksimile-Ausgabe des einzigen erhaltenen chiroxylographischen Blockbuches*, vol. 1 (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1970), 5-6, 20-40, particularly 30. The author notes that the print of this particular chiroxylographic version was most likely produced at Nuremberg, but acknowledges that “Ulm, Regensburg and Nördlingen should not be excluded.”

⁸⁰ Gow, 87.

typographically, it was being produced in editions of anywhere from several hundred to several thousand copies.⁸¹

The story contained in *Der Antichrist* very much followed the same path as *Fortalitium fidei*, but was less concerned with arguing its assertions about the role of the Jews, instead focusing on the narrative itself. Even without the explanation of why the Jews support the Devil, the function of the European Jews who would rush to serve the Antichrist is more than clear. By this time it was more or less unnecessary to convince the audience of the inherently evil and deliberately blind nature of the Jews, so the emphasis was instead placed on forming and creating a story that would demonstrate the end to which this vile and blasphemous race would go to destroy Christendom. Just as with the Latin *Fortalitium fidei* discussed above, *Der Antichrist* did not play a decisive role in the history of Central Europe because it introduced profoundly new ideas, but rather it served to create a consolidated legend which could then reach an even broader audience. The belief in the active role the Jews would play in the End Times “was only heightened by the advent of printing” and fell on fertile ground in the form of the literate and semi-literate, serving to create a unified front against the Jews.⁸²

The uniformity in thought created by the influx of printed material is clearly evident in Hans Folz’s *Ein spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund (A Play about the Duke of Burgundy)*, which would have brought the printed ideas available to the literate and semi-literate to the people at large. Here, even though the actual narrative of the *Antichrist* book is absent, the Jews of Europe are painted at their most vile as the strongest supporters of the Antichrist. Folz knew that his audience was already familiar

⁸¹ Ibid., 90.

⁸² Ibid., 87.

with the story of the Antichrist and his Jewish supporters, so there was no need to repeat it, only to build off of it. Unlike earlier takes on the Antichrist legend where it is the Red Jews who are his foremost supporters, Folz's play serves to bring the danger closer to home by portraying the European Jews as the primary servants of the Antichrist. This is unsurprising based on the context in which the play was written: Folz penned this play c.1490 in Nuremberg when the city was at the height of its struggle to expel its Jews. Folz was one of the movement's most ardent supporters and wrote this as part of the effort to convince the Emperor of the danger the Jews posed to the Christian city.⁸³

To that end, *Herzog von Burgund* is extremely successful in painting the Jews as power-hungry miscreants plotting the downfall of Christianity. Among modern historians the play is acknowledged to be one of the most brutal portrayals of the Jews of the time.⁸⁴ The plot opens with the entrance of the Messiah (Antichrist) and three Rabbis who promptly demand that the Duke step aside and hand power over to the Jews. The Christians refuse to yield their power, demanding instead that the Jews and the Antichrist admit their attempted deception. Eventually the Messiah is revealed as a fraud and admits that the Jews had decided to produce their own Messiah since they had been waiting in vain for fourteen hundred years. The Antichrist goes on to declare:

And yet if only they [the Christians] knew
What great curses, what hatred and envy
We have always harbored for them,
How much we have stolen from them,
How many whose lives we have spoiled
Of those to whom we were physicians;
How many young children
We have stolen from them and killed
And stained red with their innocent blood
As well as we stole from you Christians
To dishonor the yearly birth

⁸³ Ibid., 126.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 125 and Trachtenberg, 36-37.

Of Jesus, which you always celebrate,
Whose hatred and envy is with us so constantly
That it drives away all our pleasures
And the Messiah is so long in coming
And does nothing to comfort us,
This is why we did this to you,
Thinking to trick all peoples
Into subjugating themselves to us.
We would have liked that a great deal,
But that will have to wait
Until he himself comes;
Then this disaster would not
Have happened to us,
And we would be confident
That all Jewry must be destroyed
Or all Christians would die.

After this blatant confession to all the crimes of which the Jews were accused in the late Middle Ages, the play ends with the trial of the Jews and their condemnation to a plethora of outlandish and grotesque tortures. The final scene shows the Christians dancing with exaggerated joy around the corpses of the tortured Jews.⁸⁵

As is made apparent with this play, the role of the Jews in the End Times had changed dramatically from the previous centuries by the end of the fifteenth century. Elements of the beliefs previously found in bits and pieces throughout earlier texts were now unified into a single story. At the advent of the Antichrist, it would no longer be solely Gog and Magog who would aid in the destruction of Christendom, but the Red Jews and their European counterparts. Indeed, as is evident with this play, in the eyes of Folz and his contemporaries the true danger came from the Jews found within the walls of German cities and these renegades should be punished with the complete elimination of their population. These were the sentiments that sermons inspired by *Fortalitium fidei* and circulating copies of *Der Antichrist*, as well as popular plays like Folz's, would have

⁸⁵ For the full text in German, see *Fasnachtspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Literarischer verein, 1853), no. 20, pp.169-190. English translation taken from Gow, 375-76.

inspired in those exposed to them. In an era in which there was already significant discontent regarding the presence of Jews in German cities and the dangers of the Antichrist were real and tangible, the availability of this variety of sources (for all levels of society) provided the impetus needed to unite the two themes, to the ultimate ruination of the Jews. According to late-medieval thought, for a population who so directly threatened Christendom by allying itself with Christianity's archenemy, as was obvious from printed authorities, the only way to protect their cities from this impending doom was to expel the Jews before it was too late.

CONCLUSION

As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the Jewish communities of late Medieval Germany were fighting a losing battle against what basically amounted to slanderous, but effective, publicity. What emerged was not propaganda in that it was not seeking to change the minds of those on the receiving end, but rather an increasingly consolidated discourse on the perceptions of the Jews. There were many other sources concerning the Jews, some more scathing and even a few slightly more sympathetic to the plight of the Jews (although not many), but I have highlighted here those which I think most typical of the atmosphere at the turn of the sixteenth century.⁸⁶ I would like to use this final section, then, to put some finishing touches on the context in which these sources appeared, especially those, which, though pertinent, fall outside the immediate scope of this study.

⁸⁶ For a useful look at the pro-Jewish works of the Middle Ages, including many works authored by the Jews themselves, see Heinz Schreckenberg's book, which provides an excellent overview of many of the texts pertaining to the Jews.

With regard to the adaptation of distant evidence to local events, it is noteworthy that its use in ritual murder and Host desecration cases is one of the only places that it appeared during this time frame. In very few other contexts did communities react so strongly to events outside their city walls. In this era of growing religious discontent it seems in fact to be only rare incidents challenging accepted religious norms that warranted such broad reactions. For example, the Hussite uprising in Bohemia c. 1420 is often seen as a precursor to Luther's Reformation and fear of its repetition spread across the Holy Roman Empire, inspiring heightened awareness of any religious unrest, even in places distant from Bohemia. Indeed, as Alfred Thomas states, the Hussites "were feared throughout Europe for their religious fanaticism and their military prowess."⁸⁷ Their military capabilities made them a group that could potentially attack communities outside of Bohemia, and thus it is no surprise that they were one of the few movements with broad-reaching effects without ever leaving their place of origin. It seems obvious, then, that there would have to be aggravating circumstances for a group with no military ability, like the Jews, to end up so hated and feared across the Empire. It seems virtually impossible for there to have been such a unified front against the Jews at this time without the emergence of the printing press.

The Apocalypse legend also saw a wide variety of sources from which it compiled its tale. All across Europe at this time was an emerging Jewish Messianism, spreading from Spain to Italy to Germany.⁸⁸ The widespread Jewish belief that the Messiah would soon arrive (which for Christians meant the advent of the Antichrist)

⁸⁷ Alfred Thomas, "Review of *The Magnificent Ride: The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia* by Thomas A. Fudge," *Slavic Review*, vol. 60 (Summer, 2001), 404.

⁸⁸ Gow, 33-35.

served to strengthen the Christian fear of the impending Apocalypse even more. I talked briefly above about signs that the End was near with the circulation of images like Dürer's *Monstrous Sow* and von Olmutz's *Roma Caput Mundi*, however there was an even wider scope of 'evidence' that the world was falling apart. For example, in 1492 the news of a massive meteorite in Alsace would have spread quickly and implied all sorts of upheaval, including the death of Emperor Frederick III.⁸⁹ There was also widespread alarm about the advent of the Ottoman Empire. After the Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453, they "overran the Balkan peninsula and advanced toward the heart of Europe," which produced, in the words of Joshua Trachtenberg, "mass hysteria of epidemic proportions."⁹⁰ The combination of these fears with the developing ideas about the End Times made certainty of the approaching Apocalypse inevitable. These events, while not directly related to the Jews, lent weight to the premise that the Last Days were coming, so that all that was left was to fill in the role the Jews would play.

It was this combination of growing fears of impending doom with the capabilities of the printing press that succeeded in truly completing the transition from anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism. As discussed above, according to Gavin Langmuir, anti-Judaism was marked by hatred of Jews based on concrete realities, such as the Jews' disbelief in Christ. Anti-Semitism, in contrast, was based on perceptions that had no base in reality, like accusations of ritual murder and Host desecration, or the belief that Jews had horns. In order for anti-Semitism to spread successfully across all of the Holy Roman Empire, then, there had to be a way for the imagined transgressions of the Jews of a single city to be converted into a unified script of actions by all Jews against Christianity. Without an

⁸⁹ Scribner, 125.

⁹⁰ Trachtenberg, 38.

actual trait common to all Jewish communities that could be seen and witnessed, the imagined traits required the help of outside forces in order to reach every community in the same form. While many of these “irrational fantasies” began emerging, as Langmuir notes, in the High Middle Ages, the printing press was able to unite all of the prejudicial images unique to separate locations into a single medieval German view of the evil Jew. The printing press, simply put, was the means of creation of the first truly unified form of anti-Semitism.

Some may argue, however, that the printing press served only to mirror the rising tide of anti-Semitism, rather than being an active participant in shaping it. While it is impossible to know what would have happened, I believe that the correlation of the consolidation and spread of unified ideas across long distances with the emergence of the printing press cannot be overlooked. If the printing press were merely echoing what was already happening, it seems that there would have been a much greater variation in script. However, as we have seen, for example, with the ritual murder and Host desecration accusations in Passau and Regensburg, a definite sequence of events developed where the Jews were accused, expelled, the synagogue razed and a new church erected in its stead, the site of which quickly became a pilgrimage destination. This was clearly set out in the broadsheets, images and songs circulated about each city, and it is only logical to assume that these immensely popular printed materials affected those exposed to them. As is the nature of history, we cannot always know which came first, the chicken or the egg (so to speak), but in this case, based on the newfound uniformity of script and the immense popularity of printed material, we must conclude that the advent of the printing press played a defining role in shaping the fate of the Jews of medieval Germany.

As I have attempted to make obvious with this conclusion, there are many facets that relate to the general malaise of the end of the Middle Ages. Unfortunately the scope of this study is such that I can only provide a base and some indications of further directions for historians to pursue. There are an immense number of factors that influenced the flood of Jewish expulsions at the end of the fifteenth century, all of which have their representations in print. I hoped to furnish an overview of the kinds of printed material that had such a tremendous effect on the fate of the Jews by filling in the hole left by previous historians and showing how the newly consolidated discourse was created. The next step is to apply this knowledge to what came before across a variety of disciplines, by attempting to understand how the discourse fits in with previous ideas such as images of the Jew as usurer and pawn-broker, or with fears of the strengthening and approaching Islamic world. Unfortunately all of these issues lie outside the bounds of this discussion, but they are worthy of further investigation and, when finally undertaken, will contribute greatly to our knowledge of the pre-Reformation era. Even without addressing these points, however, this study has begun to fill the gap between the history of the Jews and the history of printing at the end of the Middle Ages.

APPENDIX

1) "Lied von den eltern und unschuldigen kindern" ("Song of the parents and innocent children")

1.
What do I want to sing and tell you
of a woman and a man
and two small children, yes, children?

2.
They passed through Endingen town,
they came in front of the Jew's door,
lodging they could not find, not find.

3.
Jew, will you not let us stay for the
night?
The Jew, he said: with all my heart,
go rest in the shed on straw, on straw.

4.
And they came into the shed on straw,
there they praised God and Our Lady,
that they lodging had found, had found.

5.
And it was around midnight
when the Jews held counsel,
what to do with them, with them.

6.
The Jewess, she gave false counsel:
we will strike them all dead,
no one can say a thing, a thing.

7.
And it was around midnight,
Jacob the butcher said to his wife:
Listen, the Jew hits his wife, his wife.

8.
Oh no, I think it's not his wife,
but the poor folks on straw,
they strike their children, their children.

9.
And when it was light in the morn'

Jacob the butcher into the Jew's house stepped:
Jew, where are your guests, your guests?

10.
I sent them first thing morn'
out the city gate away,
must have been half past six, yes six.

11.
Oh Jew, you lie to my face,
the horse is still in your stall,
eating hay from your stack, your stack.

12.
Jacob the butcher will not let things stand,
he goes to the Bürgermeister,
wants to tell him things, yes things.

13.
Jacob Butcher, you are a clever man,
you can just let things be,
they will bring you money, yes money.

14.
Before I will let things lie still,
I will rather lose my possessions,
and my young, fresh life, yes life.

15.
Eight and a half years went by,
Jacob experienced much with the Jews,
his possessions are all gone, all gone.

16.
When Jacob was a poor man,
God showed a miracle one day,
the charnel caved in, caved in.

17.
They bloom like a rose tree,
their fragrance like a pilgrim staff,
before God they are four angels, yes angels.

2) “Wie die new capell zu der schönen Maria in Regensburg erstlich aufkommen ist” (“How the new church of the Beautiful Mary in Regensburg came to be”) [This is a partial English translation by Gerald Strauss. For the full original see Rochus von Liliencron, *Die historischen Volkslieder der Deutschen vom 13. bis 16 Jahrhundert*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1867), 319-325.]

Among the Christians were a few
 Felt pity for the wretched Jew;
 These loved not God and felt no urge
 To venerate the Holy Church.
 But other men were free of blame;
 Among them Thomas Fuchs I name
 And Simon Schwebel; furthermore,
 The worthy Caspar Amman, nor
 Should Johann Portner be left out;
 Of Friedrich Stüchs you’ve heard, no
 doubt;
 Hans Hyrstorfer, councillor-elect,
 Wolf Kitztaler, Hans Ofenbeck,
 Hans Hetzer, Adam Kölner too,
 And Urban Trünkel also, who
 Supports the Christian cause with might;
 Stefan Pösinger I cite,
 Georg Saller and Erhard Fiechtmair,
 Wilhelm Wieland and Wolfgang Steirer;
 Last but not least Hans Reusold, clerk
 To the government of Regensburg.

By murder and usury, the Jews
 Had done our city grave abuse.
 Stirred by laments from young and old,
 By pleas from all the land, I’m told,
 The council acted. Otherwise,
 Had council members shut their eyes
 And left the Jews in impunity
 They would have wrecked our
 community.
 May our crave councillors be blessed
 For having rid us of this pest.
 God’s purpose was behind their action,
 For our Lord feels satisfaction
 Whenever Jews are driven from
 A famous city in Christendom.
 God heeds the cries of honest folk
 Oppressed beneath the Jewish yoke.
 No craftman’s income is too small
 For Jews to demand it all.
 He needs a suit a pair of shoes?
 Off he goes trudging to the Jews;
 There he finds pewter, silver plate,

Velvet and linen stuffs, brocade,
 The things that he himself not owns
 Jews hold as pledges for their loans,
 Or buy from highwayman and thief
 To make their pile from Christian grief.
 Stolen or found, cheap stuff or rare,
 Look at the Jew’s; you’ll find it there.
 He’s got the cash to lend on it,
 No questions asked, depend on it.
 A piece worth fifty gulden when
 Bought new, the Jew gets it for ten,
 Holds on to it two weeks or three,
 Then claims it as his property,
 Converts his house into a store
 With pants and coats stuffed roof to floor;
 A cobbler can’t sell a pair of shoes,
 Townfolk buy only from the Jews.

But these misdeeds, though they are cursed
 By all the world, are not their worst.
 A graver crime and fouler deed
 Lies on this Godforsaken breed.
 Obstinate, blind, faithless toward
 Their patient, kind, forgiving Lord,
 They’ve always sinned, never repent,
 As we learn from the Old Testament.
 The five books of Moses, the Book of Kings
 Show how the Jew to his habits clings;
 They prove it to satiety:
 Jews are a race without piety.
 We’re told by wise old Jeremiah
 That they killed their prophets with sword and
 fire.
 David, among their kings the first,
 They sent to hell despised and cursed.
 Moses, a demigod to Jews,
 They covered with hatred and abuse.
 No wonder, given such behavior,
 They crucified God’s son, our savior.
 They’re in the dark, can’t see the clearing,
 They’ll never give their prophets hearing,
 Must live forever in God’s ban;
 Who gives them aid is no Christian man.

Jewish malignity was foretold
By the prophet Isaiah in days of old;
And if further evidence you desire,
Ask Doctor Balthasar Hubmaier
To tell you why it is that we
Treat the Jews with such hostility.
He'll waste no time convincing you
(By quoting God's own Gospel, too)
That there's no punishment too painful
For a tribe so openly disdainful
Not only of Christ, their adversary,
But of his mother, the Virgin Mary.
For a Christian there's no sin so great
As to merit a Jew's love, not his hate.
Unceasingly the Jewish swine
Scheme how to violate, malign,
Dishonor the pure Virgin Maid,
Our Christian solace, hope and aid,
Whose son died on the cross that we
Might live in bliss eternally.
No city therefore can fare well
Until it's sent its Jews to hell.

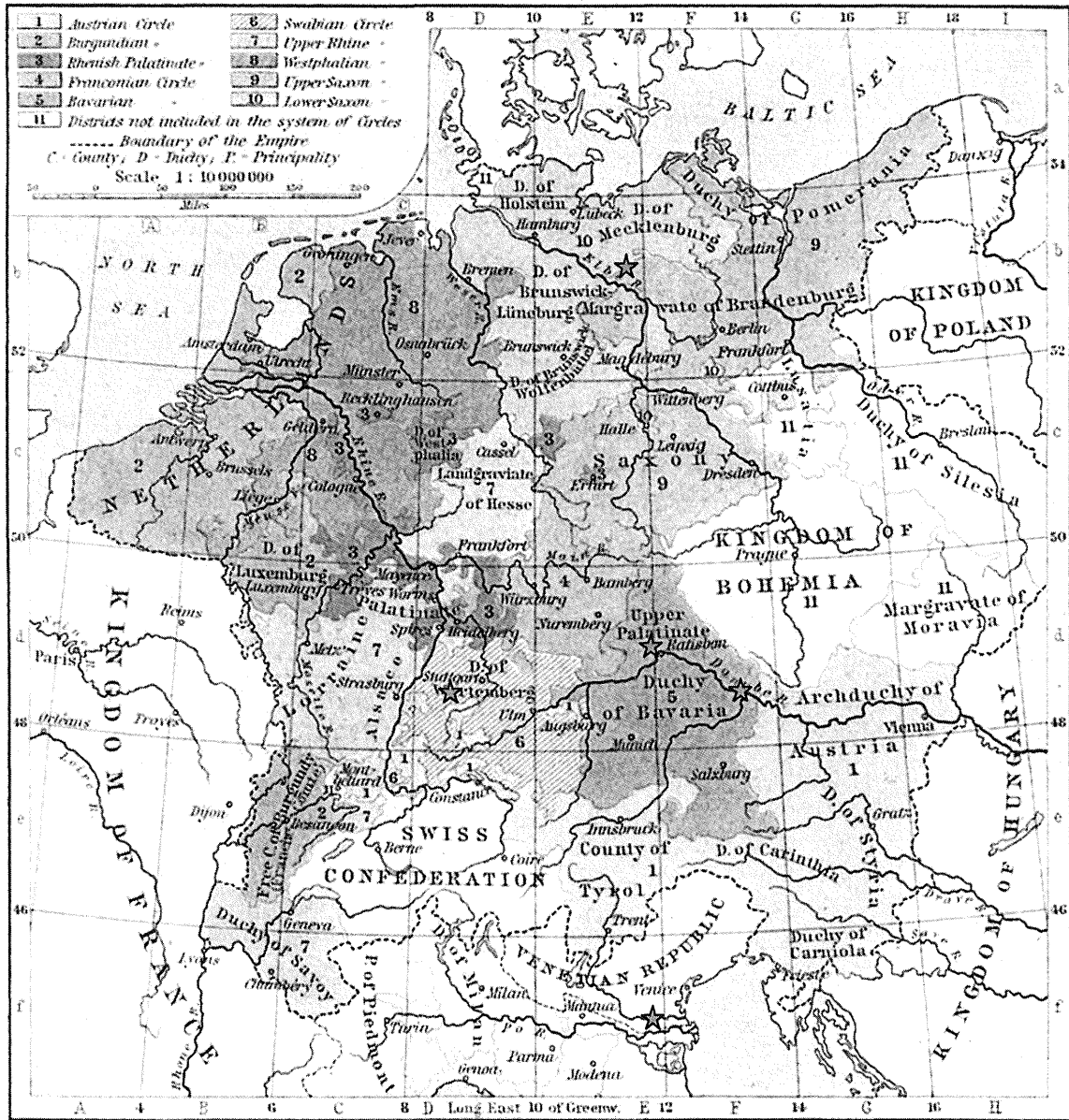
Now listen and pay careful heed
To a horrendous, bestial deed
Of Christian blood shed without pity
By murderous Jews in our city.
It happened in Emperor Frederick's
reign;
Six children they killed with dreadful
pain,
Into a dungeon then they threw them
To hide the bodies, bleeding and
gruesome.
But soon their crime was indicated,
All of the Jews incarcerated,
And the burghers resolved, for the
Virgin's sake,
To burn the damned Jews at the stake.
But – though to tell it is a disgrace –
The Jews found help in an exalted place.
Our council spent what money it could
To keep the Jews from winning their
suit,
But with the emperor to defend
Their case, the Jews won in the end.

This caused complaints and lamentations;
Citizens sent deputations
To ask why Jewish dogs who spilled
Pure Christian blood should not be killed.
As for the Jews, they caught the drift
Of things, made many a handsome gift
Where money counts; their silver and gold
Regained for them their old foothold.
The burghers would have burned the Jews,
But the emperor saw fit to refuse.
The might and glory of his crown
Served to keep Jews in our town.
Our councillors resented this intervention,
Which frustrated their good intention
Of just revenge on the blaspheming Jew
For the innocent children whom they slew.
The gold sent abroad also caused them grief;
It could have been used for poor relief.
Three years they wasted in vain appeal,
But the emperor adhered to his deal.
Nothing the councillors could say
Would change his mind; the Jews must stay.

For forty years we pressed our case
Against the murderous Jewish race.
Of money paid out, the total score
Was a hundred and thirty-five thousand gulden
or more;
The city registers record it.
Our citizens could scarcely afford it,
While the Jews, who had much more to spend,
Bribed the emperor's courtiers to pretend
To Maximilian, double-tongued,
That the Jews of Regensburg had been wronged.
Money makes the lie like truth appear,
And the facts were kept from the emperor's ear.
Thus matters stood, justice defied,
Until the day Maximilian died,
And God eliminated a few
Of our Jew-loving burghers, too,
Which left the Jews without a friend
Their horrid actions to defend.
That's all I'll say about them here,
Their stubborn blindness cost them dear.
We're free at last of their oppressions;
May God forgive them their transgressions.

3) Map of Central Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. ★ represents cities with ritual murder or Host desecration allegations discussed in this thesis. [Note: Regensburg is here labeled as Ratisbon. The two stars without names are Endingen in the West and Passau in the East.]

The Imperial Circles about 1512.



Map of Central Europe as it was in 1512. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin. Accessed at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_europe.html.

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