

Satan and his World of Darkness

The Devil and the Jews

The Jews as the Agents of Satan: Origins of the Concept

They answered him, 'Abraham is our father'. Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does'. They said to him, 'We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.' Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. **You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.** When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God'. John 8:39-47

Gospel of John and Judaism

- Is there an anti-Semitic potential to be discovered in John's Gospel?

‘The Gospel of John has proved to be a dangerous document, for although it may not itself be anti-Semitic, it has given aid and comfort to anti-Semites’ (D. Moody Smith).
- References to ‘the Jews’: a group that embodies opposition against Jesus and is ultimately responsible for Jesus’ death.

Who are 'the Jews' in John?

- Symbol of unbelief.
- Judaeans - i.e. inhabitants of Judaea (but see 12:9, 11; 19:20).
- Jewish religious authorities, often linked closely to 'the Pharisees' (11:46-52; 18:1-3; 18:12-14).
- Those who are themselves Jews fear 'the Jews' (7:13; 19:22).



Socio-Historical Context

Tension between Johannine Christians and synagogue Jews (see John 9:22; 16:2).

‘In an era when there were ill feelings between the Church and the synagogue, ‘the Jews’ was a term used with a connotation of hostility to Christians..... This does not mean that the evangelist has forgotten the true circumstances of Jesus’ ministry in the anachronistic use of ‘the Jews’. By this term he indicates his belief that the Jews of his own time are the spiritual descendants of the Jewish authorities who were hostile to Jesus during the ministry’ (R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, page lxxii).

Further Biblical 'Proof-texts'

'I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan' (Revelation 2:9).

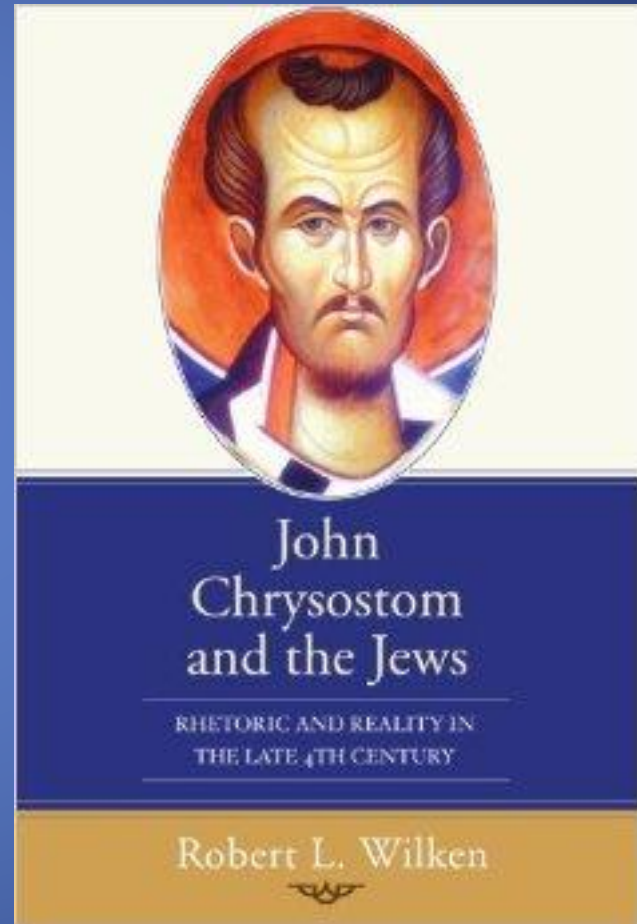
'I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying – I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you' (Revelation 3:9).

Hostility towards the Jews: The Early Church

- **Hatred and persecution**
 - condemnation of the Jews by several Church fathers for their refusal to accept Christ, indeed for deicide
- **Limited tolerance**
 - the survival of the Jews meant that they had a purpose in the divine plan (e.g. Augustine). This was the prevalent position during the Middle Ages:
 - a) the Jews were the possessors of the books that prophesied the coming of Christ
 - b) the Jews were witnesses by their own error to the truth of Christianity: homeless, the wandering Jews.

Theological Interpretations

- **John Chrysostom**: the synagogues of the Jews are the homes of idolatry and devils'. Satan himself 'inhabits the soul of a Jew' (*Adversus Iudaeos* ca. 386/7 CE).
- **Gregory of Nyssa**: Jews are 'advocates of the devil' and 'the congregation of demons'.
- The Devil prevented the Jews from understanding their own Scriptures; they were blinded by Satan.



Shift in Attitudes

- From 1000 onwards the official policy of 'limited toleration' disintegrates:
 - banning of Judaism by local authorities
 - closure of synagogues and enforced baptisms
 - accusations by priests during the period of the Crusades (murder and expulsion)
 - expositions of the Christian Scriptures in a negative way towards the Jews
 - negative visual representations of the Jews

Popular Interpretations

- Shift from restricted theological circles to the popular masses through the work of preachers and playwrights.
- Condemnation in sermons of Jews as Christ-killers.
- Denunciation in passion plays: evil demons 'invest the Jews with courage to kill him by their outrage and to hate him just as we do' (French Mystery Play).
- 'Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnate'
Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, 2:2, 7.
'Let me say "Amen" betimes lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew' (3:1, 22).
- Under the influence of the theologians and preachers, craftsmen communicated the belief to common people about the close relationship between Satan and the Jews.

Theological Interpretations



Martin Luther: As Jews were no longer God's people they must be the devil's people. 'Whenever you see a genuine Jew, you may with a good conscience cross yourself, and say, 'There goes a devil incarnate' (*Concerning the Jews and their Lies*, 1543).

‘The devil and all his
angels have
possessed this
nation.’

Martin Luther



Medieval Concepts of Satan

The devil has never played a very prominent role in Jewish thought as a distinct personality... But to the medieval Christian he was a very real personage indeed, as real, at one end of the moral scale and the world scheme, as Jesus was at the other. The Christian was constantly oppressed by his omnipresence, incessantly subjected to his temptations and blandishments, tormented by his machinations and those of his agents, the demons. (J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 19).

Medieval Representations of Satan

- Representations of medieval demonology:
 - Satan as a frightening figure
 - association with animals (monkeys, snakes, pigs) especially the goat: horns, beard, tail, cloven hooves. This highlighted his bestial features.
 - often naked, in stark contrast to robed angels and saints.
- Deformed human with twisted limbs, dishevelled hair, bulging eyes with no eyebrows, prominent nose and lower lip.
- Pungent, sulphurous smell as a sign of his presence.
- Attraction to the north (on the left if one enters a church through the west door). The left (Latin: *sinister*) is associated with danger and evil.

Descent to Hell (Duccio, 1308)



Satan in the Middle Ages

- Revelation 12. 7-9
- The fallen angel Lucifer as a semi-human dragon.
- Michael holds a spear over the horned, winged and clawed Devil.

St Michael (Crivelli, 1476).



Satan and the Colour Red

- Favourite colours of the devil are black and red or reddish yellow (colour of fire and blood).
- He has red hair and a red beard (cf. Aristotle, *Physiognomics*: 'the reddish are of bad character; witness the foxes').
- Esau's red hair was viewed as a sign of his inclinations to murder, idolatry and immorality (Jewish commentaries).
- Prejudice against redheads: they were branded as liars, traitors, murderers and bring bad luck to others.
- The dishonest miller has facial hair 'as red as any fox or sow' and on his nose he has 'a wart upon which stood a tuft of hairs, red as the bristles are in a sow's ears' (Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*).

The Medieval Satan



- Satan's body is covered in fur.
- He has claws, horned head, grotesque face, scorpion's tail and batwings.

Our Lady of Succour, ca. 1460
(Church of Santo Spirito,
Florence)

Riding Backwards

- A widespread element in the folk traditions of Europe and Western Asia.
- In the Middle Ages it marked the rider out for ridicule, often leading to persecution (even execution).
- It was used to punish offenders and heretics.
- Transformation into a symbol of evil.



Satanic Features of the Jews

- Animal characteristics
- Ugliness (thick lips, bulging eyes, long hooked nose)
- Red hair
- Riding backwards
- Pointed hat to hide horns
- Reddish yellow piece of cloth sown onto outer garment – ‘the Jewish badge’

Used by medieval artists and sculptors to demonize the Jews as servants of Satan.

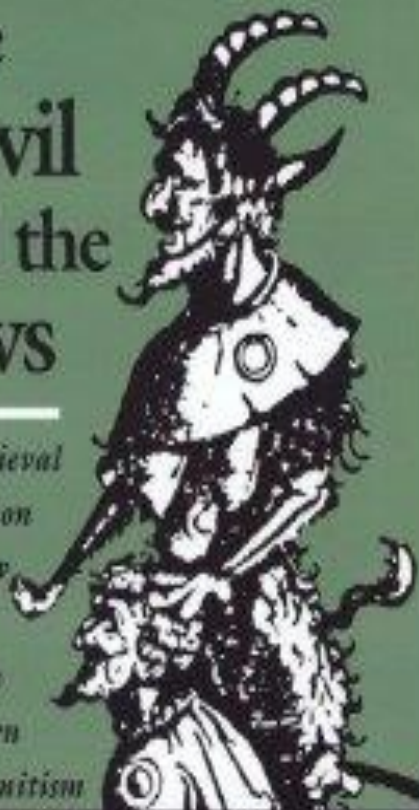


The Devil and the Jews

The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism

Joshua Trachtenberg

Foreword by Marc Saperstein



‘The Clothing of the Jew’

Jewish money lenders (France): pointed hat and a circle of red/yellowish material sown onto the coat.



Satanic Features attributed to the Jews

- Judas Iscariot (*Ioudas*) is often depicted as a redhead.



Caspar Isenmann, The
Betrayal of Christ, 1462-65.

Satanic Features attributed to the Jews

In depictions of Jesus' crucifixion Jews stand on the left side of the cross, the side of Satan and the unrepentant thief.



Satanic Features attributed to the Jews

- The Jews also associated with owls (preference for the darkness rather than the light of Christ).
- An ape riding backwards on a goat with an owl on his wrist (a decoration found on the ceiling of Peterborough Cathedral).



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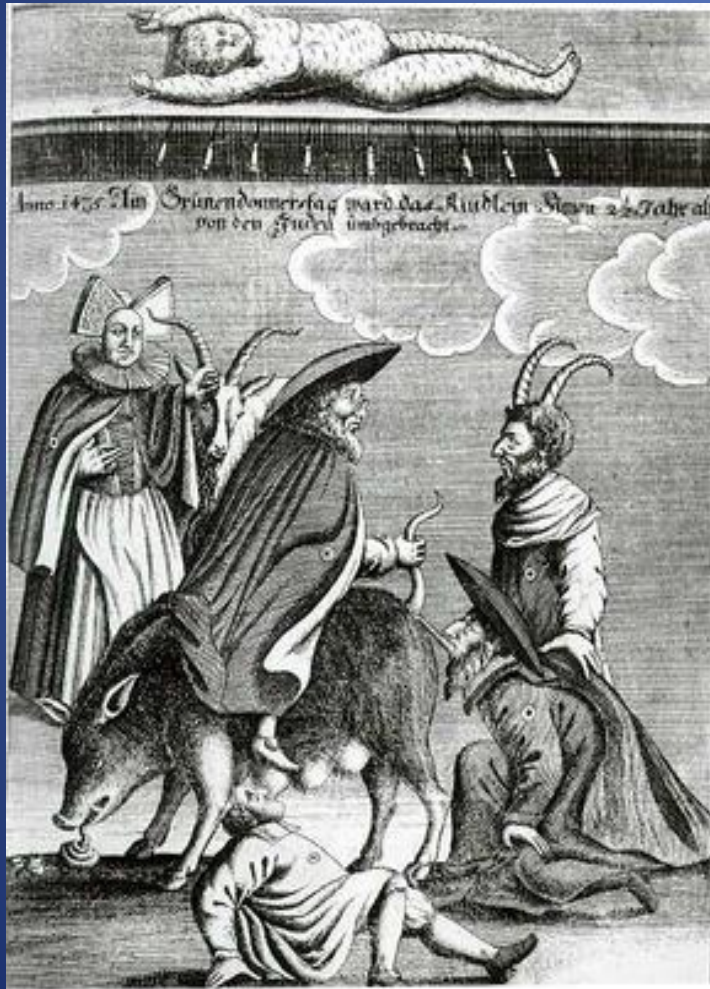


- Saint Francis preaching to the birds
- Owls represent the Jews in need of conversion

Jews associated with Pigs

- Pigs were commonly associated with evil and Satan.
- Characterized by filth and stench.
- An unclean animal as a symbol of an unclean people.
- Offensive odour (like their father, the Devil)

The Judensau



- German images of the sow as a mother (*Judensau*) suckling her Jewish offspring in the presence of the Devil.
- An adult Jew, rides the animal backwards and another eats the pig's excrement.
- Emphasis in Luther's writings on Satan eating excrement.
- Emphasis on the alien character of the Jew; the offspring of the pig.

The Frankfurt 'Judensau'
(copperplate engraving in Johann
Jakob Schudt's *Jüdische
Merkwürdigkeiten* (1714))

Judensau (Stiftskirche, Bad Wimpfen)



foto: peter schmelzle 2009
original upload to wikimedia commons

Satanization of the Jews

- Emphasis on the demonic qualities of the Jews.
- This led to irrational fears, false accusations and fanaticism directed at the Jews.
- They were the opponents of Jesus and of Christianity.
- They were agents of Satan – the representatives of the Antichrist.



Afterlife of Caricatures

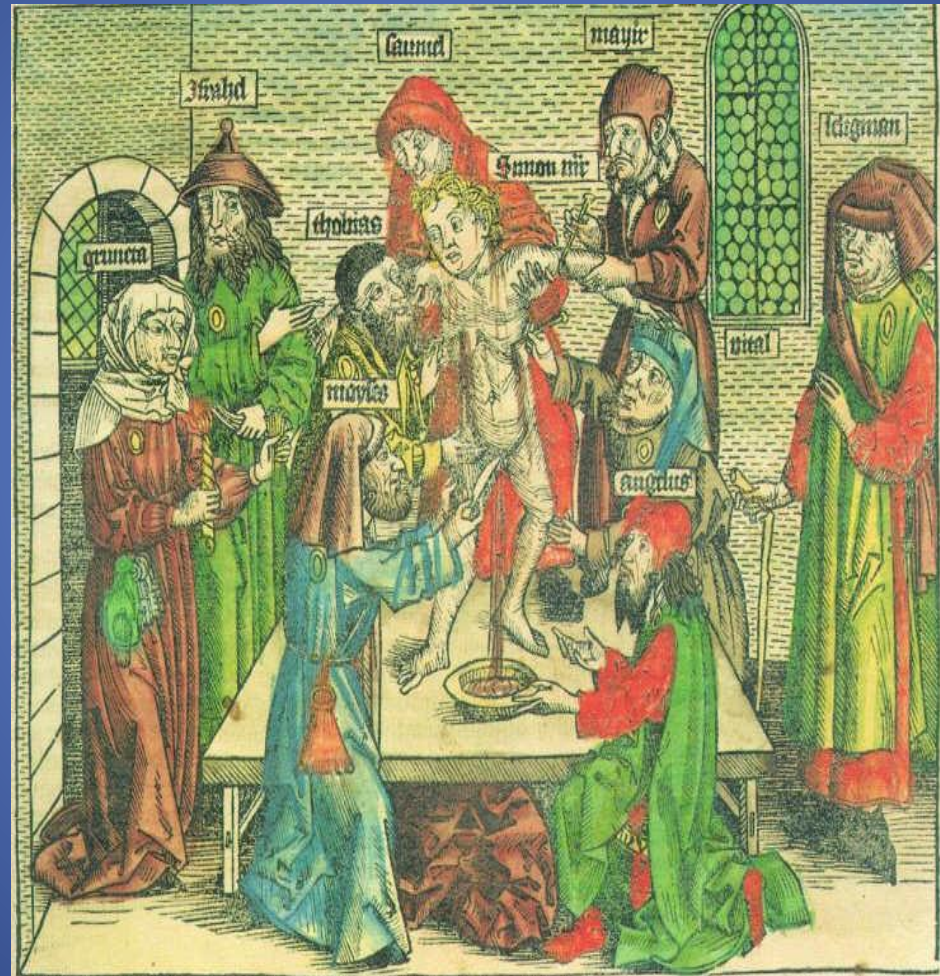
- These caricatures survived into later centuries.
- 'Standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair' (depiction of Fagin in Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, chapter 7).



Ritual Murder by Lucifer's Children

- Satanizing of the Jews linked to other false accusations.
- Ritual murder: crucifying of young Christian boys to insult Christ.
- Charge of blood libel: the Jews required Christian blood for a variety of purposes – to anoint the dead, to remove their foul odour, to guard against illness, to make Passover bread (matzah).
- Over 150 incidents of blood libel are recorded in Europe between 1140 and 1600.
- Blood libel and ritual murder became popular accusations which stemmed from fear of the Jews and the depiction of them as allies of Lucifer.
- To serve their master, the Devil, they required blood, which was obtained from the bodies of Christian boys.

Ritual Murder



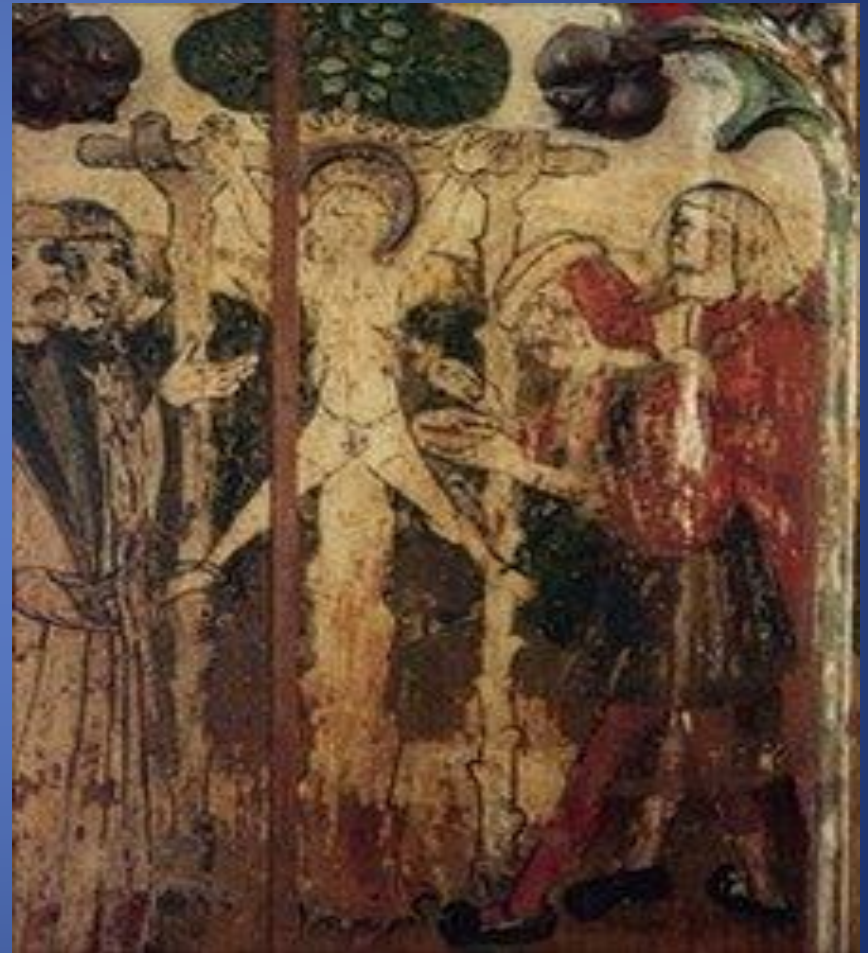
William of Norwich (1144)

- Discovery of the body of a 12-year old; his uncle places the blame on the Jews of Norwich.
- The story of Williams is later recorded (1150) by Thomas of Monmouth – his sufferings, the miracles around his grave.
- William's grave turns into a shrine and pilgrimage site.



Hugh of Lincoln (1255)

- Body of 8-year old boy discovered in a pit in the city of Lincoln (1255).
- Local Jews were accused of his death, intended as a parody of the crucifixion.
- 90 Jews were sent to the Tower of London; 18 of them were hanged.
- The child became known as Little Saint Hugh.
- The cathedral became a shrine with statues, pictures and reported miracles.
- The Jews were expelled from England in 1270.



Afterlife of Hugh of Lincoln

- Story of a young boy who was abducted and killed by Jews. The Prioress calls upon Little St Hugh to pray for the pilgrims (*Canterbury Tales*).
- 'I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage. They date beyond the pyramids But I should not be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerves to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln' (Charles Lamb, 'Imperial Sympathies', 1823).

The Story of Saint Hugh

Trumped-up stories of ritual murders of Christian boys by Jewish communities were common throughout the Middle Ages, and even much later. These fictions cost many innocent Jews their lives. Lincoln had its own legend, and the alleged victim was buried in the Cathedral. A shrine was erected above and the boy was referred to as Little St Hugh. Such stories do not redound to the credit of Christendom, and so we pray: 'Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers' (1955 inscription on a memorial tablet to Little Saint Hugh in Lincoln Cathedral).

[illegible]

Durch die Jahressende vergoß der Tod, geheiltes Nimm folgend, Herrgott!
Der Kranke ist uns heute noch im Haufen, es liegt an Euch die Krankenlast zu tragen

Nazi Propaganda



Nazi Propaganda

The father of the Jews is the devil (caption next to a picture of Satan published in a picture-book for children – Elvira Bauer, *Ein Bilderbuch für Gross und Klein*, Nürnberg, 1936).



EXERCISE

- 1) Read Chapter 3 of J. Trachtenberg's, *The Devil and the Jews*.
- 2) Drawing on the lecture and J. Trachtenberg's chapter, how and in what ways are Jews Satanized in texts and paintings during the Medieval Period?
- 3) What images/text/sculpture has stood out to you most during today's lecture and why?