

ful stigmatization still have a right to exist. It vividly shows how deeply the hatred of Jews is rooted in our Christian shaped culture, and to which extent people and their churches, who saw themselves as Christian, spread anti-Jewish thought processes and distorted images; such also evidences to what extent the abysmal malice towards Jews had already developed, long before the Shoah.

As poisonous as this hatred is, just as devastating are the seemingly subtle fundamentals that divide the characters: the righteous are on the Christian side, the wicked on the Jewish.



Thus, the Adoration of the Magi on the main panel of the *altar of the Three Kings* in St. Lorenz turns things upside down: Mary and Joseph appear to have completely lost their Jewish identity and have become the (Christian) „ours“, while the first king with the Hebrew letters on his robe embodies the „stranger“ who joins the scene as an outsider.

Moreover on the *St. Sebald mural*, which depicts scenes from the legend of Paul, Paul appears with his nimbus as a Christian saint, while the high priests and the henchman of Emperor Nero are to be identified by their hats as Jews. In the adage „from Saul to Paul“, the contempt

for Jewry and the apparent opposition of Christianity to Judaism resonate. These words suggest that in his vision of Christ, the apostle converted from evil to righteous and from Judaism to Christianity.



If you read the Acts of the Apostles, you will find that Saul is still called Saul even after his conversion experience, and that his Greek name Paul first begins to be used when he addresses non-Jewish Greeks.

Different Practices - Common Basic Convictions

In recent years, numerous research papers have been published which show how slowly Christianity and Judaism have moved away from each other over the course of centuries and separated themselves as independent religious communities.

Today, Judaism and Christianity are two distinct communities with different practices and beliefs. But they are by no means opposed to each other, as many works of art suggest, because diversity and common basic beliefs exist. The medieval works of art show not only impressive piety and theological profundity, but also the dangers of attribution of certain characteristics and behaviors to others as

well as in defining oneself by devaluing others, and how necessary personal introspection is.

[Text abridged. The full version as well as additional illustrations can be found on our website at www.norum.de]

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St. Sebald: www.sebalduskirche.de
Church of Our Lady: www.innenstadtkirche.de

Who We Are

Our Forum is open to all people interested in Jewish history and culture, regardless of their religious affiliation. Our events are open to the public. Details about the programs and the Forum can be found on our website at www.norum.de, which is constantly updated.



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Traces of Damnation

Guided Tour
on Anti-Jewish Images
in the Medieval Churches of Nuremberg

Expressions of Christian Hostility towards Jews in the Medieval Churches of Nuremberg

Christian hostility towards Jews has left its traces on many medieval churches, whether carved in stone, painted on panels or in the church construction itself. Theology and piety are incorporated in anti-Jewish images as well political and legal decisions that the Christian majority made about the Jewish minority. The core churches of Nuremberg's medieval city are no exception. The pious endowments of Nuremberg patrician families in the two parish churches of St. Sebald and St. Lorenz are not only an expression of personal religious convictions, but also testify to the political self-image that these families portrayed to shape the institutions of the imperial city.



Jews were considered guilty for the suffering and death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This is shown, for example, by depictions of the Passion such as in the Tucher window panel from the late 14th century or the epitaph in St. Sebald for Klara Löffelholz from the middle of the 15th century. The torturers are to be recognizable as Jews, for example by the „Jewish hat“, as such were worn by male

Jews as standard dress in the late Middle Ages. The Three Kings Altar in St. Lorenz was also created around the middle of the 15th century. It depicts the *legend of the infanticide* in Bethlehem as a murderous act by Jews. The Hebrew letters on the hem of the robe are to suggest that „the Jews“ are even capable of the greatest evil things imaginable, the murder of God and the murder of children.



As „child murderers of Israel“ this ancient defamation reverberates today in the hatred of the state of Israel.

Jews as „Archetype of all Apostates“

„You Jew“ has not just become a swear word in modern times. In late antiquity and the Middle Ages, Jews were used as a reference for the worst misconduct, as character defective and as deviants from proper norms. They were regarded as the archetype of all apostates from the true faith and therefore could only expect terrible punishments. This is shown by the *depictions of the Last Judgment* in both St. Lorenz and St. Sebald: In medieval society Christ is to judge the world, which includes nobility, members of the clergy and the bourgeoisie. Some receive the salvation of eternal life, others adjudged to eternal damnation.



On both sides there are representatives of all groups - with one exception: Jews are only found among those adjudged to eternal damnation - as presumed arch-villains they even stand at the forefront of the procession of the damned.

The *Sebalder Marienportal* and the „Juden-sau“ sculpture defame Jews and Judaism in a particularly extreme manner. In previous times parents brought their children to be baptized through the Marienportal. The medieval legend of the burial of Mary above the „baptismal door“ violently depicts the dramatic consequences for Jews for turning away from the true Christian



church and the blasphemous deviation away from the proper faith: Blindness, crippling deformity and paralysis. Only faith in the true church brings salvation - and the figure of Mary stands symbolically for this premise. In a figurative sense such expresses that the church has triumphed over the synagogue.

In the early 14th century, when the portal was built, the bloody pogrom of 1298 had taken place about 20 years earlier, when a mob, who saw themselves as Christian, murdered more than 700 Jewish men, women and children. About 30 years after the construction of the Marienportal, the stone message of hatred became a bloody reality: In a mixture of political calculation with economic interests, the Nuremberg patricians and their henchmen, with the blessing of Emperor Charles IV, destroyed the Jewish quarter. In December 1349, they murdered over 500 children, women and men, simply because they were Jewish, and destroyed their synagogue. Charles IV had a church built over the ruins of the synagogue as a sign of Christian triumph over Judaism, a place of worship in honour of Mary, the patron saint of the Christian Church.

Another 30 years or so later, the depiction of hatred for Jews reached its sad low point: in the late 14th century, a sculpture mocking and demonizing all things Jewish was placed on the new east choir of St. Sebald: The „Jewish sow“ motif brings a pig and four humans into a symbiotic relationship. It mocks the divine command to Jews not to consume pork. As the embodiment of the devil, it declares „the Jews“ collectively to be the henchmen of evil.

Only for the reason of being a constant reminder against collective amnesia, and to put into perspective the self-deception of historical-political turnarounds, does such depiction of disgrace-