



Anti-Judaism in Christian Art. Some examples of anti-Judaic Christian art. Ecclesia and Synagoga

| Voll, Fritz

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Negative images of Judaism in Christian Art

Ecclesia and Synagoga

Ecclesia and Synagoga as a double-portal of the soul entrance to the Strasbourg cathedral (around 1230)

Here both, the Church and Synagogue, are symbolized and related to each other in the motto *concordia veteris et novi testamenti*, the unity of the Old and New Testaments. Both figures have a noble character. However, the Church is depicted as triumphant, with crown and imperial robes on her shoulders, with staff and scepter in her hands, symbolizing her authority. She looks ahead, confident of her mission in the world. The Synagogue is symbolized as defeated, her staff broken under her feet. More than once, the Torah is slipped from her hands, a veil is covering her face, and her head is bowed.

**Wood
carving at the
choir benches
of the Erfurt
cathedral,
Thuringia,
Germany**

**(about
1400-1410)**

Ecclesia on a horse is attacking the Synagogue with a lance. Her shield carries the Christian symbol of a fish. The Synagogue is symbolized as riding a pig. Her eyes are closed and with her left hand she holds on to a branch. One of many depictions of the "Judensau" in the art work of European churches.

**Church
windo
w of
St.
John's
Church
in Wer
ben/
Elbe
River,
Germa
ny
(aroun
d 1414-
1467)**

In the left section of the window the

Church
is
riding a
tetramorph (a
creature with
the
heads
of
eagle,
human,
lion
and
bull, sy
mbolizi
ng the
four Go
spels).
She
holds
the flag
of the
cross
and the
chalice
in her
hands.

The
divine
hand
from
heaven
places
a
crown
on her
head.

In the
right
section
the Syn
agogue
is
depicte
d as
riding a
donkey
which
is
about
to
break

down.
In her
right
hand
she
holds
the
head of
a he-
goat.
Her
crown
is
falling.
She is b
lindfold
ed. The
staff of
her flag
is
broken.
But
worst
of all,
the
divine
hand
from
heaven
pierces
her
head
and
body
with
the
sword
of judg
ment.

One of
the
panels
at the b
aptism
al font
at St.
Mary"s
in Prest
bury,

UK

The
Tree of
the
ecclesia
is in
bloom
while
the
tree of
the syn
agoga
is dead.
The
ecclesia
is the
sun,
the
moon
over
the syn
agoga
only
reflects
the
light of
the
sun.

web.uk
online.
co.uk/p
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pagej.h
tm
Photos
by
Brian
Wood

On
October 11th,
2006,
Pope Benedict
XVI. consecrat
ed the
statue
of the Carmelit
e nun
Edith
Stein,
who
was
born
1891 in
Breslau
, Germany, as
a Jew
and murdered
in the concentr
ation
camp
of Auschwitz
on
August
9, 1942.
The
statue
fills one
of the
last
free
exterior
niches
at the
western

n
facade
of St.
Peter's
cathedr
al in
Rome.
She
had co
nverted
to Chris
tianity
and
was
baptize
d on
January
1, 1942,
entere
d the m
onastry
in
Cogn
e and
receive
d the
name
Teresia
Benedi
cta a
Cruce
(Teresi
a,
blessed
by the
cross).
This
name
is also
chisele
d into
the
base of
the
marble
statue.

The
person
al
integrit
y of
Edith
Stein

and her right to convert to Christianity are undisputed, that she was canonized by the church in 1998 was, however, for Jews and Christians equally a very misleading sign — and precarious for the Christian-Jewish relationship. After all, she was not murdered in Auschwitz because she was a Christian but because she was Jewish and not for her Christian faith

but in spite of it, in spite of having been baptised .

The new statue adds to the irritation of Christians and Jews that has set the Catholic-Jewish understanding and dialogue back. When the statue was revealed, many of those present at the ceremony were shocked to see her holding a Torah scroll in both hands and behind the scroll

she holds a cross and, as an added Christian symbol, a crown of thorns. The cross surmounts the Torah scroll which has the words Shema Jisrael in Hebrew written on it. Thus the statue becomes an unbearable mixture of Jewish and Christian symbols and another visible sign to Jews of Christianity's attempt to take possession

n not
only of
the
Jewish
traditio
n but
also of
the Hol
ocaust.
Here,
as in
the vict
orious
pose of
the
Ecclesia
above,
the
cross d
ominat
es the
Torah
and
remind
s us of
almost
two mil
lennia
of Chris
tian ant
i-Judais
m.

See also Heinz
Schreckenberg:

[The Jews in
Christian Art:
An Illustrated
History](#)

Franz
Böhmisch:
Synagoga et
Ecclesia,
Exegese einer
Beziehung in
Wort und Bild
[www.animabit.
de/bibel/synag
oga_et_ecclesia
.htm](http://www.animabit.de/bibel/synagoga_et_ecclesia.htm)

[Positive images
of Judaism in
Christian Art](#)