

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

| Voll, Fritz

Some examples of anti-Judaic Christian art. Ecclesia and Synagoga

### Negative images of Judaism in Christian Art

#### Ecclesia and Synagoga

**Ecclesia and Synagoga as a double-portal of the south to the Strasbourg cathedral (1230)**

Here both, the Church and Synagogue, are symbolized to each other in the sense of *concordia veteris et novi testamenti* (the unity of the Old and New Testaments). Both figures are of opposite character. However, the Church is depicted as triumphant with an imperial robe on her shoulders, a crosier staff and chalice in her hands, symbolizing her divine authority. She looks ahead assured of her dominion over the world. The Synagogue is symbolized as defeated, her crown broken more than once, the crown slipping from her hands, a hand covering her eyes and her head 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 window of St. John's Church in Werben/ Elbe River, Germany (around 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, symbolizing the four Gospels). 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 Synagogue is depicted 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  
aptisma  
l font at  
St.  
Mary"s  
in Prest  
bury,  
UK

The  
Tree of  
the  
ecclesia  
is in  
bloom  
while  
the tree

of the s  
ynagog  
a is  
dead.  
The  
ecclesia  
is the  
sun, the  
moon  
over the  
synago  
ga only  
reflects  
the light  
of the  
sun.

web.uk  
online.c  
o.uk/pre  
stbury/0  
102/pag  
ej.htm  
Photos  
by  
Brian  
Wood

On  
October  
11th,  
2006,  
Pope  
Benedik  
t XVI. c  
onsecra  
ted the  
statue  
of the C  
armelite  
nun  
Edith  
Stein,  
who  
was  
born  
1891 in  
Breslau  
, Germa  
ny, as a  
Jew  
and mu  
rdered  
in the c  
oncentr  
ation  
camp of  
Auschw  
itz on  
August  
9, 1942.  
The  
statue  
fills one  
of the  
last free  
exterior  
niches  
at the  
western  
facade  
of St.  
Peter"s  
cathedr  
al in  
Rome.  
She  
had con  
verted  
to Chris  
tianity  
and

was  
baptize  
d on  
January  
1, 1942,  
entered  
the mon  
astery in  
Cogn  
e and  
receive  
d the  
name  
Teresia  
Benedic  
ta a  
Cruce  
(Teresi  
a,  
blessed  
by the  
cross).  
This  
name is  
also  
chisele  
d into  
the  
base of  
the  
marble  
statue.

The  
persona  
l  
integrity  
of Edith  
Stein  
and her  
right to  
convert  
to Chris  
tianity  
are undi  
sputed,  
that she  
was ca  
nonized  
by the  
church  
in 1998  
was,  
howeve



r, for  
Jews  
and Chr  
istians  
equally  
a very  
mislead  
ing sign  
— and pr  
ecariou  
s for the  
Christia  
n-  
Jewish  
relation  
ship.  
After  
all, she  
was not  
murder  
ed in A  
uschwit  
z  
becaus  
e she  
was a  
Christia  
n but  
becaus  
e she  
was  
Jewish  
and not  
for her  
Christia  
n faith  
but in  
spite of  
it, in  
spite of  
having  
been  
baptise  
d.

The  
new  
statue  
adds to  
the  
irritation  
of Chris  
tians  
and

Jews  
that has  
set the  
Catholic-  
Jewish  
underst  
anding  
and  
dialogu  
e back.  
When  
the  
statue  
was rev  
ealed,  
many of  
those  
present  
at the c  
eremon  
y were  
shocke  
d to see  
her  
holding  
a Torah  
scroll in  
both  
hands  
and  
behind  
the  
scroll  
she  
holds a  
cross  
and, as  
an  
added  
Christia  
n  
symbol,  
a crown  
of  
thorns.  
The  
cross s  
urmoun  
ts the  
Torah  
scroll  
which  
has the  
words

*Shema  
Jisrael*  
in  
Hebrew  
written  
on it.  
Thus  
the  
statue  
become  
s an un  
bearabl  
e  
mixture  
of  
Jewish  
and  
Christia  
n symb  
olysm  
and  
another  
visible  
sign to  
Jews of  
Christia  
nity"s  
attempt  
to take  
posses  
sion not  
only of  
the  
Jewish  
tradition  
but also  
of the H  
olocaus  
t. Here,  
as in  
the vict  
orious  
pose of  
the  
Ecclesi  
a  
above,  
the  
cross d  
ominate  
s the  
Torah  
and  
reminds

us of  
almost  
two  
millenni  
a of  
Christia  
n anti-J  
udaism.

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.d](http://www.animabit.de/bibel/synagoga_et_ecclesia.htm)

[e/bibel/synagog](http://www.animabit.de/bibel/synagoga_et_ecclesia.htm)

[a\\_et\\_ecclesia.ht](http://www.animabit.de/bibel/synagoga_et_ecclesia.htm)

[m](http://www.animabit.de/bibel/synagoga_et_ecclesia.htm)

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