

ABSTRACT

ALEXANDER, MELISSA CALL. *Sibling Rivals to Mortal Enemies: The Evolution of Ecclesia and Synagoga From the Early to Late Middle Ages*. (Under the direction of Dr. Julie Mell).

This thesis explores the evolution of Ecclesia and Synagoga from their philosophical origins in the fourth-century, up to their image as a wood-carving in the High Middle period. In doing so, its aim is to shed light on the reasons for the choice of women's bodies as symbols for Judaism and Christianity, to explore what this choice meant to Jews and Christians' views of each other, and to analyze the treatment of the pair in visual mediums. Up until now, scholars have overwhelmingly focused on the historical context surrounding the images, or their roles in increased hostility toward Jews on the part of Christians, from the eleventh-century onward. This has left a void in the study of the pair, as well as the study of Jewish-Christian relations. Scholarship has not been focused specifically on the usage of female forms, the characterization of the two as familial by Hildegard of Bingen in the twelfth-century, nor has it sufficiently illuminated why striking changes were made in the manner in which the two were portrayed, in a specific fifteenth-century example. Through an analysis of secondary literature and an examination of the images themselves, this thesis demonstrates that the choice of women's bodies directly reflected a Roman cultural influence on the Early Church; that ideals of motherhood, virginity, and sacred kinship held by Hildegard directly affected her vision of the pair; and transmutative gender seen in science and popular forms of entertainment in fifteenth-century Erfurt, had a direct effect on the manner in which the Ecclesia and Synagoga were understood, evolved, characterized, and depicted. This examination of the two symbols suggests that they occupied a complex, didactic, evolving space in Christian culture throughout the Middle Ages, and that the gendering of the two played a notable role in how Jews and Christians

viewed each other. Therefore, the complexities of the choice of women as representative, and the evolving nature of the images themselves, ought to be more carefully studied and dissected.

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Sibling Rivals to Mortal Enemies: The Evolution of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*
From the Early to Late Middle Ages

by
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DEDICATION

For my Grandmother Juanita, who always believed in “Ol’ Jug-head,” and who was there for me on a crucial, “dark and stormy night.” For Vik, my companion of 18 years – thank you for being one who has never stopped believing in me, enduring more chaos and madness than any mortal should, simply because I have dreams. You will always be my kindred. For Imelda, who saw me when I needed to be seen, I love you, and am looking forward to the future with you, happier now than I have ever been. For my parents, who weathered the storms of having a weird, dark, and bookish child, and for being the two people I try to make proud every day. For my brother Randy, and his husband Mark – thanks for believing in me when I didn’t believe in myself, for talking me down from more ledges than I care to remember, and for suffering the craziness of my mental derangement. For “Papa Rick” (R.I.P.), and for “Mom Candace,” who has been a guru, a friend, a font of encouragement, my wise-woman, and the bravest person I know. For my brother Daniel – I’m so proud of you and Yadira, and you have my love. I hope to be someone that mis sobrinos y mi sobrina may look to for an example of a flawed but good, human being. For Dr. Nita Bogart who taught a stubborn young woman that she did indeed, have a choice. For Jenni, a new, old soul-mate who has traveled with me for a very long time, and someone who no matter what, will never be scared by hearing the contents of my head. For Kim Burke who was there in a very dark moment, and who first told me to listen for the Whisper. I will always be your friend. For Stephanie L. Nicks - You are a poet in my heart, and I read between your lines. Thank you to Dr. Nikhil Teppara at Cornerstone Surgical for saving my life, literally.

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- M. Alexander, 20 November 2015

Biography

Melissa C. Alexander was born in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, where she first found her love of History as a student at Wilkes Central Senior High. In 2006, she began her academic career at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina where she earned a BA in History and Anthropology, graduating *summa cum laude* in 2009. Later the same year, she started the MA Program in History, at North Carolina State University as a Master of Arts candidate. After setbacks involving her health she recovered fully, and will finish her MA in Medieval History, in Spring 2015. She hopes to continue her academic career by pursuing a PhD in Art History, after travel and writing professionally.

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Note: Any mistakes in this work, are exclusively my own. - MA

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Chapter I – Why Am I Woman? Ecclesia and Synagoga in Late Antiquity

Introduction

From the ninth century, the figures of Ecclesia and Synagoga were used to symbolically to represent Jews and Christians for didactic and conspicuously hegemonic purposes. The Western Church utilized the two in order to demonstrate to its followers the triumph of Christianity over Judaism. The motif, found frequently throughout the Middle Ages, presented the female form as a manner in which to view both groups. The symbolism was employed by the Early Church as a visual means in which to assert religious dominance, and to reinforce Christian hegemony in the bodies of two “queens.” As such, they are found in varying mediums throughout the period – within the margins of manuscripts, and in both paintings and sculptures. Shifts in attitudes toward Jews were reflected in the manner in which the two symbols interacted, their placement within creative spaces, and in secondary symbols either held by the two queens, or in close proximity.¹ From the time of their earliest usages, Ecclesia and Synagoga evolved from women at the foot of Christ’s cross, to individual sculptures adorning the façades of cathedrals. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the two women shifted so dramatically that they were not shown as female, but rather as warring knights. At times, the two were artistically interpreted in more esoteric terms, as in the case of their depiction in St. Mary’s Church in Prestbury, where they are polarized as living and dying trees. Elsewhere, they were shown as two women under the cross of Christ, one turned away in disregard, the other worshipful and favored. The importance of the pair to visual memory that accompanied Jewish-Christian

¹ Nina Rowe. *The Jew, the Cathedral and the Medieval City : Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

relations becomes clear when one considers the placements, frequency and variances of their appearance throughout the period. However, another value lies in the wealth of knowledge that may be gleaned from their evolution and what those changes tell us about the accompanying trajectory of Christian thoughts on the Jew as “other” in both a cultural and religious realm. It is possible, through examination, to understand better the nuances of decline that characterized the view of Jews held by Christians during the Middle Ages, a dynamic that went from tolerance in the early Middle Ages, to a polarizing stance of clear opposition, hatred, and religious dichotomy in the High Middle Ages. I draw upon images from art depicting the pair throughout this thesis, and as such hope to use the images not only as a measurement of decline, but also to explore the reasons for the choice of women’s bodies as symbols, and to hopefully shed light upon how this specific choice affected Christian opinions of Judaism, the co-mingling of cultures, and the practice of tolerance.

Utilizing the backdrop of period during which Ecclesia and Synagoga first appeared, I hope to illuminate why women were chosen as symbols of the two belief systems, and to set the stage for the emergence of Christian attempts to not simply separate from a joint origin of belief, but more importantly to dominate and triumph over Judaism in what would become an increasingly hostile and intolerant stance toward Jews in the twelfth century. The Early Church's desire to identify less with Judaism was the impetus behind the creation and subsequent conspicuous utilization of Ecclesia and Synagoga as opposing symbols. The influence of the pair reinforced the Church’s position on Jews as that of increasing opposition, from the ninth century to the Central Middle Ages. Yet, the images themselves raise a number of questions. Why depict the two religions as women? Why was the female form utilized in an era that largely viewed women as inferior intellectually, physically, spiritually, and politically? Why would

such a polarizing view of such didactic importance take on a feminine form when Christian tenets and dogma were clearly written by male administrators who saw little, if any, room for women in positions of religious influence? In order to answer these queries, I would argue that the most prominent reason for the choice is found in the view of women held by Roman culture, which in turn, held a considerable amount of influence over the Early Church due to the fact that many of its followers and leaders were Roman themselves. As its focus, this chapter will explore the early Middle Ages and the images of the pair within this period.



Figure I – Baptismal Font Panel, St. Mary's Church, Prestbury. c. 1878

We know from their writings that Early Church leaders wrestled with its philosophy were scarcely availed of Roman familial ties, culture, and influence, often citing their Roman

heritage. The Roman ideal of womanhood was dichotomous in and of itself in which both weakness and virtue were held as contained within feminine nature. Women were viewed as life givers and vessels of nourishment, but also as stubborn and lacking in reason. These could be remedied by pursuits deemed as virtuous, upright behavior according to cultural norms, or the presence of a proper male influence.² Yet, there is an odd sort of opposition working in the Roman ideal of women as both life-givers and those whom are too stubborn or lacking in reason to discern what is truth. Out of this atmosphere sprang the symbols of Ecclesia and Synagoga. The odd pairings of virtue and weakness, noble tenacity and stubborn denial was envisaged in the dynamic between Ecclesia and Synagoga, in their early depictions. In these, the Roman view of the woman appears through the idealism that the pair who share a common origin are mother/offspring, and antagonist/protagonist. The two women reflect Roman idealism in that they represent the polarizing duality of begetting and rejecting of the “truth” over which the female as vessel, claimed parentage. Synagoga, as mother of “true religion” stubbornly refused it later, choosing instead to cling to the ways and laws of the Old Testament. Conversely, Ecclesia, the “truth” embodied, gave birth to the New Faith and Testament that accepted Christ as the only Messiah and savior of human souls. Herein lies a more precise replication of Roman philosophy concerned with a woman redeeming herself through certain gestures and actions such as subjugating herself to a man through complete obedience, or religious piety. Romans believed that women could improve upon congenital shortcomings by way of marriage or proper indoctrination by men. Hence Synagoga, born into inferiority might be redeemed via rebirth into Christian belief, thereby obtaining virtue and spiritual enlightenment. To the Early Church women, whose very nature was left wanting, could be redeemed by way of acceptance of the

² Rowe. *The Jew, the Cathedral and the Medieval City : Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century*, (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 78.

faith and virtuous practice. Once these actions took place, her old, darkened, irrational and deficient mind and body might be made pious, even celebratory. We see this belief recounted in primary source writings on early female martyrs, who after their holy transformations were described as “glorious of presence . . . a true spouse of Christ and darling of God, at whose piercing look all cast down their eyes.”³ Christians at once held that Jews might redeem themselves likewise, by sloughing off the old ways and beliefs and accepting the “true” faith of Christ as Messiah. Herein we find a complex array of views concerning women that fostered the choice of Ecclesia and Synagoga as female symbols of faiths. The roots of this choice of women as fitting symbols, and the dualities contained in both that choice, and in Roman thought which held sway over it, are multi-layered. They are if nothing more than for the myriad of dichotomies represented within the roots of the structures that were Ecclesia and Synagoga, as symbolic queens.

Historiography

Historians such as Wolfgang Seiferth, Nina Rowe, Heinz Schreckenberg, and Deborah Higgs Strickland have written important studies on Ecclesia and Synagoga. But they have not addressed why Synagoga and Ecclesia were created as women. My aim is to re-examine these images to provide further understanding into the environment surrounding the formation of early Jewish-Christian relations, and shed more light on how that formation continues to impact the

³ W.H. Shewring, trans., “Medieval Sourcebook the Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity 203.” Internet History Sourcebook, 1996, accessed 9 August 2012.

modern dynamic between the two religions. In exploring these roots, I intend to probe the origins of prejudices and anti-Semitism in their archaic roots, found in part, in the Late Antique period. Ultimately, it is hoped that this offering will contribute to uncovering the nexus of opinion surrounding modern relations between Jews and Christians, indeed between Jews and non-Jewish groups, an interplay that still draws upon the past in perpetuating negative stereotypes and cultural biases.

We find a lengthy exploration of the images in the pivotal work of Heinz Schreckenberg. He explicitly states that his intent was “not to form opinions but to provide comprehensive information with a view to well-founded discussion.”⁴ Schreckenberg’s work is crucial for anyone attempting to further understand the evolution of the two queens. The author devotes an entire section to the images, exploring changes to their appearance over time. However, his intent was not analysis or comparison of those changes.⁵ Schreckenberg’s purpose is echoed in the work of Debra Higgs Strickland. Her work is an in depth exploration of the creation of “monsters” and how those creations were perceived and contributed to anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages. Strickland rightly asks “what is a monster?” In contrast to Schreckenberg, she answers this question utilizing an art history prism of view, arguing that “monstrous external form and moral character stems from the recognition that ugliness is a visual phenomenon . . . [and that] the most effective means by which ideas about ugliness can be transmitted is through pictorial works of art.” I build on her model not so much by exploring “ugliness,” but rather the effect that women as representatives had on Christian and Jewish views of the “other.”

Contrary to Schreckenberg and Higgs Strickland, Wolfgang Seiferth’s seminal work

⁴ Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: an Illustrated History* (New York: Continuum Intl Pub Group (Sd), 1997), 23.

⁵ Schreckenberg., p. 24.

Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages, Two Symbols in Art and Literature, provides a valuable investigation of the early origins of Ecclesia and Synagoga.⁶ Seiferth's argument narrows the iconographic influence of the images down to categories – *concordia* and *altercatio*.⁷ The former he postulates that Jews were viewed as descendants of biblical prophets, and as a result early Christians thought they, as symbolized by Synagoga, should be treated as a less-educated, stubborn and ignorant sister of Ecclesia. Jews were viewed as necessary placeholders and living witnesses of the Old Testament. Building upon this backdrop, Seiferth argues a familial view of Jews did provide a more tolerant presence between the two groups, even if Christians felt religiously superior. However this tolerance he notes, eventually gave way to violence, expulsion, and genocide in subsequent decades.⁸ Yet despite his most important contributions to the study of the two symbols, Seiferth does not illuminate the gendering of the motif, why women's bodies were used, nor does he offer thoughts as to what the choice of women did to Christian views of Jews. These voids in his analysis create a disconnect between earlier and later renditions of the two, as he explores them, and as such makes the text seem incomplete. I hope to address those voids, and offer a closer look at the criteria that Seiferth overlooks.

Roger E. Reynolds and Amos Funkenstein both attack the scholarship of Seiferth's work and note that his supporting research over-reaches the conclusions to which he arrives.⁹ While Seiferth's notable work does contain far-reaching conclusions it cannot be written off

⁶ Wolfgang S. Seiferth. Translated by Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald, *Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages: Two Symbols in Art and Literature* (New York: Ungar, 1970).

⁷ Seiferth, pgs. 35-44.

⁸ Seiferth, pgs. 1-12.

⁹ Richard E. Reynolds. "Review: Synagogue and the Church in the Middle Ages, Two Symbols in Art and Literature by Wolfgang Seiferth." *Church History* 41, March (1972): 118; and; Amos Funkenstein. "Review: Synagogue and the Church in the Middle Ages, Two Symbols in Art and Literature." *The Catholic Historical Review* 58, January (1973): 592-594.

completely, however. This is due to the considerable amount of information he provides on Synagoga and Ecclesia, no matter how broad his focus. His ideas on the nature of the relationship between Jews and Christians with regard to tolerance and altercations underscore some of the ideas presented here. Moreover, they do provide a stable, though broad underlying basis for analyzing the two symbols. Another author whose ideas are drawn upon in my analysis is Ruth Mellinkoff. Her two-volume work entitled *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, obviously focuses only on one part of the period discussed here.¹⁰ However, her work, as she notes is a sourcebook that is both rich in visual images upon which she relies heavily, and one that provides a heavy emphasis on Jews as the “other” during the late Middle Period. Her work provides an excellent analysis of Ecclesia and Synagoga however, instead of delving into questions as to their gender, Mellinkoff focuses more on physiognomy and the repetition of stereotypes across art mediums. She does give a broad history of the two queens and focuses briefly on the symbols that accompanied them, both of which offered much toward my own analysis.

The historians discussed here have provided a rich vein of information and study that is both erudite and multi-faceted. Any scholar attempting to understand the nuances of Ecclesia and Synagoga as symbols and didactic tools would be remiss to overlook the considerable wealth of knowledge they provide. It is my wish to build upon their works in some cases, and in others, address relationships between factors that have not been given their share of scholarly focus. The reasons for the choice of women’s bodies and the dynamic between Roman ideals of womanhood and those of the Early Church are largely ignored in the works of historians and art historians. These omissions cause a void in the scholarship that should be addressed in order to

¹⁰ Ruth Mellinkoff. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. Vol. I. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 48-51, 64-65.

deepen our understanding of the symbols, and the ways in which they were both utilized and perceived. In order to better understand the earliest images of Ecclesia and Synagoga, we must first look at how the choice of women's bodies as representative colored perceptions of Jews on the part of Christians in the period of the Early Church. This era witnessed the end of Roman rule, and gave way to a Church struggling to define itself against burgeoning sects that also venerated Christ but differed in dogma, practice, and beliefs.

Central Argument

While defining itself and moving toward codifying its tenets, the Early Church also existed in a period of transition between Roman rule and the formation of loosely united groups that formerly paid homage to Rome. As such, many of the texts from this period reflected Roman thought and the grafting of accompanying ideologies onto Christian philosophies. In terms of ritual and practice within religion, the Early Church attempted to create a boldly-defined break with Roman paganism, however, culturally-speaking, in the rhetoric of the learned classes, Roman influence still weighed heavily and noticeably. This contrasted with growing agency on the part of women during the period. This is not to say that women became mobilized in pursuit of rights in any modern sense, however, we do see them becoming more visible in extant sources and noted for such things as martyrdom. Early Church intellectuals chafed at the growing control exhibited by women in areas of economy and marital rights. As a result, their writings sought to offer what they perceived as a more Christian view of womanhood, and in turn, return women to subservience and subordination. This impetus was furthered in part, by combining Roman and biblical philosophies.

As a cultural backdrop, we see that during the period of Roman decline, women were not considered even remotely equal to their male counterparts. Rather, they were viewed as the property of their fathers or husbands. Women had their place as part of a home, but were not seen as masters, outright. Within their limited power was the running of the household, and as such they were often in charge of managing slaves and servants. However, womanhood in Rome was part and parcel, a political piece to be maneuvered by men.¹¹ Marriages were arranged affairs with socio-political gains in mind. Married women were considered the property of the *pater familias*, or the head of the household. With few exceptions, men held absolute sway over the lives and conduct of their children and spouses, even to the point of death.¹² Roman men wielded the power of the *manu* or “hand,” and along with this, the authority associated with the position of *pater potestas*. This meant that a father retained command of his children for life, no matter their social or political position.¹³ Women were given the title *matronas* and subsequently, *mater familias* if she bore more than one child.¹⁴ However, in contrast to men, women were discouraged from drinking alcohol other than for mere sustenance, and extra-marital affairs, something so often practiced by men, could carry a sentence of death for a woman.¹⁵ Women were also required to raise and instruct their children in the manner dictated by the *pater familias*, and even the act of refusing to breast-feed, was subject to severe punishment.¹⁶

¹¹ Jan Zablocki. “The Image of A Roman Family in *Noctes Atticae* by Aulus Gellius.” *POMOERIVM 2* (1996): 36.

¹² Marcus Tullius Cicero. *De Dom Sua*, sect. 7. Latin text cited in Zablocki. Found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Cic.+Dom.+77&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.014> Passage 77, translated by M. Alexander.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Zablocki, 39-40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Zablocki cites Gellius saying, “Since a mother fed her own baby with her own blood when it was in her womb, she should also feed her newly-born child. Because after the delivery, the blood passed to the

While views of women in Late Roman culture did not solely underscore the Early Church Fathers' view of womanhood, as we have seen it held a strong influence. Affluent men still thought of themselves as essentially Roman, and many of these also held positions of power and influence in the Early Church. Ideals on education, virtue, and social stratification remained essentially Romanized. We see notions on virtue in many extant texts from the period including those of St. Jerome. His opinions and those of other influential Christian authors were informed by ideals of chastity and aestheticism. These notions gave way to the idea that women were by and large a temptation. Virginal or non-virginal, they were a trap to men who sought aesthetic forms of piety and deeper spiritual learning. Jerome took this further by arguing that women who lost their virginity dishonorably were beyond even God's "graces:"

I will say it boldly, though God can do all things He cannot raise up a virgin when once she has fallen. He may indeed relieve one who is defiled from the penalty of her sin, but He will not give her a crown. Let us fear lest in us also the prophecy be fulfilled, "Good virgins shall faint." Notice that it is good virgins who are spoken of, for there are bad ones as well. "Whosoever looketh on a woman," the Lord says, "to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." So that virginity may be lost even by a thought. Such are evil virgins, virgins in the flesh, not in the spirit; foolish virgins, who, having no oil, are shut out by the Bridegroom.¹⁷

We see a similar aesthetic rejection of sexuality echoed in the words of Chrysostom concerning women and the responsibility for original sin. According to the author, women could only be redeemed by a few acts, including childbirth. The following demonstrates underlying Roman

breasts which were not only decorative growths but serve feeding purposes as well. It was not without significance that food was given to a newborn baby. The food affected physical similarity and the baby's character. If then a slave was instructed to feed the baby or another woman of low morale, the baby could take the worst features from her. No wonder then that children of upright and respectable women did not resemble their parents either in character or looks."

¹⁷ St. Jerome. *On Marriage and Virginity*. Taken from *Letter XXII to Eustochium* and from the *Treatise Against Jovinian*. *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University. Stable URL: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/jerome-marriage.asp>. Accessed 14 March 2010.

philosophies on womanhood and the purpose of bearing numerous offspring in order to purify a woman's essential nature that is sinful and prone to transgression:

The woman taught once, and ruined all. On this account therefore he saith, let her not teach. But what is it to other women, that she suffered this? It certainly concerns them; for the sex is weak and fickle, and he is speaking of the sex collectively. For he says not Eve, but "the woman," which is the common name of the whole sex, not her proper name. Was then the whole sex included in the transgression for her fault? As he said of Adam, "After the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come" . . . so here the female sex transgressed, and not the male. Shall not women then be saved? Yes, by means of children. For it is not of Eve that he says, "If they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." What faith? what charity? what holiness with sobriety? It is as if he had said, "Ye women, be not cast down, because your sex has incurred blame. God has granted you another opportunity of salvation, by the bringing up of children, so that you are saved, not only by yourselves, but by others." See how many questions are involved in this matter. "The woman," he says, "being deceived was in the transgression." What woman? Eve. Shall she then be saved by child-bearing? He does not say that, but, the race of women shall be saved.¹⁸

Despite the nature of Chrysostom's writings, perhaps we see the most excoriating contempt for female sexuality from Tertullian who, like others, saw women as the ultimate source of all evil. The female, in his view was essentially sinful at her core, naturally licentious, and in need of aestheticism if they were to truly save themselves from perdition and their own aberrance inherited from Eve:

And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil's gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: *you* are the first deserter of the divine law: *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of *your* desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die. And do you think about adorning yourself over and above your tunics of skins? Come, now; if from the beginning of the world⁸⁷ the Milesians sheared sheep, and the Serians spun trees, and the Tyrians dyed, and the Phrygians embroidered with the needle, and the Babylonians with the loom, and pearls gleamed, and onyx-stones flashed; if gold itself also had already issued, with the cupidity (which accompanies it), from the ground; if the mirror, too, already had licence to lie so

¹⁸ St. John Chrysostom. *Homily IX*, Found in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Phillip Schaff, ed., *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, Calvin College. Stable URL: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf113.v.iii.x.html>.

largely, Eve, expelled from paradise, (Eve) already dead, would also have coveted *these* things, I imagine! No more, then, ought she *now* to crave, or be acquainted with (if she desires to live again), what, when she *was* living, she had neither had nor known. Accordingly these things are all the baggage of woman in her condemned and dead state, instituted as if to swell the pomp of her funeral.¹⁹

In these sources we see the contempt that characterized most Early Church intellectual views of women. Further, they illustrate that the ideal woman and idealized womanhood were afforded certain “graces” when Roman cultural holdings on women were amalgamated with Christian religious notions of womanhood. As such, through certain acts, we see that it was believed that women could remove the inherently female “stain” of Eve, and rise above their spiritual heritage. However, these early sources alone do not provide sufficient answers as to why women’s bodies were chosen to represent Jews and Christians in the images of Ecclesia and Synagoga. Nor do they adequately serve to illuminate what the feminine image did to Jews and Christians’ views of the “other.” To address these more specified queries, it is necessary to build upon the source examples from Early Church intellects by examining how interaction with these didactic writings and others, evolved into an image of women as both fallen and redeemed. It is also necessary to look at the backdrop of the Early Church, its struggle to define itself, and the overall atmosphere of change that fostered attempts by Early Church intellects at reconciling Church History with actual history. Ostensibly, we must understand the contemporary times that spawned the creation of Ecclesia and Synagoga, the effort on the part of the Church Fathers to offer an example of womanhood that could be fit into the moral ascent and descent of women throughout and after Biblical times, and the contemporary historical circumstances that shaped their beginnings. This will aid in further illuminating how views of the religious “other” were shaped

¹⁹ Tertullian of Carthage. *On The Apparel of Women*. Rev. S. Thelwall, trans. *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, Calvin College. Stable URL: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iii.iii.i.i.html>.

via teachings taken from these texts, especially with regard to how Christians looked at their Jewish counterparts. For such an exercise, I would argue that the application of Elizabeth Clark's three-part "construction of women in Late Christian Antiquity" model, is most revealing where Ecclesia and Synagoga are concerned.

In her article, Clark makes three crucial points. First, she notes that ". . . matters concerning sex and gender are by far the dominant category in which appeals to 'nature' are made by the Church Fathers."²⁰ "Nature," she writes had varied uses in patristic literature, "from serving as a synonym for God to designating bodily necessities such as food, from naming the limit for acceptable sexual expression to designating a girl's arrival at puberty, from indicating 'our common humanity' to expressing women's weakness and delicacy from signaling [sic] the sexual impulse itself to (paradoxically) representing virginity (the 'natural' condition of humanity)."²¹ Clark also argues that "women" were amalgamated to "woman" and "woman" became equated to Eve along with her initial sin of leading Adam into temptation.²²

Second, Clark holds that the Early Christian Fathers attempted to "fix" the ideal of woman by appealing to the history of the past.²³ In reconciling the past and contemporary with the idea of abandoning the Law of the Old Testament for the Grace of the New Testament and the messiah-hood of Christ, she contends that Christian intellectuals created myth, typology, and

²⁰ Elizabeth A. Clark. "Ideology, History, and the Construction of "Woman" in Late Ancient Christianity." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, (1994): 168.

²¹ Ibid. pgs. 167-68. Clark cites St. Jerome, John Chrysostom, and Tertullian, and their works on women, in which she notes that women who lived virtuously according to their interpretations, especially in the case of Chrysostom, were no longer viewed as women, it seems, but rather as a more non-gendered entity. Also see discussion in Elizabeth A. Clark, "Friendship Between the Sexes: Classical Theory and Christian Practice," in Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends: Essays and Translations*. *Studies in Women and Religion* 2 (New York: Edwin Meilen Press, 1979): 54-57.

²² Ibid. pg. 168.

²³ Ibid.

allegory that gave the past a sense of timelessness.²⁴ They employed images of Lucretia and Dido and hearkened back to the height of Roman rule to formulate an image of ideal womanhood.²⁵ Yet, these images did not mirror the contemporary status of women who could, in certain circumstances obtain a divorce, own some forms of property, and serve as the guardians of their own children. By forging these images, the Early Church wished to reconcile women with their own notions of womanhood and therefore, utilized the relatively recent memory of Roman culture in order to bolster their telling of such stories as that of Adam and Eve. This in turn, served to correct what they felt were troublesome areas in conflict with dogma with regard to female subservience and absolute obedience, during their own time.²⁶

Clark then continues by analyzing “historical trajectories,” a term that she uses to describe the conciliatory rhetoric of the Early Church Fathers and the lines of discourse encompassing them that offered ways to reconciling actual history with their contemporary ideals. In making sense of the past, these writers struggled with how far to take their analysis with regard to hearkening to a pagan past and the history given in the Old Testament.²⁷ Clark argues that one trajectory was found in the complex dichotomy of the characters of Old Testament Hebrew woman (Ruth,

²⁴ Ibid. pg. 170.

²⁵ Ibid. pg. 171.

²⁶ Ibid. pg. 172.

²⁷ Ibid. pgs. 169-72. Clark notes that in using history to form opinion and bring that opinion into contemporary times, the Early Church Fathers encountered notable and very problematic inconsistencies in the application of biblical ideals and the teleology of women’s development. Clark says, “the ideological function of their appeals to history is betrayed by their indecision as to whether Heilsgeschichte – which in many other circumstances they would read as a message of liberation – should be understood similarly when the topic was regarding “woman.” Several problems beset the larger historiographical enterprise: could a progressive view of revelation that assumes an upward development from the realm of the “the old” (“Law”) to that of “the new” (“Grace”) be squared with the belief that each Scriptural verse – “old” as well as “new” – was equally sacred and meaningful? Was the trajectory of revelation upward, or simply “flat?” And where should the Church of the present be placed? Had it been even more gloriously endowed with grace than the apostolic era, or had it suffered a downward slide from its primitive luster? Was “woman” to remain a constant in history that itself evolved either “upward” or “downward?” Did the appeal to history work in its ideological function by closing the gap between past and present – or did the appeal itself ironically serve to widen the gulf?”

Rebekah, Mary, Martha) and those of actual women in the Early Church period. However, she tells us that this trajectory was problematic given biblical stories that revealed the “shocking” behavior of Hebrew women who held rank and enjoyed far more equality with their male counterparts than did women in the contemporary time. This clashed with their ideals, and the notion of granting such elements of equal footing to the women of their times was unthinkable. Moreover, they found that the actions of Biblical women would have been shunned and despised if replicated by women in the Early Church period. The very ideal picture of the woman presented by the Early Church did not coincide at all with the example provided by Biblical women of the Old Testament.²⁸ Clark offers other examples of historical trajectories but claims that a moral ascent of women from the era of the Old Testament also presented problems for Church intellectuals because it lacked the power to offer chastising tools for contemporary women. She further notes a “downhill” trajectory that would start at the end of the New Testament. This particular trajectory would have been better employed by the Early Church because of the leveling effect it would have given placing women on par with those of the New Testament. Afterward, the “downhill slide” in morality could be used to chastise and teach, but still historically regard women as higher than the Hebrew women of the Old Testament, providing a dichotomy and separating, “othering” effect. Although Biblical women could be called “apostles” and walk in relative freedom, the descent of female morality from the historical time of the New Testament to contemporary times could be used in order to “fix” an ideal for women

²⁸ Ibid. pg. 172. Clark cites the writings of Methodius of Olympia (d. 311 CE) and how he noted that in the period of the Old Testament, incest, after which polygamy and adultery were permitted until outlawed by Mosaic Law. This gave way to the “enlightened” Christian period of grace when, according to Methodius, “. . . God like a skillful pedagogue, had educated the human race in morality by stages, from the time that humans were allowed to “frolic like calves” through their “student days” to full maturity. For further analysis see, Methodius of Olympus. *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*. Methodius calls Synagoga “adulterous,” a term later echoed in the writings of Pope Gregory I, in his *Moralia in Job* written in the late sixth century. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0623.htm>; Stable URL for Gregory’s *Moralia* <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/gregory.html>.

to ascend to in order to re-attain the virtues of New Testament women.²⁹ The moral ascent of women provided a trajectory with which to reconcile past history with that of the Church's ideals. Using it as a model, essentially using women as a model, the Church as a whole could be reconciled historically, and the more ethereal elements of the journey of the Church through history could make sense especially morally. Most importantly, the chronological line of evolution from Biblical historical beginnings, through the separation of Christian religious belief from Jewish belief, and into the Early Church period could be mirrored and transformed into a didactic tool by using the same chronological development of women. Though Clark rightly claims that all of these trajectories were disjointed and never fully developed, we know that they were accepted and employed by Church Fathers for the purpose of teaching and historical reconciliation. Nonetheless for examining the origins of Ecclesia and Synagoga, the writings of Methodius and those of the Early Church Fathers work well to illuminate the atmosphere at the time of their origins, and provide a solid reason as to why women were utilized symbolically. By using Clark's model as a framework, not only do we find a reason for the choice of women as symbols, we may also see a frame for how the dynamic between Ecclesia and Synagoga was formed – that of Hebrew women, once on similar ground with men in the time of the Law (Old Testament), then fallen through refusal of Christ as messiah, and Christian women, who, being fully matured and enlightened by Grace, re-claimed moral status, rectified themselves, and became virtuous enough to accompany Christ.

One of the earliest extant writings that mention Ecclesia and Synagoga dates to the sixth century. It is Pseudo-Augustinian and is among the earliest references of the pair as both women and representative of Judaism and Christianity. The text consists of an argument between

²⁹ Clark, pgs. 172-74.

Ecclesia and Synagoga that takes place before the “censors.” In Lukyn Williams’s translation he defines the “censors” as judges of sorts from the Late Roman Period charges with assessing questionable acts among the citizenry.³⁰ However, he also notes that even though an attempt at reviving the practice of bringing higher class citizens in front of the censors failed in the fourth century, it would not have mattered since women would not have been affected due to their contemporary social status.³¹ Lukyn then clarifies why the word was used in the first place noting that the usage of the term “censors” was only added in order to evoke a trial-like imagery to accompany the text.³² Despite the use of dramatic tools, the text tells us much about how the author viewed Judaism. The *Church* and the *Synagogue* he identifies as “ladies.” However, the story begins by noting that the *Synagogue* has been accused of “adultery more than once” and “usurpation of the legal rights that we [the *Church*] claim as ours.”³³ The *Church* further charges that “the Lady who is the *Synagogue*, once powerful and wealthy, usurped by her gold in the Gentile nations, who are our inheritance, our property, granted to us – even to the very ends of the earth – by the law of the Supreme Emperor.”³⁴ The *Synagogue* replies that “undeniably the prophets came to [her].” “Yes, indeed, replies the *Church*, but only as to a land-lady. For they were the forerunners to arrange the dwelling for my Bridegroom. And again, they were the servants who carried the children’s books and were slain by you out of envy. Yet they did come to me, and I received them.”³⁵ The *Synagogue* reminds the *Church* that she is older and ruled when the *Church* was barbaric; she recounts her victories over Egypt, the Canaanites, and others.

³⁰ A. Lukyn Williams. *Adversus Judeos, A Bird’s-Eye View of Christian Apologiae Until the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1935): note 2, pg. 326; and; pgs. 326-38.

³¹ *Ibid.* pg. 326.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Pseudo-Augustine. *Concerning the Dispute Between the Church and Synagogue – A Dialogue*. Found in Lukyn, pg. 36.

³⁴ Pseudo-Augustine in Lukyn, pg. 327.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The *Church* replies that she was “mistress in the world, but now only [a] maid.” *Church* then demands that *Synagogue* acknowledge her superiority on the grounds that *Synagogue* “demanded idols” when God had given her the Ten Commandments.³⁶ As the argument continues, *Synagogue* is called a “widowed and forsaken Woman,” to which she demands proof of Christ’s divinity from the Prophets. The *Church* answers, “Listen, poor and unhappy Lady! Thou woman murderer . . .”³⁷ She then quotes King David himself who alludes to the rising of the *Son* [my emphasis] after three days. *Synagogue* asks why the third day was chosen for the resurrection to which *Church* replies, “You really remember, but [are too stubborn] to say so.” In other words, *Synagoga* refuses Christ because *Ecclesia* cannot convince her using evidence from the Old Testament or the Law, which Jews were thought to cling to over the Grace of Christ. In the end of the dialogue, *Synagoga* is “. . . condemned by [her own] sword, stricken by [her own] Testament, by the utterances of [her Prophets] all of whom were Jews.”³⁸ *Ecclesia* proclaims, “Rejoice, O ye Peoples: rejoice ye Worshippers of Christ; the barren has borne, and she who had children failed with her children of old.”³⁹

This lambasting dialogue demonstrates that during the time of the sixth century, contention, to a certain degree, had become part of the dynamic between Jews and Christians. The text shows not only that *Ecclesia*, or the Christian Church, claimed victory over *Synagoga*, or the Jews, who was bound to her in sisterhood, but also that *Synagoga* knew the truth of Christ’s divinity and simply refused to admit it. *Ecclesia* claims her righteous place and relegates *Synagoga* to the fate of a widow, and adulteress and one who has murdered her own

³⁶ Ibid. pg. 328.

³⁷ Ibid. pgs. 330-2.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. pgs. 35-6.

Prophets.⁴⁰ Further, the conversation supports using Clark's model as a framework by offering a trajectory for creating the "woman" ideal as relying upon polarizing the Hebrew woman who had fallen after the woman of the Christian Church accepted Christ's divinity. From this point, how Ecclesia and Synagoga became envisioned as women becomes clearer. When we add this to the views of the Early Church Fathers and their attempts to repair the image of the ideal woman, the choice of women as representatives is enhanced and more clearly understood, as well. The woman as choice would have shaped Christian views of Jews as fallen, adulterous, and stubbornly refusing of Christ, even to the point of damnation. The woman, already in need of redemption in the eyes of Christian intellectuals, fit well in order to teach piety and the need for penitence. Jews would have been viewed as having the worst of female qualities, even reveling in their old ways of the Law, much like women who refused to take steps to purify themselves. To Jews, it would seem that the symbols would set up the image of the Church as a triumphant queen, a conqueror, and one whose Grace redeemed and transformed what had begun as mere laws and out-dated dogma. A flawed woman she was yes, but like women who took steps to become pure and saved from damnation by their own sinful natures, at once, glorified and reborn into godliness. This mirrors the ideals put forth by the Church holding that individuals who denied Christ would be damned to eternal punishment, yet could be saved through Grace and the professing of Christ's messiah-hood. In the personages of Ecclesia and Synagoga, we see the construction of a tool that is multi-layered and complex, yet able to be understood by the most uneducated of people. Their didactic purpose extended from the more esoteric philosophies wrestled with by intellectuals, all the way "down" to commoners needing to be reminded to keep watch and guard over their eternal souls by way of worship, Christian practice, and piety. They were a means of control, a means of lording triumph over a people

⁴⁰ Ibid. pg. 335.

perceived as fallen, a way to place the Jew in a position of polarity as the “other,” the Church and Christians, no matter their social station, as superior, and ultimately offer what was felt as a rightful, arrogant, example of what could be if refusal of the Christian truth took place in the heart or mind.

More specifically, in response to the concerns of Early Church fathers over women, Ecclesia as the Church and bride of Christ removed temptation by providing a sexless, virtuous example to those they felt had stepped out of their proper places within the God-sanctioned divine order. This need was addressed by Jerome, Chrysostom, and Tertullian, who outlined ideals for women that would quell the temptation they provided and save them spiritually from inherent, female faults. Synagoga on the other hand compounded negative views of Judaism. As Robert Michael notes in *Holy Hatred*, before the fourth century, Jews were political and theological rivals to Christians who suffered martyrdom and persecution, and thus naturally resented the fact that Judaism enjoyed the privilege of legal acknowledgment and protection, by the Romans.⁴¹ Yet, Michael argues that despite persecution, many Jewish customs were attractive to Christians because of their common religious ancestry, and that this aided in maintaining a relatively ambivalent attitude toward Jews. Later, after the fourth century, when a need to distance and define itself arose among Early Church Fathers, Ecclesia and Synagoga served to begin to strike away at tolerant attitudes toward Jews and any attraction to their customs. Moreover, they capitalized on latent resentments of Jews by making them fallen, polar opposite, and despite a religious “sisterhood,” essentially damned by murder, stubbornness, and rigid refusal of anything but the Law of the Old Testament. This was the tone of pogroms against Jews that found root in the period of the Early Church. By the High Middle Ages, religious leaders were using anti-Jewish rhetoric to distance themselves and the Church even

⁴¹ Robert Michael. *Holy Hatred*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2006, pg. 19.

further, accusing Jews of a systematic plan of destruction of all things Christian. Even Christians who might otherwise be sympathetic to Jews, were denounced and thought of as traitorous or equated with Jews as anti-Christian.⁴²

Image Analysis

As I have shown, the Early Middle Ages or Late Antiquity, witnessed the beginnings of Ecclesia and Synagoga, a time still heavily influenced by the writings of the Church Fathers, including their ideas on women. It was a period that saw the Church and Synagogue symbolically represented as the kind of women seen in the Pseudo-Augustinian reference, and one in which Christian intellectuals increasingly attempted to distance their beliefs and practice from that of Judaism. Nascent polarization of Jews as anti-Christian, damned, and defeated deniers of Christ, is evident in the symbols as a pair placed spatially opposite of each other in art depicting the crucifixion of Christ, and writings. As stated, the two were held as related via sisterhood through their common beginnings, but decidedly different, otherwise. Synagoga in these images is often turned away from Christ, sometimes she looks back at him, at other times she becomes marginalia having wandered far away from Christ via her rejection of his divinity. At times Christ looks away to shun her, and the symbols of her defeat – a broken crown, shattered staff, and tattered clothing. Conversely, Ecclesia is depicted as venerative, adoring, and worshipful, often catching his blood in her chalice, an act that symbolizes the Eucharist. Despite her sorrow, she is upright, crowned and adorned with Christ's gaze, the opposite of Synagoga who leaves the crucifixion sometime clutching her book of Old Testament Law.

⁴² Ibid. pgs. 21 @ 44-5.

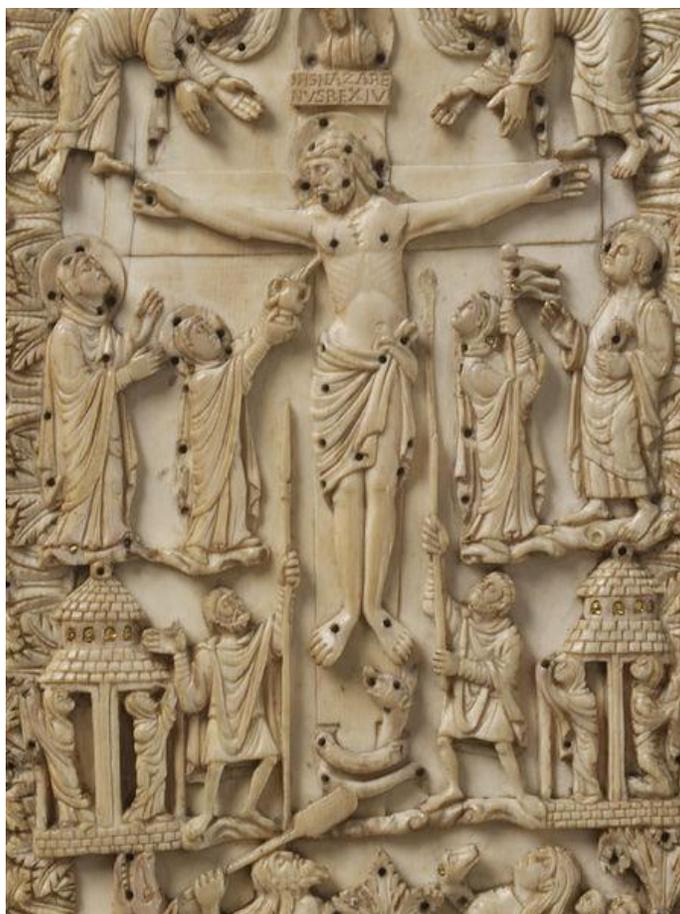


Figure II – Ecclesia and Synagoga, Below the Cross, Metz, c. 860

Though, as Nina Rowe rightly notes in her seminal work on the pair, the use of female bodies to represent abstract concepts may be dated back to the Classical era, here, their use is clearly based on scriptural references from the Old and New Testaments.⁴³ A queen in the form of Synagoga, once beloved of God in the Old Testament, under the Law, is now dejected of Christ in favor of Ecclesia.

⁴³ Nina Rowe. *The Jew, the Cathedral and the Medieval City : Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 40-5. Rowe notes also that feminine imagery was often used during the Classical and Late Antique periods to personify defeated enemies subjugated by the empire. Though this obviously seems to play a part in the choice of female bodies for portraying the Church and Judaism, here, I feel that the images were used much more as demonstrative of scripture.

We see in Figure II, another example of the two women beneath the crucifix of Christ. Ecclesia, ever venerating, holds her cup of the Eucharist to catch Christ's blood. Synagoga has been relegated to the margins, and is picture in half-figure at the bottom right, head down, eyes turned away, defeated, yet defiant of Christ. Her staff is broken, and there is no crown adorning her head. Accompanying the space with Ecclesia is St. John the Baptist, while closer to Synagoga is Longinus with his fabled spear.⁴⁴ The figure of Christ, is strikingly upright even while crucified, symbolizing both his death and victory.⁴⁵ In other images from this period Synagoga is seen with a pointed hat, a symbol seen on other representations of Jews in various mediums.⁴⁶ Still in other depictions, oddly enough Synagoga is enthroned. Both Stanley Ferber and Ruth Mellinkoff argue that this is not so much an endorsement of her as it is a symbol of the Heavenly Jerusalem, redeemed by Christ, after his triumph.⁴⁷ In other versions of the two from the era, Synagoga holds a circumcision knife, symbolic of her clinging to the covenant between God and Jews, in and of itself, representative of the Old Testament and the Law.

⁴⁴ For more on the spatial relations and interpretations of figures, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). While Mellinkoff's book specifically addresses the late Middle Period, her assertions are applicable to earlier images, and interpretations which set the tone for the images that Mellinkoff examines. Spatial placement, body language, figure type, and symbolism that accompany Ecclesia and Synagoga have been shown by Mellinkoff and other scholars to be replicated throughout the history of the images. Hence, we may deduce that these interpretations remain very much the same over time throughout images of the two at the crucifixion of Christ.

⁴⁵ Stanley Ferber. "Crucifixion Iconography in a Group of Carolingian Ivory Plaques." *The Art Bulletin* 48 (1966): pg. 324.

⁴⁶ Mellinkoff, pgs. 59-65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*



Figure III – Ecclesia and Synagoga, Crucifixion Plaque, c. 1050, Köln, Germany

All of these images when viewed would have colored the perceptions of Jews by Christians. We have noted that women, as a vehicle representing both Jews and Christians, would coincide well with notions of Early Church Fathers concerning women and a return to their submissive roles, and triumph over innate, sinfulness. Jews bowing to a triumphant Christianity would naturally fit in this model that hearkens to Biblical conceptualizations of the transition of the woman from that of the Old Testament, to Christian women who resume a place of subservience in passages from the New Testament. Ecclesia and Synagoga as women, offer an interesting dichotomy of views when held against the ideals of the Early Church Fathers. On

the one hand, women were malleable, easily-swayed, quick to transgress, and a vehicle of temptation for men. On the other, they were seen as capable of being redeemed by belief in Christ, marriage, and family. Synagoga, when compared to the writings of Church intellectuals from the period, would have seemed fallen, deflowered, and even damned. If we turn these texts toward Ecclesia, we see that she would have seemed virginal and arguably akin to St. Mary, triumphant and the very image of virtue. She would be the bride of Christ, exalted and recognized by him, and blessed, while Synagoga, lacking acknowledgment would be broken, defeated, stubbornly resonant, and blinded by a refusal to accept Christ's divinity. In short, while one figure gave the quintessential virtuous woman, the other represented the pinnacle of womanhood at its worst according to Christian thought – vile, entrapping, sinful, and even proud in her defiance. By proxy, all of these negativities would have been heaped upon Jews as a group, along with apostasy and heretical practices. Roman visions of women, so influential upon the Church Fathers, would have been amplified in the motif, Ecclesia, a statuesque woman of noble intent, nourishing, care-taking, a *mater familias* and Synagoga though in some images, beautiful, still the antithesis of what women should be. Ecclesia was the maturity of women's nature from the Old to New Testament, the redemption of Original Sin, and a symbol of Christianity, a maturation of religion from Law to Grace. The journey of women as occupiers of stations similar to men in the Old Testament, to that of subservience, adoration of the Bridegroom Christ – the *pater familias* – docile, nourishing, and ultimately accepting of the redemptive power of his messiah-hood, as thought of under the Grace of the New Testament. Church intellects, as Christ's representatives on earth, were naturally the *pater familias* under which women should be subjugated, both religiously and as those to look to for answers regarding virtue. Culturally speaking, just as Synagoga occupied the same space as Ecclesia,

Jews intermingled with Christians, and the lessons of Synagoga's deceitfulness and transgression were not lost upon the Early Church Fathers or those they influenced. Jews had to be distanced and viewed as the "other" in order to deter any Christians seeking to imitate them or trust them. This was the transition Wolfgang Seiferth spoke of when he argued Jewish-Christian relations transitioning from *concordia* to *altercatio*. Yet we see in arguments made here, an attempt to build on Seiferth's notions by demonstrating that through the personage of Synagoga, the worst aspects of womanhood, essential to her nature, when transposed onto Jews living beside Christians, transformed relative toleration into the early stages of persecution by painting Jews as an ever-increasing threat to the survival of Christianity, and their customs as attractive, yet dangerous. Thus, Jews as a woman in the form of Synagoga were thought of as the epitome of everything a woman could be if left unsupervised, unmarried, and a product of her own devices, without the guiding force of Christ, or his representative hand. Just as a woman could be attractive, pliable in body, a comforting mother, and the source of children, she could also be a vehicle for damnation, a temptress, rejecting of her role as nourishing in favor of evil and wickedness.

Conclusion

As I have shown, this atmosphere of Late Antiquity or the early Middle Ages, set the stage for increasing negativity toward Jews, and violent, anti-Semitism. Hostilities fostered in this era, gave rise to horrific pogroms in the Central and High Middle periods, and the equating of Jews with heresy, murder, poison, and anti-Christ. Moreover, this same beginning spawned stereotypical images of Jews that more and more took on evil, ugly, even demonic qualities in later depictions. Imagery, in a time of wide-scale illiteracy was quite obviously very powerful, and was skillfully manipulated by the Church in fostering hatred of Jews, and violent purgings of

Jewish populations. Increasing discomforts, fear, and an ever-changing Church seeking to define itself and marshal power under the Pope spawned ever-imaginative, and wild fantasies about Jews that were easily translated into visible images designed to inspire fear, hatred, and conspicuous wariness. All the possibilities of women unchecked and unfettered became focused in the personages of Jews, and stereotypes in art and other visual mediums stirred intolerance in the illiterate classes. Hence, it should come as no surprise that anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism survive in an age where literacy is often favored less than religious teachings. Religious foundations of the past, as historians well know, shape the “truths” of our modern era. If we deconstruct Ecclesia and Synagoga, and find in their origins the beginnings of our own irrational prejudices, then, when human beings feel the need to subjugate the religious “other,” we may be far more able to shed light on the absurdity of such actions. In this manner, scholarship on these ancient by revealing images, may make a truly lasting difference.

Chapter II – Ecclesia and Synagoga During the High Middle Ages; The Visions of Hildegard of Bingen; Escalating Religious Persecution

Introduction

The dynamic between Christians and Jews from the early Middle Ages onward is one characterized by increasing religious and anti-Semitic hostility. Scholars have addressed this escalation from various viewpoints, notably from a standpoint first argued by James Parkes in 1934, generally referred to as the “Parting of the Ways.”⁴⁸ This model proposes a bifurcated existence between Jews and Christians that eventually led to a religious and societal parting with each other, despite common religious beginnings. Since its proposal, many historians have rejected Parkes’s arguments because further probing demonstrated that Jews and Christians did not separate from each other so clearly, either in a religious or cultural manner. Not only did the Early Church and its followers continue their interactions with Jews throughout the Middle Ages, both groups exhibited similarities that highlight the notion that they never fully diverged religiously, culturally, politically, or in esoteric matters such as common myths and practices. Both groups wrote about the other, largely on the subject of religious practice and dogma. Perceived errors and heresies often characterized these writings that went on throughout the medieval era and on into Early Modernity. These offerings were quite often polemical, accusatory, and caustic, especially with regard to Christian clerical viewpoints. With so many sources conveying everything from mild intolerance of Jews to those espousing expulsion and death, it is easy to forget that some authors from the period did not echo what was by then, familiar indictments of Judaism.

⁴⁸ James William Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: a Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (ACLS Humanities E-Book) (New York: ACLS Humanities, 2008), Ch. 3.

This is not to say that prejudices and anti-Semitism were absent entirely in their works, however, the overall tone and temperament differed, notably. We may note this variance in the writings of Hildegard of Bingen. In her texts, Jews were not ridiculed quite so sharply as they were in many works by her contemporaries, such as Bernard of Clairvaux. According to her holdings, the notion of Jews and Christians sharing a common religious ancestry meant that the groups were related spiritually, and even connected by familial ties. This is reflected in an overall tone that shaped her visions regarding Synagoga and Ecclesia, one that pits them as rival siblings, one triumphant and glorious, the other resolute in her errors, yet in need of pity because of the same. Hildegard looks at the dynamic between the two more as that of siblings, ones whose practices have differed, one errantly, the other truthfully. As such, she treats Synagoga with a markedly less violent and caustic manner. Again, this is not to say that anti-Semitism and prejudicial notions are absent, far from it. Still, this chapter will demonstrate that if we look into Hildegard's early life and adulthood, we may find credible reasoning for what is arguably a gentler treatment of Jews, a group she viewed as spiritually-related to Christians. It is this facet of her works that has largely gone unexplored by historians, and the primary focus of this chapter. I would argue that Hildegard's views on motherhood and family, as outlined in the descriptions of her visions, provide clear indication as to why Hildegard's view of Judaism was less excoriating, even to the point of compassion. Moreover, I submit that Hildegard's removal from her mother at a young age fostered a nostalgic kind of esteem for motherhood and a life-long pursuit of understanding it as best she could, given her circumstances. Note that my purpose here is **not** *apologia*, nor is it an exoneration of the negative aspects of her works where Jews were concerned. I have no intent to exculpate what are clear prejudices regarding the religious "other" as evident in her texts. Rather, it is my hope to shed light on the formation of

Hildegard's intellect via events in her life, so that a woman who was otherwise quite visionary and learned, might be viewed as independent of popular anti-Semitic veins, and perhaps uniquely tolerant, given the historical context of her time.⁴⁹

In order to support these arguments, I will examine the symbols of Ecclesia and Synagoga as envisioned by Hildegard in her work entitled *Scivias*, the first book written containing her visualizations. However, the symbols themselves will first be explored and couched within their historical context, in order to more fully understand the nuances of the symbols during the period in question. The anti-Semitic practices of political bodies and the Church in Europe had by then, become systematic in a number of ways. The Church was further distancing itself from other religious groups not just by outlining what it meant to be Christian, but also by starkly delineating what Christianity was not. As such, philosophical intolerance of Jews seen in the Late Antique period, had morphed into violence, marginalization, and religiously-motivated pogroms that characterized Jews not just as the religious "other," but as

⁴⁹ Some historians may question the arguments I forward, my analysis of Hildegard of Bingen, with regard to Synagoga. To those I would argue that an exploration of her work does not have to exclude or gloss over her obvious prejudices in order to see that she was much more civil in her treatment of Jews and Judaism. One does not have to ascribe to all of her beliefs to see that she was a uniquely brilliant scholar that is worthy of further study. I do not seek to vindicate her, rather one hopes to show that she did step away from popular prejudices to a notable degree, and that in and of itself, given her historical context, was a laudable act. To any who feel that her views eclipse any notion of compassion or humanity, I would echo the words of Joan Wallach Scott in her seminal work, *Gender and the Politics of History*. Therein, one may find why I hold Hildegard of Bingen in esteem. Scott says, "[Historians] have to change some of the ways we've gone about working, some of the questions we have asked. We need to scrutinize our methods of analysis, clarify our operative assumptions, and explain how we think change occurs. Instead of a search for single origins, we have to conceive of processes so interconnected that they cannot be disentangled. Of course, we identify problems to study, and these constitute beginnings or points of entry into complex processes. But it is the processes we must continually keep in mind. We must ask more often how things happened in order to find out why they happened . . . To pursue meaning, we need to deal with the individual subject as well as social organization and to articulate the nature of their interrelationships, for both are crucial to understanding how . . . change occurs." Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, pg. 42. For a full citation, see note 48.

dangerous and radical enemies of Christianity.⁵⁰ Hence, I will first re-visit the historical pretexts for this heightened level of intolerance, then examine Hildegard's image of Ecclesia and Synagoga, and her personal background. Finally, this chapter will attempt to illuminate why she, as an apocalyptic cleric, treated the two symbols in a manner distinctive from that of her contemporaries and predecessors. This will be done by arguing that in *Scivias, Book I, Vision V*, Hildegard saw a vision of Synagoga unlike those prior to her, in art or text. Also, this essay will utilize the framework ascribed by Joan Wallach Scott that proposes gender as a tool for historical analysis. I propose that if we substitute the word "gender" with "ethnic, religious differences," we may extrapolate and use a form of Scott's framework in this essay in order to better understand Hildegard's treatment of Ecclesia and Synagoga. While Scott's ideas on gender focus heavily on feminism and the history of historical analysis, what is needed for this examination is a rather simplified form of her model. Scott argues that gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived difference between the sexes.⁵¹ Therefore, in my modification of her notion, I argue that ethnic, religious differences are constitutive elements based on perceived differences between "race" and cultures. By the High Middle Ages, due to centuries of marginalization and differentiation on the part of the Church, Jews were not only perceived as different with regard to "race" and culture, they were most assuredly viewed as anti-

⁵⁰ See, Ekkehard of Aura, Albert of Aix. "Emico and the Slaughter of the Rhineland Jews." *Medieval Sourcebook*. Fordham University, Dec. 1997. September 18, 2012.

<<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1096jews.asp>> Unlike Albert of Aix, Ekkehard, despite seeming interest in relaying the slaughter of Jews, seems to waiver in such a manner that it obscures how he felt about the massacres. At one point he calls Jews "execrable," and only uses compassionate tones when speaking of Christians that began to terrorize Christian pilgrims, those they were, according to the author, sent to "free." For a more comprehensive historical context, see R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

⁵¹ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), Introduction.

Christian and anti-Christ in many regards.⁵² Despite increasing anxiety over Jews and religious codification of practice and belief, if we apply Scott's framework and examine Hildegard's views on family, especially motherhood, we begin to see why Hildegard viewed Synagoga differently than most of her contemporaries.

Historiography, Part I – Historical Context

Scholars have done considerable amounts of research on Hildegard's *Scivias*. There are numerous works devoted to understanding the meaning of her visions and why she interpreted them as she did. Recently, but to a far less degree, researchers have addressed Ecclesia and Synagoga, and the evolution of the images in copy, print, and art. However, Hildegard's vision of Synagoga has not been given due attention. I feel that this particular issue warrants much more focus given Hildegard's importance as both a woman, and prominent cleric. Moreover, in

⁵² Agobard of Lyons "De Scriptoribus Ecclesiae Relatis," *Documenta Catholica Omnia*, 2006, accessed November 28, 2012, http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/30_10_0779-0841-Agobardus_Lugdunensis.html. As far back as the Early Middle Ages, Jews had been construed as anti-Christ. Agobard of Lyons's *De Iudaicis Superstitionibus et Erroribus*, written to Louis the Pious, was the climax of a series of anti-Jewish works by the author. As Jeremy Cohen notes, Agobard utilized both stereotypical and first-hand knowledge in his treatise arguing that Jews were not only worse than heretical, but decidedly anti-Christ. [*In hoc ergo solo blasphemiam Judæorum superat Antichristus, quod se presumit nuncupare Christum. In hoc autem Judæi nequitiam æquiparent Antichristi, quod Jesum negare audent fuisse Christum*] trans. by M. Alexander. Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 143-45. Also see, R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 7. Moore states that "among the reasons for the undertaking of [the Lateran Decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215], was the defence [sic] of the Catholic faith against its perceived enemies." Though the council met after Hildegard's death, the focus of Jews and Christians distinguishing themselves from Jews even to the point of dress, [*Canon 68*] shows an increasing anxiety concerning Judaism and the perception of Jews as a threat to Christianity. This angst was most certainly not new, as we have seen in Chapter 1 of this work. Hence, we may conclude that this same evidence from the Fourth Lateran Council's decree, is of importance here, as well. For a complete translation of *Canon 68*, see John R. Shinnars, ed., *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000-1500: a Reader, Second Edition (Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures)*, 2 ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Higher Education Division, 2006), 13.

examining her vision of the relationship between the Church and Judaism, we discover another thread in the vast tapestry of anti-Semitism, prejudice, and stereotyping that stretches into our modern world. I will review some of the scholarship that has influenced my research and understanding. In building upon the works of a select few, I hope to put forth a more heuristic examination of Hildegard, and demonstrate that not all Christians who lived in proximity to Jews viewed them with popular disdain, nor did they subscribe to ubiquitous ideologies that pitted Christians and Jews against each other as religious enemies.⁵³ This fragmented ambivalence toward Jews on the part of a few became increasingly threatening to the Church during this period. R. I. Moore notes that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries “persecution became habitual, [and that] deliberate and socially sanctioned violence began to be directed, *through established governmental, judicial, and social institutions*, against groups of people defined by general characteristics such as race, religion, or way of life; and that membership of such groups in itself became regarded as justifying these attacks.”⁵⁴ This is not to say that violence and prejudice toward Jews that took place in the centuries prior to the High Middle Period should be

⁵³ Ibid. Also see Eva Haverkamp, *Jews in Christian Europe*, In *The Wiley-Blackwell History of Jews and Judaism*, A.T. Levinson, ed. (John Wiley & Sons: Chichester, UK, 2012): Ch. 11, pgs. 172 and 174. Haverkamp notes the immigration routes of Jews from Italy and Spain into Provence in Northern France and Germany’s Rhineland. We know this to be true due to primary source accounts of the massacre of Jews in the Rhineland in 1096, led by Count Emico and Peter the Hermit. Taken together with the perceived need for clearer distinctions between groups, decades later, on the part of the Fourth Lateran Council, we may conclude that in some communities, Jews and Christians intermingled, and lived perhaps too peaceably in the eyes of the Church. Also, Paul Halsall, “Medieval Sourcebook Disputation of a Jew with a Christian About the Christian Faith (Before 1096): Gilbert Crispin,” Internet History Sourcebook, January, 1999, accessed October 6, 2012, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1196crispin-jews.asp>. Crispin wrote, “I send you a little work to be submitted to your fatherly-prudence. I wrote it recently putting to paper what a Jew said when formerly disputing with me against our faith in defence of his own law, and what I replied in favour of the faith against his objections. I know not where he was born, but he was educated at Mayence; he was well versed even in our law and literature, and had a mind practised in the Scriptures and in disputes against us. He often used to come to me as a friend both for business and to see me, since in certain things I was very necessary to him, and as often as we came together we would soon net talking in a friendly, spirit about the Scriptures and our faith.”

⁵⁴ Ibid. pg. 4.

disregarded. It is quite clear that in the period after the first millennia, those Christians who lived peaceably with Jews were few. However, contextual analysis shows that before Hildegard's time, popular hatred was not as systemic, politically-sanctioned, or perpetrated with the same level of anxiety and fear toward heretical practices. As such, we see that these concerns were incorporated into the opening canons of the treatise put forth by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. If the Church had not felt the need for conspicuous separation, then the Council would not have gone so far as to regulate such banal elements as distinguishing dress codes for Christians and Jews who lived, worked, and socialized in proximity to each other. However, inflated concerns over heresy resulted in the Church inserting itself more and more into the everyday lives of its constituents. The result fostered a growing atmosphere of suspicion which fueled increased violence toward Jews and underscored the creation of ever-more imaginative fantasies about Judaism's supposed role in the ruination of Christianity.

Historiography, Part II – Christian Imagination and Symbology

My research was informed by a rich volume of scholarly analysis of Jewish-Christian relations in the High Middle period. In a broad sense, no effort to understand the portrayal of Jews in Christian art and literature would be complete without the works of both Heinz Schreckenberg and Debra Higgs-Strickland. Schreckenberg devotes an entire chapter to *Ecclesia and Synagoga*, offering a cursory examination of them via rich imagery and survey-type commentary. By his admission, Schreckenberg's purpose was not to offer in-depth analysis or a comparative study. Still, this weighty volume is invaluable for anyone interested in finding many images, including those rarely-seen, of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*. With regard to Hildegard,

Schrekenberg's only notation of her is as a Christian author of two texts that focus upon Jews.⁵⁵ Debra Higgs-Strickland on the other hand offers historical contextualization on a number of images specifically dealing with the creation of and meaning of the term "monsters." Her work entitled, *Demons, Saracens and Jews, Making Monsters in Medieval Art*, prefaces itself by asking "what is a monster?"⁵⁶ In contrast to Schrekenberg, she engages an art history argument by offering that "monstrous external form and moral character stems from the recognition that ugliness is a visual phenomenon . . . [and that] the most effective means by which ideas about ugliness can be transmitted is through pictorial works of art."⁵⁷ As any scholar of the Middle Ages, Judaism, and Christianity knows much effort was spent during this period to create and instill the idea amongst Christians that Jews were monstrous in a variety of ways. As such, Ecclesia and Synagoga were not a tool for this purpose, if, strictly speaking, we go by Higgs Strickland's argument. However, if one studies the pair closely, they see that the monstrous part of Judaism, as emphasized by Church intellectuals and clerics, was more a part of the esoteric parts of Synagoga, her symbolic meaning, interpretation, and implied intent. With this in mind, and despite what I consider gaps in her definition of "monstrous," Higgs Strickland's work is excellent in examining how the visual image affected largely illiterate populations, and how those in power used visualizations to motivate and instill fear in the masses.

Contrary to Schrekenberg and Higgs Strickland, Wolfgang Seiferth researched and wrote on Ecclesia and Synagoga exclusively in his work *Synagogue and the Church in the*

⁵⁵ Heinz Schrekenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: an Illustrated History* (New York: Continuum Intl Pub Group (Sd), 1997), 23.

⁵⁶ Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 8.

Middle Ages, Two Symbols in Art and Literature.⁵⁸ His work traces Christian ideologies on Jews from the Early Church to the Reformation Era, paying special attention to the two icons. Seiferth argues that the perspective of Christians in the Middle Ages could be categorized in a two-fold manner as either *concordia* or *altercatio*.⁵⁹ The first category is the one I would argue as encompassing of Hildegard and her image of Judaism. It holds that Jews were descendants of biblical prophets and living testaments to religious history. Likewise, Jews and the symbol of Synagoga, should be regarded as a less-sophisticated, obstinate, immature and lost, relative of Christianity, much like a religiously-inert sister who knew the truth but turned her back in order to cling to the Old Law and Testament. Without explicitly regarding her as immature, this is much the same way that Hildegard characterized Jews and Judaism. *Altercatio*, Seiferth argues is the eventual state into which Jewish-Christian relations fell. Despite arguing that the images themselves engendered a kind of restraint amongst Christians simply due to their projection of triumph, Seiferth says that this uneasy existence escalated into murder, marginalization, expulsion, and accusations of libel, as in the case of William of Norwich.⁶⁰ Insofar as Hildegard's vision of Synagoga, Seiferth spends no time on her imagery either in cursory form or analysis. He chooses to devote pages to her contemporary, Bernard of Clairvaux, indicating that the cleric "refined" the symbols from their earlier polemics. Yet, the author does not follow with any explanation as to his meaning, and as such, his argument is incomplete.

⁵⁸ Wolfgang S. Seiferth. Translated by Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald, *Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages: Two Symbols in Art and Literature* (New York,: Ungar, 1970). For critique of Seiferth, see Amos Funkenstein "Review Two Symbols in Art and Literature: Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages,"*The Catholic Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (Jan., 1973): 592-94; and; Roger E. Reynolds, "Review Two Symbols in Art and Literature: Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages,"*Church History* 41, no. 1 (Mar., 1972): 118.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* pgs. 35-44.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pgs. 1-12.

Another author, Christine Rose, delves further into noting Hildegard's difference in her treatment of Jews, than that of her contemporaries.⁶¹ However, she concludes that the origins of the visions may be found within the nuances of exegetical and typological commentaries on the Song of Solomon, that date to her time and before.⁶² To my mind, Rose's conclusions have shortcomings. Although I do see some similarities to the references that she makes, Hildegard's visions were plainly unique and an entity unto themselves. What is more, she does not address why Hildegard's vision of Synagoga cast her in a different and less harsh light than others of her time. As stated earlier, I would argue that her life and subsequent ideas on motherhood shaped the way she saw familial relationships. Since she ascribed to the characterization of Ecclesia and Synagoga as sisters, her personal regard for ties of kinship were instrumental in formulating her interpretations of the two figures. In the considerable amount of scholarship that has been done on Hildegard, it seems that relatively little of it has been done to address this question, and these notions. Historians have arguably overlooked asking why, in the midst of increasing demonization of Jews, systematic equating of Judaism with heresy, and fervent political and religious polarization of them as anti-Christian, would Hildegard choose to regard Judaism and Jews not only as those in need of compassion, but also rather stridently, as religious kin. We know that she thought of her visions as eschatological. Indeed, quite a number of contemporary Christian intellectuals wrote works with apocalyptic themes. Yet, she chose not to join her contemporaries in a pejorative condemnation of Jews. Ostensibly, she associated Christianity with light, truth, strength and life (*vitae*), she did not forthwith, equate Judaism with polar opposites – darkness, systematic sacrilege, insidiousness, monstrous anthropomorphism and

⁶¹Christine Rose. "The Jewish Mother-In-Law, Synagoga and the Man of Law's Tale." Published in *Chaucer, and the Jews: Sources, Contexts, Meanings*. Sheila Delaney, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002) , pgs. 1-23.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pg. 5.

death (mors). Despite this difference, the amount of comparative research and scholarship on this facet of her illustrated visions is not adequate, especially given the importance of both anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic imagery in a largely illiterate Middle Ages. Both her visions of the symbols and the symbols of Ecclesia and Synagoga themselves hold too small a place in current historical research, given their importance as perpetuators of superiority on the part of Christians, and hatred of Jews. Before I analyze Hildegard's interpretations of Synagoga, and prior to examining the manner in which she crafted a line of kinship between the two symbols, it is necessary to examine the pair in a twelfth century context. This will render a more complete backdrop with which to measure their influence and further distinguish how Hildegard interpreted the pair in her visions.

Historical Context, Image Analysis

Biblical exegesis reveals that earlier references to Ecclesia and Synagoga were most likely shaped by references in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah's Lamentations.⁶³ Here, there are references to a once great city that has fallen, and her people are likened to a widow. More importantly, the same passages utilize the symbols of a broken crown and blinded eyes. These symbols, according to Schreckenberg, were associated with Judaism as far back as the ninth century.⁶⁴ I would argue as Nina Rowe does that these representations were associated later

⁶³ Lisa Lampert. *Gender and Jewish Difference From Paul to Shakespeare*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pg. 44. For further reading on the influence of Lamentations and the Book of Zachariah, see Nina Rowe. *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pgs. 40-41.; Rose, pg. 10. Also, Schreckenberg, pg. 16.

⁶⁴ Schreckenberg, pg. 16.

however, and that Ecclesia and Synagoga had their beginnings as far back as the fifth century.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, by Hildegard's time, an inchoate mass of exegetical texts and historical arguments engaged by the Early Church Fathers, had evolved into a struggle to deal with heretical movements, and in the process further unify Church practices and the lives of Christian laymen. Schreckenberg contends that the perceived need to show Christianity as triumphant over Judaism stretched back as far as the ninth century.⁶⁶ In actuality, this triumphant stance found its origins more in the fourth century, when Church intellectuals were grappling with forging a dominant separation between Judaic practices and history, and that of Catholicism. Still, Schreckenberg references ninth century images of a woman with a broken crown, and the Roman custom of representing conquered peoples as a seated woman, both of which were methods used by the Early Church to indicate Synagoga.⁶⁷ He also notes that the Early Church utilized the Old Testament story of Rachel and Leah to parallel that of Ecclesia and Synagoga. As Leah's eyes were "weak," and Rachel was "beautiful and lovely," so were symbolic Judaism and Christianity, respectively.⁶⁸

History demonstrates that from the tenth century onward, Christian authors made use of the two symbols in a concerted effort to polarize Jews and Christians as opposites. Where one sought the truth, the other obstinately refused it; when one refused to accept Christ's divinity over the Law of the Old Testament, the other ascribed to his messiah-hood and triumphed over its counterpart. By Hildegard's time, concerns over dissenting movements and influential clerics calling for Crusades, had concerns over heresy spilling over into violence. Synagoga's was

⁶⁵ Nina Rowe. *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pgs. 40-51.

⁶⁶ Schreckenberg, pg. 16.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., and pg. 17.

depicted as leaving the scene of the Crucifixion, often with a broken or complete battle standard, a circumcision knife, and sometimes a book representing the Old Law held tightly to her chest. Not long after, she is viewed also as blind-folded, broken queen with eyes cast downward, literally visionless, symbolizing her willing blindness to Christian truth.⁶⁹



Figure IV – Scherenberg Psalter, c. 1260.

Variants from this period also show Synagoga equated with Death, Ecclesia with Life as in an example from the Benedictine monastery at Regensburg. Much of Synagoga's strength has fled

⁶⁹ Miniature created in Niederaltaich, Bavaria by the local Benedictine abbey ca. 1100s; and; Illuminated crucifixion scene with Ecclesia, Synagoga, St. Mary, and St. John. Surrounded by medallions with the virtues of obedience, patience, humility, love; Miniature from the Scherenberg Psalter, Strasbourg, c. 1260

in these images, and she is sometimes pictured as faceless, naked or only partially clothed, with a broken battle standard. In a walrus tusk relief from the Gunhild Cross the two figures are cast in medallions, Ecclesia crowned, stern, wielding a book with her name; Synagoga is bent and contorted, her face twisted in misery. Her staff is broken, eyes hollow, head bent, supported by her left hand. Still, in another image from the 1300s, Ecclesia and Synagoga, by themselves are shown as diametric opposites. Ecclesia holds her chalice of Eucharist above the level of Synagoga's head, in her other stand a sturdy battle standard. Contrastingly, Synagoga is bent with a distorted body, clinging to tablets symbolizing the Law, with a broken scepter and a goat's head symbolizing the Christian Devil.⁷⁰



Figure V – Missal, Abbey of Saint-Pierre, Ghent, c. Early 1300s

⁷⁰ Lazar Fleishman, *An Inexhaustible Source of Great Hatred*, 2001. Accessed January 21, 2010, <http://www.lechaim.ru/ARHIV/115/fleyshman.htm>.

Other images created in Hildegard's time often included explanatory text. The *Liber floridus* of St. Omer, that dates to the 1100s, has Synagoga not only leaving a the Crucifixion, but unwarily moving toward a Hell-Mouth that she cannot see due to the glare she casts at Christ. As Gavin Langmuir demonstrates, invasions of groups like the Magyars and political upheaval in Spain and other areas had created a form of identity awareness in European Christians who now had an even larger sense of the distinguishing properties of their beliefs and a sense of religious "superiority."⁷¹ These were the decades that witnessed the slaughters of Jews in the German Rhineland (1096), that resulted in deaths of scores of people, including children, despite the fact that attempts at negotiation on the part of the victims, had been attempted. According to a witness in Mainz, burghers of the town allowed the armies of Count Emico in resulting in a march directly to the center of the area where children were being held for protection. Without conscience, they along with others were mercilessly murdered.⁷² This atrocity took place two years before Hildegard's birth and by her adulthood, she would have most likely known of it. According to Gavin Langmuir, further complicating matters was the fact that by the mid-twelfth century, Jews had become established moneylenders. However, this notion has been shown false in recent scholarship. Julie Mell's close examination of Jewish and Christian moral literature successfully challenges the stereotype of the Jew as a "money grubbing moneylender," an image often replicated by traditional early twentieth-century narratives regarding the economy of the High Middle period.⁷³ Still, even with its shortcomings, Langmuir's research examines violence against Jews during the period and serves to familiarize. Though Christian hostilities pre-dated

⁷¹ Gavin Langmuir. *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990): 304-5.

⁷² Robert Chazan. "The Anti-Jewish Bias of 1096," found in *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews*, Anna Sapir Abulafia, ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pg. 28.

⁷³ Julie Mell. "Cultural Meanings of Money in Medieval Ashkenaz: On Gift, Profit, and Value in Medieval Judaism and Christianity," *Jewish History* 28, (2014): pp. 138, 149-152, and 157-158.

Hildegard's life, violent pogroms served to further mitigate and sharpen hatred and intolerance in the eyes of the populace, who had by the eleventh- and twelfth-centuries, often witnessed or participated in anti-Semitic violence, beforehand.⁷⁴

Also around the time that Hildegard wrote *Scivias*, Thomas of Monmouth wrote his polarizing chronicle regarding the imagined ritual murder William of Norwich (1155). This fantastical work accused Jews of kidnapping and killing a child during the course of anti-Christian rituals that served to threaten Christians and mock Christ.⁷⁵ Writings like Monmouth's as well as increasing vitriol in images like those of Ecclesia and Synagoga, made Hildegard's vision of Judaism even more peculiar. Ambiguities surrounding tolerance and Christian notions of superiority had long since faded, and European Christians along with the Church had cast the Jews as enemies of Christ, polarized, and dedicated to the destruction of Christendom. Though depictions of Ecclesia and Synagoga had not yet reflected such focused violence, Hildegard would have certainly known of massacres, and been well familiar with the images and their meanings. She would have understood them both as a didactic tool for the learned classes, and a deliberately-crafted reminder to illiterate commoners that no matter their station otherwise, in religious terms, they were "superior" to other groups.

⁷⁴ Langmuir, p. 305.

⁷⁵ Jacob Marcus, "Medieval Sourcebook the Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich, 1173: Thomas of Monmouth," Medieval Sourcebook, 1997, accessed April 9, 2010, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1173williamnorwich.asp>.

Hildegard, Biographical

From the time she was born in 1098 near Alzey in Germany, Hildegard of Bingen felt she had “not lived in security.”⁷⁶ She was the tenth or “tithed” child of a noble family, and as such from birth, was promised to the Church. By the age of three, she had begun to experience visions.⁷⁷ At the age of eight she was “given to God” by her family and went to live with Jutta von Spanheim in a small cloister that operated under the supervision and auspices of the Disibodenberg Benedictine monastery.⁷⁸ She took vows as a Benedictine nun upon coming of age and many years later accepted the position of Abbess of her convent, after Jutta’s death in 1136.⁷⁹ During these years she continued to have visions. At age forty-two she had one of her most profound revelations, during which she felt commanded by God to write down what she had seen and heard during her trance.⁸⁰ After wrangling with permissions from religious superiors concerning the legitimacy of her insights, and overcoming crippling shyness, her visions were recorded. Her first book, *Scivias*, or “Know the Ways,” was begun in 1141.⁸¹ *Scivias* was completed at some point between 1152 and 1158, during which her convent had moved to Rupertsburg due to its growth.⁸² She is credited with founding a new convent there over the vociferous objections of the monks at Disibodenberg who had profited quite nicely

⁷⁶ Hildegard of Bingen. *Briefwechsel: Nach den Ältesten Handschriften Übersetzt und Nach dem Quellen Erläutert*. Fürkötter, Adelgundis, O.S.B., ed. and trans. (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag Pub., 1990): 25.

⁷⁷ Kristina Lerman, “The Life and Works of Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179),” Internet Medieval Sourcebook, February 2, 1995, accessed September 23, 2009, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/hildegarde.asp>.

⁷⁸ Matthew Fox, “Forward,” in *Hildegard von Bingen's Mystical Visions: Translated from Scivias*, trans. Bruce Hozeski (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1986), ix.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*; and; Hildegard of Bingen. *The Personal Correspondence of Hildegard of Bingen*. Joseph L. Baird, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): pg. 6.

⁸² Sarah Roche-Mahdi. “Review: “The Sybil of the Rhine.” Reviewed work: *Hildegard von Bingen's Mystical Visions: Translated from Scivias*, trans. Bruce Hozeski, *The Women's Review of Books* 4, (1986): pgs. 14-15.

“spiritually as well as financially,” prior to the move.⁸³ Hildegard completed three books of visions before her death, the last sometime between 1163 and 1173, entitled *Liber Divinorum Operum*.

Scivias

In *Scivias*, Hildegard envisioned Synagoga unlike any other before her in either art or copy. From the very beginning of her interpretation, clear differences in Hildegard’s ideas of Synagoga, become apparent:

After this I saw a certain womanly image, pale-colored from the top of her head right down to her waist. She is synagogue, the mother of the incarnation of the Word of God. She came into existence from the beginning when her sons were coming to their full strength. And she foresaw the mysteries of God in darkness. But she did not appear fully. This is because the Word of God is not coming into existence as the rising dawn just yet. The Word’s coming has been spoken of openly, but she is gazing at the Word’s coming with much admiration, although from a distance.⁸⁴

Nowhere in this particular passage do we find a broken, shamed woman. Nowhere in these lines are there the images of obstinate haughtiness and ignorance, as envisioned by others. There is no diametrical opposition to Christendom, or alliance with demons. In another part of this vision, the characterization of Synagoga is even more vivid:

[She was] dark -colored from her waist right down to her feet. Her feet were bloody-colored and had a very bright and pure cloud around them. She did not, however, have eyes. She had her hands placed under her sleeves. She was standing close to an altar which is before the eyes of God, but she was not touching the altar. Abraham was standing by her heart, and Moses by her breast. The remaining prophets were standing by her belly, and they were showing their individual signs. They were also admiring the

⁸³ Baird, trans. pg. 20.

⁸⁴ Bruce Hozeski. *Hildegard von Bingen's Mystical Visions: Translated from Scivias* (Kindle Location: 1267). (Inner Traditions/Bear & Company, 1985). Kindle Edition.

beauty of the church. The woman was indeed of great size, just like some tower of some city. She had a circle which resembled dawn upon her head. And again I heard a heavenly voice speak to me: God imposed the severity of the law on the ancient people when God introduced the circumcision of Abraham. Eventually God turned this severity into the grace of pleasantness by giving through the Word the truth of the evangelist to those who believe. By doing this, God softened those who had been wounded by the yoke of the law with the oil of mercy.⁸⁵

Hildegard's interpretation is not what one expects from an eleventh-century apocalyptic abbess who lived in a religiously-charged time of violence and marginalization of non-Christians. Her use of words such as "pure," the enjoining of Synagoga to the family of God that spawned the "True Church," and her clear reminder that Synagoga occupied an esoteric space adjacent to the prophets of old, still revered by Christians, all differed from the characterizations and slanders of Jews by her contemporaries. Heresy and fear of perceived religious enemies were becoming more and more crystallized, institutional, and eschatological in the writings of other apocalyptics.⁸⁶ Her image of Synagoga as motherly was unique, as was her use of words that seem to indicate that she held some level of esteem for her. Often enough, Ecclesia herself was not portrayed as motherly, rather as a triumphant, stern, righteous queen who towers above her disgraced adversary, who is shunned by Christ and espoused by the Devil. This is not to say that

⁸⁵ Ibid. *Scivias* (Kindle Location: 1262).

⁸⁶ Of eschatological writers in her time, it seems to me that Joachim of Fiore was most like Hildegard in his views of Jews and Judaism. For contextualization and analysis of some of their texts see the following: Jeremy Cohen, "'Synagoga Conversa: Honorius Augustodunensis, the Song of Songs, and Christianity's 'Eschatological Jew,'" *Speculum* 79, no. 2 (April 2004): 309-40; and; Eugène Honé, "Joachim of Fiore: The Development of His Life and the Genesis of His Works and Doctrines. About the Merits of Gian Luca Potestà's New Biography.," *Church History and Religious Culture* 87, no. 1 (2007): 47-74. NOTE: While Bernard of Clairvaux did not expressly advocate the annihilation of Jews, after the massacres in the Rhineland, he did nothing to stem contempt of Jews, or religious pogroms. For more on his ideals toward Judaism and for those of Peter the Venerable, see Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al., *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Jackson, TN: Basic Books Publishers, 2002), 15-17; and; David Berger. "Christian Heresy and Jewish Polemic in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *The Harvard Theological Review* 68, no. ¾ (1973): pgs. 203-7; and for Peter the Venerable, see Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000-1150)*. Graham Robert Edwards and Barbara Rosenwein, trans., (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003): pg. 364.

Hildegard shared none of the views of her colleagues or held Jews on equal footing with Christians – far from it. She was raised within the confines of the abbey and would have obviously retained much of what she was taught. In other parts of the vision of Synagoga she echoes a parallel prejudice toward Judaism, and repeats similar negative terms. But this is done whilst offering what she viewed as hope for the woman who cradles the prophets of old. In *Vision Five, Part II*, directly after her description of Synagoga, she heralds the coming of a “bride who lean[s] upon her Chosen One.” This indicates her new incarnation as the Bride of Christ, the woman spoken of in the Song of Solomon who waits eagerly for her companion. She is characterized her by Hildegard as “the one who was provided with a dowry by the Word of God . . . flourish[ing] with brilliant virtues and overflow[ing] with the rivulets of the scriptures. Concerning the sons of the synagogue, my servant Isaiah the prophet speaks with great admiration.”⁸⁷ At this point, Hildegard goes deeper into the nature of Synagoga and the subsequent five parts of *Vision Five* betrays her belief in commonly-held ideas about Jews and Judaism. The parts are condensed below:

The woman was indeed of great size, just like some tower of some city. This signifies that since she supported the greatness of the divine commands, she foretold the protection and defense of the noble and chosen city. She had a circle which resembled dawn upon her head. This signifies that she revealed beforehand the miracle of the incarnation of the Only-Begotten of God, and she predicted the virtues and mysteries which were to follow. For she was crowned gloriously on her first morning when she received the commands of the divinity. She pointed to Adam who received the first command of God, but afterwards she fell by his transgression into death. The Jews did the same thing. They received the divine law first, but they then cast the Word of God aside in their unbelief. But just as the human race was snatched from the destruction of death through the death of the Only-Begotten of God around the beginning of time, so also synagogue forsook her unbelief and arrived truthfully at the knowledge of God through divine mercy . . . What does this mean? The dawn ascends before the sun, doesn't it? But the dawn recedes and the brightness of the sun remains. What does this mean? The Old Testament receded and the truth of the evangelists remained. What the people of old were observing with regard to the flesh in legal observings, the new people were making strong with regard to spiritual

⁸⁷ Hozeski. Kindle Location 1275.

things in the New Testament . What those people of old showed in the flesh, the new people completed in the spirit. For circumcision was not gone, but it was changed into baptism. Just as the former was signed in one member of their body, so the latter are signed by baptism in all of their members. So the old law did not perish because it was changed into a sweeter state. Similarly, in the newness of time, synagogue carried itself across faithfully to the church. For, o synagogue, when you erred in many evils so that you polluted yourself with Baal and with other similar ones—abusing the law with the foulest of customs and lying naked in your sins —I did just as my servant Ezekiel said, (*Vision Five, Part 7*) *I stretched my garment over you and I covered your disgrace, and I swore an oath to you and I entered into a pact with you. (Ezekiel 16:8)* What does this mean? I, the Word of the Most High, by the will of God stretched out my incarnation, o Synagogue, upon you . . . This is similar to a woman being subject to the power of her marriage. I removed the harshness of the outer law from you, and I gave you the sweetness of spiritual doctrine. I showed you all the mysteries of my spiritual doctrines through my very self. But you forsook me, the just one, and joined the devil. (*Vision Five, Part 8*) [You fell] into many errors of total confusion and schism, and she had polluted herself with the collusions of total evil. But just as David nevertheless called back his wife who had been betrothed to him first and then had polluted herself with another man, so also the Word of God will take synagogue back around the newness of time. For synagogue had been joined to him first at the time of the incarnation and then followed the devil, forsaking the grace of baptism. After that she forsook the errors of her unfaithfulness and will return to the light of truth. The devil had seized synagogue in her blindness and had carried her over to unfaithfulness in many errors . She did not prevent the devil from doing this. She then fell down because of the exaltation of her pride . . . so also the devil will try to separate my Word from his chosen ones. My Word will call synagogue back to the true faith from the dejected Antichrist, just as David received his wife back after the death of Saul. In the newness of time, people will see the devil who had deceived them conquered, and they will hasten back to the way of salvation with a great deal of speed.⁸⁸

At many points in this rather protracted section it appears that Hildegard echoes the harsh opinion of Jews that her clerical predecessors and contemporaries shared. In certain areas, this most likely was the case. However, one must recall the imagery and violence directed at Synagoga in manuscripts and art. Though it was not as poignantly belligerent toward Judaism during this period as it was in subsequent centuries, the historical context was that of violent attitudes toward Jews. This most certainly affected Hildegard. But missing in her interpretations

⁸⁸ Hozeski, (Kindle Locations 1330-1333, 1325-1329).

are the elements of arrogance, violence, and boastfulness that accompanied most images and characterizations of Ecclesia and Synagoga, during this period. Instead, Synagoga is entreated as a mother would a child who has wandered away, reminding herself that in the end, the child will return. Hildegard insists on this coming to pass because she came from and was ordained as the mother of the Old Testament prophets. Hence, in a manner of speaking, it seems Hildegard is characterizing Synagoga as the spiritual, matronly ancestor of the Church itself, or Ecclesia. Synagoga is further named as the mother of the Word of God, or Christ, as he was believed to be the living embodiment of the divine Word. It would seem as such, that attributes of St. Mary are being attributed to Synagoga. Given how Judaism was treated in other written texts and in art, it is arguable that Hildegard did not hold a similar contempt or hatred of Jews and Judaism, as most of those surrounding her. She does not preface her visions with violence, nor does she thread resentment into the language she uses. There is no looming angst at Synagoga's transgressions, or any sense that Synagoga is the spiritual enemy of Ecclesia. What is more, Hildegard does not seem to fear that Jews are plotting the annihilation of Christendom. There is no mention of a congenital evil, or a lasting, concrete alliance with the Devil. Instead of anger toward a perceived enemy, she seems in mourning. Where others viewed Judaism as irreconcilably evil and obstinate, here it seems more of an estranged religious kinsman, not a diametric force of opposition.

Historiography, Hildegard's Visions

Questions remain as to why Hildegard chose to interpret her visions in a manner that did not treat Jews as inherently evil enemies, as a whole. Scholars have hinted at reasons such as the

i. **D**e synagoga matre in car
 nationis domini. filii dei.
 ii. **V**erba salemonis.
 iii. **V**erba ysaię pphete.
 iii. **D**e diuerso colore synagoge.
 v. **D**e cecitate eius et quod in
 corde abraham. in pectore
 moyses. in uentre eius reli
 qui pphete. qd significet.
 vi. **Q**uod magna ut turris. ha
 bens circulum in capite si
 milem aurore.
 vii. **V**erba ezechielis. **S**reim
 viii. **C**omparatio de samfone. et de
 saul et de dauid ad eandē



Figure VI – Synagoga, Scivias, c. 1175, Rupertsberg

emulation of Early Church fathers who were relatively more tolerant of Judaism than clerics of the High Middle Ages. They have also cited the horror of the massacres in the Rhineland at the hands of Crusaders, and subsequent compassion for those victims. However, given increasing concerns over heresy, the growing concerns over sanctioned ritual and practice, and burgeoning views of Jews as religious adversaries, Hildegard's characterizations do not seem so broad in explanation. Threats to Christendom were imagined as ensconced within the agendas of heretical groups such as Jews. This makes Hildegard's familial treatment of Judaism through Synagoga even more atypical. Generalizing reasons such as the massacres or the views of Early Church fathers are not acceptable given the way that Jews were stereotyped and denounced by other clerical writers during the period – those that we know Hildegard knew personally, and others with whom she was very likely familiar. Her colleagues did not go so far as she in relating Jews to Christians in religious kinship, nor did they couch this relationship between Christians, Jews, and Christ into such an intimate sort of space. No one finds Peter the Venerable or Peter the Hermit speaking of Synagoga as mother to Ecclesia or treating them as sisters. Bernard of Clairvaux may have shared Hildegard's ideas on Jews and apocalypse, but his words, according to some scholars, served only to intensify hatred. Hildegard's visions certainly reproduced some stereotypical ideals, but they were much more complex and esoteric. We see that they were grounded in a deeply-rooted endeavor to understand the meanings of cryptic imagery and symbolism. In clarifying why she viewed Judaism as such, it is much more helpful to examine her thoughts on motherhood and family. When one understands the sacred nature of motherhood according to Hildegard, no matter if she is speaking of the archetype figuratively or literally, her interpretations become much clearer.

Carolyn Wörman Sur addresses this question in her excellent dissertation entitled, *The*

Feminine Images of God in the Visions of Saint Hildegard of Bingen's Scivias. She argues that in Chapter Six, the six symbols most crucial to Hildegard's interpretations "manifest in an aspect of motherhood." Sur notes that "First, the Living Light sparks a dynamic in the elements of creation." Second, "Terra Mater nurses all of creation and is an archetype of women who give birth." Third, "Eve mothers the human race physically." Fourth, "Synagoga nurtures the figures of the Old Testament." Fifth, "Mary nourishes the Incarnation as Terra Mater nourishes the earth," and finally, "Ecclesia is the sacramental mother of the faithful in the Church."⁸⁹ Sur goes further by saying that "Synagoga contains the patriarchs and prophets within her womb, ready to give birth to their wisdom and prophecies . . . [and that Synagoga] personifies the Old Testament Era . . . [and] Ecclesia becomes the new Synagoga . . . Mary becomes the new Eve."⁹⁰ Sur makes supporting use of Hildegard's presentation of God as Mother even going so far as to propose that in one part of her visions, Hildegard claims that she saw an image of God with three heads shining so brightly that she could not ascertain whether they were masculine or feminine, and that she wrote in this manner to escape the censorship of "inquisition and the Roman Index."⁹¹ We know from her letters to religious superiors that Hildegard did employ reticent language in order to placate their ideas of women as inferior, both mentally and physically. However, it is quite obvious after reading her works, that nothing was inferior about Hildegard's scholarship, nor were her thoughts simplistic and one-dimensional. Hence, we are forced to conclude that her claims of mental feebleness were in reality a kind of canny coyishness aimed at getting her visions qualified by her male superiors via inferences that they came from God, not a piteously simple woman's mind. But this is another vein of argument entirely, and here we are

⁸⁹ Carolyn Wörman Sur. *The Feminine Images of God in Saint Hildegard of Bingen's Scivias*. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, LTD, 1993): pg. 129.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid. pg. xiv.

concerned with the motherhood archetype. As previously noted, Sur has established this was considerably present in Hildegard's visions. She also supports a crucial notion on which this chapter rests – that Hildegard's removal of her birth mother at a very young age was hurtful. We know this to be true because she wrote to Bernard of Clairvaux begging him to “comfort her [so that she may] be secure.”⁹² According to Sur, two women in her life were contributed to Hildegard's matronly ideals – Jutta, her spiritual mother, and Mechtild, her biological mother.⁹³ The need for a mother was manifested early in her life, and she fully embraced Jutta as a surrogate. Yet, the emptiness of being estranged from her real mother caused Hildegard to manifest matronly images in a variety of archetypal ways. She philosophically delved into ideas surrounding God as having both masculinity and femininity. Moreover, she regarded Earth as a kind of mother, held Eve as the mother of humankind, and viewed Synagoga as the mother of the Old Testament. Hence, the mixing of motherhood and the divine was a thematic pursuit in her visions as well as her attempts to understand the physical world around her. Her own letters demonstrate that she accepted Jutta as a mother figure, while revealing an insecurity that was very likely the result of being separated from Mechtild as a child.⁹⁴ In her letter to Bernard of Clairvaux, referenced above, she states, “From childhood, I have not, even for one hour, lived in security.”⁹⁵ Hildegard's own hagiographers, Godfrid of Disibodenberg and Theodoric of Echternach both describe her relationship to Jutta as one of a “venerable mother . . . a woman devoutly consecrated to God, [Hildegard's] magistra who instructed her [with] humility and

⁹² Ibid. pg. 4.

⁹³ Ibid. pg. 5.

⁹⁴ For more on Hildegard's relationship to Jutta, see Miriam Schmitt, O.S.B. “Blessed Jutta of Disibodenberg: Hildegard of Bingen's Magistra and Abbess.” *The American Benedictine Review* 40 (June): 1989.

⁹⁵ Hildegard and Adelgundis Führkötter, trans. *Hildegardis Scivias*, Corpus Christianorum. Scholars Version (Turnholti: Brepols, ©2003), 25

innocence . . . [who] took pains over her and rejoiced in her progress.⁹⁶

Central Analysis, Hildegard's Other Writings and *Scivias*

We can also deduce from Hildegard's writings that she held physical motherhood as a necessary entity. She even seems to treat it with reverence at times. However, while she had the utmost compassion for mothers, she expressed disdain for the sex act itself. As was commonly-believed, Hildegard felt that chastity was the highest form of piety, and as such, nuns often likened themselves virginally, to St. Mary. Hildegard viewed this choice as a "privileged" one that enabled women to emulate the virginal Ecclesia or Church (*imitatio Ecclesiae*).⁹⁷ Further, on conjugal matters, she felt that semen was inherently tainted, weak, and demonic until "like a warm, impetuous wind," the soul entered the womb in the second month, cleansing the male seed of impurity.⁹⁸ Her sympathy for birth mothers however, is unmistakable. She not only devoted much work to creating and discovering medicinal aids and charms for easing the pain of childbirth, she also spent much of her life as a herbologist and botanist, deriving cures for the pain of menstruation.⁹⁹ It seems fair to say that her seeming disdain for the sex act was typical of

⁹⁶Anne Silvas, *Jutta and Hildegard: The Biographical Sources* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 138-41

⁹⁷ Barbara Newman. *Sister of Wisdom, St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987): pg. 220.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* pg. 135.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* pgs. 145-148. Newman notes that Hildegard advocated the use of a semiprecious stone called a sardius (Red Carnelian or Red Chalcedony), if the use of herbs failed to ease the pain of childbirth. In this charm, Hildegard instructed the user to stroke their thighs with the gem and say, "As you jewel, shone by the command of God in the first angel, so you, infant come forth as a shining man abiding in God." Then, according to her, the expectant mother should hold the stone over her vagina and recite this charm: "Be opened, passage and portal, in the name of that epiphany by which Christ appeared as God and man and opened the gates of Hell; that you, infant, may go out at that portal without you or your mother's death." After doing these, the woman was told to sew or bind the stone into a belt and wear it for a safe and easier delivery. Hildegard also prescribed such remedies as fresh river water and heated herbs in a sauna bath in order to open the body up and allow unimpeded flow of menstrual fluids.

those like her who vowed virginity. Likewise, she seemingly felt that “spiritual” or Marian motherhood was the only acceptable means of merging motherhood and the divine. The illustration of her vision in *Book II, Vision III* and *Book I, Vision IV*, details the Church giving “birth” orally. We know from her writing that Hildegard idealized the breath, holding it sacred, as she described her biological mother’s breath as “sweet.” This symbolism may seem strange at first, until one considers medieval debates on the virginal birth of Christ, and speculation on Mary giving birth in this manner, to preserve her purity.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in a more practical sense, it must be remembered that at this time, virginity inside a convent meant much more than simple emulation of a virginal mother, or Marian devotion. Barbara Newman and other scholars have shown that to the “feminist” woman of the twelfth century, complicit virginity – part and parcel of convent life – meant safety and a shield against rape, incest, and personal freedom from arranged marriage.¹⁰¹ With this in mind, it is clear how Hildegard could maintain a balance between disdain for the sex act, but have sympathy and praise for archetypal and literal motherhood.

But Hildegard does not just envision Synagoga and Ecclesia as matronly. She also focuses upon Synagoga, Ecclesia, and Mary as sisters, devoting large amounts of text to them as spiritual kin. It is difficult to read her words without noticing the profound level of interpretation she attaches to the divineness of femininity. While she does not unite them in Trinitarian terms, she does hold, like others of her time, that a feminine presence was intrinsic in the Father, Son,

Moreover, for menstrual pain, she prescribed a variety of herbs to be steeped in water as a tea or to drink otherwise. Millefolium, rye, dittany and aristologia, were among the herbs she claimed were remedies. Eggs, wine, and fat she said were useful for easing menstruation if drunk or ate for five days or as long as pain continued. She advocated the avoidance of meat and the overindulgence of wine or spring water during menstruation arguing that these were contrary to quelling pain. Conversely, she advised women to consume a bland diet with less activity for those suffering with heavy menstruation noting that cold should be substituted for the heat of the sauna to bind the internal body and stave off excessive bleeding.

¹⁰⁰ Sur, pgs. 115-118.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pg. 153.

and Holy Spirit.¹⁰² Among her most ardent focal points on the feminine comes in *Book II, Vision II* where she says, “Through the fountain of life, came the embrace of God’s maternal love, which has nourished us to life.”¹⁰³ She made other references to the Holy Trinity and inherent femininity throughout her analysis of her visions.

Of note here is also the trinity of Ecclesia, Synagoga, and Mary and mystical meanings attributed to the number three. Inasmuch as kinship may be inferred in the very nomenclature of the Holy Trinity, so are the three women in Hildegard’s visions characterized with bonds of sisterhood. First, in *Book I, Vision V*, she esteems Synagoga due to her “motherhood” of the Church.¹⁰⁴ In her depiction of Synagoga, despite her “blackness of disbelief,” she still carries the dawn or symbol of St. Mary above her head, and the swirling clouds, the symbol of Eve, at her feet.¹⁰⁵ To add further mystique, Synagoga’s feet, the color of blood, were reminiscent to Hildegard of Christ’s own “birthing” of Ecclesia through his wounds, and the dawn of Mary around her forehead symbolized Israel’s destiny as the “Mother of the Incarnation.”¹⁰⁶ Newman argues that Synagoga is pregnant in Hildegard’s vision, with the salvation inherent in the Church (Ecclesia) despite the darkening of disbelief.¹⁰⁷ In this highly complex and cryptic system, Mary is drawn akin to Synagoga in that both give birth to salvation, one in the form of Christ, the other in the form of the Church. The three are related in this way and kinship is given to Synagoga not

¹⁰² For more on the Middle Age belief in epicene qualities of God, see Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

¹⁰³ “*Nam per ipsum fontem uitae maternal dilectio amplexionis Dei, quae nos ad uitam enutruit . . .*” Hildegard and Adelgundis Führkötter, *Hildegardis Scivias*, Corpus Christianorum. Scholars Version (Turnholti: Brepols, ©2003).

¹⁰⁴ Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, pg. 205. Newman argues that Augustine theologians in the era, despite anti-Judaic ideologies did hold a dichotomous view of Synagoga as both enemy and mother of the Church due to the notion that the Church “descended” from her, or from the Jewish faith.

¹⁰⁵ Newman, pg. 210.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

only as related to Ecclesia as mother (Augustinian), but also to the Virgin Mary, herself. In light of what I have shown of Hildegard's opinion of motherhood both spiritual and literal, it becomes clear why motherhood and its presence in Synagoga are a factor in Hildegard's non-violent, even respectful treatment of her. Couple this with her sympathy for pregnant women, her seemingly contradictory views of physical motherhood and the "pollution" to virginity within the sex act, and we find a paralleled framework, containing the same parameters ensconced in Synagoga. She expresses contempt for her "sins of disbelief" while expressing sympathy and respect for her, not as an enemy of Christendom and Christians, but more as one might have for a lost relative. In her view of Judaism, there is a hope for "salvation" and a respect for Synagoga's position, even in a state of "darkness." This does not sound like those in her time who felt violence and murder were the only answers to the imagined threats presented by Jews, nor does it tread the line between denouncing violence and embracing it, as some of her contemporaries did. There is a definitive and complex balance of honoring Synagoga from a very Christian point of sight. This enables her to repeat the notion that Jews and Judaism were lost in unbelief to the "True Faith," but also were living markers of the Old Testament, and the spiritual kin of all Christians.

Methodology, Scott Model

So far, I have analyzed Hildegard's visions in *Scivias* and demonstrated not only the differences in the way she envisioned Synagoga, but also the dynamic of motherhood in her analysis, as well. In this method, I have made use of a slightly-altered form of Scott's entreat to historians for historical exploration based on gender. To reiterate, Scott argued that gender is a useful tool in historical study and facilitates an understanding of events. I modified her model,

and in doing so substituted “gender” with “ethnic religious differences.” In this way, Hildegard’s visions are given another frame for analysis. Scott argues that gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes.¹⁰⁸ I alter this and argue that “ethnic religious differences” are constitutive elements within the prejudices and hatred of Jews on the part of Christians in the Middle Ages, and were based on perceived differences between cultures. This mode of analysis may be extrapolated and transferred onto Hildegard’s writings and that of contemporary Church intellectuals. Their opinion of Jews was based fundamentally on perceived cultural and thereby religious differences. These differences were also perceived in areas of race, belief, scriptural interpretation, human-ness, and even in the hierarchy ordered by God in creation. Scott also proposes that historians need to ask what the relationships between the cultural aspects are, specifically, those culturally-available symbols that evoke multiple, often contradictory representations.¹⁰⁹ Into this framework, I have introduced Ecclesia, Synagoga, and in some respects, The Virgin Mary. In Hildegard’s visions, her image of Synagoga is especially clarified to the historian by examining the notable differences between Hildegard’s opinion of Synagoga and that of her contemporaries. Moreover, Scott’s model aids in interpreting Hildegard’s view of physical motherhood as both the blessing and ruination of sacred virginity in all women. By analyzing the relationship between her contradictions, it is revealed that Hildegard keeps returning to motherhood in the spiritual sense, and the kinship it creates between Synagoga and Ecclesia. Scott’s method supports these findings in that her model does what she charges it will do – lays bare one of the factors behind Hildegard’s treatment of Synagoga in the face of contradicting opinions. The normative concepts that Scott characterizes as limiting are seen in

¹⁰⁸ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the broader opinions held by theologians and laymen, alike. Jews were unbelievers, lost in blindness and obstinate in clinging to the Old Law. However present these limits were in Hildegard's time, the factors that usurp the replication of that view in Hildegard, were her own experiences with motherhood, and the subsequent opinion of spiritual motherhood that came about via her removal from her own mother, and the surrogate position adopted by Jutta. The normative limits applied by her society and theologians were broken, and thus, to use Scott's framework in reverse, the limits of metaphoric possibilities are *lifted*. Hildegard was then able to interpret her vision of Synagoga differently due to events in her life. Her particular experiences were not shared by male theologians, or if they were, they did not affect and shape their opinions in a similar fashion. Hence, as I have argued and shown, motherhood was key and crucial in understanding why Hildegard envisioned Synagoga as she did. With the help of Scott's frame we see that motherhood was pivotal in its guiding role behind the treatment of Synagoga and Judaism not only as kin to Ecclesia, but also to St. Mary as both another mother and the Mother of Compassion, who seemingly holds Synagoga in respect, despite differences of faith.

Conclusion

Hildegard of Bingen's works and life continue to shape and inspire women in modernity. Her unique vision of femininity in the divine, finds pertinence in our day, despite the passing of many centuries. Many scholars and non-scholars have esteemed her intellect, her wisdom, and ground-breaking spirit that resiliently pursued knowledge despite her gender and the subsequent obstacles faced by women in the High Middle Ages. It was these attributes and strengths that enabled Hildegard to survive being removed from her parents at such a young age, and then thrive as an lauded intellectual in the turbulent period of the twelfth century. In looking beyond

convention, and asking as she often does in *Scivias*, “what does this mean,” her intrinsic brilliance becomes apparent. She asked questions in a time when women were not thought of as intellectually capable of deeper thought, much less theorizing with male intellects. Eternally as student, Hildegard knew how to work within the constraints and when to break them in order to fulfill her wishes. For that reason, and for daring to go against the misogynistic grain; for venerating womanhood, motherhood, and drawing a line of kinship between Christians and Jews who were increasingly subjected to violence and derision, she is worthy of our respect and remembrance.

Chapter III –Sibling Rivals to Mortal Enemies: The Transgendering of Ecclesia and Synagoga in Fifteenth-Century Thuringia

Introduction

Around the year 1350 in Erfurt, Germany, the area around the town's cathedral was very likely charged with expectation. Ten years earlier, the cathedral's roof had been raised over the transept and western side of the façade. Now, the choir section and transepts were finally complete. The cathedral, dedicated to Saint Mary and church consecrated in honor of Saint Severus, formed the centerpiece of Thuringian, Catholic architecture. Inside, towering stained glass proclaimed the richness of Christian religious belief, and in the cupola the *Maria Gloriosa*, up until then, the largest, free-swinging bell ever cast, chimed tones throughout the day that were known for their purity. Years later, in 1509, Martin Luther himself would be ordained within the cathedral's walls and in modern times, the post World War II years would witness thousands of pilgrims coming to offer thanks to Saint Mary, for an end to years of uncertainty and destruction. Even before its ultimate completion in the late seventeenth-century, Saint Mary's was a masterpiece. It still is even today. However, in the mid 14th century, it represented much more than architectural triumph. It represented religious position, power, and the very essence of Christian dominance. However, years later around 1420, inside its walls Saint Mary's played host to a rather odd image. Among the whimsical marginalia on the seats in the Choir area, there was a very small, but old image of conflict. The first figure in the image was Ecclesia. She represented the Church, Christian belief in divine grace, and acceptance of Christ as the true messiah. The other figure, Synagoga, symbolized the Old Testament, the Law of Moses, and

Judaism's rejection of Christ. From the fourth century they had told the story of tumultuous relations between Jews and Christians. Representing the dynamic between the two groups, they were honed and utilized by the Church as didactic tools, and veins through which Christian dominance flowed.¹¹⁰ The odd element here was that the pair, always depicted as women, were now depicted as masculine. This image broke with tradition further, however. Ecclesia and Synagoga, from their beginnings as arguing sisters, had been transformed into warring knights, jousting to the death. Jousting was inherently the sport of men. Yet, here were two figures, formerly women, still female in name, depicted as masculine riders locked in battle.

Why, in fourteenth-century Thuringia, more specifically in the town of Erfurt, was it acceptable, even appropriate to depict the two as masculine? What elements created an atmosphere that was receptive to understanding what modernity might term as “gender-play,” and warring knights, both ensconced within a peculiar symbology that represented Jews and Christians? What accounted for such an increase of conspicuous belligerence in the image, and the role-reversal? What elements in the historical context of Erfurt caused the creator of the image to shift the gender of two women whose origins placed them in the realm of Roman female icons – an enduring motif – to that of masculine knights? Sources here support the conclusion that among others, within the realm of aristocratic thought, this gendered shift mirrored principles put forth by the study of alchemical principles in university curricula, via the writings of Christian intellectuals. Yet, how did the notion of gender fluidity within alchemical processes translate into the masculinization of Ecclesia and Synagoga, two symbols of religious opposition? What

¹¹⁰ Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History* (New York: Continuum, 1996): 31.

is more, how did intellectual thought – a domain of the aristocratic and royal classes – effect a change in imagery? The purpose of this chapter is to offer a nuanced understanding of the historical reasons behind the transformation of Ecclesia and Synagoga in Erfurt. The evidence will show that three factors were crucial in influencing the gendering of Ecclesia and Synagoga as masculine. Within these factors, facets that obfuscated and diluted gender will be examined. These factors consist of the principles of gender found in alchemical theory; the consequential effect of esoteric, alchemy-based, gender philosophy found within the curricula of the universities of the late Middle Ages; and the blurring of gender lines that took place in productions of a popular story based on the French version of *The Tale of Vices and Virtues*. An exploration of philosophy within these three will demonstrate that they were pervasive in shaping the motif of Ecclesia and Synagoga, and the acceptance of them as masculine figures. At the root of this argument is the notion that these factors were so present in Thuringia, that they aided in creating a culture where gender-play in imagery was not strange. As a result, this fostered an environment where the masculinization of two historically female characters, would have been accepted and even appropriate. Fourteenth and fifteenth century Thuringian culture was quite familiar with tensions and violence between Jews and Christians. Alongside the interaction between the two groups, the factors discussed here will aid in illuminating how conflict, education, and how a common form of entertainment directly affected the transformation of Ecclesia and Synagoga into masculine figures of war.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Corinne Julius. “Jewels of Disease and Discrimination,” *History Today* 59, no. 3 (March 2009): 5.



Figure VII – Choir Section, St. Mary's Cathedral, Erfurt, c. 1420s.
(Photo Courtesy of Dr. David Gilmartin)

Significant amounts of research have focused on the images in particular settings or periods, largely overlooking the evolution of the images themselves. None of the scholars researching Ecclesia and Synagoga have focused on the image in Erfurt, nor have they addressed the masculinization of symbols that beforehand, were women. Despite these omissions, this chapter is informed heavily by this prior research. A more nuanced examination of the secondary literature may be found in Chapter Two of this thesis. In order to avoid redundancy, I will not re-visit that analysis, here. What I will do is delve into the historical context of Erfurt in Thuringia, during the fifteenth and part of the fourteenth centuries. This will illuminate the backdrop against which, changes to Ecclesia and Synagoga were made.

Historical Context, Erfurt and Western Europe – Part I

During this period, Erfurt was a center of trade and intellectual study. By the end of the fourteenth century, it was home to a large university that served as a hub of education and academic pursuit.¹¹² The curriculum of the medieval university was considerably based on the writings of Christian intellectual authors, many from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries such as Michael Scot and Thomas Aquinas.¹¹³ Several of these Christian intellectuals were also scientists, in the medieval sense. This meant that many of them studied subjects that in modernity have been rejected as hokum or false. Alchemy, astrology, cartomancy, were all considered scientific, as well as mysticism and the study of fable and mythology. Many of these intellectuals studied alchemy and their writings covered experimentation, its principles and

¹¹² Kai Brodersen. "University of Erfurt, History and Buildings." University of Erfurt. <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/en/uni/portraet/geschichte>. Accessed March 2, 2010.

¹¹³ Charles F. Briggs. "Aristotle's Rhetoric in Late Medieval Universities: A Reassessment." *Rhetorica* 25, no. 3 (2007): 257.

methodologies.¹¹⁴ Alchemical principles held that elements each had a gender, and some were capable of changing gender if subjected to other elements, processes, or natural forces. As a result of mixed learning and interdisciplinary intellectual pursuits, the theologians who wrote much of what was studied in the medieval university, were influenced heavily by alchemical theory and philosophy. Their writings demonstrate this point and relayed their experiences with alchemy and their thoughts on its principles within the study itself, and the natural world.

Interspersed within writings on religion, history, rhetoric, and mathematics, were references to alchemical processes and the theoretical presence of these processes in other disciplines.¹¹⁵

These would have been the focus of academic training at the university in Erfurt, and others. As a consequence, the curriculum of the university would have shaped and affected the ideologies of those men who came in search of education, and then subsequently, those lives they affected amongst all classes. Hence, alchemical traditions regarding gender would have been familiar. The transformative gendering of Ecclesia and Synagoga therefore, would not have been a first-time experience with the concept of symbols that change or mutate gender. Their transformation would have arguably made sense on many levels to those who had studied alchemy as a part of their academic training.

Another prominent part of Erfurt's culture during the period, were chivalric tournaments and knightly games. Thuringia was home to a long-standing tradition of knighthood and tournaments in which men of war showcased their skills.¹¹⁶ Tournament culture was pervasive across all classes, and subsequently affected Thuringian lore, fable, and local stories. This influence in story-telling and literature from the region included the presence of gender-play and

¹¹⁴ See these texts for more on the curriculum of medieval universities:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook1r.asp>.

¹¹⁵ Briggs.

¹¹⁶ Arthur Charles Fox-Davies. *A Complete Guide to Heraldry*. (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007): 63-64.

role-reversal. Popular tales satirized knights, gave them effeminate qualities, and some fables envisaged women as the embodiment of intangible concepts like vice and virtue, or in the case of Ecclesia and Synagoga, Judaism and Christianity. The *Tale of Vices and Virtues* was one such story. Though this particular version of the tale originated in France, the tale's plot was based on a Roman system of allegory. In fact, some of the first references to women representing concepts like triumph, religion, groups of people, and other abstract concepts were arguably part of the creation of Ecclesia and Synagoga, during the fourth century.¹¹⁷ In its inception, the story highlighted gender transformations and other oddities in order to impart a serious commentary on societal behavior, religious piety, penitence, and culture. The story had remained a popular one throughout the centuries in Europe, and as such by the late 1400s, many areas had developed their own localized versions. Through the re-telling of the tale as part of entertainment at tournaments and other venues, commoners and elites alike would have been familiar with gender-play and role-reversal as a theme in social commentaries and religious instruction via popular entertainment.

When combined with gendering already inherent in alchemical philosophy, the atmosphere in Erfurt in all classes, educated and uneducated would have been one that was familiar with gender-play as a tool of story-telling and illustration of natural forces. Before the late 1400s, Ecclesia and Synagoga had clearly been depicted as women. Themes of triumph were present in images of Ecclesia, but these elements were far removed from her image in Erfurt as a knight, slaying her religious counterpart. Their gendering would have offered a popular and easily-recognized theme that spoke to complexities on a level that many could understand. Varying levels of thought could be conveyed via their image in the cathedral,

¹¹⁷ Nina Rowe. *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 40-50.

thoughts that spoke to those who were familiar with sophisticated themes, and those whose lives dictated more simplistic modes. Overtly, the images would have denoted a violent sense of finality to the religious rivalry between Jews and Christians. Hence, on a cursory level, the purpose of showing the dominance of Christianity over Judaism, would be clear in a contemporary version.

Ecclesia and Synagoga, Evolution

As Jewish-Christian relations became more tense, and the Church perceived a greater need to distance and define itself apart from Judaism, the figures became more exacting and less ambiguous.¹¹⁸ Symbols were still present in the depictions, but the overall meaning of the pair was laid bare, and their placement on cathedrals and in mediums such as stained-glass, were intentionally positioned so that all could understand.¹¹⁹ Declining relations between Judaism and Christianity from the twelfth century onward affected the way the two were pictured, and the way they interacted in space. Ecclesia took on a definitive statuesque form reflective of Greek and Roman sculpture. Her shoulders squared and her body was taut, firm, and stiffly upright, and nearly always crowned. Synagoga took on a blindfold, her Laws of the Old Testament were often depicted as broken at her feet and her staff shattered. Her body was often slumped or twisted into a pose of misery and defeat. Though her facial features remained very much idealized like those of Ecclesia, her crown, if present, was always off-set and loose, shoulders

¹¹⁸ Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: an Illustrated History* (New York: Continuum Intl Pub Group, (1997),: 60-65.

¹¹⁹ C Kaser. "Architecture of Gothic Medieval Cathedrals," accessed March 13, 2013. <http://www.wou.edu/~ckaser10/myweb/ornamentation.html>.

downcast, and her face sullen. She was the quintessential image of failure; Ecclesia the very image of triumph and victory.



Figure VIII – Medallion detail, Cathedral de Notre-Dame, Chartres, 1300s

In the late Middle Ages, during the fifteenth century, in the Choir of St. Mary's, the two again exemplified diametrical opposition, but in a much more vicious likeness. The difference in this image of the two becomes immediately apparent. Here, instead of statuesque, Greco-Roman womanhood, the pair are transgendered into masculine warriors. Rather than paired to the right and left of Christ, at opposite ends of horizontal entablatures, or tucked away into exedra recesses as their images in Paris at Notre Dame, these images were carved in motion, swiftly charging, and aggressive. Here we see a deliberate desire to subdue an enemy once and for all. Emboldened by years of pogroms against Jews, Ecclesia is poised to decapitate her rival.



Figure IX – Cathedral de Notre-Dame, west façade, Paris. c. 1220

Sitting aside her war horse, she brings finality, mortality, and a finite sense of dominance. Synagoga is now relegated to the sitting atop another anti-Jewish image, the *judensau*. Her mount is a female pig, used in Christian images of the most pejorative and heinous sort, in order to publically humiliate, debase, and conflate Judaism with Satanic leanings.¹²⁰ With elements such as this it is quite clear that there is no pretense made into this image, nor is there ambiguity. Meaning is not enigmatic or considerably wrapped in symbolism, and gone are ties of kinship

¹²⁰ Sprezzatura, “Negative Images of Judaism in Christian Art – Ecclesia and Synagoga.” Jewish-Christian Relations. http://www.sprezzatura.it/Arte/Ecclesia_Synagoga/res/art1.htm, Accessed January 15, 2011.

and common religious ancestry. There is masculinity, warfare, and the grittiness of the joust in place of femininity. Curves, once softened by womanly bodies are edgy and jagged of tone, filled with the rough shock of hatred, and the blow of a lance. The two, once sisters, had now evolved into



Figure X - Figure VI – Choir Section detail, St. Mary's Cathedral, Erfurt, c. 1420s.
(Photo Courtesy of Dr. David Gilmartin)

mortal enemies. In Erfurt, they further represented the decline of Jewish-Christian relations that by now had lost all ambiguity or pretense. Unmistakably, the motif had evolved, and the resultant gender-shift into masculinity clearly reflected the historical violence that had escalated since the High Middle Ages. Still, we have seen that even though violence and tension had increased between groups, these changes to the figures in Erfurt were no ordinary variance. Violence had been a part of Christian treatment of Jews for several centuries. What factors contributed to this role-reversal? What elements made the creator feel that such an image would be meaningful to those who saw it? We find answers to these questions in the study of alchemy

within the university, and in common sources of entertainment that were accessible to all classes of society in Erfurt.

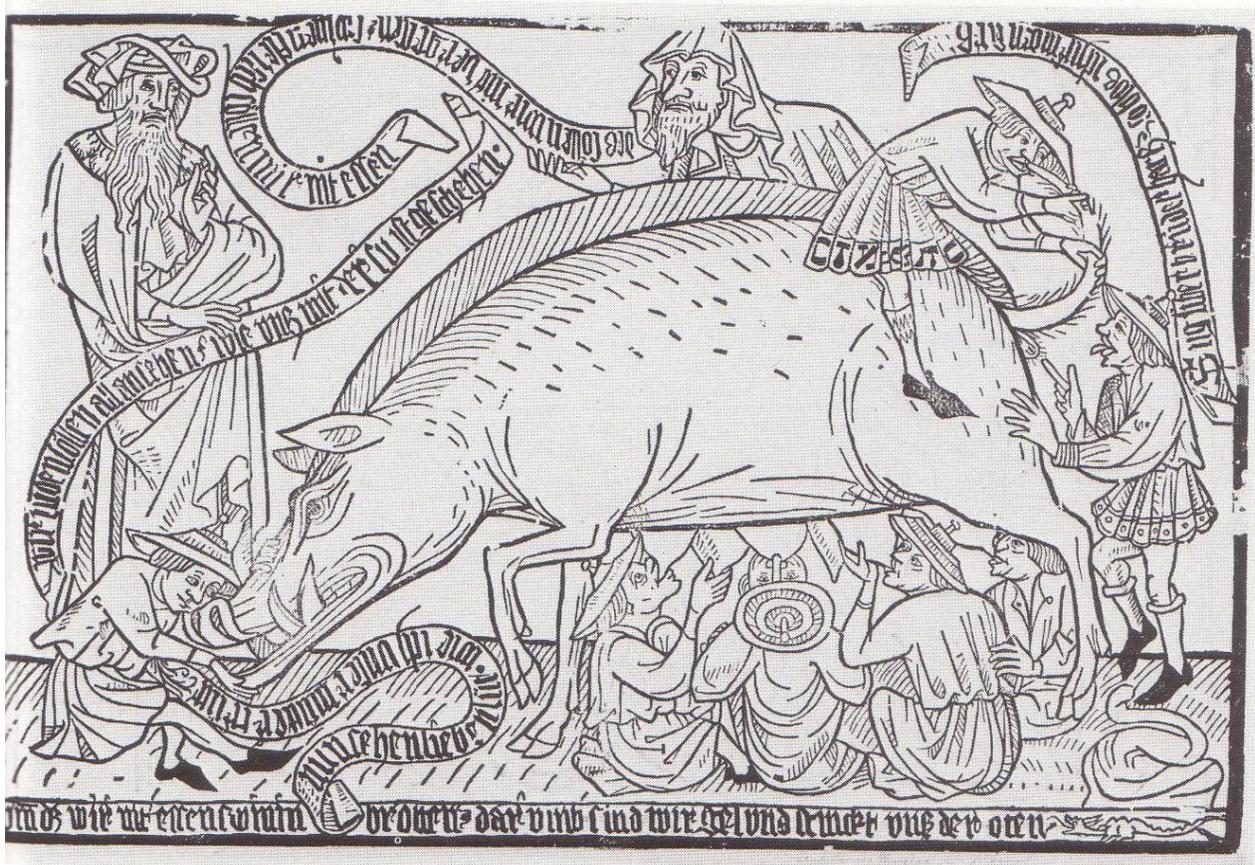


Figure XI – *Judensau*. Woodcut from a Kupferstichkabinet (print room), Munich, c. 1470.

Historical Context – Part II, Erfurt

To further explore alchemical theory as a catalyst for gendering, one must first understand that education during the Middle Ages, was intrinsically male.¹²¹ Moreover, it must be implicit that Christianity viewed, and had viewed itself as the “true” religion, and was

¹²¹ David Knowles. *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962): 160.

inextricably bound to intellectual thought, debate, and revision.¹²² With this came a series of what may arguably be termed as “permissions of study.” These permissions, usually granted by high-level clerics, decided who could study such disciplines as alchemy, and more importantly, these clerics were decisive in fleshing out whose motivations for study were pure, and whose were tainted. Alchemy, astrology, and demonology were not viewed as areas with which to be meddled. Only those with the strongest religious convictions and the most conspicuous and sincere piety were granted the right to pursue knowledge in these areas. To illustrate this point, we may look at the areas of study themselves. For example, the study of alchemy and astrology was reserved not only for the aristocratic and royal classes, but also those whose religious loyalties were unassailable.¹²³ In turn, these theologians and intellects would have also comprised the majority of those commissioning art and funding the building of cathedrals that contained art. Many of these same patrons would have studied and been educated in the traditions that brought the ideas of those who studied the mystical arts, to the university. The authors of works on those disciplines were often considered the authority or at the very least, expertly-informed.¹²⁴ Again, these men would have also been those whose piety and religious patronage was sound.¹²⁵ If one studied alchemy and astrology in order to exalt the mechanisms of the divine, and provide methods in which to guard against the trappings of heresy and sin, then their ideologies and theories were taken as fact. Otherwise, a preoccupation with such elements was condemned and often punishable by death.¹²⁶

¹²² Ibid. Ch. 24.

¹²³ Michael Bailey. *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

¹²⁴ Robert Rait. *Life in the Medieval University*. (New York: BiblioLife, 2008).

¹²⁵ M. W. F. Stone. “The Angelic Doctor and the Stagirite: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary ‘Aristotelian’ Ethics.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 101 (2001): 98.

¹²⁶ Bailey, p. 124. Also for a treatise on Christian thought and ideology surrounding intellectual pursuits during this period, see Anselm’s *Proslogiom*. This work argued against any scientific research or

Knowing that Church-sanctioned, intellectual thought on gender transmutations in alchemical study was present in the medieval university curriculum, clarifies how, in a single piece of woodworking, the portrayal of Ecclesia and Synagoga in Erfurt would have meant something to the aristocratic classes, and reinforced anti-Semitism. More importantly, a familiarity with elements of the image underscored how Christians who saw it envisioned Jews and Judaism. The masculinization of Ecclesia and Synagoga would have amplified this message to men who had studied the works of theologians and intellectuals like Aquinas, Chaucer, and Flamel. The rise of the university system, however, hinged upon socio-intellectual shifts that affected not just Erfurt, but Western Europe and the curriculum of the universities. These shifts were bound to have manipulated the image of Jews held by educated men and those whose lives their ideals touched.

This leads to another important point. In the period just before the carving in question, Europe had witnessed the beginnings of what many scholars would call a “Renaissance.”¹²⁷ In the twelfth century, Church Reform and secular interests provided an impetus for scholarly pursuits of literature, art, and other humanistic subjects.¹²⁸ This led to the creation of universities in cities such as Bologna and Paris in the 1300s. Before centralized learning centers, cathedral schools had provided the major source of education and as such, most if not all learning was,

otherwise that questioned the existence of God or his divinity. In the text, Anselm offers a polemic against logic and rationalization as being found only in tangible things saying, “For, if only corporeal things are sensible, since the senses encompass a body and are in a body, how are you sensible, although you are not a body, but a supreme Spirit, who is superior to body? But, if feeling is only cognition, or for the sake of cognition, -- for he who feels obtains knowledge in accordance with the proper functions of his senses; as through sight, of colors; through taste, of flavors, -- whatever in any way cognizes is not inappropriately said, in some sort, to feel.” Anselm. “*Proslogium*.” Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.asp> , Accessed February 17, 2010.

¹²⁷ Anna Abulafia. *Jews and Christians in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*. (New York: Routledge, 1995): 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid. *Introduction*.

Church-sanctioned and interlinked with religious themes.¹²⁹ Most of the young men who came to these universities to study joined the clergy, afterward.¹³⁰ After the appearance of universities, religious study still played a central role education, however, joined to it was the pursuit of secular knowledge, as well.¹³¹ The revival of Classical texts, and hearkening to the Classical period as one of enlightenment, colored educational pursuits.¹³² Classes were frequently taught by clerics or those who had earned their degrees under clerics, and the curriculum was formed out of religious doctrine combined with secular disciplines. The earliest forms of education in Western Europe, during the reign of Charlemagne, relied on Boethius's models that he called the "Trivium," and "Quadrivium." Together they made up the study of the Liberal Arts. The Trivium consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. The Quadrivium was comprised of arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry. The Boethian frame rested on earlier forms of education dating back to the Classical period, particularly the Aristotelian method of teaching whereby learning was highly structured and drawn from a regimented set of subjects.¹³³

¹²⁹ Rait., p. 57.

¹³⁰ C. Stephen Jaeger. *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200*. (Pittsburg: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000): 46-50.

¹³¹ Donald Mowbray. *Pain and Suffering in Medieval Theology: Academic Debates at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century*. (Suffolk, UK, Boydell Press, 2009): 101.

¹³² Ibid., pgs. 49-98. For more on the introduction of secularist subjects into university curricula, see Fulk, Prior Deuil. "Letter to Peter Abelard, (Epistola XIV)." *Medieval Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/fulk-abelard.html> Accessed February 13, 2010. In this letter, Fulk counsels Abelard as an instructor on the danger of secularist interests and their protrusion into life: "Whoever thinks he can escape the risks of the secular life without risk seems to me to be no less a fool than the person who thinks himself a wise man, even though he is a fool. Of course, there is no need for me to show [you] in what a great error of stupidity such a person is entangled, since it is clearer than day to the wise man. They are ruled by fortune who promise themselves to stand unmoved amidst the mutability of this happiness. How contrary to reason it is to think this, faithless felicity shows by its own mutability. It is not human to endure instability. And yet, despite the fact that human affairs are daily slipping into a worse state and the joyful vanity of happiness is wounded by contraries, wretched men - the intimates and greatest friends of this age - fail to attend to the end of the world, how they are subject to many dangers, and how, when they are distinguished by some little prosperity, they are measured by the eye of providence. "

¹³³ Briggs., pg. 258.

The disciplined exploration of a subject always rested in what was perceived as reality. Rationality dictated that emotion and feeling often clouded the serious pursuit of knowledge. This meant that if one was taught the theories of Aquinas, an educated man, then his ideas were not readily open to skepticism, certainly not by novices. Moreover, since it was Aquinas who in the twelfth century had reconciled the theories of Aristotle and Plato with Christian teachings, his works were highly regarded, academically.¹³⁴ Aquinas was also thought of highly because he was allowed to study alchemy.¹³⁵ His thoughts on the Church, God, and the application of religious teachings were widely-accepted. With intellectual clout, came power and influence. Likewise, Aquinas's theoretical arguments, his experiments, and the inspirations behind them tended to be replicated in the university, affecting the viewpoints of the young men who attended, long after his death in 1274. Contrary to earlier theologians and academics, the students of the 1300s were not necessarily bound for clerical occupations, nor were they solely concerned with religious matters.¹³⁶ Moreover, reform movements and those the Church deemed heretical in the thirteenth century provided space for thought outside, but not necessarily free from, religious influence.¹³⁷ Hence, religion and subjects like science were inextricably linked. This created a two-fold influence upon academic study, as we have seen.

Astrology and alchemy were viewed as important as other subjects such as mathematics. Ideas on the pervasive influence of the planets in human life were held in high regard, accepted as truth, and thought of as merit-worthy. Nascent studies of chemicals and their reactions was joined with myth and what we might call magic. This joining led to the idea that gold could

¹³⁴ Mary M. Keys. *Aquinas, Aristotle and the Promise of the Common Good*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 11.

¹³⁵ Keys, pg. 78; and; Mowbray, pgs. 23, 35, and 89.

¹³⁶ Knowles., pg. 224.

¹³⁷ Edward Peters. *Inquisition*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 40.

somehow be made from various processes involving the manipulation of elements.¹³⁸

Essentially, elements as we understand them, did not exist. In the late Middle Ages, there were four: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. By combining these with various materials and subjecting them to a wide array of processes, the pursuit of making gold, drove alchemical study. Every major intellectual figure of the period, to some degree, addressed alchemy and either studied it, or wrote an opinion of it in texts. Alchemists in Western Europe were comprised of both Christians and Jews, elite and commoners. However, according to religious mandate, only those whose interests lay in pure knowledge, and whose piety was clear, were thought of as fit and trustworthy enough to study alchemy.¹³⁹ This belief was supported by the notion that manipulation of substances and the complex, often mythical symbology and ritual accompanying alchemy studies, must be performed by those men whose minds were grounded firmly in Christian training. Otherwise, “simple” or “uneducated” minds did not possess the fortitude to study alchemy without being tempted by demonic forces looking to turn the wits toward diabolic interests. We have already established that Jews were thought of as diabolical. In the thirteenth century, Jews had been steadily equated more and more with evil intentions, but in the years just after the outbreak of the Black Plague, what had been at best a marginalized Jewish culture, had been transformed into one bent on the murder of Christians. Since the twelfth century and to some degree prior to it, Jews had been thought of as intrinsically heretical. In 1221, Erfurt was also the site of a popular uprising against Jews resulting in the massacre of some and suicide by

¹³⁸ Stanton Linden. *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 278-96.

¹³⁹ Thomas Aquinas was first given permission to study alchemy in the twelfth century as part of his theological work, and as part of his service to the Church. His mandate, in part, was to clarify whether alchemy should be permitted, and to ascertain whether it was contrary to canon law or Christian practice. As a theologian and scholar, his religious training qualified him in the eyes of the Church as one who might successfully tread the fine line between the demonic and the pure pursuit of knowledge via alchemical study.

fire of others. In 1349, a century later, the Black Plague's ravages, superstition, and anti-Semitism caused the murder of over one-hundred Jews in Erfurt, and the subsequent banishment of those who managed to survive.¹⁴⁰ By the time construction started on St. Mary's, despite the allowance of another Jewish settlement in the city and the success of that community, many European Christians felt that Jews were in league with the Devil, and thus represented a credible threat to Christianity both literally and spiritually.¹⁴¹ Consequently, anti-Semitism was present in the curriculum of universities and the writings of Christian academics. In 1392, the university in Erfurt was established adding a scholarly hub to a town that was already central to economic, banking, and trade interests. Alongside theories of economics and trade, the works of Christian academics relayed not only the study of major disciplines, but also that of anti-Semitism. These ideals were assimilated, expounded upon and amalgamated into the arguments offered by elite, educated classes. The result was an educated group of men who emerged from the university with honed and sharpened negative views of Jews, intermingled with their knowledge of alchemy, astronomy, and mathematics. These views became translated through channels such as patronage of art, politics, and legal matters which in turn, touched the lives of commoners. In 1392, the king had rescinded all debts owed to Jewish lenders by Christians resulting in the creation of a special tax paid by Jews to the royal treasury.¹⁴² By 1418, the king had also made it compulsory for all Jewish men of property to declare in the synagogue, the total value of their assets, upon which they were then additionally taxed.¹⁴³ To summarize this part of the chapter, by the time of the creation of the image of Ecclesia and Synagoga in Erfurt Cathedral, the city

¹⁴⁰ Corinne, pg. 5.

¹⁴¹ R. I. Moore. *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007): 125-34.

¹⁴² Moore., pg. 103.

¹⁴³ Donald G. McNeil, Jr. "Finding a Scapegoat When Epidemics Strike," *The New York Times*, August 31, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/01/health/plague.html>, Accessed March 17, 2010.

was among the most prominent in the German lands. It was a center of academic study, and an economic capital of banking and trade importance. Alchemy was present in the scientific pursuits of students, despite what had been attempts by some clerics and even Pope John XXII to ban it in 1317. Even when the study of alchemy was halted officially by the Church, many including such notables as Paracelsus, Arnold of Villanova and much later, Isaac Newton continued to seek out and study its processes and theories either in secret or through cleverly-disguised terminology such as “Philosopher’s Stone,” often substituted for the word “Christ.”¹⁴⁴ They found ways to disguise alchemical symbols and messages even in religious art and within the pages of manuscripts.

Central Argument - Alchemy

Within the basic tenets of alchemy we find gendering and a transgendering precedent for images like that of Ecclesia and Synagoga in St. Mary’s. Alchemy based a notable amount of theory on the idea of transmutation or *chrysopoieia*.¹⁴⁵ In order to understand transmutation, one must know how the natural world appeared to the scientist/theologian in the late Middle Ages. During this time, if one looked around the physical world it was easy to find evidence for transmutation within the four elements. Water could be heated by fire and transported to the air by way of steam, and fire could be turned into an air elemental by way of smoke. It was to these

¹⁴⁴Linden, pgs. 201-220. Also, Eric Ramírez Weaver not only demonstrates that sciences like Astrology continued to be a pursuit in the late Middle Period, but also that as long as postulations were prefaced by saying that the relationships between individual leanings or characteristics, and planets or elements were only suggestive and not constitutive factors, then “Christian doctrinal dilemmas [were] side-stepped.” Weaver also argues that a science like astrology (one that was closely monitored by the Church) reached its medieval apex of study in neighboring Bohemia, during the reign of Wenceslas IV (up to 1419). Therefore, we may argue that in the German regions, it was still very much a part of education and study. Also, see Weaver’s section in this article entitled “Art of Astrology.” Eric Ramírez Weaver. “Reading the Heavens: Revelation and Reification in the Astronomical Anthology for Wenceslas IV.” *Gesta* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 73-94.

¹⁴⁵ Linden, pg. 178.

transmutative possibilities in nature that the alchemist pointed, for evidence of truth in their ideas in support of making gold.¹⁴⁶ Nature showed that the yellow and white parts of eggs transmuted into chicks. The sweet and sugary juice of grapes transformed into wine. Colorless fluids in nature could be turned into colorful solids, stones could be made into powders, and these dusty forms could disappear into the air. These transmutations were basic parts of the evidence that alchemists used to support theories on turning base metals into gold. The pursuit of creating gold was viewed as meritorious a pursuit as that of literary or mathematical knowledge.¹⁴⁷ The alchemical study of elements married with myth and what we would call magic, held that gold could be processed out of other metals and substances via various procedures that manipulated other substances which had male or female identities.¹⁴⁸ What is more, by combining these with varying materials and subjecting them to an array of treatments, it was thought that their basic structures could be transformed into something else that might be identifiable as the opposite gender. To this end, every major intellectual figure of the period, to some degree, addressed alchemy, either studying it personally or writing of it in texts.¹⁴⁹ Within these writings, the analysis of basic, natural substances was emphasized as key in understanding alchemy and natural processes.¹⁵⁰ If we go further into alchemy theory we find a substance that defied being classified as either male or female – Mercury. Specifically, within theories and processes involving Mercury we find the significance and precedent for a concept like transgendering, because it was thought to be at once, both male and female.

¹⁴⁶ Lawrence Principe and Lloyd DeWitt. *Transmutations – Alchemy in Art: Selected Works From the Eddleman and Fisher Collections at the Chemical Heritage Foundation*. (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Foundation, 2002): 5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Jaeger, pg. 58.

¹⁴⁸ Linden, pgs. 114-118.

¹⁴⁹ C. J. S. Thompson. *Alchemy and Alchemists*. (Mineola, NY: Dover 2002): 78-86.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 89.

Mercury, the Roman messenger of the gods, was likewise envisioned as both male and female in myths and in alchemy. Supernatural forces were not foreign to alchemists and oft times, procedures involved working with them to achieve the desired effects. Mercury lent itself to gender-play because as both a liquid and a metal, it was perceived as neither male nor female, but in flux between both.¹⁵¹ By and large, alchemists were very interested in this phenomenon. It was these fluctuations that were thought to hold the secret to gold creation. Along with gendering mercury, the elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water were also thought to be either male or female.¹⁵² Water was thought of as life-giving, wet, heavy, and dark – essentially female. Fire was hot, dry, and light – essentially male. Earth was mother to all living things in theory, and Air fed fire, blew forcefully and was capable of transporting seeds, or destructive substances that killed crops, ferried foul smells, toxic vapors, or brought disease. Hence, due to its force and ability to destroy it was thought of as male. All of this created a science extremely preoccupied with male and female dichotomies, hence mercury was a substance of considerable study. It was thought of not only as both and neither gender, but was also purportedly able to change the gender of other substances, as well.¹⁵³ The alchemist might attempt to hasten this transformation through the introduction of heat (male), the mixing of water (female), or by a variety of what were sometimes bizarre formulas and rituals.¹⁵⁴ Part of these rituals involved both literal and symbolic use of mercury in order to control and transform the gender of a substance, or the substance itself into that of another. The resulting effect was one of transmutation and transgendering.

¹⁵¹ Karen Pinkus. *Alchemical Mercury: A Theory of Ambivalence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010): 61.

¹⁵² Pinkus., pg. 71.

¹⁵³ Pinkus., 35-48.

¹⁵⁴ Pinkus., 118-20.

What this demonstrates is that transgenering, as part of the natural world, would have been familiar to educated men in Erfurt, as part of their academic training. Moreover, ideas of gender in symbols and the changing of gender would have been in the curriculum of those who studied the works of theologian/intellectual alchemists like Aquinas. Therefore, the change in gender to Ecclesia and Synagoga, depicted as opposing forces within the space of the image in question, would seem quite natural to those who had read of changes in gender to base metals and mercury itself.



Figure XII – Mercury, from *The Second Key* of Basilius Valentinus, Fifteenth-Century Alchemist, and Canon of the Benedictine Priory of St. Peter, in Erfurt.

As one may see by the image, alchemy was very much occupied with the study of opposites, binaries, and dichotomies. The image of Mercury, depicted between opposing forces, contains elements that mirror the balance and battle between opposites also shown in the image of Ecclesia and Synagoga. Spatial and thematic similarities between the two images are striking in some regards. The ideologies supporting these transformations hearkened back to the

teachings of Aristotle and Plato. It was the reconciliation of their philosophies with Christian dogma by theologians that underscored much of the curriculum in universities. Likewise, in part, these ideas shaped the thought of those who in turn, commissioned art. Art, reflective of the patron's wishes, mediated the way that symbols such as those ascribed to Ecclesia and Synagoga were interpreted, as well as the manner in which the two were depicted, as well. If these patrons were familiar with alchemy and its principles as a part of their formal education, then it starts to become clear as to why Ecclesia and Synagoga as masculine figures would have not been as strange a sight, due to their familiarity with transmutative gendering and the natural world. Indeed, they would have reinforced esoteric ideas surrounding balance and the triumph of one element over the other, elements that we also find in alchemical principles.

Central Argument – Gender-Play and Role-Reversal in Tournaments

These ideas surrounding alchemy would have been familiar to the educated elite. But what of the illiterate masses? What references as a part of normal life would have familiarized commoners with transformations of gender or gender-play? What set up a precedent for gender transformation as a didactic method? I argue that common folk would have been exposed to such things as part of tournaments and tournament culture. German regions, along with the rest of Western Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, all were home to groups of warring men allied through feudal ties to lords and kings.¹⁵⁵ Despite the decline of the armed knight as a necessity in warfare, during the 1300s, Erfurt, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, like other cities, possessed a culture that centered on chivalric ideals, providing a source of civic pride that survives, even today. Large tournament societies were formed in Bavaria, the Rhineland,

¹⁵⁵ Fox-Davies, pg. 78.

Swabia, and Franconia, in the fifteenth century, but from the time of the mid 1300s, many regional associations staged tournaments in varying places across German territories.¹⁵⁶ Within these smaller tournaments, war games and matches of bravado did not so much replicate the actual conditions of war as they reflected the chivalric idea of knighthood and the associated drama. This did not mean that tournaments lacked violence or deadly interplay. Knights and warriors that participated were always at risk. According to one source, in 1241 a tournament in Neuss witnessed the death of eighty men in a single tournament.¹⁵⁷ In tournament culture, the joust was the most popular game, and the one that held the most potential for glory. Swordplay, mock battles and other forms of sport ranked behind it insofar as perceptions of masculine fortitude. The joust was also the most deadly game with more injuries and deaths as a result of it than most of the other events combined. Yet, these tournaments also boasted, as a part of entertainment for the masses, elements of satire and comedy. Many traditions included the late Middle Age equivalent of clowns in a modern circus, with the inclusion of jesters who dressed in women's clothing and entertained crowds with mock swordplay, or satirical jousts.¹⁵⁸ Satirizing and lampooning knights offered a venue where commoners could laugh and poke fun at nobles without fear of reprisal. Hence, the practice was a popular one in an era where class stratification was clearly delineated, and being born into a certain class could mean poverty and back-breaking labor, or a life of relative ease.

¹⁵⁶ Fox-Davies. Pg. 120.

¹⁵⁷ Der Dom zu Erfurt. http://www.erfurt-guide.de/cathedral_st_mary.htm.

¹⁵⁸ Richard Jones, *The Book of Honor and Armes*. (Rose and Crown House: Richard Thomas, Publisher, 1590): Book Three.

Central Argument – Gender-Play and Role-Reversal in *The Tale of Vices and Virtues*

Also included in tournament culture were exhibitions of stories and fables. The exposure of the lower classes to gender transformation could have come via popular tales and the re-telling of them in plays and skits. An ever-popular theme was *The Tale of Vices and Virtues*, the origin of which dated back to the Classical period. As stated earlier, the tournament culture of Erfurt and Thuringia was well-established by the 1420s, during the time the image of Ecclesia and Synagoga was created. This culture, in turn, influenced the regionalizing of popular themes and stories. In *The Tale of Vices and Virtues*, each group was represented by women. In the story, the two groups were in opposition, pitted against each other in order to convey a message of morality to the audience. The plot starts with the night before tournament during which the *Vices* drink, carouse, and participate in raucous parades of hedonism and obscene practices.¹⁵⁹ The *Virtues* were contrastingly portrayed as sober and “prim,” the very essence of their name. While the *Vices* caroused, the *Virtues* spent the night before the tournament in prayer and contemplation, entreating God for victory in the upcoming games. Transformation was key in this story. The *Vices* were transformed into the epitome of the sins they committed, and the *Virtues* into the elements of Christian piety they represented. The theme of transformation went further, however. In the tale, the very progression of night into day was framed as that of dark to light, evil to good. The night’s uncertain, drunken carousing gave way to the dawn’s purity.¹⁶⁰ The tournament, as part of the new day was always held at dawn, after the night’s debauchery. In the contests that ensued, *Vices* and *Virtues*, who were women, took up arms and participated in combat with each other. *The Virtues*, emerging from a night of prayer are more prepared,

¹⁵⁹ Nancy Freeman Regalado. “Allegories of Power: The Tournament of Vices and Virtues in the *Roman de Fauvel*. *Gesta* 32, no.2 (1993): 41.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 38.

focused, and skilled in combat than *The Vices*, who come across as evil, forming a chaotic backdrop against their calm and pious adversaries. The moral of the tale is clear – virtue as part of a pious Christian life, always triumphs over evil and the rejection of Christian conduct. The combat between the groups is depicted in such a manner as to be on par with the violence and viciousness of actual tournaments, with the *Virtues* defeating *Vices* at the end of the jousts.¹⁶¹ In the story, more poignantly, each *Virtue* defeats her counterpart amongst the *Vices*: *Virginity* defeats *Carnality*, *Adultery* and *Fornication* are subdued by *Chastity*, *Patience* wins over *Pride*, and in the final joust, *Abstinence* defeats *Gluttony*. We have seen that many of these vices were associated with Jews and the Devil. As a theme, this story would have meant something to onlookers both on a spiritual and practical level. They reinforced the benefits of being Christian and the privileged position it afforded over non-Christians. What is more, this tale would have been a familiar part of tournament entertainments. Based on biblical texts that extol the goodness of virtue and caution against the trappings of vice, the story literally places women as the personifications of good and evil, and in the foreground of the triumph of Christianity over other religions. Hence, the idea of women acting as masculine warriors, would have been familiar to both noble and commoner, by way of allegory.

When we examine the notion that women, as masculine warriors would have been a familiar theme in both allegory and satire, the reasons behind the gendering of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* become apparent. It was a method with which to reach all classes utilizing a popular element found in many aspects of Thuringian culture. The elements affecting that have been examined – the prominence and curriculum of the university, the mediation of subjects through the ideals of theologians who also practiced alchemy, and women in chivalric-themed

¹⁶¹ Regalado., pg. 32.

entertainment – create a picture that would have been meaningful and even contextually appropriate. The transformation of gender in a theme that had survived since Classical times would have made the subsequent change in Ecclesia and Synagoga evocative in a manner that was poignant and familiar. When these factors are considered in light of Erfurt’s economic status, the reputation of Jews as usurers, scapegoats for compulsory taxation, and the positioning of the Jew as a being of opposition, the polarization of Jews and Christians throughout centuries of variation in the theme of Ecclesia and Synagoga, would have taken on a unique and contemporary face in the context of late Middle Age Thuringia. The factors affecting the masculinization of the pair when viewed in relationship to each other, demonstrate just how gender mutability, from various sources, melded into a single impetus that generated this particular and peculiar image of the two in the Erfurt Cathedral Choir.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in Erfurt of the late Middle Ages, the addition of gender-play in popular forms of entertainment, and in the curriculum of the university, resulted in a masculinized Ecclesia and Synagoga that gave a finality to Christian dominance over Judaism, in the minds of all classes. Consequently, instead of overt or implied kinship, this portrayal of the two pitted them against one another in mortal combat. The re-gendering of them not only reflects the historical context of Thuringia during the period, but also demonstrates a much more violent and belligerent form of anti-Semitism in the late Middle Ages. R. I. Moore argues that the polarization of Jews and Christians as opposites became acute in the twelfth century.¹⁶² Likewise, Gavin Langmuir noted that a pivotal turning point in Jewish-Christian relations took

¹⁶² R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

place in the twelfth century – the formation of fantasies in Christian belief concerning Jews, and the attributing of blood libel.¹⁶³ These findings point to increases in hatred of, and violence against Jews during the late Middle Ages. We must remember that the evolution of Ecclesia and Synagoga envisioned in the Erfurt Cathedral carving was conceived after the massacres of Jews in the Rhineland, and indeed in Erfurt. It also came about after the Black Plague in the mid 1300s, during which Jews were rumored to have poisoned wells in order to kill Christians. Throughout these events, Jews were increasingly equated with heresy. Christian pogroms of the period polarized Jews and accused them of endeavoring to destroy Christendom as part of an alliance with the Devil. Given these factors alone, it no wonder that Ecclesia and Synagoga no longer resembled their former selves. Changes to the images directly affected and demarcated worsening of attitudes toward Jews on the part of Christians. In the image, Synagoga rides the *judensau* and is pitifully-equipped to stave off an attacking Ecclesia. This did not so much as reflect the idea of an ongoing struggle to thwart Judaism, as it did the notion of a *fait accompli*. In reality, what was thought of as complete, was factually on-going. The anti-Judaic attitudes of the Middle Ages as a whole shaped Jewish-Christian relations for centuries after, and continues to underscore modern prejudices. If we are to understand why so many medieval ideologies have managed to survive and thrive in our era of so-called “modernity,” then we must re-examine the trappings of stereotypes and the true origins of our misconceptions and prejudices. We must deconstruct why archaic, out-moded, intolerance still threads its way through thought in the “modern world.” The images of Ecclesia and Synagoga, more than any other, contain a palpable timeline and virtual history of decline in relationships between Jews and Christians. They quite literally map the progression or regression as it were, into negative and fantastical

¹⁶³ Gavin Langmuir. *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

falsities in conceptions of the religious “other.” The pair are among the oldest forms of polemic art known. As such, scholarship on them and the exploration of how they engendered and enabled on-going prejudices and hatred that still survives, is of vital importance. Currently, there is a good amount of research on the images, but it is still woefully lacking given the weight of the message they bear. If Ecclesia and Synagoga are re-examined by scholars, this endeavor may provide further answers as to why Jews and Christians related to each other as they did, how these relations started, and why they ran the course that they did. As a result, it is hoped that we will uncover the antiquated and outmoded nexus of opinion that fuels continued negativities and prejudices contained in the interactions of Jews and Christians.

Ecclesia and Synagoga in their beginnings were images of conflict. Throughout their history, they drew on Roman ideals of womanhood, were at once related and paired as enemies, and were specifically adapted to suit the needs and culture of those who utilized them for the purpose of representing the dynamic between Jews and Christians. While there were certainly some who never came into contact with the images, they were no doubt viewed by many who held power, and were perceived as a salient means of conveying a message of triumph, degradation, and marginalization. This is demonstrated by the fact that they were used for hundreds of years, modified, and contemplated by clerics and intellectuals. We see that through their origins within Roman ideals, they utilized the female archetype in order to capitalize upon the notion that female bodies could represent opposites, both politically and religiously. This thread of using the woman’s body as representative heavily influenced the Early Church who further adapted the pair to forge an identity apart from Judaism, a religion that they felt held a

common ancestry, but was wholly apart from their own. By Hildegard's time, relationships between Jews and Christians had become far more violent and polarized at least in ideal. Though Jews and Christians often lived beside of each other and had dealings in common, the Church wished to insert itself into daily affairs and thwart what they feared might draw parishioners away from Christianity. Moreover, intellectualization of Ecclesia and Synagoga became more sophisticated, engaging Hildegard and others who endeavored to understand and expound upon the pair in order to create contemporary applications for the motif. By the time of their appearance in Thuringia, in order to make them meaningful to those who saw them, they were conspicuously and markedly modified from their origins to fit the tournament culture of late Middle Ages. This reveals a desire to make the pair meaningful to both commoners and intellectuals.

Ecclesia and Synagoga were adapted, modified, and utilized in many parts of Europe due to an on-going relationship between Jews and Christians that became more and more violent, taking a prominent place in the concerns of clerics and rulers, alike. As the Church sought to insert itself more into daily life, it used the pair to draw a theoretical line of demarcation between itself and Judaism, reminding all who came into contact with the pair, who had "triumphed" over whom. These attitudes and ideals of conflict surrounding two religions of common ancestry, permeated Western culture and influenced so many veins of thought, they heavily affected the way that Jews and Christians viewed each other even into modernity. As such, if they are examined closely, they not only tell a story of increasing marginalization and violence between groups, they hold a record of our own ideals and prejudices, and may serve as a key to unlocking why conflicts still exist even today. If we struggle to understand further how our ideas are shaped by visual elements, and how those elements are manipulated for effect, we may further

uncover why we still hold fast to prejudices whose roots lie in antiquated spaces, and move forward into deconstructing our own tendencies toward marginalization, and both subtle and pronounced prejudices that still exist within political and religious realms.

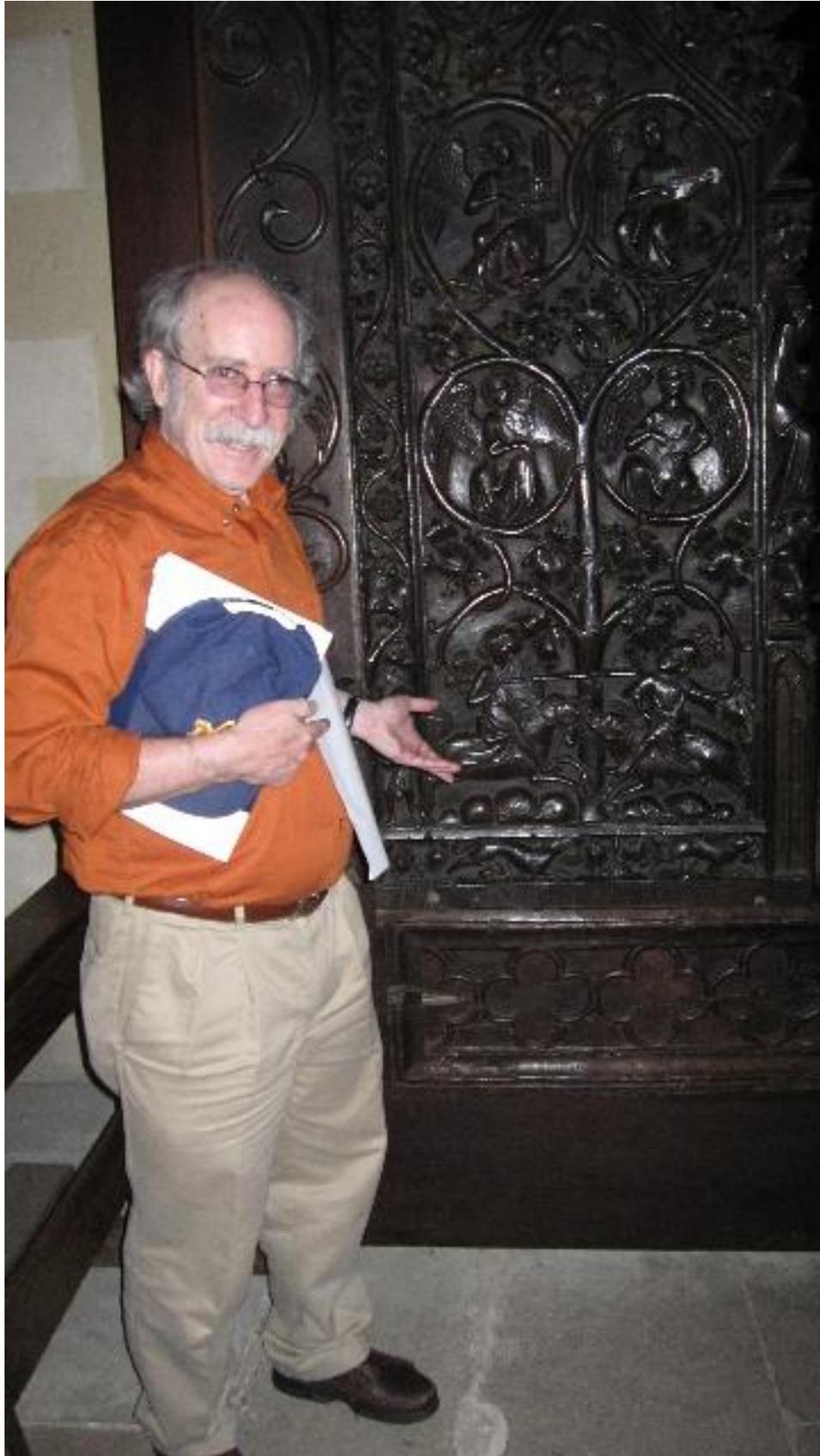


Figure XII - Dr. David Gilmartin, Choir Section Detail, St. Mary's Cathedral, Erfurt

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