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Pushing the Bounds of Typology: Jewish Carnality and the Eucharist in Jörg Ratgeb's Herrenberg Altarpiece

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**PUSHING THE BOUNDS OF TYPOLOGY: JEWISH CARNALITY AND THE
EUCHARIST IN JÖRG RATGEB'S *HERRENBERG ALTARPIECE***

by

GENEVIEVE D. MILLIKEN

Under the Direction of John R. Decker, PhD

ABSTRACT

Jörg Ratgeb's *Herrenberg Altarpiece* (1518-1519) depicts well-established examples of Christian iconography, but appears to reconfigure and intensify traditional subjects and subject matter through the inclusion of overt anti-Judaic references. In this paper, my focus is the strong anti-Judaic subject matter of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* and the local context in which, and for which, it was created. The anti-Jewish representations are investigated by exploring Christian perceptions of biblical and contemporary Jews, identifying social tensions in Swabia that may have influenced how Jews were depicted, and recognizing the ways in which the trope of Jewish wantonness may have served a politico-religious agenda in the region. Given the Eucharistic overtones of the altarpiece, I also argue that anxieties in Christian practice concerning the

presence of Christ's true body and blood in the consecrated Eucharist could be, and often were, exacerbated by Christian perceptions of Jews and "judaizing."

INDEX WORDS: Modern Devotion, Anti-Judaism, Blood Libel, Eucharist, Simon of Trent,
Print Culture

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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by

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DEDICATION

My deepest gratitude goes to my twin sister (and life-long friend) Lauren Milliken. She has supported me with her kindness and honesty as long as I can remember.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Jörg Ratgeb's *Herrenberg Altarpiece* (1518-1519), now in the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, depicts scenes from the *Life of the Virgin* and the *Life of Christ* (Fig. 1.1, fig. 1.2). The altarpiece, measuring 400 cm by 680 cm, was one of the largest polyptychs executed in Swabia in the years leading to the Reformation and presents biblical narratives on an imposing scale.¹ Each of the four surviving panels, painted on both the front and back, include a main image nearest the foreground with subsidiary scenes interwoven into the background. Ratgeb achieves pictorial cohesion between these scenes by employing intricately painted landscapes of stone outcroppings, mountains, and bodies of water to visually and temporally connect the foreground and background elements into narrative cycles. The artist embellishes his environments by including fantastically rendered architectural scenery. The fanciful architecture provides a theatrical quality evident in several panels. Such theatrical aspects are heightened by the many active figures the artist includes, the range of facial expressions he creates, and the sense of dramatic tension both of these elements engender.

Ratgeb's panels present well-established examples of Christian iconography, in complex pictorial form, but appear to reconfigure and intensify traditional subjects and subject matter in rather idiosyncratic ways. More precisely, many overt anti-Judaic references appear threaded throughout the altarpiece, appearing within the main images as well as in the smaller, subsidiary ones. The pervasiveness and intensity of the anti-Jewish representations in the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* seems to elide, or at least work outside, the established function of an altarpiece,

*All biblical citations are from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

¹ The *Herrenberg Altarpiece* spans 400 cm by 680 cm (approx. 13 ft. by 22 ft.) when fully open. The near contemporary *Isenheim Altarpiece* is comparable in scale. It is slightly smaller at 376 cm by 668 cm (approx. 12.3 ft. by 22 ft.). John Bayne Brush also notes a similarity in scale between these two altarpieces. John Bayne Brush, "The Herrenberg Altarpiece of Jörg Ratgeb: Iconography and Historical Context" (M.A. Thesis, University of Notre Dame, 2002), 28.

which posited by Barbara Lane, was to “dramatize the Mass.”² These polemical references—often expressed through costuming, caricature, and violence—buttress against (and create tension with) the more standard Christian themes encountered in similar Marian and Christological narratives. In this paper, my focus is the strongly anti-Judaic subject matter of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* and the local context in which, and for which, it was created.³ The immediate source for images in the polyptych is the Bible, but the inspiration for each of the elements—especially the more anti-Judaic—is harder to discern. The scenes are not strict reflections of the Gospel accounts and do not appear to be visualizations of early devotional writings that interpolated the four Evangelists. The altarpiece was commissioned by the Brethren of the Common Life, which had a well-defined corpus of pastoral and devotional texts of their own. None of the themes in the altarpiece, however, are directly traceable to known works from this group. As I will demonstrate, a good deal of the inspiration and invention for this altarpiece was drawn from, or at least highly influenced by, popular polemical sources, which often misinterpreted and misrepresented Jewish religious practices and often expounded the myth of the murderous Jew.

The objective of this paper is to place the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* in its proper socio-religious milieu. By investigating Christian perceptions of biblical and contemporary Jews, identifying

² For Lane’s thesis see, Barbara G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 1, 2. Also, as pointed out by Mitchell Merback, Lane’s thesis is further problematic within a church’s non-liturgical and para-liturgical contexts, such as pilgrimage. See, Mitchell Merback, “Fount of Mercy, City of Blood: Cultic Anti-Judaism and the Pulkau Passion Altarpiece,” *The Art Bulletin* 87, no. 4 (2005): note 57.

³ The anti-Jewish components to the altarpiece have received little attention. Some English-language scholars who have acknowledged its presence, albeit briefly, are, Mitchell Merback, “Jewish Carnality, Christian Guilt, and Eucharistic Peril in the Rotterdam-Berlin Altarpiece of the Holy Sacrament,” in *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and David Nirenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 208, 211, 219; Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages* 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), *Passim*. Also, Lisa Farber briefly mentions the anti-Judaic imagery on page 205 and notes 588, 603, and 607 of her dissertation. Note 607 mentions the altarpiece has not been studied from the perspective of anti-Jewish sentiment in Württemberg and Herrenberg. See, Lisa de la Mare Farber, “Jerg Ratgeb and the Herrenberg Altarpiece” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1990), 205, 197, 203-4.

social tensions in Swabia that may have influenced how Jews were depicted, and exploring the ways in which the trope of Jewish wantonness may have served a politico-religious agenda in the region, I will explain the appearance of anti-Jewish representations in the work. My anti-Jewish reading of the altarpiece is made even more complex because this work has strong Eucharistic overtones. The deep-seated anxieties in Christian practice concerning the presence of Christ's true body and blood in the consecrated Eucharist could be, and often were, exacerbated by Christian perceptions of Jews and "judaizing." Jews and Judaism were often foils used to illuminate not only the veracity and sanctity, but also the vulnerability, of the theologically complex change of substance signaled by the Transubstantiation. Within this context, I hope to show that the altarpiece served as both a material and metaphorical conduit that absorbed and reflected the popular and mythical conception of the Jewish "other."

In its current state, all four panels of the altarpiece have been fixed together for display purposes (see fig. 1.1, fig. 1.2). The Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, however, acknowledges that the altarpiece once functioned as a triptych with two sets of folding wings (*Flügelpaar*) and had a central corpus containing statuary, likely Marian in theme.⁴ The central Marian statuary is believed to have been lost or destroyed when the Protestant Reformation came to Württemberg in 1534.⁵ Other structural parts are also missing. Gone are the *predella* (or *Sarg*) figures that would have been found across the bottom of the altarpiece and the *Gesprenge* or crowning superstructure of ornamental carved wood extending upward several feet from the corpus.⁶ The financial records of the Herrenberg Church mention payment of twelve shillings to a joiner for

⁴ Elsbeth Wiemann, *Der Herrenberger Altar von Jerg Ratgeb* (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 2013), 19. This book, published by the Staatsgalerie, is also organized around three distinct stages as a reflection of its original triptych design. See, Wiemann, *Der Herrenberger Altar*, esp. 20-21, 29, 60.

⁵ Wiemann, *Der Herrenberger Altar*, 20.

⁶ Farber, "Jerg Ratgeb and the Herrenberg Altarpiece," 118.

the completion of the *Gesprenge*.⁷ What survives of the altarpiece are the four large panels in their original frames, painted on both sides, and three small *predella* paintings of the *Sudarium* and two *Censing Angels*. The surviving frames for the panels all contain Latin inscriptions around the edges, typologically relating to the images they contain.

Depending on the time of year and liturgical calendar, and based on a triptych layout, three options for high-altar display were available. When viewed in the closed position, two separate panels of the *Parting of the Apostles* (*divisio apostolorum*) comprised the exterior of the altarpiece (fig. 1.3). The artist has treated the exterior of the altarpiece as one cohesive scene spread across two panels, and the Latin inscriptions run continuously across both frames from left to right to reflect this unification. When the exterior panels are opened once, four panels taken from the *Passion* (the *Last Supper*, *Flagellation*, *Crucifixion*, and *Resurrection*) are revealed and comprised the intermediate position (see fig. 1.2). The panel depicting the *Flagellation* has a set of hinges on the left side of its frame, while the *Crucifixion* contains an identical set on the right side of its frame.⁸ When these two hinged panels were opened, the final stage of the altarpiece revealed scenes from the *Life of the Virgin*, which included the *Betrothal*, a sculpture of the *Virgin and Child* (now lost), and *Circumcision of Christ*. The Latin inscriptions on the frames of the *Marriage of the Virgin* and *Circumcision*, are written in silver on a gold background; all other panels contain silver inscriptions on a black background. Both the use of gold paint only on the inner most panels and the surviving hinges on the *Flagellation* and the *Crucifixion* panels are some of the smaller details confirming a mobile and visually interactive layout. A similar three-stage triptych construction with central sculptural corpus was common at the time as seen, for instance, in the near contemporaneous *Isenheim Altarpiece* (1512-16) by Matthias Grünewald.

⁷ Farber, "Jerg Ratgeb and the Herrenberg Altarpiece," 128.

⁸ Brush, "The Herrenberg Altarpiece of Jörg Ratgeb," 34.

Having established the likely layout of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, it is now necessary to provide a general overview of the extant panels and the anti-Jewish representations contained within them.



Figure 1.1 Jörg Ratgeb, *The Herrenberg Altarpiece*, 1519. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Figure 1.2 *The Herrenberg Altarpiece*, Intermediate Position. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Figure 1.3 *Parting of the Apostles*, Reconstruction of Exterior. Photos ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

2 ANTI-JEWISH REPRESENTATIONS

The two outermost wings of the *Parting of the Apostles* (*divisio apostolorum*) represent the moment the apostles separate to preach the gospel throughout the world, fulfilling Christ's commission to spread his word given on the mountain in Galilee (see fig. 1.3).⁹ In the panels, the separation of the disciples is visualized as an emotional, but essential farewell. The two groups of disciples located in the foreground embrace, shake hands, and weep openly. Individual apostles have already embarked on their journey and head in different directions. St. Thomas, for instance, is visible in the distance as a dark silhouette on a footbridge in the left panel, while St. Matthias turns the bend near a hillock in the right panel (the saint's names are provided by inscriptions in the panel). All the apostles are well-packed with flasks, satchels, walking sticks, and gourds; most of the men have gathered the bottoms of their garments into their belts for unhindered strides. The image on the exterior of the altarpiece would have been appropriate to the pastoral calling of the commissioners of the altarpiece, the Brethren of the Common Life. Although they did not take monastic vows, the Brethren dedicated their lives to preaching and modeled their religious identities on that of the apostles and the ideals of the primitive church.¹⁰ Given that all the men are presented as "biblical Christians," there are no Jewish (and therefore no anti-Jewish) representations on the exterior of the altarpiece.

When the *Parting of the Apostles* panels are opened (i.e. the first opening), four images of the Passion—the *Last Supper*, the *Flagellation*, the *Crucifixion*, and *Resurrection*—become visible (see fig 1.2). In the *Last Supper* panel of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, all three principal interpretations of the Gospel narrative attached to the meal occur—the Institution of the

⁹ Matthew 28:16-20; Contrary to Matthew, the commission from Christ happens while the Apostles are eating in the gospel of Mark, see Mark 16:14-20. Also, see Acts 2, where the Apostles are given the gift of language to facilitate their apostolic calling at Pentecost.

¹⁰ The Brethren of the Common Life in Württemberg and Herrenberg are discussed in section 3 of this thesis.

Eucharist, the Communion of the Apostles, and the Betrayal of Judas (2.1). In the scene, Christ and his apostles, sitting around a table in the “upper room” in Jerusalem, celebrate the Passover meal.¹¹ The artist depicts the moment of offering bread and eating the paschal lamb as an intimate and lively event occurring in a sparsely decorated space. Two canisters and a slip of paper are stowed in the cupboard on the wall. Both of these items are inscribed with pseudo-Hebrew, indicating that the meal is taking place within an ostensibly Jewish setting. Most of the Apostles are huddled in small groups in reaction to Christ’s announcement that one of them will betray him.¹² According to the Gospel accounts, before revealing the betrayal, Christ consecrated and distributed the sacramental bread to his disciples; after this, taking a glass of wine in his hand, he said, in the words of the Canon on the Mass, “Take and drink of this, all of you, for this is my blood, of new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith, which shall be shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.”¹³ The image signals the Institution of the Eucharist by Christ’s right hand, held in benediction. Further, the scene indicates that the Communion of the Apostles has occurred as well. The Apostle to the right of Christ, for example, crosses his arms in prayer with a morsel of bread still in his hand. The significance of the Last Supper lies mainly in the Institution of the Sacraments, the bread and wine taken during Mass as a commemoration of Christ’s sacrifice of the Cross. Ratgeb, like many artists however, is keener on highlighting the Betrayal of Judas, which shifts the scene away from a purely liturgical representation to a more nuanced dramatization of reception.¹⁴

¹¹ Matt. 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:13-39; John 13.

¹² Matt. 26:21; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21; John 13:21.

¹³ Quoted in, Howard Creel Collison, “Sacred Themes in a Predella Panel of “The Last Supper” by Mathis Gothard-Neithart, Called Grünewald,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 49, no. 3 (1986): 307.

¹⁴ For instance, Ratgeb’s panel differs greatly from Dieric Bout’s *Last Supper*, which is orderly and replaces the sop of bread with a circular Host. See, also, note 2.

While Christ embraces his “beloved” disciple John in his lap, he reveals Judas Iscariot as his betrayer by offering him a moisten sop of bread.¹⁵ The event is part of the gospel accounts but the artist has embellished the so-called “Communion of Judas” with an extra detail found in the Gospel of John, which is not included in the Synoptic Gospels (i.e. those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke). According to John’s account, Christ offers Judas the moistened sop and as soon as the wayward Apostle takes the bread, the Devil enters into him.¹⁶ In the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, this idiosyncratic account of demonic possession is illustrated by the large black fly visibly entering Judas’ mouth (fig. 2.2).¹⁷ Even though the Gospel accounts are ambiguous on whether Judas received the sacrament or not, patristic writings and late-medieval belief held that he did receive the Eucharist; many writers, however, emphasized that his presence at the Institution of the Eucharist was as an example of “unworthy” reception.¹⁸ Underscoring the “unworthy” reception of the “Communion of Judas,” the artist includes a table and an ewer of wine that Judas has knocked over. A male servant (a peculiar fourteenth inclusion) looks to steady the container, but his rescue efforts are inevitably distracted by a conversation with the Apostle in blue—rendering the task unsuccessful. Simultaneously, Judas appears to be reaching for the cup of wine on the table in front of him with his left hand. The spilling wine and “unworthy” reception are clear sacramental allusions to the shedding of Christ’s blood instigated by Judas’ betrayal. A concurrent theme, however, is also apparent in the panel, specifically between Christ and Judas, where a conflicted, antagonistic, and psychodynamic moment between Judas and Christ is geared

¹⁵ Matt. 26: 25; John 13: 26.

¹⁶ John 13: 27. For the many ways Judas is portrayed differently in John compared to the synoptic gospels see, Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), esp. 34-78.

¹⁷ Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 135. Satan entering Judas could also take the form of a black bird in artworks. See, Mellinkoff, “Judas’s Red Hair and the Jews,” *Journal of Jewish Art* 9 (1982): 38.

¹⁸ Collison, “Sacerdotal Themes,” 307.

in the direction of doctrinal consensus-building on proper and improper reception as well as the foundations of an “insider” and “outsider” social dynamic.¹⁹

This social dynamic is highlighted as the artist employs a great deal of negative signifiers and visual signs of “otherness” in his depiction of Judas, which reinforce the apostate’s antagonism to Christ and the other Apostles. Judas is given bright red hair and a red beard, traits often seen in artworks employed to make Jews like Judas stand apart from the (Christian) crowd.²⁰ As an external “warning sign,” red hair was attached to myriad adjectives signaling certain characteristics including, but not limited to descriptors such as: tricky, false, dangerous, over-sexed, vulgar, crude, and unfaithful.²¹ The belief that those with red hair are inherently evil stems from the pseudo-science of physiognomics, a system wherein one’s exterior physical appearance was said to be a manifestation of one’s internal virtue or vice.²² With his emotions little hidden, Judas’ contorted lunging body and uncontrolled facial expression are evocative of the sanguinity and impulsivity that Sixteenth-century society connected to red-headed people.

Ratgeb has also dressed Judas in yellow, a color used definitively and intentionally to signify Jews in contemporary European society.²³ This was especially the case as yellow was a color that could convey cowardice and treachery.²⁴ His yellow outfit, furthermore, is fashioned like that of a *Landsknecht*, or German mercenary soldier. Many artists, such as Albrecht Dürer, used the likeness of a mercenary soldier as a stereotype for socially or morally suspect people. The popular characterization of the *Landsknechte*, in the sixteenth-century, was not particularly

¹⁹ For the Last Supper as a platform for doctrinal consensus-building, see Merback, “Jewish Carnality,” 104.

²⁰ Mellinkoff, “Judas’s Red Hair,” 31.

²¹ Mellinkoff, “Judas’s Red Hair,” 32.

²² Mellinkoff, “Judas’s Red Hair,” 32. For an expanded discussion of medieval physiognomy, see Irven M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perception of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), esp. 1-52.

²³ Mellinkoff, “Judas’s Red Hair,” 40. Also, see note 30.

²⁴ Collison, “Sacerdotal Themes,” 305.

positive as they had a reputation for pillaging, murder, and sexual impropriety.²⁵ The soldiers' way of life was described as feckless—they joined the military not for wages, but for a chance to pillage and live in a world free from the many moral and behavioral constraints of civilized society.²⁶ A general distrust of soldiers often stemmed from their status on the margins of society; they were perceived as volatile men, who could turn on the communities in which they temporarily dwelled.²⁷ Because of this, the soldier's depiction in artworks became a familiar trope, one of considerable moral and allegorical resonance.²⁸ The written records of their time in townships are ample witnesses to sexual atrocities; this is manifested in artworks where they appear arrogant and aggressive often shown with codpieces and swords jutting out suggestively (fig. 2.3, fig. 2.4).²⁹ This prevailing stereotype could be, and was, used in religious images as a means of casting Christ's tormentors in as negative a light as possible. In a 1511 woodcut of the *Man of Sorrows* from Dürer's *Large Passion*, for instance, a soldier in a slashed and daggered costume mocks Christ mercilessly (fig. 2.5). Both Ratgeb's and Dürer's reference to the soldier would have been immediately understood by contemporary viewers. By dressing Judas as a *Landsknecht*, and depicting him as a red-haired Jew, Ratgeb metaphorically places him outside the confines of normal and virtuous society.

In case the *Landsknecht*'s association with violence and overt sexuality were not clear enough through sartorial cuing, Ratgeb pushes the metaphor by giving Judas a prominent erection, visible through his garments (fig. 2.6). What we see is clearly not a codpiece, but a

²⁵ J. R. Hale, "The Soldier in Germanic Graphic Art of the Renaissance," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 1 (1886): 100.

²⁶ Hale, "The Soldier in Germanic Graphic Art," 96.

²⁷ Hale, "The Soldier in Germanic Graphic Art," 100.

²⁸ Hale, "The Soldier in Germanic Graphic Art," 85.

²⁹ Hale, "The Soldier in Germanic Graphic Art," 100, 102.

tumescent penis.³⁰ Late medieval and early modern Christian perceptions of Jewish sexuality make the inclusion of this motif significant. Christians in this period, for example, believed that the Jewish rite of circumcision was a means of decreasing Jewish carnality. Such lustfulness was the result of humankind's post-lapsarian state. For Christians, however, the cure for this was not circumcision but baptism, which replaced the earlier rite after Christ's advent.³¹ The lusty Jew was a well-worn type and conditioned, as well as was conditioned by, Christian concerns over miscegenation with infidels. This concern led Christian authorities to demand that visible signs on their clothing mark Jews, usually (though not always) in the form of an obvious yellow component. The desire to prevent intercourse between Christians and non-Christians was one of the justifications of the most comprehensive effort at segregation by the medieval church. At the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, it was decided that physical similarities between Christians and non-Christians led to intercourse, thus a sartorial marker was needed to clearly differentiate Jews and Muslims from Christians.³² The cape and the wheel of yellow or red cloth this law mandated created a system of visible boundaries for the Jews; a specific haircut and dress did the same for Muslims.³³ Ratgeb's red-haired, yellow-clad, priapic Judas projects a vision of instability, violence, and "pathological lasciviousness" that threatened pure, Christian virgins and the entire Christian community.³⁴ As a literal and metaphorical projection of "menacing carnality," Ratgeb

³⁰ The soldier in yellow in the *Flagellation* (see fig. 2.7) as well as the soldiers in the *Resurrection* (see fig. 2.9) have bulging codpieces emphasizing their genitals. In comparison to these images, Judas does not appear to have a codpiece, but an erection.

³¹ For a discussion on physiognomy and circumcision, and on the connection between Jewish dietary laws and illicit sexuality, see Resnick, *Marks of Distinction*, 53-92; 144-174, respectively.

³² David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 133. For color symbolism and the yellow badge, see Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 33-56, esp. 46.

³³ Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 133.

³⁴ Hyam Maccoby uses the phrase "pathological lasciviousness" and "priapic Jew" in relation to a second century account telling of Judas' unsuccessful suicide. Afterwards, Judas wandered the world and "his genitals were repellent and huge beyond all shamelessness." Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 85-6.

creates a hybrid arch-betrayer who corrupts the sacred space and the sacrament he receives.³⁵ The erection, too, can be extended as a semiotic motif of menace to sacred bread and the pure incarnate Christ. In turn, Jewish carnal sexuality seems to be rooted in a materiality that violates Christ's substantial presence in the Eucharist, effectually bring to the fore and otherwise invisible divine substance. Judas's sexuality, furthermore, also draws a line between "sacramental eating" and "carnal feeding" common to animals and infidels and identifies the liminal edge between the spiritual realm and the material world.³⁶ Judas' transgression, in turn, reflects Eucharistic violation, pollution, and defilement and can be recasts in the language of the crucifixion where Christ was "not only denied and betrayed once more, [but] his tender limbs are scourged and bloodied again, his wounds are reopened, his brain again is pierced with thorns, his face covered with spittle, his blood drained once more from his body."³⁷

Judas's dress and erection are not the only signs that he is morally suspect. Ratgeb also includes cards and dice falling out of Judas's pocket (see fig. 2.6). An image of a dog is painted on one of the two cards. The pairing of the card with Judas plays on the well-worn Christian trope of the "Jewish dog" and marks red-headed Judas as not only carnal, but also bestial.³⁸ Ratgeb here appears to take advantage of a contemporary invective against Jews by offering a

³⁵ Judas' erection in Ratgeb's *Last Supper* is described as "a menacing Jewish carnality" in, Merback, "Jewish Carnality, Christian Guilt, and Eucharistic Peril," 211.

³⁶ I draw here on Merback's description of Eucharistic ontology, Merback, "Jewish Carnality," 114.

³⁷ Merback, "Jewish Carnality," 216.

³⁸ For the stereotype of the "Jewish dog," see James Marrow, "*Circumdedeunt me canes multi*: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *The Art Bulletin* 59, no. 2 (1977): 167-181; Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: a Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk: Van Ghemert Publishing Company, 1979): 33-43; Marrow, "Inventing the Passion in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Passion Story: From Visual Presentations to Social Drama*, ed. Marcia Kupfer (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008): 23-52; Resnick, *Marks of Distinction*, 144-174; Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles "Dogs" (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging the Exegetical Dog?" *Biblical Interpretations* 17 (2009): 448-482.

visual exegesis of Matthew 15:25 (cf. Matthew 7:6) “Give not that which is holy unto dogs.”³⁹ Although there is no specific references to Jews in this verse and ones like it, such as Philippians 3:2 “Beware of the dog,” prevailing interpretations, nevertheless, posited that it was aimed at Jews, Judaic values, and Judaizers.⁴⁰ John of Chrysostom, for example, in his homilies on Philippians explores the meaning of Paul’s words “Beware of the dogs” (Phil: 3:2) and Matthew 15:25, when stating:

But who does he style “dogs”?... those whom he hints at in all his Epistles, base and contemptible Jews, greedy of vile lucre and fond of power, who, desiring to draw aside many of the faithful, preached both Christianity and Judaism at the same time, corrupting the Gospel. As they were not easily discernable, therefore he says, “beware of the dogs”: The Jews are no longer Children; once to Gentiles were called dogs, but now the Jews.⁴¹

Chrysostom’s analysis was not unusual. Christian exegetes could, and did, draw from Psalms 21:17—*circumdedderunt me canes multi* (many dogs surrounded me)—as a source for anti-Jewish polemic; it was also often used as a source for visual exegesis in characterizing and describing Christ’s tormentors.⁴² The employment of dogs and dog-like men in artworks served as a visual cue to characterize the grotesque figures who mock Christ.⁴³ In the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, there are many references to the “Jewish dog,” including a dog running near Judas in the subsidiary scene of the *Arrest of Christ*, taking place behind Christ in the *Last Supper*.

In the next panel of the cycle, the *Flagellation*, four scenes of Christ’s Passion take place in one of Ratgeb’s fantastic architectural structures: the *Flagellation* and the *Mocking of Christ* comprise the foreground scenes, while behind and above them *Christ Before Pilate* and the *Ecce Homo* takes place in the subsidiary scenes (fig. 2.7). In *Christ Before Pilate*, located in the

³⁹ Merback makes a similar point in his analysis of the Rotterdam-Berlin Corpus Christi Altarpiece. Merback, “Jewish Carnality,” 214.

⁴⁰ Nanos, “Paul’s Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles “Dogs,” 449-450.

⁴¹ Quoted in, Nanos, “Paul’s Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles “Dogs,” 455.

⁴² Marrow, “*Circumdedderunt me canes multi*,” 169.

⁴³ Marrow, “*Circumdedderunt me canes multi*,” 174-5.

balcony, Pilate is lavishly dressed and wears a spiked turban. Other men on the balcony are also “Orientalized” through clothing.⁴⁴ One man wears an impossibly large turban, while his rather oafish, but armed, partner is dressed in head-to-toe yellow, wearing a peaked “Jew’s hat” of the same color.⁴⁵ Under the balcony, in the foreground, Christ is tied to a column, chained around the neck, and his hands are bound with rope. One soldier pulls Christ’s hair and projects a globule of spit into his face, another thrashes him with a bundle of reeds, and a third soldier, in a tightfitting yellow outfit, rears back before giving another blow with a whip. Blood streams down Christ’s body, and his face indicates misery and sorrow. His pitiful appearance is countered by the wild, violent, grotesque, and corpulent soldiers, who like Judas, are dressed like *Landsknecht*. A dreidel along with cards and money fall out of a satchel located at the foreground, ostensibly belonging to the soldiers. The cards and money indicate vice and corruption, while the dreidel mark the men as specifically Jewish sinners who partake in Christ’s suffering. In the *Mocking of Christ* to the right of the *Flagellation*, the same three *Landsknechte* appear, one with a budding codpiece. Two soldiers work in tandem to drive the Crown of Thorns into Christ’s head. Christ has been stripped and dressed in a scarlet robe, and a soldier holding a reed for a scepter and a cloth similar to a *tallit*, or fringed Jewish prayer shawl, mocks Christ as the King of the Jews.⁴⁶

In *Ecce Homo* behind this scene, Pilate shows Christ to the crowd below while a soldier pulls back Christ’s robe to expose his wounds and nakedness. Unlike Judas in the scene of the Last Supper and the corpulent soldiers of the Flagellation, Christ is presented as being

⁴⁴ For the implications of Orientalizing clothing in several fifteenth-century manuscripts, see Joyce Kubinski, “Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century Manuscript Paintings (Cit  des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)” *Gesta* 40, no. 2 (2001): 161-180.

⁴⁵ Scholarship on the various manifestations of the “Jewish hat” is vast. However, some useful sources and catalogues are: Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014); Mellinkoff, *Outcast*; Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

⁴⁶ Matt. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20; Luke 22:63-65; John 19:1-3.

emphatically sexless. The crowd yells for his crucifixion, gestured through arms crossed in the air, illustrating the Gospel text, “Crucify him, crucify him.”⁴⁷ In this scene, the artist has depicted Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest involved in Christ’s trial, with a horned miter and with a markedly bovine physique, underscored by his ill-fitting white garments and corpulent belly. Associating Caiaphas with cattle was not purely an invention of the artist or the patrons of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*. It appears to visually gloss Psalm 21:13, which proleptically describes how Christ “was surrounded by calves and besieged by fat bulls.”⁴⁸ The connection between Caiaphas, the Jewish priesthood, and cattle is seen, moreover, in a fifteenth-century manuscript *Life of Christ* written by Johannes Brugman, the noted Netherlandish preacher, who commented that when Christ was before Caiaphas, “there we may observe the gathering together of the fat bulls and oxen, the priest of the Jews.”⁴⁹ Thus, the horns of the miter, which normally was employed as a typological reference to Moses and the Old Testament, are here used to emphasize Caiaphas’ bestial nature in the painting.⁵⁰ Annas, too, has a distended belly, which mirrors that of Caiaphas and extends the visual metaphor by signaling that the assembled crowd of Jews as nothing more than a herd following its leader.

In the next panel in the cycle, the *Crucifixion*, Christ hangs rigidly on the cross (fig. 2.8). This rendition of the narrative is in sharp contrast to more emotive depictions that were popular in the period in which Christ is shown as severely wounded. Christ’s head falls to one side and his torment seems to be over, signaled by his closed eyes and lifeless body. His side wound bleeds down his torso, through his garments, and down the inside of his leg. Red blood drops from his wounds fall onto the white veils of the Virgin and two of the Three Maries. All the

⁴⁷ Matt. 27:22-23; Mark 15:13-14; Luke 23:21; John 19:6.

⁴⁸ Marrow, *Passion Iconography*, 33, 34.

⁴⁹ Quoted in, Marrow, *Passion Iconography*, 34.

⁵⁰ For the typological significance of the horned miter, see Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 82-9.

women are distraught and tears stream down the Virgin's face. A rivulet of blood from the wounds in Christ's feet pool around Mary Magdalen, located below. The Magdalen is dressed sumptuously in an ornate headpiece and golden girdle. In contrast to Judas in the *Last Supper*, she displays the elevated status of her soul through her interaction with Christ. Rather than receiving the body of her Lord unworthily, she clings to it beneath his feet in full contrition of her sins and in deep sorrow of his sacrifice. The Virgin and the Three Maries present at the Crucifixion represent pious Christians who receive Christ's blood and stand in contrast to the markedly unworthy reception of the host enacted by Judas. The propriety of the holy women gathered near Christ is made even more evident by their proximity to the so-called good and bad thieves. The good or penitent thief to Christ's right leans forward off his cross and is shown in profile. Although seemingly deceased, the weight of his chest has driven his arms into tension, pushing his body painfully forward. Located to Christ's left, the bad thief is given more prominence than the good thief. His three-quarter view not only makes his pained face visible, it also allows the viewer to see a pseudo-Hebrew plaque above him. The figure of the bad or impenitent thief, like Judas, is also given many negative signifiers. He has bright red hair and is costumed in yellow and like a *Landsknecht*, indicated by the slashed fashion at his shoulders and thighs.⁵¹ The fabric between his legs, moreover, mimics a phallus creating a visual corollary to Judas's erection in the *Last Supper*. As the black fly indicates Judas' demonic possession, the bad thief, too, appears possessed by evil signaled by a contorted face and disheveled appearance.⁵² Anti-Jewish representations also appear in the subsidiary scenes of *Christ bearing*

⁵¹ As noted in the above analysis of Judas, the *Landsknecht* costume could be used to express immorality and social menace. The slashed version of the costume was often used for the mockers of Christ as seen, for instance, in Matthais Grünewald's *Mocking of Christ* (1504-1505) and Jörg Breu's *Melk Altarpiece* (1502).

⁵² Lisa Farber notes that Ratgeb may have known of the pictorial tradition of representing people who are possessed by the devil, called demoniacs, characterized by contorted figures and unkempt appearances. See Farber, "Jerg Ratgeb and the Herrenberg Altarpiece," 205, note 661.

the Cross. A chain pulls Christ, which is held by a yellow-dressed man, who also beats him with a stick. A dog, which runs alongside him, echoes the gait of the yellow-clad man, continuing of the epithet of the “Jewish dog” also found in the *Last Supper* panel.

In the *Resurrection* – the last panel of the first opening – Christ rises triumphantly from his still sealed tomb (fig. 2.9). His right hand is raised in blessing; his left hand holds a crystal globe mounted with a gold, filigreed cross. The soldiers standing guard over his tomb are rendered in stark contrast to his radiant, divine state. Whereas he is ephemeral, light, and beautiful, they are grotesque and corpulent *Landesknechte*. Christ’s purity is made more abundant by the visible signs of the soldiers’ violence (their weapons), drunkenness, avarice (prominently displayed coins), and penchant for gambling (cards and dice). Like the other soldier types depicted in the altarpiece, each of the soldiers has a bulging codpiece, which emphasizes his genitals. The heavily sexed depiction of the soldiers contrasts with that of Christ who, as in the *Ecce Homo*, is virtually sexless.⁵³ This, in turn, creates a visual comparison wherein the artist is able to laud Christ and condemn the soldiers. Like the impenitent thief and Judas, these men are identified with a carnal sexuality through their clothing and grotesque features. This panel closes the passion cycle of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, all of which contains anti-Judaic imagery.

When the altarpiece is opened a second and final time, two wings of the *Life of the Virgin* are exposed. In the left wing, the *Marriage of the Virgin*, the Virgin, kneels reverently, casting her eye downward in a modest pose (fig. 2.10). She is dressed in a blue gown, which she gathers in her hand and in doing so draws attention to her womb. This gesture may allude to her reception of Christ as she agrees to play her role in God’s plan of human salvation. Over this, she also wears a matching blue mantle, lightly trimmed with gold embroidery and completed with a large gem-encrusted clasp. Both garments flow over the marble platform on to which Joseph and

⁵³ Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 206.

the Virgin kneel. A crown set with a large blue gemstone sits on the Virgin's head; golden rays emanate from this area, signaling her sanctity. Near the Virgin, Joseph appears wearing a taupe tunic with ankle boots and with a knife suspended from his belt. Unlike earlier depictions of the saint, Joseph is not a haggard old man but is young and clean-shaven. The Virgin and Joseph are bound by a Jewish officiant, who wears a highly ornamental headpiece, somewhat evocative of a Christian bishop's miter, but with slightly bending horns and a solid gold plate at the forefront. The same Jewish priest also is present in the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* in the background of this panel, and a similar priest appears in the next panel (the *Circumcision*) in a smaller scene of the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*. Like the *Parting of the Apostles*, there are no anti-Jewish representations in this panel.

The right wing of the altarpiece, across from the *Marriage of the Virgin*, contains an image of the *Circumcision* (fig. 2.11). Dominating the scene is the grotesque figure of a *mohel*, or Jewish circumciser, who performs the traditional Jewish ceremony with a double-edged stone rather than a knife.⁵⁴ With the physiognomy that would “do credit to Hieronymus Bosch,”⁵⁵ the *mohel*'s face is unnaturally shaped with a goiter-like protrusion and hooked nose on which sit pince-nez glasses. The corpulent figure is dressed in yellow, a color signifying evil and often associated with Jews, while around him other mostly grotesque figures look on.⁵⁶ The *mohel*'s menace is exacerbated by the worried expression of the defenseless infant Christ, who emits an open-mouthed cry—a realistic terror expected from a newborn, and unusual compared to the

⁵⁴ In the book of Joshua, Joshua was asked to use “flint knives” to circumcise all those born in the wilderness during the Exodus (See Joshua 5:2-8). The *Meditations on the Life of Christ* states, interestingly, “His flesh was cut with a stone knife by His mother,” Bonaventure, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illuminated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), 44. On the implications of women as circumcisers, see Holly Flora, “Empathy and Performative Vision in Oxford Corpus Christi College MS 410,” *Journal of Iconographic Studies* 3 (2010): 169-178.

⁵⁵ Burkhard, *The Herrenberg Altar of Jörg Ratgeb* (Munich: F. Bruckmann KG, 1965) 12.

⁵⁶ For the negative connotations of yellow, see note 23 and 24.

traditional stoicism found in contemporaneous *Circumcision* scenes.⁵⁷ Unlike the Jewish priest officiating the marriage ceremony, the *mohel* is caricatured and his bestial nature is extended to his animalistic posture. The Virgin, although she appears in the background scenes, is conspicuously missing from the foreground of this one. The people who are present, however, all have expressions that seem to hold the moment of Christ's first suffering and blood-shed in abeyance, stressed by their opened mouths and focused gazes.

There are several inclusions in the scene that indicate Ratgeb had a basic knowledge of the Jewish ceremony of circumcision, something that he likely learned from other images of the Circumcision. For instance, Christ sits on a man's lap, ostensibly his godfather, in a double-seated throne. This type of ornate bench with two cushions is accurate as is the seat left unoccupied, symbolically unfilled and awaiting the prophet Elijah, protector of infant children.⁵⁸ As an alternative meaning for the Christian audience, the unfilled seat could be a typological reference symbolizing the continuity of the old Law, represented by the Jewish priest, and the New Law, represented by the infant Christ, who will one day fill the throne of Heaven.⁵⁹ The prayer shawls the male figures wear over their heads purport to depict contemporary *Judaica*, although the Hebrew hem worn by the godfather figure falls into the category of nonsensical pseudo-Hebrew.⁶⁰ The golden vessels nearest the foreground could be the circumcision plate and wine for the *mohel* and child, or vessels for ritual hand washing.⁶¹ The inclusion of *Judaica*, pince-nez glasses, the empty chair, and an uncomfortable-looking Christ is also found in the Circumcision panel of the *Master of the Tucher Altarpiece* c. 1450, which seems to isolate Christ

⁵⁷ Brush, "The Herrenberg Altarpiece of Jörg Ratgeb," 45.

⁵⁸ Farber, "Jerg Ratgeb and the Herrenberg Altarpiece," 191.

⁵⁹ Brush, "The Herrenberg Altarpiece of Jörg Ratgeb," 45.

⁶⁰ For the discussion of Hebrew and pseudo-Hebrew in Christian art, see Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 95-108.

⁶¹ Farber, "Jerg Ratgeb and the Herrenberg Altarpiece," 191.

in the same manner as the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*.⁶² The *Herrenberg's Circumcision* painting closes the *Life of the Virgin* cycle, yet it also temporally begins Christ's first blood shedding at his infancy as well as provides a chronological moment when Christ first encounters Jewish menace in the altarpiece.

With this exploration of the panels, it is evident that anti-Jewish imagery was not just a minor part of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, but was a large measure of its message as it looked to interpret standard indexes of Christian iconography as a platform for polemical representations. The depictions of Jews in the paintings are marked through sartorial signaling, grotesque features, and physiognomy and often emphasized by strong gestural movement and violence against Christ's body. These anti-Jewish representations, moreover, clearly contradict Christian representations, such as the grieving Virgin and the contrite Magdalen. As a means of explaining the appearance of the anti-Jewish imagery, I would like to turn to an exploration of the historical context of the south German area where the altarpiece was made. My historical analysis begins with a brief discussion of the Brethren of the Common Life, who commissioned the altarpiece. I do this, in part, to argue that the Brethren's religious philosophy does not seem to be a plausible explanation for the altarpiece's anti-Jewish imagery. I then expand the historical context to include Jewish-Christian relationship in Southern Germany as well as a relevant case of blood libel involving the Jews of Trent, which seemed to put Jewish-Christians relationships in Southern Germany into tension.

⁶² A reproduction of this painting can be found in, Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, Vol 2, Plate 11.23.



Figure 2.1 *Last Supper*. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Figure 2.2 Detail of Judas, *Last Supper*. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

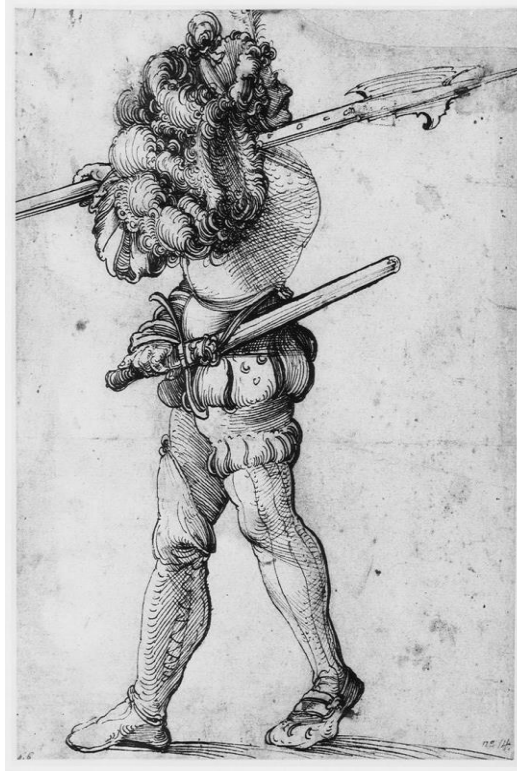


Figure 2.3 Hans Schüfelein the Elder, *Landsknecht*, drawing, c. 1507-08.
Photo ©Artstor.org



Figure 2.4 Hans Schüfelein the Elder, *Landsknecht*, drawing, c. 1512-15.
Photo ©Artstor.org



Figure 2.5 Albrecht Dürer, *Man of Sorrow* from the *Large Passion*, 1511.
Photo ©Artstor.org



Figure 2.6 Detail of Judas, *Last Supper*. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Figure 2.7 *Flagellation*. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

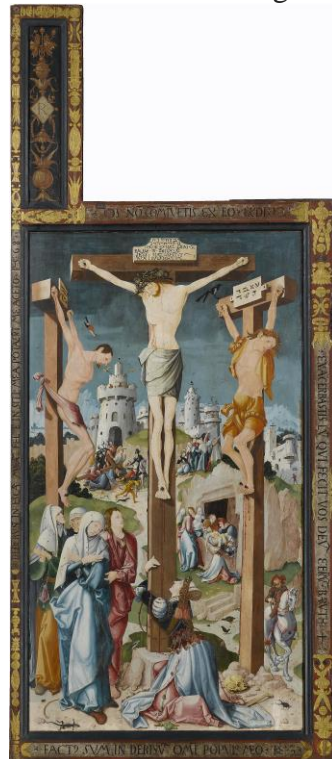


Figure 2.8 *Crucifixion*. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Figure 2.9 *Resurrection*. Photo. ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Figure 2.10 *Marriage of the Virgin*. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

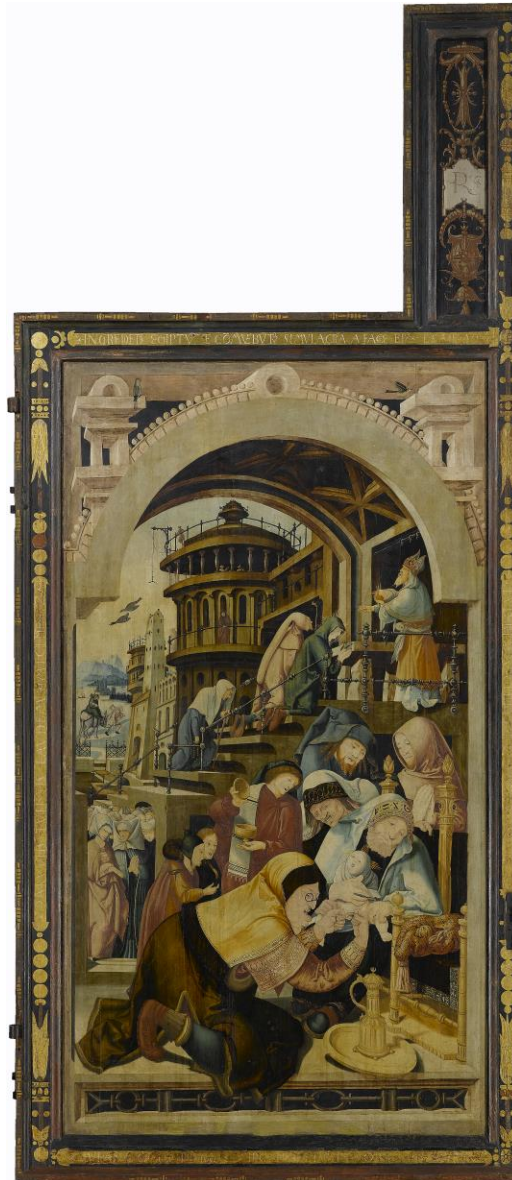


Figure 2.11 *Circumcision*. Photo ©Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The *Herrenberg Altarpiece* was commissioned by Brethren of the Common Life, who inhabited the collegiate church of Herrenberg from 1477 to 1517. This chapter was a later German subsidiary of an earlier religious Netherlandish movement called the *Devotio Moderna* or Modern Devotion.⁶³ During the second half of the fifteenth-century, many houses of the Modern Devotion were established in the Low Countries and across Upper Germany, spanning east to west from Prussia to Münster.⁶⁴ The movement, however, has its beginnings in the Ijssel valley of the eastern Netherlands and its foundations are with the fourteenth-century revival preacher Geert Groote.⁶⁵ Groote died unexpectedly from the plague in 1384 and his disciple, Florentius Radewyns, assumed leadership of the movement.⁶⁶ Inspired and motivated by Groote's writings, small groups of men and women, both lay and cleric, took to voluntarily living a "common life" in imitation of the apostles.⁶⁷ The Devout believed in a simple life of communal and manual labor. Members of the movement frequently worked as book copyists, and the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life (as they were also called) believed that devotional and moral subject matter should be in the vernacular, rather than Latin.⁶⁸ The aim and practices of the *Devotio Moderna* were, from the beginning, directed toward spiritual renewal, and their devotional texts instructed adherents about how to attain an intimate relationship with Christ. This is reflected in the texts they championed, such as the sermons of Bernard, the *Life of*

⁶³ The sources used for my discussion of the *devotio moderna* are the following: William M. Landeen, "Gabriel Biel and the Brethren of the Common Life in Germany," *Church History* 20, no. 1 (1951): 23-36, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3162046>; Landeen, "The *Devotio Moderna* in Trier," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 2, no. 1 (1964): 62-78, http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/auss/v_012/iss1/6; Heiko Augustinus Oberman, "The *devotio moderna*: movement and mystery," in *Masters of the Reformation: The Emergence of A New Intellectual Climate in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45-56; and, John van Engen, ed. and trans., *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

⁶⁴ Landeen, "The *Devotio Moderna* in Trier," 62; Landeen, "Gabriel Biel," 23.

⁶⁵ Engen, *Basic Writings*, 12.

⁶⁶ Landeen, "Gabriel Biel," 23; Engen, *Basic Writings*, 12.

⁶⁷ Landeen, "Gabriel Biel," 23. Engen, *Basic Writings*, 12.

⁶⁸ Engen, *Basic Writings*, 14-16.

Christ by Bonaventure, the meditations of Pseudo-Anselm, the Book on Divine wisdom by the Dominican mystic Henry Suso, and the writings of the Carthusian Ludolf of Saxony.⁶⁹ Many of these texts interpolated the gospels, providing very specific details about Christ, such as his infancy and Passion, on which to contemplate.⁷⁰ Through “spiritual exercises,” the Devout looked to deepen “inwardness” and “interiority” and a life meant to engender a sense of spiritual and moral sanctity.⁷¹

One of the last expansions of the movement was into Germany, in the form of the Brethren of the Common Life, and took place late in the fifteenth-century in the Upper-Rhenish lands and in Württemberg under the leadership of the distinguished preacher Gabriel Biel, sometimes called the “last of the scholastics.”⁷² In Württemberg, Biel’s efforts were supported by Duke Eberhard *im Bart* (the Bearded), who brought in the Brethren to Southern Germany in an attempt to improve religious conditions in his domain.⁷³ The duke was unhappy with the secular canons in his domain, including those originally ensconced at Herrenberg, and invited the Brethren to establish houses in southern Germany.⁷⁴ Biel became a trusted leader of the movement within the duke’s duchy.⁷⁵ On July 10, 1477, the General Chapter of the Upper-Rhenish houses considered the duke’s request, and by August they had transferred and transformed their first house in Urach, with subsequent house following in Tübingen, Herrenberg, Dettingen, Dachenhausen, and Schoenbuch.⁷⁶ The house in Württemberg joined the General Chapter of the Upper-Rhenish

⁶⁹ Engen, *Basic Writings*, 25.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, Groote’s “A Treatise on Four Classes of Subjects Suitable for Meditation: A Sermon on the Lord’s Nativity” reprinting in, Engen, *Basic Writings*, 99-118.

⁷¹ Engen, *Basic Writings*, 27.

⁷² Landeen, “Gabriel Biel,” 24; Landeen, *Devotio Moderna* in Trier, 63.

⁷³ Landeen, “Gabriel Biel,” 29.

⁷⁴ Landeen, *Devotio Moderna* in Trier, 63.

⁷⁵ Landeen, *Devotio Moderna* in Trier, 63.

⁷⁶ Landeen, “Gabriel Biel,” 29.

region, meeting annually to consider common policies and problems.⁷⁷ Although there are differences between the earlier movement in the Netherlands and the later movement in Germany (the latter of which has been defined as more clerical) the German movement still pursued many of the same ideals, including transcending monastic controversies and furthering a renewal of Christian charity as a means of recovering the purity of the primitive church.⁷⁸ Much of the Brethren's presence in southern Germany, however, came to a close when Duke Ulrich of Württemberg, who was in financial trouble, dissolved many of the congregations in 1517.⁷⁹ At the Herrenberg Church, the Brethren of the Common Life were disbanded effectively July 30, 1517, but only after the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* was commissioned; even with the dismissal in place, however, most of the Brethren members stayed at the Herrenberg church and decided to transition to secular canons, which meant the altarpiece was likely made for that particular audience.⁸⁰ As discussed above, the Brethren's emphasis on the primitive church and the apostles would be appropriate for the exterior of the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*. Once the altarpiece is opened, however, the Brethren's religious philosophy—that of returning to the simplicity of the apostolic period—does not seem to correlate with the anti-Jewish representations introduced throughout the altarpiece. In order to understand how such anti-Jewish representation was incorporated into the altarpiece's imagery, it is necessary to expand the historical context of Württemberg to include Jewish-Christian relationships.

In the Swabian area of southern Germany, Jewish life in the middle ages was marred by social instability and intolerance. These tensions grew out of economic circumstances wherein

⁷⁷ Landeen, "The *Devotio Moderna* in Trier, 64.

⁷⁸ Oberman, "The *devotio moderna*," 46. This is reflected in one of Biel's tracts, which states, "It is sufficient for our complete perfection that we live and persevere in the liberty of Christians under one Abbot Jesus Christ." Quoted in, Oberman, "The *devotio moderna*," 54.

⁷⁹ Oberman, "The *devotio moderna*," 55.

⁸⁰ Farber, "Jerg Ratgeb and the Herrenberg Altarpiece," iii, also see, 64-82, 102-117.

medieval artisan guilds, rather than noblemen, felt threatened by sharing a common space with non-Christians.⁸¹ The Jewish population was required to pay tributes and high taxes to the city or villages in which they dwelt, which made engaging in trade and earning a living more complicated than it was for Christians.⁸² As a result, prospective jobs were often limited, and the “village Jews” (*Dorfjuden*) lent money at interest and, as they could not deal in new wares, peddled second-hand wares—both of which were unpopular professions.⁸³ During the years of the Black Death pandemic (1348/49), illness and persecution greatly reduced, but did not completely destroy, the Jewish presence in Swabia. According to the available lists of Württemberg residences, all Jewish communities were affected by the plague and were further put under stress as the area was “blanketed” with pogroms against the Jews living in Württemberg.⁸⁴ Anti-Jewish pogroms in Southern Germany stemmed from a belief among Christians that Jews brought about the plague through the tainting of water supplies such as waterways, fountains, and rivers.⁸⁵ In three-hundred-fifty Jewish communities in Swabia, Jews were burned at the stake, drowned, strangled, and broken on the wheel.⁸⁶ Their property was confiscated and redistributed among Christian citizens during the plague.⁸⁷ Other members of the Jewish community died through Jewish self-sacrifice (the practice of *kiddush hashem*), circumventing forced conversion and death by Christian hands.⁸⁸ A decade after the plague, relationships somewhat improved when, in September 1360, two co-regents in Württemberg, Count Eberhard II and Ulrich IV, were granted the right to engage *Schutzjuden*, or the imperial

⁸¹ Gilya Gerda Schmidt, “Introduction,” in *Süssen in Now Free of Jews: World War II, the Holocaust, and Rural Judaism* (New York: Fordham Press, 2012): 3.

⁸² Schmidt, “Introduction,” 3.

⁸³ Schmidt, “Introduction,” 3.

⁸⁴ Schmidt, “Introduction,” 4.

⁸⁵ Lilli Zapf, “Mittelalter,” in *Die Tübinger Juden: Eine Dokumentation* (Tübingen: Katzmann Verlag, 1974): 10-11.

⁸⁶ Zapf, “Mittelalter,” 11.

⁸⁷ Zapf, “Mittelalter,” 11.

⁸⁸ Zapf, “Mittelalter,” 11.

protection of Jews.⁸⁹ As Jews moved back into the area in the next century, records show that they re-settled in Stuttgart, near Herrenberg, in 1434, 1441, 1443, and 1459, and they seemed to have lived there under relatively favorable conditions between 1393 and 1488, in Stuttgart's Jewish quarters or ghetto (*Judengasse*), which held the synagogue and *mikvah* or ritual bath.⁹⁰ This is true, too, for nearby Tübingen, who saw a growth in Jewish population during the beginnings of the fifteenth century after the pogroms of 1348/49.⁹¹

The stability of Jewish life in Württemberg changed during the last quarter of the fifteenth-century due to several anti-Jewish policies implemented by Eberhard *im Bart*, the duke who also brought the Brethren of the Common Life to Southern Germany. In Eberhard's charter for the University of Tübingen (founded in 1477), for example, it states that all Jews must be excluded from the city.⁹² Eberhard also added a clause to his will and testament stating that all Jews should be expelled from his territory of Württemberg upon his death on February 24, 1496.⁹³ Additionally, the will forbade Jews to trade in Württemberg.⁹⁴ Eberhard's anti-Jewish policies seem to be, in part, economically motivated. In the late fifteenth-century, the community made complaints concerning the high interest rates charged by the Jews.⁹⁵ This increase in interest charges was likely a result of the taxation of landlords and cities in which Jews had imperial protection.⁹⁶ In addition to the complaints regarding interest rates, Eberhard's opinion toward the Jews living in his dominion was likely (de)formed by the popularization of cases of blood libel.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Schmidt, "Introduction," 4.

⁹⁰ The former Stuttgart *Judengasse* is now located on the city's *Brennerstraße*. Schmidt, "Introduction," 5. For the Tübingen *Judengasse* and *Schutzjuden*, see Zapf, "Mittelalter," 11-4.

⁹¹ Zapf, "Mittelalter," 14.

⁹² Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*, trans. James I. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984): 3, 53 note 28; Zapf, "Mittelalter," 15-6, also see note 14.

⁹³ Schmidt, "Introduction," 5.

⁹⁴ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992): xviii.

⁹⁵ Zapf, "Mittelalter," 16.

⁹⁶ Zapf, "Mittelalter," 16.

⁹⁷ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, xviii.

Such cases claimed that Jews partook in the slaughter of innocent Christians (usually children) in order to use their blood for perverse rituals, typically for the baking of *matzah* for Passover and, sometimes, as a palliative.⁹⁸ Blood libel is a subdivision of *ritual murder*—*ritual murder* is the charge that Jews vented hostility towards Christ and Christians, usually boys, by killing them in the spring often creating, or re-creating, Christ's Passion through ritual crucifixion.⁹⁹ The term *blood libel* insinuates that a *ritual murder* has taken place with the addition of perverse use of Christian blood for Jewish ritual.¹⁰⁰

Eberhard's interest in the subject of blood libel is evident in a manuscript he commissioned—the transcriptions of the 1475 Simon of Trent trial.¹⁰¹ The manuscript survives today in the Yeshiva Museum in New York and bears the coat of arms of the house of Württemberg.¹⁰² The trial itself was against the Jewish community of Trent, located in Northern Italy, close to the southern border of Germany (present-day Austria). Although the civic infrastructure and most of the population was Northern Italian, Trent absorbed many German immigrants and as much as one-quarter of the population might have been German speaking.¹⁰³

The story of ritual murder and blood libel began during Holy Week in 1475, when Simon Unferdorben disappeared, and his mutilated body was found on Easter Sunday in an underground cistern in the house of Samuel, the leader of the Jewish community in Trent.¹⁰⁴ The accusation was preceded by several anti-Jewish sermons by the well-known Franciscan preacher, Bernardino Feltre, who arrived in Trent to deliver the Lenten sermons; in them, he vilified the

⁹⁸ Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93.

⁹⁹ Cohen, *Christ Killers*, 93.

¹⁰⁰ Cohen, *Christ Killers*, 93, 110.

¹⁰¹ The sources used for the discussion of the Trent libel are: Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Hsia, *Trent 1475*; Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers*.

¹⁰² Hsia, *Trent 1475*, xviii.

¹⁰³ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 3.

Jews for practicing usury, chided Christians who engaged with them, and warned of an impending danger soon to befall the city.¹⁰⁵ The series of anti-Jewish sermons heightened the awareness of the community, ensuring that Trent would be receptive to the ensuing allegations of blood libel.¹⁰⁶ The investigation into the murder was led by Johannes Hinderbach and resulted in the arrest, interrogation, torture, trial, and execution of most of the Jews accused of being involved; they were convicted for the torture and murder of Simon and the collection and distribution of Christian blood for ritual purposes. The trial itself, however, was suspended for a short time when Hinderbach's conduct was called into question, namely due to disputed miracles attached to the newly sanctified Simon martyr, which he championed.¹⁰⁷ Because of the suspension, Hinderbach sought the help of the princes of the Holy Roman Empire in an open letter written in German, and he also organized a convoy, headed by the Dominican Heinrich of Schlettstett, to gather testimonies of the previous trials in southern Germany to help close his case against the Jews.¹⁰⁸ Schlettstett arrived in Ravensburg to collect documents of all relevant south German cases, and the task was achieved when the imperial bailiff of Lower and Upper Swabia, Johannes Truchsess von Waldburg, provided documentation on the trial against the Jews of Ravensburg in 1430, which included the murder of a Christian child in a cellar, resulting in the execution of the Jews charged.¹⁰⁹ Based on the trial transcription and sources associated with the trial, a reconstruction of the libels that were mentioned were largely from the southern German-Alpine region: Ravensburg (1430), Meran (1440), Landshut (1440), an earlier accusation in Trent (1461), Pfullendorf (1461), Endingen (1470), and Regensburg (1476).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 33.

¹⁰⁷ Between 31 March 1475 and 29 June 1476, there were at least 129 miracles attributed to Simon. See Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 52.

¹⁰⁸ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 76.

¹⁰⁹ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 76.

¹¹⁰ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 93.

The story of Simon of Trent spread quickly through Germany, largely through printed sources. Other cases of blood libel and ritual murder, such as that in Endigen (1470) and Regensburg (1476), were also communicated via prints.¹¹¹ As with the story of Simon of Trent, these narratives of Jewish “bloodlust” could dominate public consciousness through a process capable of quickly producing and disseminating polemic material.¹¹² The event of Simon’s murder, in fact, was well-known enough that it appeared in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493) (fig. 3.1). In the print, nine Jews marked with a Jewish badge gather around Simon, who is standing on a table. The Jewish men cut and poke specific areas of the young boy’s body. The tip of his infant penis is cut, causing his blood to fountain into a collecting vessel. Several of the motifs found in print reinforced Christian expectations by including a specific “Jewish” pattern of wounding, which has its parallel and origin in the narrative of Jewish violence found in the Crucifixion.¹¹³ Moreover, the print has many visual corollaries with Christ’s circumcision as it appears to present assault by Jews through the language of Christological suffering. This is relevant for a German audience because Jews already symbolized for them many of the problems in the Holy Roman Empire and confirmed much of what they thought already to be true—that Jews murdered Christians.¹¹⁴ This “narrative” of murder, therefore, became part of how many German communities understood their own histories and identities by including political and civic justice as a reflection of the “salvific progress of Christendom.”¹¹⁵ This is exemplified by the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, which gives an account of history starting with the creation of the world to 1493 (the year of its publication) and included Simon’s story under the theme of

¹¹¹ Mitchell Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogroms: Violence, Memory, and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 138.

¹¹² Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogroms*, 138.

¹¹³ Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogroms*, 138-9. Also, see Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 57.

¹¹⁴ Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 46.

¹¹⁵ Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 46.

“crimes” against Christianity perpetrated by Jews, witches, and heretics.¹¹⁶ Jewish malefactors are seen, through words and images, engaged in all sorts of violence against Christianity, including ritual murder, host desecration, and blood libel.¹¹⁷ The publication of the story of Simon of Trent in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* was key in making it, and other stories of Jewish blood libel, available to a large audience. Not only was the *Nuremberg Chronicle* printed in Latin fifteen-hundred times, there were also one-thousand copies in German.¹¹⁸ Further, the book was published in smaller, pirated versions in German and distributed widely.¹¹⁹ In addition, the story of Simon was also distributed in a cheaper version through pamphlets, broadsheets, and chapbooks. In these forms, the story of Simon was meant to engender a deep emotional response on the infant’s suffering, especially for those who could not make a pilgrimage to Trent.¹²⁰

Moreover, the Trent trials had real implications for the Jews in Southern Germany. Under severe torture, one of the Jews involved in the Trent trials invented a story about a ritual murder and blood libel that happened eight years earlier at Passover in the south German city of Regensburg; and, during the fabrication, he named fourteen actual Regensburg Jews.¹²¹ The named Jews plus many others were arrested, tortured, and set to be executed in 1476.¹²² Many of these Jews, however, were under the protection of Emperor Friedrich III, who intervened.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 47.

¹¹⁷ Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 47. This section of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* also includes the bloody “Rindfleisch” pogroms and the massive executions after the Black Death. For an account of the Rindfleisch massacres in the *exempla* of the Dominican preacher Rudolph of Schlettstadt, see Miri Rubin, “Rudolph of Schlettstadt, O.P.: Reporter of Violence, Writer on Jews,” in *Christ Among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Order of Preachers*, ed. Kent Emery, Jr. and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 283-292.

¹¹⁸ Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 48.

¹¹⁹ Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 48.

¹²⁰ Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 50.

¹²¹ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 97.

¹²² Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 98.

¹²³ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 98.

After a four year impasse, the Jews were finally released from prison.¹²⁴ The event, nevertheless, preoccupied Christian consciousness for several decades—on February 25, 1519, for example, eight hundred Jewish adults and children were expelled from the city.¹²⁵ This happened at a time when local sentiment concerning usurious loans ran high. The local preacher Balthasar Hubmair, who condemned the practice on religious grounds, enflamed anti-Jewish sentiment and the twenty-eight local guilds regularly complained about the loans, even stating the Christians were “sucked dry, injured in their body and goods, and without doubt, also blemished in their soul’s salvation and all felicitous estate.”¹²⁶ As a sign of social unrest and in response to the death of Emperor Maximilian I, the city rid themselves of the “emperor’s Jews,” a goal that was part of the civic agenda since the trial of 1476.¹²⁷ After the expulsion, the synagogue was demolished and replaced with a church dedicated to the Virgin, an act which is celebrated in many surviving broadsheets, songs, and woodcuts.¹²⁸ As noted with Jewish-Christian relationships in Württemberg, economic tensions, political motivations, and religious forces could, and did, directly affect the Jewish population in Regensburg. A similar set of circumstances characterized the expulsion in Nuremberg in 1499.¹²⁹ In short, anti-Jewish movements were part of civic life in the region in the period and were not restricted to any one particular place.

The belief that Jews were the enemies of Christ and Christianity, which lay at the heart of charges of blood libel, was also made possible by a “transcoding” between sacred history and

¹²⁴ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 98.

¹²⁵ Hsia, “The Usurious Jew: Economic Structure and Religious Representations in an Anti-Semitic Discourse” in *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 62.

¹²⁶ Hsia, “The Usurious Jew,” 163-4

¹²⁷ Hsia, “The Usurious Jew,” 163.

¹²⁸ Hsia, “The Usurious Jew,” 163. Also, see the anonymous poem “How the New Chapel of the Virgin in Regensburg was Built in the Year A.D. 1519” reprinted in, Gerald Strauss, trans. *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation: A Collection of Documents Selected, Translated, and Introduced by Gerald Strauss* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 123-129.

¹²⁹ Hsia, “The Usurious Jew,” 165.

popular history. The elision of past and present, sacred and profane resulted in a tense typological relationship between biblical and contemporary events.¹³⁰ This is certainly seen in the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, which constructs its image of the Jew from myriad biblical and contemporary source outside canonical descriptions. As indexes, rather than isolated objects, the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, and altarpieces like it, may be conceptualized as conduits that absorbed and reflected the Jewish “other” while, as stated by Mitchell Merback, also working as “machines for the periodic interchange of [anti-Jewish] imagery.”¹³¹ Prints and mythical stories underscored the narrative of “Jewish menace” to the Christian body social and to Christian sacraments, which may explain the reasons anti-Jewish representations appear in the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* with regularity and consistency. The anti-Jewish representation Ratgeb created is certainly reflective of the anti-Semitism prevalent in Southern Germany at the time.

Yet, the question remains, how might such anti-Jewish polemic have served the needs of a Christian viewer? As I demonstrate in the following section, the anti-Jewish imagery in the panels of the altarpiece may be seen as a mobilizing and activating agent for the Christian viewer. Because the altarpiece is a liturgical object, I must also consider the specific functional and ideological context in which the anti-Judaic imagery was given meaning. What purpose did anti-Jewish representations serve in engendering piety? What types of behaviors were they supposed to stimulate? To answer this, I will briefly discuss Eucharistic “reception” in connection with contemporary concepts of Jewish malefaction.

¹³⁰ For this concept, see Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogroms*, 109.

¹³¹ Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogroms*, 109.



Figure 3.1 Workshop of Michael Wolgemut, *The Martyrdom of St. Simon of Trent* from the Nuremberg Chronicle, fol. 254, 1493. Available at Artstor.org.

4 EUCHARISTIC IMPLICATIONS

In the *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, the *Last Supper* and the *Crucifixion* present the viewer with two types of “reception.” Judas’s reception of the sacrificial bread in the *Last Supper* and the Magdalen’s reception of Christ’s body and blood in the *Crucifixion* are representative of the sacramental wine, signified by Christ’s blood, in the *Crucifixion* are representative of two types of Eucharistic reception—one correct and the other exceedingly incorrect. In turn, a typological relationship between the two figures is mirrored not only in their reception, but also visually in their bodies, expressions, and clothing. The unworthy “Communion of Judas,” therefore, may be seen as a cautionary tale for the Christian viewer and the Magdalen’s pious and contrite reception can be viewed as one to be imitated. Since the “unworthy” reception is likely to have been the underlying cause of anxiety surrounding reception, my discussion here is centered on incorrect or “unworthy” reception.

Eucharistic doctrine was an ongoing topic of debate in late-medieval and early modern Christianity with scholars adopting a range of positions regarding the nature and identity of Christ’s body both historically and eucharistically. Throughout this process, many important questions arose as to the nature of Christ’s risen body and its relationship to the body of the Christian, both in a corporeal and social sense.¹³² This could range from the fourth-century concept of the Church as the *corpus verum Christi* (true body of Christ) to the complexities of Christ’s bodily presence in the Mass. By the Carolingian period, the doctrine of the real presence of Christ’s body had been established. Theologians looking to differentiate between the historical body and the Eucharistic body introduced the *corpus mysticum Christi* (mystical presence of

¹³² Robert C. Stacy, “From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews and the Body of Christ,” *Jewish History* 12, no. 1 (1998): 13.

Christ's body) in the Mass.¹³³ Priests were given authority to administer the sacrament's salvific powers with regularity and predictability.¹³⁴ For Christians, the doctrine of Real Presence was something to be celebrated, as made evident in the establishment of the feast of *Corpus Christi*, but it also necessitated being on guard against those who threatened to violate Christ's bodily integrity, the Jews.¹³⁵ This bodily integrity, moreover, was emphasized by popular devotion and expressed by theologians and artists through a general tendency of thinking about Christ in human terms manifested in representations and imitations of Christ's physical suffering.¹³⁶ This threat is arguably the oldest and most unchanging Christian perception of Jews and Judaism; it has precedence with Jewish presence at the Crucifixion, something emphasized by redactors of the New Testament, who reassigned blame for Christ's death from to the Romans to the Jews.¹³⁷ By the sixteenth century, the susceptibility of Christ's fragile body, from heretics, skeptics, and Jews, manifested itself as a "dialectic of vulnerability and power."¹³⁸

Yet, over time, the image of carnal Jew in the Christian consciousness is also one that became a paradoxical mirror, often appearing in Christian sermons, artworks, and textual sources. In some instances, the antithesis could be so self-referential that it even collapsed Judas and the Christian into the same person. In the *Zeitglöcklein der Passion Jesu Christi* (Little Hours of the Passion of Jesus Christ), by the Dominican Bertholdus of Freiberg (1493), for example, both Judas and the living celebrant become indistinguishable from one another as they both participate in Christ's sacrifice; the reader speaks the following during the eighth meditation, on Judas' sale of Christ:

¹³³ Stacy, "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration," 13.

¹³⁴ Stacy, "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration," 12.

¹³⁵ Stacy, "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration," 13.

¹³⁶ David Biale, "God's Blood: Medieval Jews and Christians Debate the Body," in *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 85.

¹³⁷ Stacy, "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration," 11.

¹³⁸ Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 4.

Woe to me, a miserable sinner. Woe to me, an accomplice of Judas. That I so often, in mortal sin and with the intent to go and sin more, have gone with Judas to the table of the Lord, to supper of the Easter lamb of the most Holy Sacrament. Woe to me, the most miserable of men, yes, more offensive than Judas... Woe to me a most impure traitor that I, so often as I receive the Sacrament, kiss my God, pass myself off as a friend of God and lead my God to the thieves.¹³⁹

The text asks the votary to be aware of her or his own transgressions by equating her or his inability to stop sinning with Judas's betrayal. Like Judas, the devotee is inculcated in Christ's suffering and death and, by extension, is also prone to unworthily taking the Host and, thus, desecrating it. As a point of identification as well as a strong anti-type, Judas provided Christians with a means of discerning the level of peril in which their souls resided. His image, undoubtedly, was a strong evocation for the viewer to heed Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:16-29).

In Paul's letter and in the *Zeitglöcklein*, the displacement of guilt onto Judas served as a mobilizing agent pushing the Christian towards God and away from carnal and "judaizing" reception of the Eucharist. The point is quite effective. The grotesqueness with which Judas is rendered in the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* is a reminder to the viewer that those who take the Sacraments unworthily and sinfully are no better than carnal Jewish "dogs" and deserve damnation.¹⁴⁰ In other words, Judas, as an anti-type, albeit one with whom a poor, fallen Christian might temporarily identify, is a strong enjoiner to the viewer to examine himself. Ratgeb's construction of Judas is one that absorbs many of the social stigmas attached to Jews and social pariahs. He creates a caricature of all Jews by presenting the arch-betrayer in a manner

¹³⁹ Quoted in, Collison, "Sacerdotal Themes," 316.

¹⁴⁰ Merback, "Jewish Carnality," 214; also, see Collison, "Sacerdotal Themes," 316.

meant to mobilize the Christian viewer by Judas and his “unworthy” reception. Ratgeb’s composition exposes anti-Jewish sentiment as well as the anxieties surrounding the Eucharist, believed to be the true blood and body of Christ, and which needed protection from Jewish malefactors like the carnal, priapic Judas who threatened to re-injure Christ by his actions.

5 CONCLUSION

By positioning the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* within its proper socio-religious milieu, I have attempted to describe the way in which the negative conception of biblical and contemporary Jews could be ensconced in a “liturgical” object meant to motivate the viewer to receive communion properly. By placing quotations around *liturgical*, however, I hope to emphasize that images such as the *Herrenberg Altarpiece* were not strict visual representations of canonical religious sources, but were receptive to, and reflective of, a variety of supplementary material. This is especially evident, for instance, in Ratgeb’s construction of the priapic Judas, the sexualized and violent *Landsknechte*, and the menacing Jewish mohel. The *Herrenberg Altarpiece*, in turn, seems to draw on a variety of sources and relies on invention and inspiration accumulated from popular and polemical material outside of what would be considered traditional influences.

The *Herrenberg Altarpiece* and its polemical imagery, furthermore, can be connected to anti-Jewish sentiment stirred by cases of blood libel, ritual murder, and Host desecration occurring in southern Germany and nearby locales. As with the case of Simon of Trent, stories of the inimical Jew (and the printed image that disseminated those myths) were not only pervasive and powerful, but also motivational for the expulsion of Jews from many southern Germany cities. The idea of the “Jewish” threat (with its social, economic, and religious variants), moreover, was one that could be projected and adapted to Christological self-understanding, which seemed to blur biblical and contemporary realities. Jewish menace to Christ’s body during his Passion merged with Jewish assault to the social body of Christianity, resulting in a very powerful trope that could illuminate the anxieties surrounding Christ’s true body and blood present in the Host and its foil—the mythical Jewish “other.”

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