

JOURNAL OF MILLENNIAL STUDIES

Volume I, Issue 1

Spring 1998

Jewish Shock-Troops of the Apocalypse: Antichrist and the End, 1200-1600

Andrew Gow, PhD
History and Classics, University of Alberta, Canada

It would not be difficult to dismiss the legend of the Antichrist in its medieval manifestations as pure fantasy—analogueous to such entertaining motifs as fire-breathing dragons, unicorns, enchantments and the like. The Antichrist was, in our terms, an ‘imaginary’ figure, a product of the collective, historical, theological, mythopoeic functions of the imagination. In our terms; to medieval and early modern Christians, the Antichrist was a terrifying reality. Matthew of Janow (†1394) wrote that the Antichrist was so universally and thoroughly discussed that when he appeared, even the little children would know him instantly.¹

From the time of the Church Fathers, learned Biblical exegesis has tended to interpret the Beast of Revelation 13, the basis of the Antichrist legend, as a corporate entity—the totality and final sum of evil in the world. However, many medieval and early modern commentators (even many who wrote in Latin) were less concerned with precise Biblical scholarship than with that part of the Christian tradition which they knew best. Furthermore, the vernacular sources that in-

¹ Cited by Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 39. To medieval Christians, the Antichrist was “no legendary dragon spouting imaginary fire; he was a terrifying reality” (37-38); “...the Antichrist was no mere creature of scholarly dispute but the deeply disturbing concern of everyone.”(39). Portions of this paper appeared in my article “The Jewish Antichrist in Medieval and Early Modern Germany”, in: *MedievalEncounters* 2,3 (1996), 249-285; this material is reproduced in this electronic format by permission of Koninklijke Brill, Leiden/NL.

terpreted learned theology for the non-Latinate in literary or exegetical genres provide evidence for a strikingly different and more popular interpretation. On the European Continent, the broad masses of western Christendom and many learned clerks believed the Antichrist was a real person who would be born, live and die, often in a perverse parody of Jesus' life, at the End of Time.² He would persecute true believers and set up an ungodly realm of terror on earth. Starting in the early Middle Ages, Christian sources began to assimilate the Jewish Messiah to the Christian Antichrist. Christians came to see in the Antichrist they expected at the End of Time the figure the Jews believed would be their Messiah. Beginning in the twelfth century, vernacular literary and exegetical texts express the idea that the despised Jews would play a major role as the servants, supporters and troops of the Antichrist when he came to devastate Christendom. In his famous and influential *Historia Scholastica* (c.1165), the Parisian master Peter Comestor confused the Ten Tribes of Israel with the apocalyptic destroyers Gog and Magog. In the face of such an authority, the very few academic commentators who attempted to maintain Biblical and historical distinctions between these two legendary peoples had little success in persuading the broad public.

² The situation in England seems to have been rather different. Lollard exegesis tended to see the Antichrist as the pope. Curtis Bostick notes that this is the result of a similar distinction between a corporate and a personal Antichrist: see his dissertation "The Antichrist and the 'trewe men'. Lollard Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Early Modern England" (University of Arizona, 1993). Bostick notes that the theologians Tyndale and Wyclif generally saw the Antichrist as a corporate entity, whereas at the popular level, the Lollards interpreted Antichrist as a real person, usually the pope. Most students of the Antichrist traditions have not taken both views seriously: Emerson, for example, calls the personal interpretation "a standard and widely accepted understanding of Antichrist" (*Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 7); the main alternative to this view, he suggests, is the political interpretation that from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries identified the Antichrist with a specific pope, political figure, opponent, heretic or reformer, a view that was to prevail in the sixteenth century with the Protestants, who understood the entire Roman Catholic church as Antichrist (*Idem*). Yet the identification of the *papacy* with Antichrist was not merely a political move, but also a fundamentally theological, Bible-centered exegesis. My study shows that there is a real distinction between the allegorizing or symbolic view characteristic of high theology and the personal view that indeed did win out and become 'standard and widely accepted' among the majority of western Christians—except the Lollards. In fact, both these ancient traditions were necessary for the identification of specific personages (a pope or an emperor, usually) with the Antichrist—whether by Lollards, by Rupert of Deutz (see below) or by Luther. Whether the identification of the Antichrist with the pope is more "political" than identifying him with the Messiah awaited by the Jews (clearly not the pope!) would lead us beyond the scope of this article.

It is characteristic of the artificial divisions in the historical profession that students of apocalypticism have tended to overlook antisemitic sentiment in their sources, putting it down to 'the medieval environment', while historians of antisemitism have seen apocalyptic belief as a 'typically medieval' aberration, unrelated to their own work. In fact, apocalypticism and anti-semitism are, in the high and later Middle Ages, inextricably intertwined. They may both be rooted in the same fundamentally insecure and credulous use of Biblical, legendary and literary authorities as interpretive guides to radically troubled times. Given the overwhelming evidence that medieval Christians believed the Antichrist would be none other than the Messiah awaited by the Jews, and the Jews would be his first and foremost servants, it is astonishing that this aspect of Europe's oldest *Intimfeindschaft* has received so little attention in scholarship.

Without wishing to engage in a debate on periodization, I will, in this paper, treat the early decades of the sixteenth century as belonging to the later Middle Ages. As such, early sixteenth-century culture and its products cannot be understood without reference to phenomena that belong originally and properly to the preceding centuries.

The German *Antichrist* book was a product of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. Its roots must be sought, however, in an earlier century. Berthold of Regensburg (c.1210-1272), who was not known for friendly feelings toward the Jews, nonetheless retained a very conservative and 'cautious' attitude toward their final role in the history of salvation: any Jews who survive the Antichrist's time will convert to Christianity before the Last Day.³ Berthold's Dominican contemporary Hugo Ripelin of Strasbourg (1210-c.1270), whose work would exert a decisive influence on later-medieval ideas concerning the Antichrist and the Jews, had a very

³ Frey, "Gottesmörder", 38: The second reason: "Unde durch ein ander sache: swaz ir den endekrist überlebt, die werdent vor dem jungesten tage alle ze kristenliuten" Cited from Franz Pfeiffer, ed., *Berthold von Regensburg. Vollständige Ausgabe seiner Predigten mit Anmerkungen* (Vienna, 1862-1880/Reprint Berlin, 1965; = Deutsche Neudrucke, Texte des Mittelalters), 1, 363. The vicious tone of the sermons in general must also be considered: the Talmud is "allez sament ketzerie, unde dâ stêt sô verfluochtiu ketzerie an, daz daz übel ist daz sie lebent." (vol. 1, 401): "heresy through and through, and there is such damnable heresy in it that it is sickening that they are allowed to live."

different view, based at least in part on the ancient traditions of the Tiburtine Sibyl and the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius.

Hugo's *Compendium theologiae veritatis* was the most widespread basic sketch of scholastic theology in the later Middle Ages and Reformation era. It went through almost 40 printings, and owed much of its medieval vogue to the fact that it was greatly indebted to Bonaventure's 'Breviloquium' and to the works of Albert the Great; indeed, it was generally mistaken for the work of one or the other.⁴ Hugo followed the Tiburtine Sibyl and Adso concerning the descent of the Antichrist, who was to be born of the Jewish tribe of Dan. He would claim to be the Jewish Messiah, and the Jewish people would be his special and foremost adherents.⁵ Hugo was not above inventing sources for this assertion.⁶ His thinking on the Antichrist is concrete and personal, whereas the *Glossa ordinaria* he carelessly cites calls the Beast of Rev. 13,1, 'in a spiritual

⁴ Christoph Peter Burger, "Endzeiterwartungen im späten Mittelalter", in: *Der Antichrist und die Fünfzehn Zeichen vor dem Jüngsten Gericht*. Kommentarband zum Faksimile der ersten typographischen Ausgabe eines unbekanntes Straßburger Druckers, um 1480; ed. Friedrich Wittig Verlag (Hamburg, 1979), 18-78; 21, esp. note 8. For a complete listing and investigation of the manuscript and printed tradition, see Georg Steer's monumental study, *Hugo Ripelin von Straßburg. Zur Rezeptions- und Wirkungsgeschichte des 'Compendium theologiae veritatis' im deutschen Spätmittelalter* (Tübingen, 1981). Formerly, the *Compendium* was attributed to Albertus Magnus (Ulm: Johannes Zainer, 1481); Hain 437.

⁵ "[Antichristus] nascetur autem in babilone de tribu Dan, sicut dicit glossa super apocalypsim. Post hoc veniet in hierusalem, et circumcidet se dicens iudeis se esse christum illis promissum. Unde plebs iudaica specialiter adhaerebit illi, sicut dicit Haymo super Apocalypsim." Trachtenberg cites numerous examples of this hostile and polemical imputation—in which anti-Judaic and antisemitic motives are inseparable— even dating it to "the early Christian era", although he does not cite a source. An eleventh-century formula of renunciation of Judaism required the convert to anathematize 'all those who hope for the coming of the Messiah, or rather of the Antichrist': *The Devil and the Jews*, 32. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, the Tortosa Jewry oath required a Jew to swear "per mesías qui es dit Antecrist, lo cual vosaltres esperats" ('by the Messiah, who is called the Antichrist, for whom you people are waiting'); cited in *The Devil and the Jews*, note 2 to chapter 2 (224), from José Amador de los Ríos, *Historia social, política y religiosa de los Judíos de España y Portugal* (Madrid, 1875-76), three vols.; vol. 1, 572.

⁶ See notes to the Latin text, Appendix C, number 4.

sense the Antichrist, or generally the entire number of the wicked'.⁷ The late-medieval *Antichrist*-book is based largely on Hugh's popularizing and literalist exegetical framework.

First printed around 1450 in a transitional format, in which the images are woodcut prints and the text hand-written, the chiroxylographic *Antichrist* book of c.1450 is not merely an *unicum*, it is an unique testimonial from the dawn of Western printing to the urgency and popularity of this theme. The oldest of the eight surviving manuscripts can be dated to 1430.⁸ A xylographic edition (text and images are woodcuts: Nuremberg, 1472) and a number of typographically-printed editions (e.g., the Strasbourg *Antichrist* of 1480 with woodcut illustrations⁹) are also known.¹⁰ The text of these early printed versions is in essence identical. The latest German edition was printed at Erfurt in 1516. An English variant, published by the astute businessman Wynkyn de Worde, begins with the words *The Byrth and Lyfe of the Moost False and Deceytfull Antechryste*. This version appeared around 1520. It was based on an English edition published as early as 1505, and

⁷ *Glossæordinaria*, PLCXIV.733b: “Et vidi’ etc. Bestia spiritualiter est Antichristus, vel generaliter tota collectio malorum.” This view is shared by Hugh of St. Cher and Hugo a Novo Castro.

⁸ Burger, “Endzeiterwartungen”, 18-19.

⁹ For the text, see *Der Antichrist. Faksimile der ersten typographischen Ausgabe* (Hamburg, 1979). The text has been rendered in modern German by Karin Boveland in the companion volume, *Der Antichrist und Die Fünfzehn Zeichen vor dem Jüngsten Gericht. Kommentarband zum Faksimile der ersten typographischen Ausgabe eines unbekanntes Straßburger Druckers, um 1480* (Hamburg, 1979).

¹⁰ Another fifteenth-century xylographic version, undated and without place of publication, can be added to the list: *Enndtkrist. Hie hebet sich ann von dem Entkrist* (title incomplete), 27 sheets in-folio; and another undated typographic edition, without place of publication, of 20 sheets, also in-folio. Yet another edition came out at Strasbourg in-quarto, published by Hupfuff, undated; there is also a late Erfurt edition by Hans Maler (Maller), in-quarto, typographic, of 1516: Theodor Oswald Weigel, *Verzeichnis der Xylographischen Bücher des XV. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1856), 6.

was derived at least in part from the German *Antichrist*-book.¹¹ The Jews are intimately involved in the career of the Antichrist in the English book as well. The late fifteenth-century French¹² and Spanish¹³ lives of Antichrist are not unimportant, but they also are derived in large part from the earlier German *Antichrist*-books. The paucity of surviving editions and the isolation of these texts, compared to the proliferation of Antichrist material in German, justify the narrower focus chosen here.

More important than these details of publishing are the form and content of the text. On fol. 5, plate ‘a’ of *Antichrist 1480* (chosen for convenience of reference), the Antichrist is shown being circumcised at Jerusalem. He announces to the Jews that he is “the Messiah promised them, for whom they have waited for so long, as the *Compendium* says.”¹⁴ In 5b, “the Jews begin to rebuild the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, which had been destroyed long ago by the Roman

¹¹ The other sources of the English text are the *Livre de Auctorites de Saintes Docteurs: Touchant de L’Advenement et du mauvais Antechrist* (Lyons, 1495) and *The Coming of Antichrist*, included in *The Art to Live Well and Die Well* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1505). See Joseph M. Ricke’s Ph.D. thesis “The Antichrist Vita at the End of the Middle Ages: An Edition of The Byrth and Lyfe of the Moost False and Deceytfull Antechryst” (Houston: Rice University, 1982). Ricke’s edition is from the sole surviving print, preserved at Cambridge University Library, Syn. 7.52.17.

¹² *L’Advenement de l’Antechrist* (Paris: Antoine Verard, 1492), in-folio, typographic; later printed with several other works to form *L’Art de Bien Vivre et de Bien Mourir* (Paris, Antoine Verard, 1493); the *Livre de Auctorites de Saintes Docteurs: Touchant de l’Advenement et du Mauvais Antechrist* (sic) (Lyon, 1495); *La vie du mauvais Antechrist* (Lyon, 1499, in-folio; and Antwerp, 1560, in-octo, typographic). Contemporary Latin editions included *De Antichristo auctoritas sanctorum doctorum* (Milan, 1496), in-folio, and *De turpissima conceptione, nativitate et aliis praesag. diab. illius pessimi hominum antichristi* (Paris: Le Noir, undated), in-quarto, typographic. See Weigel, *Verzeichnis*, 6-7.

¹³ *Libro del Antichristo* (Saragossa, 1496); typographic.

¹⁴ “Czu ierusalem lot sich der Enndkrist beschniden / noch der alten ee . und spricht zu^o den juden. Er sey messias der in verheissen sy. Des sy alslang gewartet haben. Und das stot ouch in Compendio.” *Antichrist 1480*, fol. 5a.

emperors Titus and Vespasian. The Jews say that their God has arrived.”¹⁵ Antichrist calls himself the ‘true Messiah’ and ‘true God on earth’.¹⁶ On fol. 11a, “the Antichrist has the Jews marked on the forehead and on the right hand as a sign that they believe in him, as is written in the Apocalypse of John in the *Compendium*, 7”.¹⁷ The Antichrist sends out his ‘apostles’ to preach and convert the world to him. One of these messengers preaches to the Queen of the Amazons and the Red Jews; “these same Jews will break out at the time of the Antichrist.” The Red Jews are a specifically German variant of the Comestorine conflation of Gog and Magog with Ten Tribes. I have written a book on them, published by E.J. Brill in 1995. The Red Jews break out in order to join the Antichrist after he has manifested himself at Jerusalem for the battle against Christendom. Like the Jews who rebuild the Temple (another detail from the *Compendium*, see *Antichrist 1480*, 5b), the military Red Jews are his particular followers.

The illustration on 13b depicts a ‘false apostle’ preaching to the Queen of the Amazons, a lady-in-waiting, and a bearded male figure bearing a scepter and girded with a sword. He is not wearing a Jew’s hat, but his beard and the content of the caption make it clear that he is a Jew.

¹⁵ “Hye heben die juden den Tempel Salomonis zu^o ierusalem wider an zu bu^oen. Der vor zyten czerstoert wart/von den romischen keisern Tyto und Vespasiano. Und die juden sprechen /ir got sy kumen.” *Antichrist 1480*, 5b. The detail is from the *Compendium*: “Judei namque templum quod romani destruxerant reedificabunt.” (lines 41-42).

¹⁶ “Der wor messias” and “worer got uff erden”: *Antichrist 1480*, fols. 12b and 13a.

¹⁷ “Der Enndkrist heysset die juden bezeichnen an die stirn. Und uff die rechten hand/zu^o einem zeichen das sy an in glouben. das stet geschriben in Appocalipsi johannis in Compendio septimo”: *Antichrist 1480*, 11a. Here the sealing of the servants of God (Rev. 7,3-17), who are twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel (i.e., including the ten ‘lost’ tribes) with a sign on the forehead is confused with the sealing of the servants of the Beast on the right hand or forehead (Rev.13,16-18); the confusion will continue with the repetition of the sealing of the servants of Antichrist in 16b and 17b. The source used by the author is not the Apocalypse of St. John, but Hugo’s *Compendium*, as the text indicates: “et omnes suo caractere signari in manu dextra, et in frontibus suis sicut habet Apocalipsim 13[,17]”. This confusion reflects the current belief that the Jews will be the servants of Antichrist, not the suggestion in Rev. 7 that the servants of God will consist of all twelve tribes of Israel; it would have been improbable had the author been well-versed in the Vulgate. He generally cites Scripture via the *Compendium*, which suggests that he was not consulting the Bible.

Armed and bearing a regal scepter, he represents the threatening paradox of a military Jewish kingdom. To medieval Christians, this was a role-reversal, a *Verkehrung* in the sense of ‘the world turned upside-down, both unthinkable and absurd except in this apocalyptic context. Next, the ‘pilgrimage’ or ingathering (*czuzug*) to the Antichrist from all over the world and of all kings begins: I quote: “First of all, the Red Jews break out and cause the world great suffering. These same Jews are called Gog and Magog and their ten tribes” (14b).¹⁸

The Red Jews then march to Jerusalem to champion the Antichrist. The illustration to 14b depicts a king, a queen, a lady of high fashion, and two Jews, all on horseback. One Jew appears to be carrying a small round shield, i.e., he too is armed—illegal since the general pacification of Mainz in 1103. In the illustration to 15b, the Antichrist takes gold coins from a tray held by a demon and hands them to his followers, who are marked on the forehead with his sign. They are a woman, a turbaned figure (a Turk or a Jew) and two figures whose dress and headgear indicate that they are Jews.

Written in German without complex citations, the *Antichrist*-book was a work of popular exegesis. Its audience was in all likelihood composed of the nobility, urban merchants and guildsmen.¹⁹ Not scriptural authenticity, but received wisdom, ‘common knowledge’, current beliefs concerning the Last Things²⁰ and the generally hostile attitude toward the Jews were the standard

¹⁸ From servants of God sealed with a mark on the forehead (Rev. 7), the Ten Tribes have become servants of Antichrist: medieval tradition filters Scripture.

¹⁹ The printing runs in the fifteenth century were still very modest, compared even to the edition sizes of the Reformation era. In the 1470s, 100-200 copies of a book were commonly printed, and in the 1480s, printings of 400-500 were average; some reached 1,000 or more: Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book. The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*, trans. David Gerard (London: NLB, 1976), 217-218.

²⁰ A contemporary (mid-fifteenth-century) Flemish block-book also depicts apocalyptic figures as Jews: the locusts from the bottomless pit (Rev. 9,3-11) appear much as they are described in Revelation, but instead of a crown of gold, they sport Jew’s hats: Zafran, *Iconography of Antisemitism*, vol. I, 26, citing Heinrich Theodor Musper, *Die Urausgaben der holländischen Apokalypse und Biblia Pauperum*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1961); Zafran reproduces this illustration in vol. 2, plate 53.

of interpretation and truth. The German-speaking audience seem to have had some demands as concerns authority: the author cites as a main source Hugo Ripelin's *Compendium*.

As we have seen, the author of the *Antichrist*-book was not overly concerned to ensure that the interpretations he proposed conformed exactly to Scripture; 'close enough' seems to have been 'good enough'. Other authorities were often held to be sufficient proof, but in this text, authorities are cited without regard for precise meaning. An incorrect reference to Jerome in a critical passage proves that medieval not patristic tradition, and legendary not theological authority were the central pillars of the mental edifice revealed here: the text of *Antichrist 1480*, 13^b, reads:

And another emissary [of the Antichrist] preaches to the Queen of the Amazons and to the Red Jews whom king Alexander enclosed in the Caspian Mountains. These Jews will break out at the time of the Antichrist as St. Jerome writes.

In fact, Jerome's point in his commentary on Ezekiel is that Gog and Magog²¹ are not particular peoples whose identity can be got at by means of clever etymologies, which he calls "vanity and a baseless science of names".²² In the *Antichrist*-books as in their main source, Hugo's *Compendium*, an appeal to authority (Jerome and the Gloss, respectively) actually masks the opposite of the 'canonical' position. The argument is as follows: that which everyone knows *must* be the truth—as witnessed to by the Fathers (Jerome) and the Church (the Ordinary Gloss)! The author selectively interprets Jerome's comments on the matter through the medium of standard medieval beliefs concerning the Last Things. He has no trouble perceiving in the mysterious nations that Jerome and the Bible called Gog and Magog the imaginary medieval reality which he and his contemporaries knew as the Red Jews.

This tells us a good deal about the unidentified author, and allows us to draw a parallel to

²¹ Jerome wrote concerning Gog and Magog only, as the Ten Tribes would not be confused with them (as they are here under the name Red Jews) until the twelfth century.

²² Line 39: "superbia et falsi nominis scientia". *Commentariorum in Hiezekielem libri XIV: Ez.* 11,38, 1-23; *CChr* LXXV, 526, line 1512.

Hugo Ripelin. In this kind of question, common knowledge was a better guide to the truth than dusty tomes. Authorities had to be cited, but citations were filtered through what was already known, so that they were understood to say what the *communis opinio* expected to hear.

All the elements that had accumulated since the time of Hugo Ripelin are included in this text, about which Christoph Peter Burger has said “it does not attempt to establish any sort of order” (in the many traditions it cites).²³ Burger thus fails to appreciate the character and genre of the text: its ordering, or lack thereof, is the whole point. Hugo and anything else handy went into this spicy apocalyptic soup. The appended work called the ‘Fifteen Signs preceding the Last Judgment’ was generally attributed to Jerome; in this case, it was drawn largely from the version included in the *Legenda aurea* of Jacobus a Voragine (1228/30-1298).²⁴ In medieval texts, the Fifteen Signs traditionally follow the death of the Antichrist.²⁵ Logic and system are foreign to the tradition, to the author(s) and redactors and to the audience of the *Antichrist*-book. The German readership of this popular text would not have been interested in systematic, logical, orderly exposition.²⁶ What was *supposed* to be there, according to tradition, *was* there.

²³ Burger, “Endzeiterwartungen”, 51.

²⁴ Burger, “Endzeiterwartungen”, 18.

²⁵ This is the case in Hugo a Novo Castro’s *Tractatus devictoria Christi contra Antichristum* (2,10) and in most fifteenth-century illustrated lives of the Antichrist, including the Old French *De l’avenement Antechrist* and the Middle English *Cursor Mundi*: Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 83-84. Burger does not mention the revealing pre-history of association between the Fifteen Signs and the life of Antichrist. On the Fifteen Signs, see William Heist, *The Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1952). One of the earliest versions is the “De quindecim signis” of Pseudo-Bede, *PL XCIV.555* (England, 8th century); see also Georg Nölle, “Die Legende von den Fünfzehn Zeichen vor dem Jüngsten Gerichte”, in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 6 (1874), 413-476.

²⁶ Burger is consternated by what must appear to him as a logical contradiction: it is said that the Antichrist will be born in ‘a city called the Great Babylon’ of the tribe of Dan (an element from the Sibylline tradition). However, this must happen *before* the Red Jews break out of their mountain prison, Burger objects. The Red Jews are the Ten Tribes, of which Dan is one. This is an element of a separate but equally authoritative medieval tradition that also has roots in antiquity. Burger looks

Antichrist or Messiah

The *Fortalicium fidei* ('Fortress of Faith') of Alphonsus a Spina (Alfonso de Espina, bishop of Orense, †1469), which appeared in at least seven editions in Germany between 1471 and 1525, is praised by Burger for offering an example of 'a considerably more logical [better-harmonized] version [of this story] than the captions [of the *Antichrist*-book]'.²⁷ Espina has the Queen of the Amazons, in the Alexander novel merely a neighbour of the 'enclosed peoples', guard (in conjunction with the Great Khan of Cathay) the 'sons of Israel'²⁸ who were enclosed by Alexander between two camps or fortresses (*castra*) called 'guth' and 'maguth'.²⁹

to the *Compendium* for help in explaining these contradictions ("diese Unstimmigkeiten ... aufklären"), but gets no help because Hugo on this point, at least, is tuned to another frequency—that of Augustine and Jerome, who both refuse to see in Gog and Magog any specific peoples, much less the Ten Tribes ("Endzeiterwartungen", 47-48). These two parallel and related, but unharmonized medieval traditions receive equal weight as they are woven seamlessly into a narrative that might seem illogical or naive. We ought to be able to look beyond such terms to the structures underlying such compilation: not credulity, but deference to tradition and a pragmatic taste for concrete detail (cf. Leonardo Olschki, "Der Brief des Presbyters Johannes", 6) are behind these *Unstimmigkeiten*.

²⁷ "Eine wesentlich harmonisiertere Version als der Bildertext bietet Alphonsus a Spina in seinem *Fortalicium fidei*, der 'Festung des Glaubens'...": "Endzeiterwartungen", 50. The *Fortalicium fidei contra fidei christianae hostes* was first printed at Strasbourg by Johann Mentelin in 1471 (Hain 872). At least six further editions appeared over the next fifty years: Basel (1475), Nuremberg (1485), Lyon (1487), Nuremberg (1494), Lyon (1511 and 1525).

²⁸ The "filii israel" are the Ten Tribes; fol. 145^v, col. 2, line 17.

²⁹ These are historical distortions of Gog and Magog, Gog having been interpreted as 'Goths'—for which Augustine was indirectly responsible—and which were common in the Romance versions of the Alexander story. Again, the reference to Comestor ("magister hystoriarum") is not accurate. Espina is conjuring with a respectable *locus*, but Comestor says nothing of the sort.

These enclosed Jews³⁰ are endowed with the horrible characteristics of the ‘unclean peoples’: “naked savages, they live on raw meat and on the fruits of trees”.³¹ When the Antichrist appears, they will join him and accompany him to Jerusalem, where he will reign as a mighty king “by virtue of their support”.³² Then all the other Jews dispersed throughout the world (i.e., the descendants of Benjamin and Judah) will gather at Jerusalem. The Antichrist will be circumcised and claim to be the Christ promised the Jews in their Law. He will say that ‘our Lord Jesus’ was a great deceiver and a magus.³³ For our present purpose, the heart of this portion is as follows:

And all the Jews, deceived by wondrous signs and drawn by promises, will come pouring in to Jerusalem and cleave to him, for they burn with an excessive desire for the Coming of their Messiah, by whom they hope to be delivered from their captivity. And since they will see him in the flush of prosperity, radiant with glory, subjugating other kings, they— who have long been blinded by their false beliefs—will accept him as the true Messiah, and will worship him as a god, and they will fear and respect him as their lord and king.³⁴

The Jews are the first and foremost servants and supporters of the Antichrist.³⁵ The ‘enclosed

³⁰ They are not called the Ten Tribes, but simply *filiis israel*.

³¹ This is what I make of the phrase “nudi incedentes carnibus crudis et arborum fructibus vivunt” (fol. 145^v, col. 2, lines 26-27).

³² That is, “virtute quorum regnabit et erit monarcha potentissimus” (fol. 145^v, col. 2, lines 37-38).

³³ Cf. the 14th-century *sielen trost*.

³⁴ Fol. 145^v, col. 2, line 38 - fol. 146^r col. 1, line 2.

³⁵ The *Compendium de vita antichristi*, published anonymously in 1475, contains the same detail: “Concerning the cult of the Antichrist there are four points. The first is that in order to attract the Jews to himself, he calls himself the Messiah promised to them in the Law, true God and true man, and he will rebuild the temple of Solomon.” (lines 5-9).

Jews' are his power base, and 'all the Jews' of the Diaspora become his subjects as well.³⁶ His reign is based on their support; they in turn see in him the Messiah promised them in their Law.

Espina expressly cites the blind error of the Jews as a justification for their apocalyptic destiny. Anti-Judaic religious positions, antisemitic literary traditions and apocalyptic expectation coalesce here to form a particularly lucid vision of Jewish participation in the destructive reign of the Antichrist. The *Fortalicium fidei* would become—during the decades of especially vigorous antisemitic agitation that followed—a popular and well-harmonized guidebook to the 'Jewish peril' in the Last Days.

Examples from other and more popular genres are readily available; a few really choice ones from the most effective propaganda machine of the Middle Ages, the drama, will suffice. The Künzelsau Corpus Christi cycle (c. 1479) displays prominently the demonic character of the Antichrist (when he is born, a devil informs Lucifer that "our comrade" is born), and emphasizes Antichrist's Jewish support. The Jews become his most faithful adherents after *Archisinagoga* identifies him as the Messiah and asks that he take revenge against the Christians on behalf of the Jews.³⁷

In Hans Folz' late fifteenth-century *Ein Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund*³⁸ and

³⁶ Espina here launches into a discussion of whether the Antichrist will reign in the Temple (*in templo*) at Jerusalem, as some—or rather, 'some others'—say, or whether he will reign *as* the Temple (*in templum*), i.e. the Church: such that the Antichrist will be a *falsus christianus* and claim to be a man of the Church. Here is a thread that can be spun into a yarn like that concerning the 'Papal Antichrist' so favoured by Luther.

³⁷ This work "particularly plays up Antichrist's devilish connections and his close association with the Jews": Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 165. See Peter Liebenow, ed., *Das Künzelsauer Fronleichnamspiel* (Berlin, 1969), lines 5075-5304.

³⁸ A. von Keller, ed. *Fastnachtsspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. I (Stuttgart, 1853; = BLVS, 28; reprint 1965), 169-190. For an English translation, see Gow, *The Red Jews*, Appendix C, no. 9. Folz (1450-1515), a barber, *Meistersinger*, writer of carnival plays and a thorough-going Jew-hater, dedicated this coarse work to the 'Duke of Burgundy'—since 1482, Philip the Fair (1478-1506), son of Maximilian I (1459-1519) of the house of Habsburg. According to one Folz specialist, the present work was composed between 1486 and 1494: see Hanns Fischer, "Hans Folz. Altes und

Pamphilius Gengenbach's *Der Nollhart* (1517),³⁹ two vernacular plays not associated with particular religious holidays, the Antichrist is depicted as the Jewish Messiah—or at least the Jews believe that the Antichrist, when he appears, is the Messiah they have been waiting for. Of this venomous and highly revealing pair of plays, that of Hans Folz is by far the more savage in content and tone.⁴⁰ Not the real Antichrist, but an impostor put up to the job by some rabbis appears at the court of the Duke of Burgundy, demanding that all Christians pay homage to him and hand over worldly power (authority, lordship and government⁴¹) to the Jews. The ruse is discovered and mocked by the Christian characters, especially the violent Fool. After the 'false Messiah' or *Endcrüst* is revealed as an impostor, he explains that the reason for this desperate deceit was that the Jews had been expecting the Messiah to come and save them for fourteen hundred years; since he still had not arrived, they decided to hurry things along. The Jews are then tortured in an unspeakably savage and degrading fashion. The play ends with the men of the Duke dancing with glee around the mutilated corpses of the Jews.

The *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* was written at the time of the strongest efforts by the Nuremberg city council to persuade Emperor Maximilian I to allow the city to expel the

Neues zur Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Schriften", in: *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 95 (1966), 212-236; 225. Concerning Folz and his other works, see the *Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1980), cols. 769-793, and Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz", in: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 101 (1982), 79-104.

³⁹ An extract from this play and an English translation can be found in Gow, *The Red Jews*, Appendix C, no. 10; Basel, 1517; Wolfenbüttel 263 Quod. A modern edition has been prepared by V. Uffer, *Der Nollhart* (Stuttgart/Bern, 1982; = Schweizer Texte, 1).

⁴⁰ Trachtenberg discusses this play briefly, then generalizes concerning the Antichrist plays: "the effect of these plays upon the passions of the mob may be gauged from the action of the Frankfurt City Council, in 1469, establishing special regulations for the protection of the Jewish quarter during the period when the play was being presented." *The Devil and the Jews*, 37. That the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* was written after 1469 does not detract from his point.

⁴¹ "Gewalt, herschaft und regiment": 171, line 30.

Jews. The Jews finally were expelled from Nuremberg in 1499. The city council had been bickering with the Emperor since their decision in 1473 to eject one of the largest and most prosperous Jewish communities in Europe. The Nuremberg citizen Hans Folz depicted the Messiah awaited by the Jews as the Antichrist in other works as well.⁴² Folz' work was supported by members of the Nuremberg patriciate, among whom he found an audience appreciative of his antisemitic tirades.⁴³ The humiliation and torments suggested in this popular carnival farce on the theme of the world turned upside-down (unsuccessfully, of course) mirror contemporary expulsions from the German towns, Spain and Portugal. In the case of Nuremberg, the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* was part of a concerted, long-term campaign on the part of the city council and ruling élite, supported by such middling citizens as Hans Folz, to rid the city of Jews. No Jew held citizenship at Nuremberg from 1499 to 1850.⁴⁴

In *Der Nollhart*, a friar and a Jew dispute the issue of the Messiah. The friar insists that Jesus was the Messiah, citing the usual Biblical *loci*, then at the request of the Jew, describes the Antichrist. The device used is a version of the comedic confusion of persons: the Jew thinks that the Christian means by 'Antichrist' the Jewish Messiah; the Christian thinks the Jew means by

⁴² Between 1483 and 1488, Folz published a poem in rhyming couplets (*Reimpaardichtung*) called *Der falsche Messias*. Here, a young student seduces a Jewish maiden and makes her pregnant. To save his skin, he tricks the girl's parents into believing the awaited child is their Messiah. However, the baby turns out to be female. The student is exposed as a seducer, but the Jews are held up to ridicule as fools. This theme had been used by Caesarius of Heisterbach (c.1180-c.1240) in his *Dialogusmiraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne/Bonn/Brussels, 1851), vol. I, 94-95. See Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz", 79-82.

⁴³ Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz", 102 and 104.

⁴⁴ Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz", 103. See also Phillip N. Bebb, "Jewish Policy in Sixteenth Century Nürnberg", In: *Occasional Papers of the American Society for Reformation Research* (1977), ed. R.C. Walton, 125-136. Bebb ascribes the push to rid the city of its Jews to the rapid growth of both population and the money supply, which caused a "widening bifurcation between prices and wages. The consequent inflation produced severe economic problems for Nürnberg's council and its subjects. Thus it is likely that the city regarded the Jews as the cause of these problems and sought a remedy in expulsion." (126-127) The wave of similar expulsions at this time is not mentioned.

‘Messiah’ the Antichrist of Christian lore. The Christian author imputes to the Jews the absurd (but among Christians, long-standing) belief that the Jewish Messiah will be the Antichrist. The Jew asks the friar to describe Antichrist (i.e., in Jewish terms, the Messiah), as the Jews have been waiting for him for fifteen hundred years, and are anxious that he arrive soon. The friar says the Antichrist will be born of the tribe of Dan, ‘as was Judas, who is eternally damned’, then recites the by-now familiar details of his birth and early career. After the Antichrist arises, the friar explains that

Gog and Magog, whom Alexander enclosed,
 Will be let loose:
 They will cause great misery in Christendom
 And create much pain and suffering.
 And the Queen of the Amazons will also
 Come to him with many Jews⁴⁵
 Who think their Messiah is on earth:
 They will be delighted indeed.
 At this time he will work many signs [wonders]
 With which he will deceive people.

The Jew:

O friar, say no more;
 I wish he would come tomorrow
 Because we have been waiting for him for so long.⁴⁶

Although this version of the Antichrist story is less clear than that of Alfonso de Espina or of the *Antichrist*-books as to which Jews will support the Antichrist and in what order, the Antichrist is to be attended by “many Jews who think their Messiah is on earth.” The Jew’s response to the friar’s description of the coming disaster is meant to evoke scorn as well as fear: “I wish he would come tomorrow.” This text confuses the Jewish Messiah with the Antichrist as thoroughly as the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* had done in the previous generation. Evidence from yet

⁴⁵ Cf. the Red Jews in the *Antichrist* books.

⁴⁶ Fol. giiiv, lines 21-34.

another genre confirms that the identification of the Jewish Messiah with the Antichrist was standard fare in the later Middle Ages. The painter Hieronymus Bosch, or van Aken, (c. 1460-1516) depicted the Jewish Messiah as the Antichrist in many of his works, including the Prado Epiphany.⁴⁷

Messianic hopes were nothing new to European Jewry, nor were they confined to this period. Intense Jewish and Christian speculation concerning the final things coincided in this decisive period for Christian-Jewish relations. Each side would seem to have fed off and confirmed the other. From the early Middle Ages to the early sixteenth century, there was a fascinating coincidence of expectations concerning the Antichrist-Red Jews-Enclosed Jews (on the Christian side) and the Messiah-Ten Tribes (on the Jewish side). Christian apocalypticism—and especially the Antichrist legend—must be seen both in the context of received antisemitic belief and in the context of Jewish messianic expectations.

Conclusion

Jewish Messianism fulfilled an apologetic and a polemical function vis-à-vis Christian doctrine, for expecting a Messiah implied that none had yet arrived. What better way, then, for Christians to attack the Jewish denial of Jesus' messianic credentials than to depict the Messiah awaited by the Jews as the personification of final evil? The argument then runs as follows: not only did the Jews in their 'blindness' deny and kill Christ the Messiah, but, far worse, they see in the evil figure known to centuries of Christian apocalyptic as the Antichrist none other than their Saviour! Therefore, they must be in league with him and the forces of evil—not a surprising conclusion if one assumes the Jews are evil in the first place. The demonization of the Jews in

⁴⁷ See Lotte Brand Philip, "The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch", in: *The Art Bulletin* 35 (1953), 267-293.

other spheres (e.g., concerning their appearance, rituals or supposed odour⁴⁸) cannot be separated from the demonic role ascribed to the savage, ‘unclean’ (*unrein*) Jews in the End Time ever since Comestor’s conflation. Christian apocalypticism, especially in the popular, vernacular realm (mirrored in the *Antichrist* books, the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* and the *Nollhart*) cannot be separated from an antisemitism rooted just as firmly in ‘demonizing’ ethnic hatred and suspicion as in antagonism to Jewish messianic beliefs.⁴⁹

In the 15th and early sixteenth century, not only vernacular drama, but vernacular and Latin popular exegesis associated the Jews very closely with the Antichrist as his first and foremost servants. This popular association was not new; it appeared in the work of Hugo Ripelin—“plebs iudaica specialiter adherebit illi”—around a century after the appearance of the Tegernsee *Antichrist*-play, which was ‘still’ innocent of this defamatory belief, came into being. Indeed, most Latin and vernacular authors held at least from the time of Peter Comestor that Jews of some description⁵⁰ would play a prominent role in the onslaught of the Antichrist during the last days. At the same time, Jewish messianic hopes created an atmosphere of alert expectation among the Jewish communities of Europe. Rumours circulated constantly that the Ten Tribes, imagined by Jews as their liberators from Christian bondage, had crossed the Sambation and were on the march. These rumours delighted Jews—but alarmed Christians. The antisemitic depiction of the Jews as minions of Antichrist was in Gavin Langmuir’s sense ‘irrational’, based on no observed or observable phenomena, and was to that extent ‘chimeric’⁵¹—yet it was tradition, the tales of

⁴⁸ Cf. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*; see pages 47-50 on the alleged ‘Jewish stench’, the *foetor judaicus*.

⁴⁹ Cf. Peter Schwartz, OP, *Der Stern Meschiach* (Esslingen: Conrad Fyner [Feyner], 1477).

⁵⁰ To Comestor and his imitators, the Ten Tribes.

⁵¹ Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 274.

centuries, including the immensely popular Pseudo-Methodius and Alexander materials, that made it possible for the author of *Von Gottes Zukunft* and a churchman like Hugo Ripelin to share similar ideas concerning Antichrist and the Jews. Tradition, indeed, is the factor that makes it impossible to apply Langmuir's concept 'chimeria'—fantasies with no possible basis in anything real—to the role of the Jews at the end of time. This role did not spring into being all at once, as the result of a psychological aberration. It developed over centuries as stories produced by hostile speculation and conflation took on the appearance of solid fact by virtue of repetition and confirmation over successive generations, each providing a new layer of 'authority' for its descendents.

In German-language texts of the 14th and 15th centuries, the especially threatening Red Jews were among the first to be assigned to the ranks of the Antichrist. First the Jews, then the Red Jews were servants of Antichrist. The part assigned to the Red Jews in the final drama was a 'step up' in the 'escalation of antisemitism' that included canon law restrictions, accusations of sacrilege and ritual murder, suspicions of a diabolical role in the entourage of Antichrist, expulsion and forced conversion. The re-assignment of the Jews from 'conversion duty' to active service in the army of the Antichrist had occurred by the time Hugo Ripelin wrote his theological encyclopedia; it took fifty years more for the idea to start showing up in other genres, after which time it became a commonplace of antisemitic Christian apocalypticism.

Apocalyptic readings of these highly fraught texts instill pre-determined meanings into under-determined vehicles. Legend is read as authority; patristic texts are read through very dark medieval shades—even to prove the opposite of the source's point. Sibylline prophecy functions as Scripture. Drama figures as prophecy and as political program; age-old Jewish messianism as a proof-text for here-and-now apocalyptic.