

Rabini - Schem hamphoras



Martin Luther changed the meaning of the antisemitic carving on the Wittenberg parish church. Instead of associating the image with Jewish people, he associated the image with the teaching of the rabbis. It is therefore very important for this carving to remain on the Wittenberg church as rather than being antisemitic, it is a protest against the Kabbalistic and mythological teaching of the rabbis, and their refusal to accept that Jesus Christ is their Messiah when Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah can be fulfilled by no one else but Jesus.

Vom Shem Hamphorus

Here at Wittenberg, in our parish church, there is a sow carved into the stone under which lie young pigs and Jews who are sucking; behind the sow stands a rabbi who is lifting up the right leg of the sow, raises the behind of the sow, bows down and looks with great effort into the Talmud under the

sow, as if he wanted to read and see something most difficult and exceptional; no doubt they gained their Shem Hamphoras from that place. For in earlier years there were many Jews in this area, as proved by the Hebrew names of country towns, villages, as well as citizens and farmers which exist even today, so that even a learned and honest man who was an enemy of the nasty lies of the Jews would have torn down such a picture. For among the Germans, it is said of someone who pretends to great wisdom without good cause: "Where did he read that? On the behind of the sow [crudely expressed]."

Many European churches, built in the Middle Ages, i.e., between the fall of Rome in the third century and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, depicted anti-Jewish stone carvings in their edifices. This can be easily seen in the great cathedrals of Europe and also in many of the lesser church statues such as the statue of the synagogue in the Cathedral at Trier which appears blindfolded and carrying a crown about to fall off its head.

Martin Luther's letter to a converted Jew, Luther was not anti-semitic.

Martin Luther wrote to Bernhard, a Converted Jew (1523)

"Now since the golden light of the Gospel rises and shines, the hope is at hand that many of the Jews will be honestly and sincerely converted and drawn in earnestness to Christ, like you and some others have been, who are the remnant of the seed of Abraham, which is supposed to be saved through grace. For the one who has begun it will also lead it to completion and not allow his word to return to him empty. It therefore seemed good to me to send this little book [Luther's treatise *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*] to you for the strengthening and reinforcement of your faith in Christ, whom you recently learned to know from the Gospel and into whom you now finally also are baptized in the Spirit and are born from God. I also would wish that through your example and your work, Christ might also be made known among other Jews, who were predestined, are called, and shall come to their king David, in order that he might lead and save them, whom our priests and Pharisees in unbelievable madness reject even

though they are ordained for this purpose, so that this judgment might come upon them. Conduct yourself well in the Lord and pray for me.”