

“ER IST NIT WIE ANDER LEÜT”: ANTI-MONASTICISM
AND REFORMATION PROPAGANDA

by

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The significance of mass-produced art during the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland has long been overlooked by historians and art historians. As deliberate productions of Protestant propaganda campaigns, deploying carefully constructed tactics of persuasion, these images are important early developments in the Western tradition of propagandistic art. As part of a long tradition of anti-monasticism in the Middle Ages, representations of monks in Protestant broadsheets, pamphlets, and books from the Reformation provide an opportunity to examine the function of propagandistic art within the context of sixteenth-century Europe. The persuasive tactics established in these images are seen in propagandistic art up to the present day.

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INTRODUCTION

The Monk and The Ass (fig. 1), a woodcut dated 1523 and attributed to Leonhard Beck, is a tour-de-force of a genre that is traditionally noted for its triviality. It is a print of a type that was common in Germany in the first half of the sixteenth century: simple, cheaply made woodcuts, containing both textual and pictorial elements, printed in multitude and sold on the public market. The image is intriguing but seems to defy interpretation. It is visually divided by a spinning-wheel, which is rendered with some attention to perspective and mechanical detail. An owl perches on the wheel, and the year 1523 is inscribed over its head. On either side of the owl are two day-birds whose open beaks suggest raucous calls. On the right, an ass attends the task of spinning. It wears a yoke, a fool's cap, and a belted purse. A banner appears over its head, reading, "If I could not spin yarn thus, one would abuse me as an ass."¹ This remark seems to be addressed to the figures on the left, to whom the ass directs its gaze. One is a bearded, cloaked old man who holds a walking-stick in one hand and a wine skin in the other. A basket slung over his back holds a small female figure and a spindle. Behind her head, another banner appears: "As one who would spin in a basket--much is lost and little won."² And indeed,

¹ Translated in Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 40 .

² Scribner, 40.

her spindle has fallen from her hand and onto the ground.

Such a strange assemblage of objects and figures begs an unraveling of associations and meanings. But, as earlier scholarship has demonstrated, a conventional approach to such an image, appraising its degree of technical mastery or eloquence of artistic expression, will be misleading and unrewarding: A profitable examination of this image requires instead an appreciation of the society that conditioned its production, function, and reception. We must begin to think of the artwork as something that operates and performs within its context. Although we cannot fully recreate the artwork's original environment, careful investigation into the culture in which it existed is an essential aid in interpreting the image for study today.

I am undertaking an examination of the process by which anti-monastic attitudes in the Middle Ages were incorporated into visual propaganda of the Reformation. After introducing the general character of these works and discussing potential challenges and problems in my study, I will review the circumstances of medieval society which contributed to the formulation of anti-monastic attitudes in the church, civic government, and the general public. Primary sources will be included as illustrations of the variety of forms anti-monasticism could take in different contexts. Moving on to the woodcuts which are my primary concern, I will discuss the visual tactics which facilitate their operation as propaganda. Finally, I will suggest a place and significance for these prints in the tradition of propagandistic art in the west.

Early-sixteenth century Germany and Switzerland experienced upheaval and unrest on every possible level during the period which has become loosely termed "the

Reformation.” Economic and political power began to shift from the estate to the city as urban populations grew and prospered. The church was openly and aggressively challenged by large factions, and would never again regain the authority it had enjoyed earlier in the Middle Ages. Printing and the dissemination of printed material contributed to a rise in literacy and the spread of education. The decay of the feudal system and the growth of cities resulted in a public that was now aware and more critical of its place in society. For any movement to gain influence and support, it was now crucial to appeal not only to the nobility and clergy, but also to this newly empowered populace. Proponents of Protestantism did exactly this, by publishing and distributing propagandistic materials that attacked the established church, while calling all righteous and moral Christians to join the reform movement. Prints made from woodcuts, which can have both pictorial and written content, are a common type of Reformation propaganda. Images in these prints are characterized by a close relationship to the text, the two elements constituting the work as a whole. They are not simply illustrations but act with the text to communicate narratives, events, and arguments. When immediate attention must be commanded, and at a time when only a minority of the population was literate, this “hybrid” form was an effective conveyor of information: the message is drawn through the reception of both text and image. And indeed, the effective and efficient communication of specific, often complicated ideas in simple visual terms is the greatest power of these prints.

These productions are designed to startle, provoke, and persuade. The message they proclaim is articulate and resonant. There is often a strong distinction between “good” (right, true Christian worship) and “evil” (distorted, corrupt religion, as practiced

by the pope and his followers), and a presentation of a implied choice between the two sides. Virulent portrayals of the pope and members of the clergy, engaged in every imaginable sin, are common. These figures, divested of any holy authority, represent degenerate worship; the virtues of Protestantism are offered as an alternative.

One religious figure provided an exceptionally potent object of satire and denunciation: the monk. Figures of monks abound in propaganda woodcuts, either depicted among the corrupt church hierarchy, or singled out for their own particular abuses. I will focus on prints representing monks³ in particular, rather than those showing them among other members of the clergy. In this way the propagandists' specific complaints against monasticism can be extracted and defined. They are characterized as slothful and lecherous at best, demoniacal at worst. Their transgressions, explicitly represented in allegorical and narrative terms, are an embodiment of the corruption of the church. Their sins make a mockery of true Christianity and are an affront to virtuous, pious, hard-working folk. I will argue that this negative representation of the monk, integrated into culturally potent visual spectacles and coupled with complementary text, was a strong, deliberate method of propaganda which employed carefully constructed visual tactics, precise cultural referents, and an anti-monastic sentiment already extant in popular culture, in order to persuade the public to Protestantism.

Certain formal qualities and representational patterns are shared by the images I

³ Nuns are also represented in Reformation propaganda. They probably deserve their own study since their treatment is not identical to that of their male counterparts. I will deal with historical representations of nuns when appropriate, but will focus primarily on monks, who are far more common targets of satire and condemnation.

will be studying, and are characteristic of most Reformation-era prints, propagandistic and otherwise, published for mass consumption. The images are strong and linear, in a style that is more often vigorous and consistent than technically masterful in execution. The composition is usually simple yet powerful, oriented around a center or a bipolar division. Figures are animated, active, and often physically distorted in grotesque or animal forms, while their distinguishing features and attributes are always rendered to make them instantly recognizable. The images often contain multiple layers of symbols and signs communicated through objects, gestures, and compositional placement which provide a still richer visual experience. Textual elements are often included within the body of the image itself, providing commentary or extracting a figure's thoughts and speech. All of these qualities contribute to the production of images that are remarkable and satisfying not in aesthetic beauty, but in their clarity, forcefulness, vitality, and accessibility. Sharply defined lines and bold contrasts of light and dark are used both to differentiate and to unify discrete objects and figures. Elements which are to be encompassed into the subject are clearly delineated and emphasized, while unmistakably remaining part of the whole. Very little unnecessary visual information is included. Each of these elements, including text, has a bearing upon the scene and the message it conveys.

The layers of meaning invested in these prints carry more significance than scholars have often allowed. It is also clear that although the propagandistic function is abrupt and unapologetic, it is carefully and deliberately realized. Like the other images included here, the simple composition, relatively crude execution, and lowly subjects seen in *The Monk and the Ass* communicate a complex interrelationship of image, sign, and text, all of which

are steeped in sixteenth-century culture.

One cannot expect to fully unravel all of these correlations. To assume that we see these images in the same way their original audience did is a mistake. But although one cannot look at these images through sixteenth-century eyes, it is possible to uncover some of the historical circumstances and cultural ideas they embody. Such analysis contributes to a larger view of art and society in the Reformation, and establishes the images as part of a tradition of art and propaganda that has continued to develop through the present day.

Given their social-historical significance, it is unfortunate that images from Protestant propaganda prints have been subordinated to a peripheral position in scholarship. Although the prominence of broadsheets in disseminating Protestant doctrine to the laity has recently been the subject of much discussion by historians, research in this field focuses almost exclusively on the poems, anecdotes, and arguments that were printed in tandem with the images. When images are discussed at all, they are usually mentioned simply as illustrations that are dependent upon and incidental to the testament of the printed word. But to analyze text while overlooking the image is to see only half of what is taking place. Imagine, for instance, reading only the textual portion of an advertisement or comic strip: All the textual information is there, but we are not compelled to buy the product or laugh at the joke. The work is infinitely more striking, resonant, and compelling with the inclusion of imagery. Much like our own culture, that of the late medieval and early modern period was highly visual; therefore, it is a mistake to underplay or ignore these images.

While the text-based approach of historians may not be surprising, traditional art history has scarcely been kinder to these images, chiefly because they do not belong to the canon of “Great Art.” They are not remarkable for their uniqueness, their refined beauty, their technical excellence, or their profound expressiveness. Because they do not conform to the categories established for the appreciation and study of painting, sculpture, architecture, and the like, traditional art history dismisses these prints as “low art”, “folk art” or “ephemera.”⁴ Prints are occasionally allowed significance as curiosities, footnotes, or atmospheric stage-settings; the usual custom is to briefly mention a relevant print before proceeding to the *chef d’oeuvre* at hand.

Indeed, it is useless to study a Protestant broadsheet in the same way that one might approach, for example, a Dürer masterpiece. Although the two may come from roughly the same temporal and geographic location, and may even depict similar subjects and themes, they were made to be viewed by radically different audiences, and held quite different functions in society. Thus they do not look alike, did not serve the same original purpose, and cannot be studied as if they did. They were not commissioned by nobles to parade in private chapels or hang in gilded galleries; they were published in broadsheets, books, and pamphlets, and sold on the street, spreading their message in order to persuade the public to join the Protestant movement.

Two scholars who have recognized this significance have both published important work dealing with Reformation woodcuts in the last generation. In *For the Sake of*

⁴ See Keith Moxey, introduction, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 2-3.

Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation, Robert Scribner analyzes the function of these prints as tools of persuasion, emphasizing the hybrid nature of the documents, the interaction of text and image, and the interpretation of the images as sign-systems. In *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation*, Keith Moxey discusses particular genres of Reformation-era prints as a response to (and often criticism of) popular culture of the time, stressing their function in reflecting and reinforcing the social order. Both of these books have been very influential in the current renewal of interest in Reformation prints and propaganda, and ground the approach I will take in my analysis. While explicitly maintaining a focus on pictorial content, both scholars acknowledge that text and image cannot be meaningfully separated, discussing the correlation in detail. Both take issue with many art historians' assumptions that these prints were of tangential importance in light of monumental artistic accomplishments of the time, and the view that the prints were "folk art" which simply reflect the attitudes and activities of the lower classes. Scribner and Moxey insist that these images were a vital means of spreading the influence of Protestant causes, and were made to *persuade* their audience to certain beliefs and behaviors.

While the persuasive function of these prints is well-established, the precise principles that lie behind this function remain to be elucidated. Productions of this sort are often categorized as polemic, which implies persuasion based on reasoned, doctrinal argument. Although this characterization is true of many textual publications of the Reformation, analysis of these prints shows that they often do not demand rational

consideration but an immediate, emotional reaction.⁵ Therefore, I will be addressing these prints specifically as propaganda. Classifying these images according to a typology of persuasive techniques of representation will provide a basis for my argument that the images employ and refine a canon of propagandistic techniques frequently used elsewhere in western art. Comparing Reformation propaganda to that of other time periods will show that no matter what the controversy, the methods of emotional persuasion through representation are comparable, as is the desired effect: to construct the opposition as a mortal enemy who poses a serious and immediate threat to the stability and security of a community.

Establishing the historical background of these images is a difficult but necessary step in this analysis. Primary sources throughout the Middle Ages, including other visual artwork, literature, documents calling for reform (from both Catholic and Protestant positions), polemical tracts, anecdotes, poems, and songs, all provide evidence of a long tradition of anti-monasticism. I will also elaborate the general historical circumstances that characterized Reformation attitudes towards church authorities, and the monastic orders in particular (and thereby avoid the trap of selecting specific works as exemplars of an entire historical tradition).

The articulation of a typology of propaganda also warrants some caution. There is a risk of oversimplifying the mechanisms of the works in question: For example, it would be a mistake to say that one group of prints chiefly relies on the representation of the

⁵ Miriam Usher Chrisman, "From Polemic to Propaganda: The Development of Mass Persuasion in the Late Sixteenth Century," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (1982), 175.

monk as monster, rather than acknowledging that the images are part of a web of historical meanings and references which are specific to their time. It is just as important, though, to also acknowledge how the images contribute to the basic mechanics and vocabulary of western propaganda. To this end, I will use examples of propagandistic art from the Reformation to the late-twentieth century, as well as critical literature on propaganda, to support the argument that a canon of persuasive techniques exists in visual propaganda, the greater part of which ultimately construct a representation of the enemy as a dangerous, destabilizing agent in society.

ANTI-MONASTICISM IN THE MIDDLE AGES

By terming the first half of the sixteenth century in Northern Europe “the Reformation,” we imply an historical view that artificially sets this period apart from times before and after. The Reformation was not the isolated, massive, religious bifurcation that such a view assumes. Like any other historical period, it can be understood best as an intertwining of events, arguments, movements, and ideas, which involved and affected different parts of society in different ways. The strands of thought and action that are traditionally consolidated under the term “the Reformation” are identifiable as historical currents which erupt at this time into religious schism, revolt, and protest, fed by entirely worldly circumstances.

The anti-monastic tradition is one of these historical currents, existing long before it appeared at the forefront of sixteenth-century reform movements. Surviving documents from this period, which refer to popular attitudes toward monasticism, indicate that anti-monasticism was a pervasive but only occasionally tumultuous part of medieval culture until the fifteenth century, when it was regularly manifested in explosive acts of vandalism and violence. Although the character of the complaints did not change much in the sixteenth century, anti-monastic sentiments intensified and had greater potential to instigate revolt. With or without the support of authorities, popular anti-monasticism became a genuine threat to the stability and presence of monastic orders in and around

many communities.

Anti-monasticism was not, of course, universally expressed in medieval Europe; there are many examples of reverence for the monastic life, as well as the co-operation of secular groups with monastic orders.¹ It is evident, though, that a wide base of medieval social conditions contributed to an atmosphere that was often critical and skeptical of monastic life, becoming more and more openly hostile in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. When Protestant leaders did speak out against the monastic orders, their familiar complaints became one of their greatest weapons in the struggle to win followers.

In any historical period, terms such as “the public,” “the laity,” or “the masses,” encompass a broader spectrum of society than the generalizing denotations of these terms imply. Peasants, merchants, politicians, educators, craftspeople, and anyone else who did not officially wield some sort of ecclesiastic or secular power can be included as part of late medieval public. Their cultures, beliefs, traditions, and practices, no matter how different, have all been broadly termed “popular.” It is necessary, therefore, to acknowledge and understand the diversity of the popular audience and the variety of responses they would have had to Protestant material.

It is clear that certain negative associations with clericalism were so commonplace in the Middle Ages that they became assumed references in cultural vocabulary. The

¹ See, for example, Bob Scribner, “Anticlericalism and the Cities,” *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1993), 151-2, which recounts citizens’ alignment with monastic houses and other church institutions against the town council over economic disputes in Erfurt, as well as civic support of local clergy against ecclesiastical authority in Augsburg, Frankfurt, and Speyer in the fifteenth century.

repetition of such associations indicates that monks were customarily identified with greed and lasciviousness, much as negative qualities are conventionally applied to particular groups in our own culture. It is telling, for instance, that in fifteenth-century Germany the expression “to act like a bishop” was in fact a euphemism for making love to a prostitute.² One anonymous satirical poet even called himself *Pfaffenfeind* (“preacher’s foe”).³ More specifically anti-monastic satire is found in a drinking song which advises husbands to return home early from the tavern, lest the monks get to their wives before they do.⁴ Other medieval literature rooted in folk tradition, including Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Dante’s *Inferno*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, and Sebastian Brant’s *Narrenschiff*, as temporally and geographically far-flung as they are, all rely on stock satirical figures of clerics, including monks.

Carnival, traditionally a time of irreverent merriment, had always provided ample opportunity to mock the excesses of the supposedly ascetic lives of the cloistered. Perhaps the most spontaneous and genuine expression of popular belief, carnival activity was both entertaining and seriously critical in its insolent defiance of decorum and authority. Mock clerical processions were ubiquitous throughout Germany in the 1520's and -30's.⁵ In Prussia, for example, carnival participants dressed as monks suggestively

² Albrecht Classen, “Anticlericalism in Late Medieval German Verse,” in Dykema and Oberman, 96.

³ See Classen, 100, for selections from this poet’s work

⁴ Classen, 99.

⁵ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 97.

pulled a plow, followed by nuns and small children⁶. Sometimes, whether a consequence of conspiracy or simply a good time gone out-of-hand, carnival activities became a pretext for serious anticlerical acts, as in Zerbst in 1522, when evangelicals chased a priest from the town in the name of a “carnival visitation”.⁷

Mass-produced art of the late Middle Ages also represents monks as laughing-stocks or objects of derision: particularly irreverent is the late-fifteenth century *Fantastic Alphabet* of Master E.S., a series of German engravings in which the letter “G” (fig. 2) is composed of the intertwined figures of two nuns and a rude monk who exposes himself to the viewer. They are accompanied by apes, an owl, and a dog gnawing a bone. Many other prints showed monks and nuns as lovers, and one curious specimen shows nuns dragging a fat and intoxicated abbot across a frozen body of water on a gigantic jawbone, as a monk and a fool who have similarly overindulged crash through the ice (fig. 3).⁸ The monk as a time-honored satirical figure still survived. A playing card, designed by Erhard Schön in the 1520's (fig. 4), shows a monk among a group of foolish drinkers and gamblers.

Many consumers could probably afford Schön's playing cards, but for wealthier collectors, more refined lampoons were available. In the Netherlands, Hieronymus Bosch drew on folk tradition in his moralizing *Ship of Fools* (fig. 5) of about 1495, in which a

⁶ R.W.Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London and Ronceverte, WV: Hambledon, 1987), 73.

⁷ Scribner, “Anticlericalism and the Cities,” 160.

⁸ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 37-38.

monk and a nun are prominent among the boisterous company of aimlessly drifting buffoons. Two engravings by Heinrich Aldegrever (figs. 6-7), dating to around 1530, depict an encounter that was commonly alluded to in popular anti-monastic discourse: an illicit tryst between a monk and a nun. The goings-on are interrupted by a *Landsknecht*, a mercenary figure whose representation in visual art became an emblem of the Germanic “everyman,” a guardian of common morality and virtuous conduct.⁹ Aldegrever captures a suspenseful moment of discovery, as the representative of the German people uncovers the lecherous hypocrisy of the ecclesiastic elite. Despite the explicit representation of such vulgar activity, the elegant composition, conscious elaboration of setting and landscape, and delicate execution of these engravings indicate that they were most likely conversation pieces for well-to-do collectors, rather than cheap productions for general public consumption.

A pen-and-ink drawing by Lucas Cranach (fig. 8)¹⁰ balances humor and brutality in a particularly amusing--and violent--evocation of popular sentiment. The drawing shows a path or clearing in the woods, in which a group of Cranach’s typically endearing, doll-like women and children go about systematically attacking clergy members, including a number of monks, with stones, flails, hoes, pitchforks, and staves. The comical aspect of this scene arises, of course, from the delightfully incongruous spectacle of cherubic, but

⁹ Stephen H. Goddard, ed. *The World in Miniature: Engravings by the Little German Masters* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1988), 188.

¹⁰ According to Scribner, *Popular Culture*, 62, this drawing may have been a design for a broadsheet, in which case its audience would have been much larger than for a drawing alone.

otherwise ordinary women and children relentlessly mauling the elaborately costumed ecclesiastics. Despite its drollery, the vengeful element of Cranach's drawing is palpable.

Works such as Aldegrever's, Cranach's, and Bosch's show that participation in folk culture was not limited to the lower classes: artists could adapt the features of popular anti-monasticism to fit the tastes of their patrons, whose moral contemplations before such works would be tempered by no small measure of amusement.

Popular anti-monasticism could go beyond mere mockery and escalate into full-scale attacks. *Pfaffensturme* and *Klostersturme*, riotous assaults on churches and monasteries which were sometimes instigated or supported by secular authorities, were rare but recurrent in the high Middle Ages. They became more common and more violent as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries wore on, when the hostility was such that many fourteenth-century clerics wrote of fearing for their lives due to the constant threats of revolt. To avoid uprisings and attacks, they were formed alliances with the nobility and were forced to hide their identities in public.¹¹ One remarkable early event was the Einsiedeln *Klostersturm* of January 6, 1314, during which peasants ransacked the church and monastery. The captured monks were imprisoned in the nearby town for eleven weeks.¹²

These isolated but recurrent events anticipated the Reformation-era *Klostersturme*, which could be devastating to the monasteries and their holdings. Indiscriminate theft,

¹¹ František Graus, "The Church and Its Critics," Dykema and Oberman, 74-75.

¹² Peter Blickle, "Antiklerikalismus um den Vierwaldstättersee 1300-1500: Von der Kritik der Macht der Kirche," Dykema and Oberman, 114.

iconoclasm, vandalism, and physical violence were all characteristic of anticlerical and -monastic riots that took place across Germany and Switzerland in the 1520's and 30's. In 1525, the humanist Nikolaus Ellenbog wrote grievously that during a ransacking of the Ottobeuren abbey, ““Our peasants and their pseudo-prophets and their accomplices’ had decapitated and mutilated images of the saints and the Virgin Mary. The archives, newly built library and printing presses were destroyed; one peasant took a large world map home, which his wife washed until it was clean enough for her to use the linen.”¹³ Such actions seem to stem less from religious conviction than from anger and resentment towards monks, whom the laity were beginning to see as their oppressors and mortal enemies.

Urban masses did not unify and revolt purely out of class solidarity. A popular rhyme condemning the greed and parasitism of the monastic orders emphasizes community loyalty, indicative of the public’s growing identification with the civic body:

“Priests, monks, and nuns
Are but a burden to the earth.
They have decided
That they will not become citizens.
That’s why they’re so greedy--
They stand firm against the city
And will swear no allegiance to it.

¹³ Nikolaus Ellenbog, *Briefwechsel*, ed. A. Bigelmair, F. Zoepfl (Münster, 1938), 329; cited in Henry J. Cohn, “Changing Places, Peasants and Clergy 1525,” Dykema and Oberman, 546.

And we hear their fine excuses:

‘It would cause us much toil and trouble

Should we pledge our troth as burghers.’”¹⁴

Those who refuse to “pledge their troth” to the city are clearly not dedicated to its prosperity and well-being. Instead, they expect to enjoy all the economic and social advantages of living in an urban area without committing to citizenship. In the late Middle Ages, as communities consolidated into urban centers, relations between citizens, civic leaders, and clergy tended to be amicable, even supportive, when the two had interests in common. But problems inevitably arose when the activities of one interfered with the other. A common complaint was that the tax-free industries of local monasteries and exploited or infringed upon the economic prosperity of the city. Usual responses were either restrictive, placing stringent limitations on monastic authority and activity, or integrative, inducing the cloister-dwellers to identify and participate with the rest of the community.¹⁵

Conflicting loyalties posed still more problems: in fifteenth-century Kolberg, for example, the town council, who had supported the deposed pope, clashed with the conciliarist clergy. Complicated by economic and political disagreements, this enmity ran too deep to be resolved through restrictions, compromises, or uneasy coexistence. The struggle came to a head around the middle of the century in a series of riots, seizures,

¹⁴ Cited in Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities. The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 36.

¹⁵ Scribner, “Anticlericalism and the Cities,” 152.

public condemnations, and the ousting of the Antonine order.¹⁶ There are many more examples of these sorts of feuds. Their growing frequency and intensity in the late Middle Ages indicates the rapidly widening rift between civic and ecclesiastical power. The efforts of the former to assert itself in the face of the latter would become one of the most forceful non-religious impulses towards reform.

The importance of German and Swiss cities in spreading and influencing activity during the Reformation is well-established in scholarship,¹⁷ but it is also important to recognize the position of the cities in relationship to the rest of late medieval European culture. During this time, only a small fraction of the population lived in urban centers; the rest still lived under feudal conditions in rural areas. The cities themselves were small in size and number, but rapidly growing. And although civic loyalty, stability, and prosperity were important, the cities were not ideal, democratic states in which the entire citizenry acted as a single body towards common goals. Community compliance or affiliation with civic authorities was not a given, and the citizenry was not simply an extension of the city council in conflicts with church institutions. In the wildly anticlerical town of Erfurt, uprisings in 1520 and 1521 enabled the city council to suppress ecclesiastical power and appropriate their material holdings; in Zerbst, the city mayor led a *Klostersturm* in 1526.¹⁸ But in the late 1520's, the city council of Lüneberg resisted evangelical citizens's series of demands, protecting the town's orthodox clergy as the

¹⁶ Scribner, "Anticlericalism and the Cities," 150-151.

¹⁷ See, for example, Ozment's *The Reformation in the Cities*.

¹⁸ Scribner, "Anticlericalism and the Cities," 160-161.

populace refused to pay taxes and threatened to riot.¹⁹ For all the documentary evidence of civic leaders and citizens acting in concert, there are just as many cases of agitation and contention between the two when their interests were opposed.

The church, for its part, made constant attempts to reform the monastic orders throughout the Middle Ages. Ecclesiastic authorities did not call for the complete suppression of the monastic orders, but advocated more restraint in their activities and the amendment of past abuses. The ideal monastic life was based on the apostolic model, characterized by an ascetic lifestyle and vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. As monasteries flourished early in the Middle Ages, it was often perceived that the existing orders were straying far from this model, as they became wealthier and more involved in worldly activities. Benedictine, Cluniac, and Cistercian houses, among others, all spearheaded a succession of monastic reform movements, each claiming to incorporate a truer understanding of the monastic ideal, advocating distinct sets of rules, and involving themselves to different degrees in the secular world. Mendicant orders, including the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites were approved by the church in the thirteenth century as a response to the ostentation, corruption, and isolation of wealthy and established orders.²⁰ Mendicant monks were to own a minimum of worldly goods and survive only through divine providence and the begging of alms. Not surprisingly, this lifestyle was often perceived as parasitism, and met with considerable disapproval from

¹⁹ Scribner, "Anticlericalism and the Cities," 162-163.

²⁰ Bernard Mc Ginn, "Christian Monasticism," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, X, 48-49.

ecclesiastic authorities and the secular world. Despite such criticisms, attempts to reform the orders indicate that the church sensed the urgent need for change no less than did the rest of society.

For reformers, however, the failings and misdeeds of the monastic orders exemplified everything that was wrong with the church. They were a case study of the emphasis on ceremony and needless trappings which many Protestant leaders found insufferable. Monastic degeneracy and greed were emblematic of the vices of the church, which was said to care more about its own worldly interests than the spiritual needs of the Christian people. But the monastic orders were more than just a symptom of a corrupt superstructure. Their spiritual elitism, as well as their proximity to and involvement with local communities cast them as a direct, predatory threat, whose continued proliferation and unchecked amassing of wealth endangered the ideal spiritual fellowship that reformers envisioned. This social concern promoted a valuable forum for addressing the public, bringing reform issues to the attention and concern of the laity.

Reformation theologians tended to focus on intellectual arguments, directing their writing to other clerics and scholars. Therefore, their complaints against monasticism tend to be both highly cerebral and intensely spiritual, questioning the terms of worship which monasticism had constructed. Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk himself, spoke vehemently and at length against the artifice and hypocrisy of the monastic orders. Although he was not above lurid descriptions of the vulgarities the monks supposedly practiced, and did not hesitate to criticize the privileged hypocrisy and moral depravity of

the orders,²¹ Luther's anti-monasticism is directed primarily toward the institution of monasticism rather than the personal, earthly transgressions of monks. Monasticism, and particularly monastic vows, he explained, ran counter to the word of God, faith, freedom, love, common sense and reason.²² He proclaims that the monastic life is

“contrary to the gospel because it finds sin in matters of food, clothing, drink, places, persons, works, acts, where Christ finds no sin but commands that there be freedom in everything; and since vows cannot exist unless they make sins of these things and ensnare consciences, as is absolutely clear to everybody...; so it is at once absolutely clear that vows of this kind are null, unlawful, blasphemous, and contrary to the gospel...these vows, whatever the circumstances, whatever the intent, whatever the time they were uttered, are to be abandoned in complete confidence and a return made to the freedom of the Christian faith.”²³

Grounded in elaborately conceived theological arguments, the objective of Luther's polemic is to demonstrate, through Scriptural evidence, that the cloistered could and should reject their meaningless vows and the inhuman circumstances that regulated their lives. Those who read and heeded Luther's call were to become some of the most

²¹ Martin Luther, “An Answer to Several Questions on Monastic Vows,” trans. Robert C. Schultz, *Luther's Works*, ed. Robert C. Schultz, gen ed. Helmut T. Lehman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) vol. 46, 149.

²² Martin Luther, “The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows,” trans. James Atkinson, *Works*, vol. 44, 251-400.

²³ Martin Luther, “Judgment,” 398-399.

important figures in the spread of Reformation ideas.

Since many of Luther's works, most obviously his translated Bible, were important and well-received by the general public, he was welcomed as their champion in a struggle against authoritarian oppression. The radical reading of Lutheran ideas in the 1525 *Twelve Articles of the Peasants*, and Luther's dismayed response exhibit just how different interpretations of Scripture and Protestant doctrine could be. For the public, the issues were of every Christian's salvation, and immediate, earthly freedom, which no amount of Scriptural acrobatics would facilitate. They had little use for elevated rhetorical tactics in justifying their beliefs and actions.

Like the church, the cities, and the Protestant reformers, the public acted in accordance with its own interests, spiritual and otherwise. As we have seen, official institutions and regulations could by no means guarantee mass support. The laity, whether urban or rural, educated or illiterate, wealthy or destitute, did not passively absorb Reformation ideology. They were active participants, both influenced and influential, who responded to Reformation ideas in terms of their own needs and interests, simultaneously bringing their own traditions of criticism and protest into the fray. But since the success of the Protestant movement depended on its attraction of a large number of followers, one of the tasks of Protestant leaders was to make a serious appeal to general public. If the necessary popular support could be neither assumed nor forced, it had to be encouraged, coaxed, insinuated, and induced. The most effective way to do so was to proclaim that Protestant leaders and the populace were engaged in a common struggle against spiritual bankruptcy, oppression, and corruption--all qualities which any good sixteenth-century

Christian would revile. When these qualities were assigned to the church and its denizens, reformers discovered the power of propaganda.

As the anti-monastic polemic of the Reformation was adapted to a wider, less learned audience with different experiences and expectations, the nature of its complaints began to change. Although it still retained some concern with the “false worship” practiced by monastic orders, the argument took on a decidedly more earthly tone as its proponents attempted to appeal to the interests and capacities of the general public, whose support was now crucial. Arguments directed toward the public focus on monkish violations of the social order, offenses which were both more relevant and more repugnant to secular communities. This shift resulted in persuasive tactics which forego rational debate in favor of an invocation of fear and a construction of opposition and enmity, stepping from intellectually ordered polemic to psychologically charged propaganda.²⁴

Protestant leaders, who were often former priests or monks themselves,²⁵ encouraged their audience to think of the monastic orders as a part of their community--albeit an undesirable and burdensome one. Although some propagandists attempted to invoke sympathy for the opposition,²⁶ they more often pitted monks directly against the

²⁴ See Chrisman; and Scribner, *Simple Folk*

²⁵ Hans-Jürgen Goertz, “‘What a Tangled and Tenuous Mess this Clergy Is!’ Clerical Anticlericalism in the Reformation Period,” Dykema and Oberman, 498.

²⁶ See, for example, Ozment 93-103. Eberlin von Günzburg, a former Franciscan preacher converted by Luther’s treatises, composed a number of reform proposals published in Basel around 1521, many of which criticized monastic life with a striking sympathy. Like the luminaries of Reformation theology, he addresses the unnatural circumstances of monastic life, which lead to unhappiness for those within and without the cloisters. One pamphlet, bearing the formidable title of *A Warning to All Christians to*

masses. A pamphlet composed by the Swiss Protestant preacher Sebastian Meyer, first published in Augsburg in 1522, protests the endless multiplications and divisions among the monastic orders, each sect of which has its own stringent regulations of dress, customs, and practices. Meyer explains that this is done in order to promote their own prosperity, at the expense of the public:

“Each order wants to excel the other, and they insult one another...like guttersnipes...Dear layman, it is all done with one purpose in mind and that is your pocketbook, which lets them have full gullets and live indulgent lives. They exist by the founding and confirmation of the pope and they help him make off with your goods. It is to that end that they receive from him special papal bulls, indulgences, and saints chosen from their midst.”²⁷

In this tract, similar in its tone and complaints to the popular civic-centered verse above, Meyer tailors a typically theological complaint to an audience who is concerned with their prosperity as well as with their salvation.

Stark oppositions of the lives of monks and laymen were often directly deployed.

Have Mercy on Cloistered Women (Send Not Your Daughter Into a Convent Until You Have Read this Little Book) advised parents to marry their daughters off to hard-working laymen rather than sending them to nunneries, where they would be forced into a far less rewarding servitude to the monks. In further pamphlets he urges “the dissolution of monasteries as an act of charity for thousands who suffer under ‘burdensome, un-Christian, and inhumane rules’--a state, Eberlin assures his readers, that is worse than Turkish servitude.” Ozment, 93-94.

²⁷ *Ernstliche Ermahnung Hugo von Landenburgs, Bischofs zu Konstanz, zu Frieden und christlicher Einigkeit, mit schöner Auslegung und Erklärung...Summarium der schädlichen tödlichen Gifte, so in diesem Mandat inbegriffen* (Augsburg: 1522-3); cited in Ozment, 58.

Class distinctions are very consciously called forth in Barthel Beham's woodcut of 1532, entitled *Three Peasants Intent Upon Becoming Monks* (fig. 9), which emphasizes the contrasting lifestyles of the diligent peasant and the shiftless monk. The image is straightforward, presenting three peasants, each shown carrying some attribute of his social class: a flail, a pig, and a walking-stick. They gesture actively toward one another in a conversation, penned by the poet Hans Guldenmundt, registered in the text below each figure. The first complains of the difficult life of the journeyman, who must work all day and has little to eat or drink. If he had the choice, he would certainly not be poor. The second agrees that such work is intolerable; he suggests that they lay down their scythes and become monks, leading a well-fed life of leisure. Then, he says, they would completely forget the poor. The third is more cautious, and urges them first to consider the "envy and hate" that abound in the cloisters before taking action. Despite this last peasant's ambivalence, the contrast between the physical labor of the peasant and the monk's life of relative ease is sharply pronounced in order to provoke recognition, realization, and indignance in its audience.

Even these criticisms are fairly controlled in comparison to some of the most brazen attacks on monks, which narrated scandalous anecdotes of rapes and murders. In contrast to the relatively staid arguments of the documents discussed above, these broadsheet texts are exceptionally graphic and sensational, even by today's standards. One such example involves a monk who, "roused to excitement by his evil spirit," brutally rapes an eight year old girl:

"The whoremongering monk carried the young girl by force of violence to

the cellar, ripping, tearing, dragging, shoving. He threw her under a barrel and held himself against the innocent child, against her shamefaced eyes, her chaste ears and the tender heart of this small youngling, and did such unnatural and unmanly things so shamefully that it is not to be described here.”²⁸

The propagandistic nature of this sort of material is unmistakable. There is no attempt to rationally argue the audience into agreement with the speaker’s own position. As with the most shameless negative propagandizing of any age, the goal is to immediately provoke anger, fear, and horrified fascination.

It is crucial to realize that the attitudes expressed by these productions were not necessarily those of the flesh-and-blood audience. As Robert Scribner’s *For the Sake of Simple Folk* and Keith Moxey’s *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives* have insisted, they were meant to influence social circumstances, not to mirror them. In order to be exploited as a common and effective tool of propaganda, however, the implied associations with monks and the monastic life must have been commonly understood. The disparity between the lifestyles of monks and laity must also have been acutely apparent to both propagandist and audience. These observations and beliefs were the basis of the Protestant propagandist’s entreaty to the mass audience, in which centuries of popular anti-monasticism become a tool in the construction of irreconcilable opposition. As such, it is an invocation of popular beliefs, and an evocation of absolute enmity.

²⁸ *Ein sehr greuliche...History wie ein heilosig Munch zu Dantzck in Preussen ein kleinis jungis Megdelein...geschendet hat* (Zurich: 1556); cited in Chrisman, 188.

VISUAL PROPAGANDA AND THE TACTICS OF PERSUASION

The word “propaganda” is surprisingly new. The usage with which we are familiar was born in the seventeenth century, when the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) was established by the Catholic Counter-Reformation in 1622 under Pope Gregory XV. Its objective was to

“reconquer by spiritual arms, by prayers and good works, by preaching and catechising, the countries...lost to the Church in the debacle of the sixteenth century and to organize into an efficient corps the numerous missionary enterprises for the diffusion of the gospel in pagan lands.”¹

The congregation, often referred to simply as “Propaganda,” and made up of dedicated, trained “propagandists,” quickly spread throughout the world. The precepts and activities of this group indicate something fundamental about the nature of propaganda, which Robert Jackall describes as “the product of intellectual work that is itself highly organized; it aims at persuading large masses of people about the virtues of some organization, cause, or person. And its success or failure depends on how well it captures, expresses, and then

¹ See Peter Guilday, “The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide,” *Catholic Historical Review* VI, 4 (January 1921), p. 480; “Propaganda, Sacred Congregation of,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911), vol. XII, 456-461. Both cited in Robert Jackall, introduction, *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall (New York: New York UP, 1995), 1.

rechannels specific existing sentiments.”² Mass propaganda of any time period can be described as intentional persuasion through the exploitation of commonly held sentiments. Like the work of Catholic opponents dealing with the aftermath of the Reformation a century later, the Protestant material with which I am concerned was no less a product of this pattern of propagandizing.

Put simply, propaganda is “the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations.”³ Defined in these terms, “propaganda” does not carry the sinister, insidious connotations with which it is associated today. Indeed, “propaganda” was a fairly value-neutral term, acknowledged as such by the parties (like the Congregatio) that made use of it until it became widely identified with the cultural policies of twentieth-century absolutism.⁴ Since this time, scholars from fields such as psychology, history, sociology, literature, and art history have approached propaganda from every possible angle. Cross- or multi-disciplinary research is both opportune and necessary in the study of propaganda, and often results in novel evaluations which have helped to bridge intellectual gaps among scholarly disciplines.⁵

² Jackall, 2.

³ Harold D. Lasswell, “Propaganda,” Jackall, 13.

⁴ Toby Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 7-8.

⁵ See, for example, Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), for a study of the psychological functions of war propaganda posters; a textual historian’s analysis of propagandistic imagery in the Reformation in Scribner’s *Simple Folk*; and the anthologies *Propaganda*, and *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, Harold D. Lasswell and Hans Speier, eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1980), both of which include a wide variety

Propagandistic elements can and have been adapted to almost every form of expression, including literature, music, speech, and visual art. Some of these forms, such as newspaper journalism, lend themselves particularly well to propaganda. Some, such as Abstract Expressionist painting, do not.⁶ Adjustments must be made for the successful incorporation of propaganda into each form of expression, though the objective remains the same.

The visual arts present a special challenge to the propagandist. By its very nature, art resists the insertion of explicit and precise messages into its content. How does a propagandist express even such basic sentiments as “Our leader is great and powerful,” or “We are right and our enemies are wrong,” using visual imagery? The task becomes even more challenging when the idea to be propagandized is very specific, for example: “All citizens should have the same rights,” or “We should all obey the new tax levy.” When art is required to be not just expressive but persuasive, the facts of its creation must often change considerably. But despite these problems, campaigns of visual propaganda are often the most effective way to make an appeal to the widest possible audience.

Protestant propagandists of the Reformation were faced with exactly this situation. When textual literacy in Northern Europe was limited but visual literacy was practically universal, the most efficient way to address a general audience was with images. Reading

of scholarly approaches to the subject.

⁶ See Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste*, Gillo Dorfles, ed. (London: Studio Vista, 1969) 116-126; see also Clark, 8-9, for a countering discussion of Abstract Expressionist exhibitions in the 1940's and 50's, whose curators “contrasted the ‘mark of freedom’ in American painting with the regimented kitsch of Soviet communism.”

was time-consuming, and a possibility for only an educated minority. Preaching and oration were accessible and evocative, but demanded the physical presence of a speaker, whose words dissipated as soon as they were spoken. Images, however, had a permanent materiality. The basic message of visual propaganda could be comprehended from its immediate, initial reception, and its specifics could be examined and meditated upon at the viewer's leisure. To comprehend their meaning, the audience needed little education beyond that which would be acquired by living and participating in sixteenth-century society. Thus art became an integral part of the Protestant leaders's repertoires of persuasive techniques. The art form most efficient to produce and most easily accessible to the public was, of course, the printed woodcut.

Previously, I have alluded to the conditions which made mass propagandizing a possibility in the Reformation. I would now like to undertake a brief review of the more specific circumstances which determined the operation and success of Protestant propaganda prints. It is essential here to focus not only on the productions of themselves, but the human beings who created, published, and received them.

Unfortunately, we know little about the individuals who commissioned these prints. Few are signed, giving no indication of the identity of writers or patrons. Some may have been princes or city councils who enlisted writers to further their political motives in the name of religious reform.⁷ Some may have been clerics like Eberlin von Günzburg and Sebastian Meyer, who marketed their doctrine directly to the public in pamphlet form. The commissioner of the work, whatever his identity, turned over his

⁷ Chrisman, 181.

prices of broadsheets and pamphlets low ensured that they would circulate quickly and freely among a large audience.

Most towns had laws which could ban or censor objectionable printed material, but they were usually invoked only in the most extreme cases, allowing for a variety of treatments of different subjects and themes. Printed material of all types was, in fact, widely available for sale at shops and street markets in urban areas. The much larger rural population had less access to books and broadsheets, but could still buy them at fairs or from chapmen--traveling peddlers who bought their stock from bookshops in cities then sold them in the smaller villages.¹³

The standard method of calculating the size of the audience of Reformation propaganda is through literacy rates, which rose considerably in the sixteenth century.¹⁴ Those who could read, it may be argued, were those who had access to the printed message. Estimates vary, but reliable scholarship puts the literacy rate at five percent for the total population of Germany, and around a third of the urban population.¹⁵ Unfortunately, these broad items of data are of little help in any but the most general and cursory analysis. These statistics do not distinguish between the highly literate, learned minority of a population, those who were only partially or pragmatically literate (for example, those who learned only the reading and writing they needed to conduct business

¹³ Burke, 253.

¹⁴ Burke, 251 and Moxey, 24.

¹⁵ Moxey, 24.

affairs), and those who might only be able to sign their names.¹⁶ The dependency on calculated literacy rates also ignores the possibility of alternate modes of communication through group reading¹⁷ and through images. For a whole host of reasons, it would be inaccurate to infer that only five percent of Germany encountered and comprehended Reformation propaganda. Because thousands of impressions of thousands of publications circulated widely in cities (and sporadically in rural areas), and because they discussed colorful, topical events of immediate relevance to everyday life in a highly accessible form, the potential audience for propaganda prints must have been considerably larger than these estimates would imply.

All of the activity which contributed to the production and distribution of a Protestant propaganda print facilitated not only efficient communication but also salability. Positing these works as pure expressions of sincere and fervent religious conviction seems romantic in light of the conditions discussed above, which indicate that at every stage of their production, propaganda prints were conceived as highly marketable, profitable merchandise. They were the savvy printer's bread-and-butter in a popular market that was eager for novel and topical material.¹⁸

This analysis tells us how to understand the practical facts of mass propaganda: its movement in society from its commission to its final destination in the hands or on the

¹⁶ Burke, 250-251, notes that samples of official documents comparing actual signatures to marks are historians's primary means of calculating literacy rates, and that "The ability to sign one's name should not be confused with the ability to read fluently."

¹⁷ Moxey, 24.

¹⁸ Chrisman, 179-180.

wall of its audience. What these facts and deductions do not tell us is *how* propaganda did its work, and *why* it worked at all. Other scholars have defended the propagandistic function of mass-produced Protestant publications, and the particular importance of the images within the material has also come to light in recent art-historical scholarship. But the psychological factors which contributed to the successful function of visual propaganda of the Reformation have not been extensively discussed. How was the organized activity of propagandizing through mass art during the Reformation realized? What characteristics made them particularly effective and relevant to a sixteenth-century audience? And to what extent can they be seen as foundations of the persuasive tactics that would be developed in later “great ages” of propaganda?

As a work whose function is primarily social, it is crucial that the propagandistic image be tightly bound up with its culture. The means by which this relationship is struck indicate a carefully conceived social specificity. In Reformation propaganda, this specificity is shaped by a popular culture rich in articulate repertoires of symbols, sharply defined class and gender structures, and a deeply held moral tradition. These conditions, significant among many others, are tapped by propagandists to present a contextually charged image of an absolute, timeless opposition of good and evil.

One of the most complicated and intriguing constructions of evil is seen in *The Monk and the Ass*, the image with which we began (Fig. 1). It is energized throughout with context-specific references and signs. The spinning-wheel, an instrument of labor and productivity, acts as both a visual and thematic axis, for as the other figures reveal, the scene revolves around the sin of sloth. The owl, which presides over the activity, marks

the space as profane. In northern Europe, owls were associated with a whole host of sins, including ignorance (they shun the light) and parasitism (they prey upon other birds). The other two birds, denizens of the day, appear to scold the owl. This antagonism is also shown in two fifteenth-century drawings by Hieronymus Bosch, as well as another German woodcut which contains the caption "All birds are envious and hateful of the owl."¹⁹ Contrary to what we might first assume, it is unlikely that these two birds represent an opposition to evil; they simply add the sins of envy and hatred. This grouping, signifying a multitude of vices, saturates the scene with evil--there is no benevolent force to counter their presence.

The ass is clearly associated with foolishness, and his cap and purse only reinforce this connotation. But he is the least contemptible figure in this scene. The cloaked figure can be none other than a monk, and his beard, averted gaze, and walking-stick identify him as a type particularly despised in the sixteenth century: the wandering mendicant who begs alms from industrious folk, only to fill his sack with wine. The significance of the female figure in the basket has been somewhat obscured by time. She is unmistakably a nun, and the distinctive style of her habit may designate her as belonging to a specific order. She is probably meant to be the monk's concubine.²⁰ Spindles or distaffs traditionally symbolize feminine virtue, and an unused spindle or an idle spinner indicates an abandonment of chastity and faithfulness. Like the ass, the nun seems engaged in

¹⁹ The Bosch drawing and woodcut of owls and other birds are discussed in John Oliver Hand *et al.*, *The Age of Bruegel: Netherlandish Drawings in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), p. 76.

²⁰ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 40.

spinning, but in a much less productive manner: she is using only a spindle while the ass is equipped with a wheel. In addition, that spindle has fallen out of the basket, so that whatever work she does cannot be collected and is wasted. These associations do help to illuminate some of the legend proclaimed by the banner behind her head. The idea of “spinning in a basket”, as well as the fabulous absurdity of a spinning ass, seem proverbial in tone, although no specific adage has been linked to either.²¹ If these sources were discovered, they very likely would be admonishments against idleness or laziness.

This image is unusual in the relationship it draws between its major figures. Opposition between the ass and the two human figures is certainly implied, but it is not strictly bipolar, nor is it strictly comparative. As with the relationship of the day-birds and the owl, there is no obvious delineation of good and evil. Both the ass and the human figures display a lack of moral and intellectual fiber; while the ass is the more exemplary figure, it is certainly not presented as a model of behavior. All of the figures are negative representations, and the image in its entirety is infested with sin. Only the spinning-wheel can be read as a productive, positive force.

Although many of the finer points communicated in this image cannot, as yet, be comprehended by a twentieth-century audience, we can certainly see that it is a condemnation of sloth. Moreover, it is a deliberate assignment of the sin of sloth to the monastic orders. It would be a mistake to see the image as a simple moral lesson when its religious and social implications are so apparent yet so complicated. The monk and the strange little figure of the nun are both identifiable as embodiments of sloth and social

²¹ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 40.

parasitism. Even an ass, and a particularly foolish one at that, is more productive with his clumsy hooves than the inebriated monk and his basket-bound concubine. The nun's spinning may have had additional relevance in communities where the economic activities of nunneries, particularly spinning and weaving, competed with those of local artisans.²² In its endeavor to engage its audience, the print proffers a spectrum of meaning, a rich complex of symbol and sign which delivers an immediate message as well as an exploratory meditation.

All of the prints in this study are susceptible to, and indeed demand, this kind of analysis as a piece and product of history. For my purposes, however, it is equally important to understand where the works fit in to the larger history of propaganda in western art. In historical study, many scholars of propaganda point to the importance of the Reformation in establishing the basic threads of the propagandistic tradition as it developed through later centuries.²³ I will be articulating and extending this argument in terms of the characteristics that made visual propaganda effective and successful in the sixteenth century. By drawing comparisons to later examples of propagandistic art, I argue that the visual elements found in Reformation-era prints were not only significant in their own time, but also vitally important developments in the history of persuasive art and imagery.

As any observation of modern political campaigns will tell us, when individuals are

²² Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 41.

²³ See, for example, Chrisman, 195; Nancy L. Roelker, "The Impact of the Reformation Era on Communication and Propaganda," Lasswell *et al.*, 40-84.

asked to take sides in a major conflict, propaganda finds it forte in unabashed character assassination. To ensure that the audience chooses the desired side, the propagandist must emphasize the positive characteristics of “our” side and the negative characteristics of “their” side. At its most extreme, this is achieved by representing “us” as good and “them” as evil. Although historical study tells us differently, sixteenth-century Protestant propagandists would have their audience believe that there were indeed only two possible religious paths, one right and one wrong. This opposition was expressed in all types of propaganda, but is particularly evident in visual art.

Propagandistic art can construct opposition in many ways. Simple compositional techniques may be used, in which two sides of a field correspond to two sides of an issue, for example in twentieth-century U.S. Army material which contrasts the perceived distinctions between U.S. and Soviet citizens (fig. 10). The enemy may be of enormous proportions, as in a Soviet poster which represents the United States a conflation of a gigantic spider, nuclear arsenal, and capitalist good-ol’-boy (fig. 11). On the other hand, diminutive proportions imply ineffectuality, subordination, subhumanity, demonstrated in an anti-Semitic poster from Germany (fig. 12) which blames Jews for World War II. These examples exhibit only a few of the structures which set the stage for the rest of the propagandist’s strategy.

In order for the representation of the enemy to fully resonate with its audience, it must be cast as a threat to basic humanity or its social values. As an aggressive opposition to all the values the audience holds dear, the enemy cannot be tolerated. It is for this reason that, in so many cultures and time periods, enemies are represented as animals,

monsters, rapists, heathens murderers, and more.²⁴ For example, the enemy becomes a wolf in a sixteenth-century anti-monastic broadsheet (Fig. 13), an ape in an 1898 illustration from the United States (Fig. 14), and pig in a late-twentieth century I.R.A. poster (Fig. 15). In the following analysis, I will show how such representations were manipulated in Reformation propaganda, discussing the conditions of their invention and continued persistence.

The simplest way to visually communicate opposition is through bipolar composition, which physically divides one side from the other. This technique is not limited to figural representations; it may be extended into text, as in Erhard Schön's undated broadsheet *The Difference Between a Monk and a Christian* (*Unterscheyd eins Münchs und eins Christen*, fig. 16). The title of this print immediately grounds the basic argument that monasticism is not true Christianity. The two are, as the compositionally engineered text asserts, categorically opposite. At the top, a small image of a monk and a peasant engaged in lively debate establishes the form of the rest of the print's argument.²⁵ Two lengthy columns of text, divided between "*Münch*" and "*Christ.*" elaborate the religious and social practices of each. We learn, for example, that while a monk must pray at certain hours, a Christian may pray anytime. While a monk flees the world ("*rist auß*

²⁴ Keen, 15-86, discusses these cross-cultural "Archetypes of the enemy" with twentieth-century examples.

²⁵ Debates between monks and uneducated laity were often staged in broadsheets. See R. Po-Chia Hsia, "Anticlericalism in German Reformation Pamphlets: a Response," Dykema and Oberman, 497, for discussion of an old woman's argument with "brother Heinrich"; Hans-Christoph Rublack, "Anticlericalism in German Reformation Pamphlets," Dykema and Oberman, 487, cites a theological debate between a baker and a monk.

der welt”), the Christian remains within it (*“Bleibt in der welt ”*). The monk prays for money, the Christian for love. The monk takes from all, the Christian gives to all, and so on. The final comparison provides a classic selection of Lutheran doctrine. It explains that a monk seeks grace and faith through good works (*“Durch sein eüsserlich gûte werck sûcht er den glauben”*). The Christian, a model Protestant, performs his inward and outward works through his faith every day (*“Durch den glauben zengt er teglich an sein eüsserlich und innerlich werck”*). Whether a viewer could read through all the oppositional pairs (or would want to) is not a primary concern, for it is not particularly crucial that one reads that the monk pursues riches while the Christian reviles them. The objective of this categorical representation (which is in many ways analogous to the U.S. Army’s contrast of American and Soviet citizens/soldiers) is that the audience observe the irreconcilable distinction being made between the monk, representing Catholic tradition, and the peasant, representing the reformer’s ideal of returning to the Word. Through the assignment of values to this distinction, the audience is meant to identify with the latter rather than the former.

Leonhard Beck’s 1532 woodcut *The Monk and His Maid* (fig. 17) exemplifies the narrative possibilities of visual propaganda, even within strict compositional restrictions. There are five “characters” in this print. a monk, seated at a table, proffers a coin. His speech-banner reads: “Father, I will hire your daughter/ And bring your affairs into order.” The enraged father has leapt from the table, reaching for his sword: “Monk, you have deceived me,/ And made my daughter leave me.” The mother stands behind him, sobbing into her cloak: “Oh what a shameful lot,/ For my child I’ll plead to God.” The

daughter, gazing at her new lover, offers small consolation: “Father, I know what’s going on/ Else I’d not have let the monk come along.” Behind the monk and his concubine stands another, older monk who remarks: “This doesn’t happen by my will,/ But I must watch and be still.” Thus a complicated story of loss and betrayal is told in a simple scene through signs, gestures, and a few lines of rudimentary text.²⁶ The narrative seems quite farcical now, and though it was probably also humorous to its original audience, we must consider the sincere beliefs and fear which were invoked by this scenario.

Another variation of bipolarity is at work in Hans Sebald Beham’s *Allegory of the Monastic Orders* of around 1521 (fig. 18). Here, personifications of vices and virtues take sides in what was apparently a classic conflict. Urged on by Poverty, a ragged peasant forces a monk to eat a book, evidently the Bible. The monk is held back by Pride, Luxury, and Avarice. Though the monk seems reluctant to consume the book, his progression from the three women who tether him toward the other figures is deliberate. He is placed in the center, as if to infer that his position in the conflict is ambivalent.²⁷ If the peasant is successful in the force-feeding, the monk may finally make his way to the favored side. Whatever the results of this struggle, the peasant is the true hero, shoving Scriptural authority in the face of ecclesiastic orthodoxy.²⁸

²⁶ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 39.

²⁷ The presence of Classicizing allegorical figures and the Latin inscriptions seem to indicate that this work was created for a more learned, possibly humanist-intellectual audience, which may help to explain the image’s ambiguous argument.

²⁸ Scribner discusses several possible interpretations of this image in *Simple Folk*, 44.

Whether it is simply presented as in Schön's *Unterscheyd*, or interpretively nuanced as in Beham's *Allegory*, this basic compositional tactic did more than clarify the opposition of two religious standpoints. All three of these prints set the monk against a peasant, the emblematic sign of the Christian everyman.²⁹ This conflict creates an adversarial opposite to the sympathetic subject with which the audience is meant to identify. The establishment of this "not-subject", or "other" is indispensable to propaganda.

Other prints did not present this polarity so explicitly. In Erhard Schön's *The Devil with a Bagpipe*³⁰ (fig. 19) of 1535, the polymorphic being, which is not two separate entities but a horrible grafting of devil, monk, and instrument,³¹ is the only figure portrayed. The opposition is created as the audience gazes upon the misshapen figure of the monk. In representing the enemy as a monster, biological distortion, and pawn of the

²⁹ Peasants, who were more likely to be illiterate and live in isolated rural areas, were not the main audience for these prints. But they can be seen as plain and honest bearers of true religious devotion and level-headed folk wisdom, unencumbered by pretensions or overeducation.

³⁰ Scholarly discussion of this woodcut has resulted in some problematic identifications. Some, such as Scribner (*Simple Folk*, 134) identify the tonsured figure as a monk. Others refer to him as Martin Luther (Keen, 27), who was also represented in monkish costume. Neither questions their identification. The text in the lower-right corner reads: "Once I whistled to and fro/ From such whistling verses grew and more/ It's over now and at an end/ I grieve and worry and fear/ but I hope not for long/ will this world be so pert/ sinful, tricky, and cunning." (Adam von Bartsch, *The Illustrated Bartsch*, gen. ed. Walter L. Strauss, [New York: Abaris, 1978], vol. 2, 282.) The passage does not immediately imply one or the other in my reading. Based on the anti-Catholic content of the rest of Schön's woodcuts of the same time, I am hesitantly identifying the figure as a monk.

³¹ See Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 134.

Devil, the print also offers a definitive reassurance of what we, the fully human audience, are not.

Associations of monks and devils became “a commonplace of Reformation propaganda.”³² a particularly revolting spectacle³³ is seen in *The Origins of the Monks* (fig. 20), probably one of a series of anonymous woodcuts of 1545. Here, a demon births monks through defecation. The monks pile up on the ground below as two other demons look on with glee. Thus monks are implicated not only with the evil and perversity of demons but also with the filth of defecation.

A less vulgar, but more sinister example is the title page of a 1522 publication by Pamphilus Gengenbach (fig. 21), which includes an image of a monk flanked by two other figures. It is an unremarkable scene, until we notice that the monk’s habit does not quite cover his enormous, clawed feet. Scribner links this representation to a folk proverb: “‘Misfortune has broad feet,’ said the peasant, as he saw the monk coming.”³⁴ The figure on the right appears to be a *Landsknecht*. His right hand seems to be reaching toward the monk, as if he is about to defrock him and reveal his true identity.

The monk’s association with the monstrous, represented as a demon’s foul

³² Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 134.

³³ So revolting, in fact, that the editor of a history journal refused to publish it with Robert Scribner’s article on the subject. As Scribner points out, such resistance perpetuates misconceptions of the Reformation: “it was the reluctance of many past historians to recognise this streak of coarseness in the Reformers which had led to present-day ignorance of popular aspects of the Reformation. It was necessary to discuss such works frankly if we were to understand the broad appeal of the Reformation in the sixteenth century.” Scribner, *Popular Culture*, 277n.

³⁴ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 134.

offspring or the devil in disguise, is common in Reformation propaganda. Indeed, this tactic arises as one of the most powerful archetypes of propaganda in general. It is so commonplace, in fact, that we scarcely notice it--one or two monsters probably growled at us from the editorial cartoons of this morning's paper. For the propagandist, creating a monster is a simple device: Take the enemy and make it gigantic, disgusting, terrifying, bloodthirsty. Give it claws and scales, or fangs and hair. Define it away from the harmlessly, righteously human in every way possible. But make sure its actual identity remains clear. Thus the monk, conjoined with a demonic musician or equipped with clawed feet, becomes not only the enemy of Protestantism, but the enemy of humanity.

Such representations are far removed from those showing monks as tricksters or debate partners. One does not negotiate or argue with a monster. But there is a possibility of fighting it, as the women who prepare to do battle with the two-headed dragon of Communism in a mid-20th century poster (fig. 22), or as a latter-day David in a nineteenth-century illustration aims his sling at a barbarous Turk (fig. 23). With strength in numbers or conviction, even the most evil and terrible of monsters can be vanquished.

In contrast to monstrous representations of monks, associations with animals may seem to be a relatively innocuous archetype. But a monk with a wolf's head is not simply a watered-down version of a monk with a demon *growing from* his head. The owls, birds, and ass we have seen in *The Monk and the Ass* barely begin to demonstrate the specificities of meaning which folk beliefs assigned to animals in this period.

Similar to *The Monk and the Ass*, animals are included among the evil, immoral, and foolish figures in *The Monk as Spoon-Seller* (fig. 24), an anonymous broadsheet from

the early 1520's. Scrolls with textual content border the image, elaborating the significance of the figures in the center. They do not make up a narrative or an allegorical scene so much as an associative interplay of signs and meanings. a monk sits in the center, carving out a wooden spoon. This "spoon-work," or meaningless activity, signifies the unproductive nature of the monastic life. To his left, a smaller monk, perhaps a novice, gathers the finished spoons on the ground into a basket. He complains that he can sell none of these spoons. To the right of the larger monk, an old miller's wife scolds him for his idleness, and beats him with one of the spoons, which has just broken.

The animals in this scene add still greater depth and richness. In the upper left, an ape points to his backside, perhaps to communicate what he thinks about the whole situation. He also says, "Do you know the old ape of Heidelberg?" The ape to whom he refers was in fact a statue in the university town, who bore an inscription attesting to the folly and idleness of students. The presence of apes in late medieval art also implies immodest sexuality. The flies buzzing around the central monk's head strengthen the sexual overtones.³⁵ As one of the woman's speech-scrolls explains, the flies torment him because he has the pox, caused by his sexual misadventures, a disease which will eventually "turn him into a shadow." The inclusion of animals in the scene considerably fortifies and complicates the symbolic web.

The monk in propaganda was not limited to simply associating with animals; he could himself become one. A trick broadsheet showing *The Monk and Wolf as Devourers*

³⁵ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 40-41, provides interpretation, some translation, and more extensive discussion of this broadsheet.

of the *Widow's House* (fig. 14) demonstrates the vicissitude of transformation from the human to the animal. The print has three stages. In the first, a monk towers over a poor widow and her child, who beg him for help. The top half of the print then folds back, to reveal the monk as a wolf devouring a lamb. Fold this second half back, and the monk returns, but this time he is devouring the widow's house. Some of the significance of ravenous wolves and innocent lambs are still familiar today, meanings which were articulated much further during the Middle Ages.³⁶ As well as making a game of anti-monastic invective, this woodcut is also remarkable because its tactics are so obvious: It could almost serve an instruction manual for the budding propagandist. Portray human beings as animals with cultural significance, and a completely new interpretation follows.

Animals retain some of these special significations today. Westerners are familiar with the conventions that apes are brutal, snakes are deceptive, wolves are ravenous, etcetera. After the Reformation, we see endless depictions of the feral enemy. Often, it is a predacious bear, ape, or serpent. It may also be a filthy rat, dog, or pig. Each animal carries its own, nuanced significance.³⁷ Like monsters and demons, animals are also decidedly not human; common symbolic knowledge and quick recognizability also make

³⁶ Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 56-57, discusses this print and others in terms of "spiritual wolves" devouring sacrificial lambs or "sheep in the fold."

³⁷ Keen, 134 sees dehumanization of the enemy through animal images as an indication of "the extent to which modern technological societies are rooted in a metaphysic of war against nature. Once upon a time, snake, bear, dog, lion, wolf, were all considered totem animals, sacred spirits, familial powers...Beasts were family, not enemies. Modernity began when we began to conceive of nature as a state of perpetual warfare, "red in tooth and claw," a struggle in which only the fittest survive." This romantic simplification completely overlooks the long tradition of animals as bearers of meaning.

representations of animals especially susceptible and effective for use in propaganda.

The spoon-selling monk, the daughter-buying monk, and the house-devouring monk all hint at the techniques propagandists used to exploit specific, popular complaints against the monastic orders. What may--or may not--be surprising is how persistent these themes were for centuries afterward. What makes charges of laziness, greed, and lasciviousness so effective for use in propaganda?

References to parasitic laziness run rampant through anti-monastic propaganda. Sloth is the major theme of *The Monk and the Ass*, and it is also prominent in *The Monk as Spoon-Seller*. In both cases, monks are condemned for their inactive, unproductive lives. One is shown performing only marginal and useless activity. The other, equipped with the concubine and wineskin that are his only necessities, simply stares at the ground in stupor. The earlier example of *Three Peasants Intent Upon Becoming Monks* hints at the roots of this conception. Except for the privileged few, life in the Middle Ages was defined by arduous labor. It is not hard to sympathize with the field worker, farmer, journeyman, or artisan, who did not see much to admire in the *vita contemplativa*. The capitalist economy of Reformation cities also made a virtue of hard work. Laziness meant unproductivity, which impeded the prosperity of the city and its populace. This kind of criticism is still leveled at certain groups in the United States, most obviously the unemployed, but also those in occupations whose productivity is not immediate and profitable: Academics, housewives, and artists, to name just a few. The United States itself is often accused of a sort of imperialist sloth, as in an Italian poster from W.W.II, which shows workers in servitude to a reclining Uncle Sam (fig. 25).

A second vice commonly perceived as social predation, related to sloth, was greed. We have seen how propagandists such as Sebastian Meyer used the commonly perceived greed of the monastic orders to make their appeals. *The Monk and Wolf as Devourers of the Widow's House* is a visual testament to monastic greed. Here, the monk does not even take mercy on a poor widow in his all-consuming pursuit of earthly possessions. In the early-sixteenth century, almost a quarter of the population of even the prosperous city of Nuremberg relied on civic charity for food.³⁸ In such times, accusations of exploitative greed must have struck a nerve, just as accusations of Jewish greed did in post-W.W.I Germany.

Those accused of greediness do not earn their money or possessions through hard work. Instead, they grow fat and rich from the labor of others, as anti-capitalist Soviet propaganda so vividly expresses (fig. 26). On a more psychological level, the act of physical consumption is often evoked. The deployment of this tactic, relying on our “earliest associations of oral aggression,” creates an enemy who is

“insatiable, has no sense of proper limits or legitimate boundaries. He opens his gullet, swallows his neighbors, and becomes bloated with the spoils of conquest...He bites, chews, and swallows his victims. His eating habits are not the civilized tasting of the gourmet, but the gluttonous gorging of an animal. He is the toothy monster of fairytales and nightmares.”³⁹

³⁸ Moxey, 11.

³⁹ Keen, 48.

This sentiment is strongly evoked by *The Monk and Wolf* and its descendants, such as an anti-German editorial cartoon from 1917 (fig. 27). Where sloth threatens the prosperity of the society we have so laboriously constructed, greed threatens to devour it entirely.

Lust, of course, was the vice that popular sentiment most often attributed to monks in the Middle Ages. We need only recall the medieval drinking songs, the carnival satires, and the scurrilous broadsheet anecdotes to remind us of the long tradition of this aspect of popular anti-monasticism, which its audience might find either highly amusing or utterly intolerable. In Reformation propaganda, we see such examples as the two supposed celibants in *The Monk and the Ass*. Monastic lasciviousness is even more apparently threatening in the *Monk and His Maid*. The bipolarity of this image contrasts not only monk and peasant, trickster and dupe, but also licit and illicit sexuality: On one side, we see the husband and wife whose marriage, and therefore sexual behavior, is sanctified. On the other side, we see the monk and the concubine he has acquired through payment, exemplifying an unholy coupling. Adding to this opposition is the fact that the monk has interfered with what was presumably a normal and happy family unit, which is now cast into despair and disorder.

In her analysis of the literature of Reformation propaganda, Miriam Usher Chrisman remarks that “The issue of sexual discipline hit close to the core of social stability and the sanctity of the family. In a period when family life was receiving increasing attention, to prove that the enemy was dissolute sexually was to strengthen internal cohesion against him.”⁴⁰ In *The Monk and His Maid*, the monk is not only

⁴⁰ Chrisman, 189.

deceptive and lustful, but also aggresses upon accepted, traditional sexual and familial customs. As one of the most subtly potent ways to render the enemy as a social threat, the establishment of “a stereotype of unbridled sexuality”⁴¹ is an invaluable tool of propagandists.

Chrisman’s characterization could just as easily be ascribed to any number of other historical periods, including our own. In 1878, Thomas Nast represented Communism as Death, proclaiming the virtue of free love over another despairing family (fig. 28). Images of enemies violating innocent women are also common, and often provide an additional means of demanding attention, as in a provocative anti-Nazi poster from the U.S. (fig. 29), in which “pornographic bait is used to capture the attention of the viewer who, in turn, is expected to condemn the rapacious actions of the enemy.”⁴² The lascivious enemy, yet another persistent archetype of propaganda, is perhaps the most insidious threat to social stability.

From its composition to its subjects to its symbolic loading, the Protestant propaganda print was a carefully constructed production, involving the orchestration of a number of visual tactics into a striking, meaningful, and persuasive image. It is because of these prints that the Reformation has been termed “the first great age of mass propaganda.”⁴³ The psychologically-charged persuasive tactics of the propaganda campaigns of the sixteenth-century would form the foundations of similar movements in

⁴¹ Chrisman, 186.

⁴² Keen, 76.

⁴³ Scribner, *Popular Culture*, 278.

the following centuries. Chrisman claims that the Reformation is the first time in western history that such oppositions were deliberately constructed and deployed as propaganda, creating social polarities and irreconcilable enmity, and eliminating any future establishment of an ideologically unified society. Specifically, she suggests that Reformation-era propaganda, “based on the principle of religious separation, created fundamental psychological and social distances which would become deeply rooted in Western European culture. The propaganda created a stereotype of the Other, each religious group accepted that stereotype of its antagonist.”⁴⁴ Although she speaks chiefly of textual propaganda, this argument can certainly be extended to mass-produced, propagandistic art of the Reformation. As essential instruments of the west’s first mass propaganda campaign, the printed images in Reformation broadsheets, books, and pamphlets contributed significantly to these adversarial developments, and established many of the persuasive techniques that would be used in mass-produced, propagandistic art through the present day.

⁴⁴ Chrisman, 194-195.

CONCLUSION

In the “Summa Summarum” of the monk in Erhard Schön’s *Unterscheyd eins Münchs und eins Christen*, we read, “*Er ist nicht wie ander leüt*”-- “He is not like other people.” This establishment of the Other, which insists upon difference and opposition, simultaneously defines the identity of the enemy and strengthens that of the favored side. It is perhaps the most basic principle behind the construction of enmity. All of the tactics of persuasion which we have observed, from the basic and universal to the complicated and context-specific, negotiate ways to render the enemy as a not-subject, a projection of all undesirable negative qualities and behaviors that are seen as immoral, harmful, or destructive. Thus propaganda is much more than an organized movement to sway public sentiments to certain opinions and conclusive actions. It also reveals the virtues a society values, and the vices it condemns. Often, a society’s acknowledgment of its own fears and shortcomings lie beneath the surface of its castigations of enemies. The object of the propagandist’s slander is, in this sense, a scapegoat which bears the qualities society denies in itself.¹ It is for this reason that we turn our Other into a monster, a beast, a thief, a murderer, a rapist, and any other identity which we cannot admit exists in humanity, especially not in our own society.

¹ See Keen’s analysis of propaganda as mirrors of “disowned truths” throughout *Faces of the Enemy*

Popular anti-monasticism began to construct its opposition in the high Middle Ages, partly from observations of genuine problems within the institution of monasticism, and partly from the instabilities, hypocrisies, and hardships of everyday life. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, institutions of feudal and ecclesiastic authority were shaken, creating further social instability, and new loci of power were established which lent power and credibility to popular anti-monasticism. Attitudes expressed by reformers and civic authorities in the sixteenth century bolstered these convictions even more. The opposition between laity and clerics was magnified and polarized by propaganda, contributing to conditions which led to open revolt. After the violent uprisings of the 1520's and 30's, far fewer of these prints were produced, suggesting that publishers felt their arguments had been perhaps too convincing. Later propagandistic works tended to advocate sensible approaches to reform, and few of them addressed the general public.² By the end of the century, there seems to have been no further need for these attacks. Instead, new conflicts demanded new constructions of enmity. The same arsenal of persuasive weapons used against Catholic authorities in the sixteenth century could be used just as effectively against kings, criminals, nobles, rebels, presidents, celebrities--anyone who could be blamed, justly or not, for social grievances. The tactics of propaganda could make scapegoats of powerful figures or, often tragically, of groups who held little or no power at all.

Although the western world does not want for religious propaganda, the monk as a symbol of spiritual and moral corruption has faded. Occasionally, though, we find

² Chrisman, 178.

echoes of the Reformation in unlikely places. Between 1929 and 1935, Diego Rivera created a riotous, fluid visual history on the wall of the National Palace in Mexico City.³ A work of art could hardly be richer in symbolism and cultural relevance. In the middle arch of the mural, titled *The Legacy of Independence* (Fig. 30), we see familiar, tonsured and robed figures. One obese and smug specimen stands among a group of Europeans (including the pope) who oversee the labor of the conquered peoples. He seems to be a direct descendant of the greedy and exploitative friars depicted by artists in the Reformation, four centuries earlier. But another group of monks defy this heritage. These are missionaries, and Rivera invests them with a unique and stirring sympathy as they protect, educate, and share with the indigenous people. One striking detail shows a monk gathering the defenseless to him. Holding up a crucifix, he fends off a group of murderous, thieving Conquistadors. In the context of the Mexican Revolution, it would have been simple, and expected, for Rivera to represent monks, particularly missionaries, as oppressors. Instead, he presents the possibility that difference might not necessitate enmity.

³ See Clark, 35 for brief discussion of this mural's propagandistic representation of history.

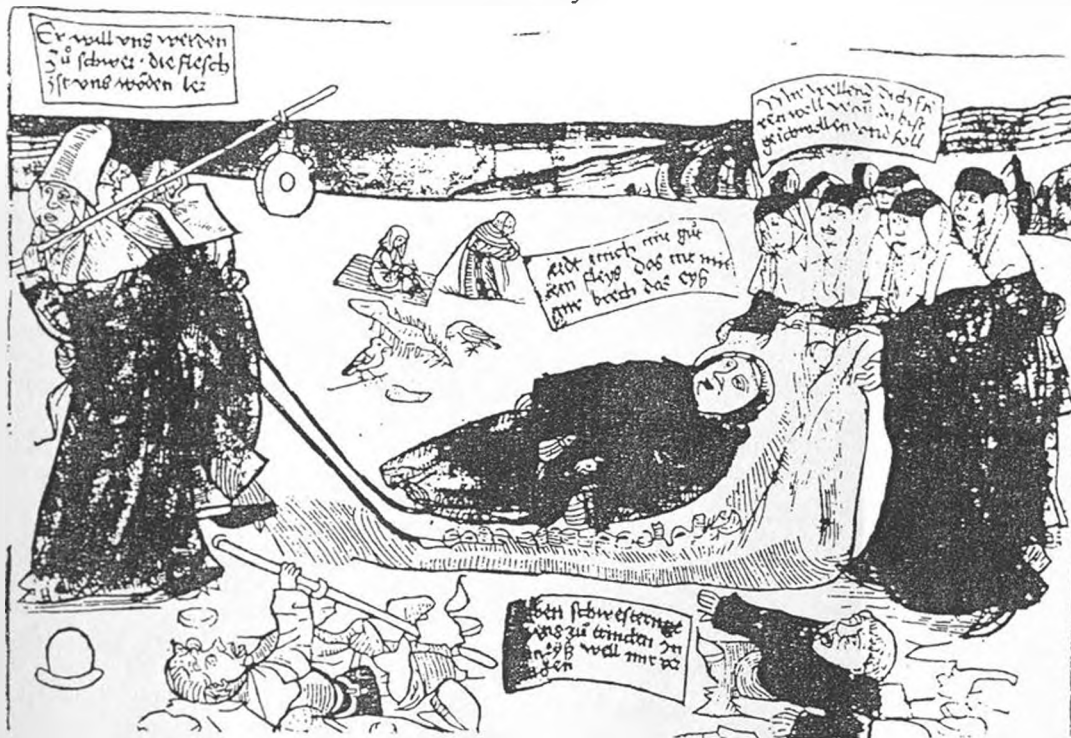


2. Master E.S., *Letter "G" from the Fantastic Alphabet*, late-fifteenth century.



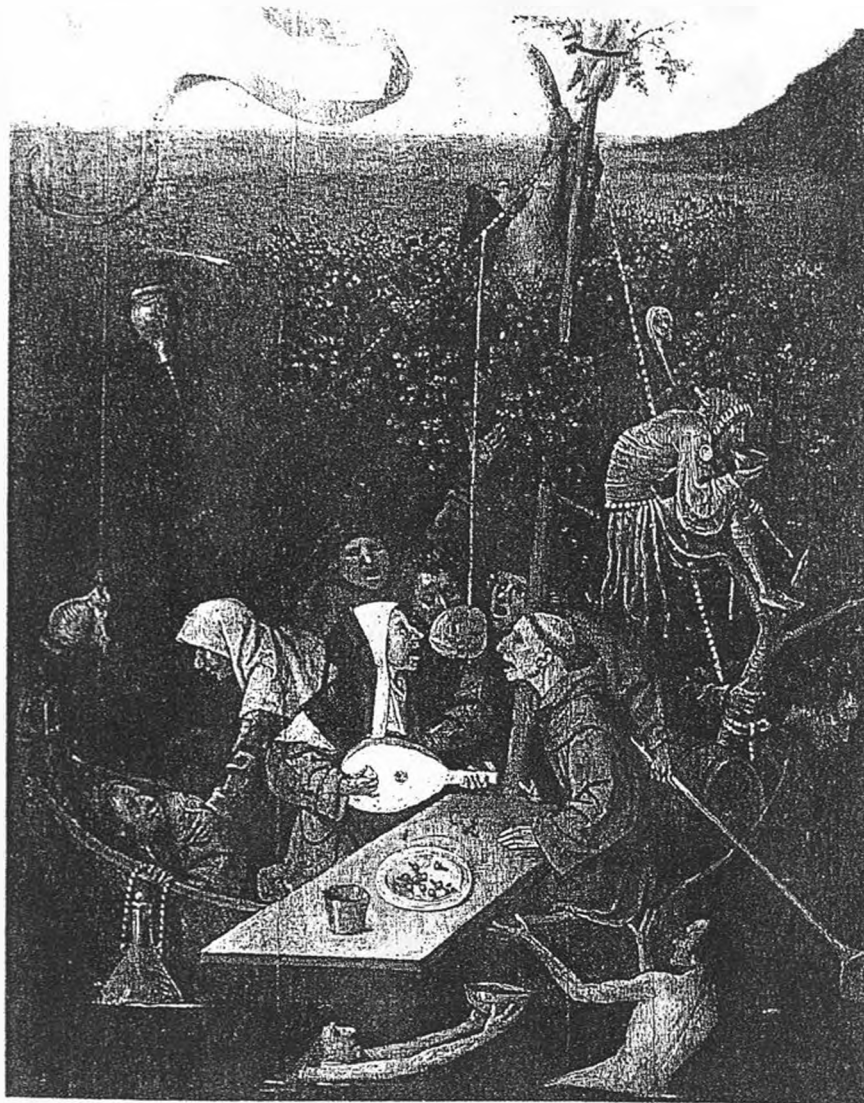
3. *The Abbot on the Ice*, late-fifteenth century.

57



4. Erhard Schön, *Four of Grapes*, before 1530.





6. Heinrich Aldegrever, *The Monk and the Nun*, 1530.

59



7. Heinrich Aldegrever, *The Monk and the Nun*, ca. 1530.



8. Lucas Cranach, *Women Hunting Monks*, early-sixteenth century. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg. 60



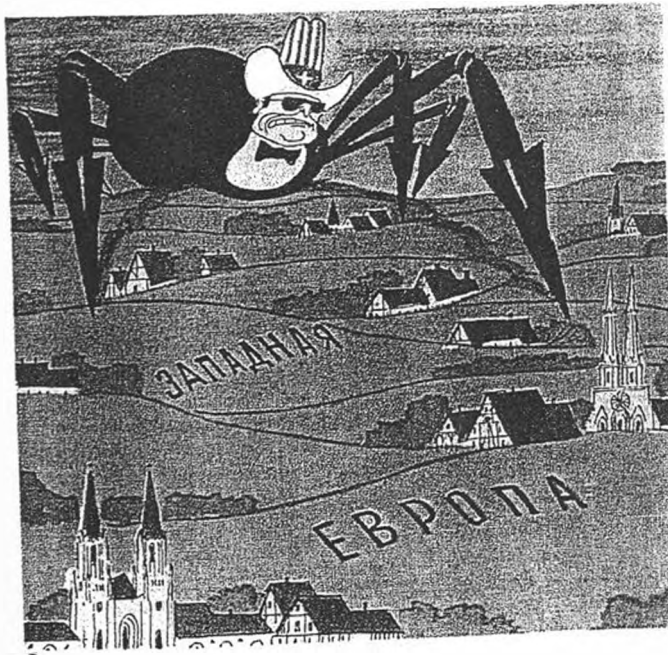
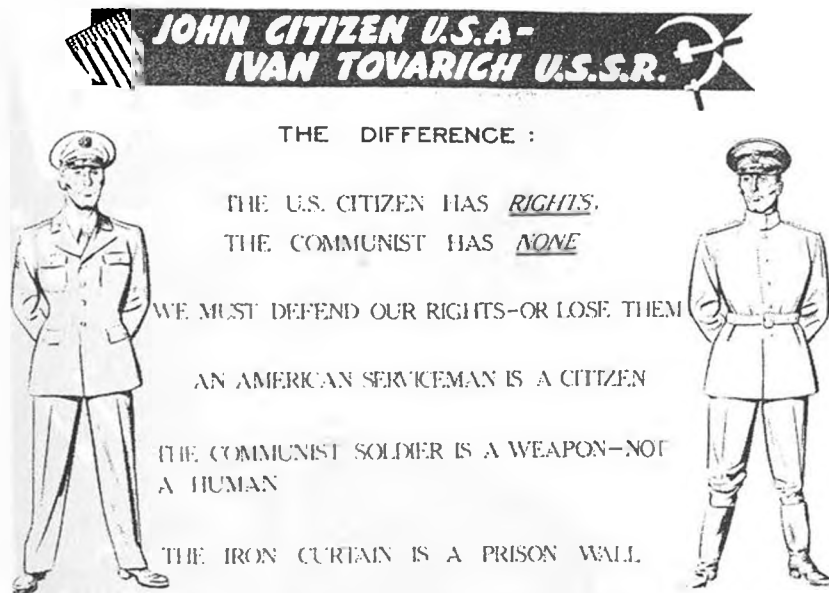


Ich: gesell seyn wir nit narren
 Das wir da auff dem doiff schern
 Wir haben reuten/laden miß
 Das eytel groffe arbeit ist
 Wir essen puerer in schoten
 Weder wil der pawen spotten
 Adon: ich etwas anders treyben
 Ich wil auch kein pawen pleyben

Gefell ich arbayt auch nit gern
 Wir wollen yetz Mönch wern
 Balde wir die kueren legen an
 Wöl wir ein jaols leben han
 Gewiß hab wir trincken ond essen
 Wollen der pawen gar veregessen

Jane Guldennant:

Merck: se knechtlich rathe auch nit
 Wilt se nit wie man spuchet
 In Clöster ist vil neyß ond haß
 Darumb so bedencket euch paß
 Ein eytel güt man muß ond suppen
 Die Wüer essen hütche ond kuppen
 Haben se weyber tag ond nacht
 Das haben gar vil Mönch betrachet
 Ond die kueren hym geworffen
 Auffen weider zu den dreyßigen





13. *The Monk and Wolf as Devourers of the Widow's House*, first half sixteenth century.

Wer auch gschaffletten vñ pharisee / Ir gschaffner / die
ir der witten heuser frassend / vñ wendend für lange ge
dau / Darbey am 23.



So man Dersich hat auch
Zu dem auch Gott für mich.

O glichney da gmeiner gailf
Was grosse freude ist in der bast
Dand hab der dard der ist gac

Bis einer die in denen rde
Alle dnen mited / das Gott gefalt
Dän stche man wol bin frome gstat.



14. United States, propaganda from Spanish-American war, 1898.

65



15. Ireland, anti-English I.R.A. propaganda, late twentieth century.



LAST SUNDAY, ENGLISH SOLDIERS MURDERED 13 UNARMED IRISH CIVILIANS. SOME OF THEM TEENAGERS. DEMONSTRATING FOR THEIR BASIC HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS. THEY KILLED MOST OF THEM WITH THE BACK OF A TRUCK. WE DEMONSTRATE OUTSIDE THIS SATURDAY, FEBRUARY FIFTH, IN FRONT OF THE BOAC OFFICE AT 45TH STREET AND FIFTH AVENUE. MEET AT 12.00 NOON. MAJOR SPEAKERS AND ENTERTAINERS. FOR INFORMATION, CALL SAGH BEE GUARANTEE (424-2120) 223-9276

16. Erhard Schön, *The Difference Between a Monk and A Christian*, first half sixteenth century.

Unterscheyd eins Mönchs



Vnd eins Christen.

Mönch.

Ist ein verdeckter mensch.
Helt auff sonderlich Jent vil.
An sonderlichen tagen fastet er
Auff sonder stund bet er.
Zu sonder Jent ist er.
Auff sonder tag ist er von dem
tisch des herren.

Wen etlichen speisen outbet er
An sonder orten bett er. (Sich
Mit sonderlicher farb bekleit er
sich.

Mit eigner monit bekleit er sich
Mit sonderlicher weiß schirt er
Sonderlich geberd bat er. (Sich
Er hüt gar an eussertliche got
Mensch gesen belt er. Dienst.
Er ist auß der welt.

Eussertlich gleist er. (Sang.
Mit menschen gesegen ist er ge
Er acht die lieb soll an im selbst
anhaben.

Sein mitverrenten licht er.
Den keynust er dienstbar.
Er bat allein auff sein nutz acht
Alweg erfordert er die lieb von
dem nachsten.

Die werck der barmhertigkeit
erfüllt er mit Worten.

Er belt wenig auff den glauben
Vertraut vnd beist in sein eige
ne gerechtigkait.

In seine werck belüftet er sich.
Eigene recht fertigkeit acht er gr
Mit eigner verdienst sü Cost
cht er selig zu werden.

Seine werck thut er gezwung.
All sein hofnig ist vñ sich selbst
Jederman nympt er.

Er samlet alweg an.
Seine werck vertaufft er
Vmb gelt bet er.

Für die im wol thun bit er.
Vmb jentliche güter danck er
sich zu gericht.

Er füllt sich auß ander leut.
Die toeten frist er. (Schweiß
Witwen vñ wäissen beraubt er.

Reichtum stelt er alweg nach.
Fremde güter raist er zu jm.
Auff sein nutz ist er geschickt
Er nympt den hungerigen.

Die toeten frist er. (Schweiß
Witwen vñ wäissen beraubt er.

Reichtum stelt er alweg nach.
Fremde güter raist er zu jm.
Auff sein nutz ist er geschickt
Er nympt den hungerigen.

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Witwen vñ wäissen beraubt er.

Reichtum stelt er alweg nach.
Fremde güter raist er zu jm.
Auff sein nutz ist er geschickt
Er nympt den hungerigen.

Die toeten frist er. (Schweiß
Witwen vñ wäissen beraubt er.

Christ.

Ist ein offener mensch
Alle Jent ist im augen an.
Alle tag festigt er sein leib.
Zu allen stunden bet er.
Du aller Jent weis die not erben.
Alle tag ist er von Tisch ist er.
des herren tisch sein hunger.

Ist von aller spais die got gefeg
An allen orten bett er. (Niet bat
Mit aller leb farb kleid er sich.
Cht er sich.

Dunder schädlicher weiß belei
Er kan wol from sein vngstem
Er bere geberden bat er.
Helt mit vil drauff.
Götlich geseg belt er.
Blait in der welt.

Imertlich soigt er.
Ist frey nie d' freyheit danut in
Er acht Christus bat erlöst.
das sy am nachste sol ansah
Alle menschen licht er.

Jederman ist er bereit.
Hat auff seins nachste nutz acht
Alweg er soigt er die lieb dem ne
chsten.

Erfüllt die mit den wercken.
Cht.

Seht all sein sach auff den glau
Er verzweifelt an seiner gerecht
tigkait.

Für all sunt werck soicht er sich
Eigene recht fertigkeit vertschme
Er weißt das die Licht er gar.
seligkait ist in christus verdienst
Auff freyheit berigt thut ers alls
Allein in Christum beist er.

Jederman gibt er.
Allweg streut er auß.
Seine werck teilt er vmb sunst
Er bet außlich (mit.

Auch für die im übeln tün bit er
Was auch sein ist thut er auß
Auch d' sein mißbraucht er mit
Die lebendigen spricht er.

Die lebendigen spricht er.
Nicht umb veracht er alweg.
Eigene würff er von jm
Sein nutz veracht er.
Zehnt auß den notdürfftigen.

Auch d' sein mißbraucht er mit
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Die lebendigen spricht er.
Nicht umb veracht er alweg.
Eigene würff er von jm
Sein nutz veracht er.
Zehnt auß den notdürfftigen.

Mönch.

Die armen entplest er.
Sein mitverrenten belt er allein
für brüder.
Für gab/gibt er wert.
Die arbeit fleucht er wie d' teuf
Im verbeissen ist er milch. (Sel.
Wierlich ist er.

Ist übermütig.
Lognsinnig ist er.
Helt vil auff sich selbst.
Schiffmütig ist er gleist er.

Helt sich für besser dā neder m.
Wälich er vñ groß titel sucht
Die erlichste stat begert er. (Cht.
Ist rümtig. (Cht den leut
Veracht nederman / allein sein
gleich mit.

Nicht sich für klug vñ weiß.
Er treget ein gleisnerisch geberd
Witale nederman / on sich selbst
Halsstarrig ist er.

Kann nichts leiden.
Ist winderlich.
In essen vñ trincket sucht er lust.
Hat nimmer kein frid.

Klagt alweg
Ist der aller vnredlichst
Widerwertig kan er nit leiden.
Nicht sich würdig dā daß im
solt schmach geschehen.

Ist vernissen vñ vnuerfchampt
Ist niemā dā den seine geberd
Kümmert sich nit in anderleut
trübsal.

Ist vnzidlich auch in glücklich
hümt leichtlich. (Cht dingen.
Vñ vñ bast legt er selten bin.
Den scand ist er berb vñ bestig
Sein freunden ist er sunst vñ
Sticht rach. (Schmachelt.

Vñ vñ vñ begirten heugt er
nach.
Last sich bewege durch nachred
Schent sich würdig aller chr.
Nacht sich selbst frum.
Durch sein eusselich güte wer
et sucht er den glauben.

Summa summarum.
Er ist nit trüander leut.

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Christ.

Die armen bekleydet er.
Er weiß das wir all ein vatter
im hirmel haben.
Er gibt auß / weiß nichts vñ wez
Er segret zu kerner Jent. (Cht.
Mit der thut ist er dienstbar
Mit wenig laßt er sich genügen
Ist demütig
Beschenden ist er.
Veracht sich selbst
Nicht senftmütig ist er beweist er
Helt sich für geringer dā neder
Zitel vñ chr veracht er. (Cht.
Auch die letzten erweist er jm.
Ist rümtig. (Cht den leut
Veracht nederman / allein sein
gleich mit.

Nicht sich für klug vñ weiß.
Er treget ein gleisnerisch geberd
Witale nederman / on sich selbst
Halsstarrig ist er.

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Ist winderlich.
In essen vñ trincket sucht er lust.
Hat nimmer kein frid.

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Er ist nit trüander leut.

Auß iren fruchten werd ir sie erkennen.



18. Hans Sebald Beham, *Allegory of the Monastic Orders*, ca. 1521.





Der zeiten pfeiff ich hin vnd her
Zue solches Pfeiffen dich vnd mer
Vil fabel Treuen vnd Jentzney
Ist gesunde anß vnd gar mæney
Das ist mit leyd auch schwer vnd bang
Doch hoff ich es wer auch nû lang
Die weyl die welt so furwartz ist
Eündelich dich qch vol arger list.

20. *The Origins of the Monks*, ca. 1545.

69

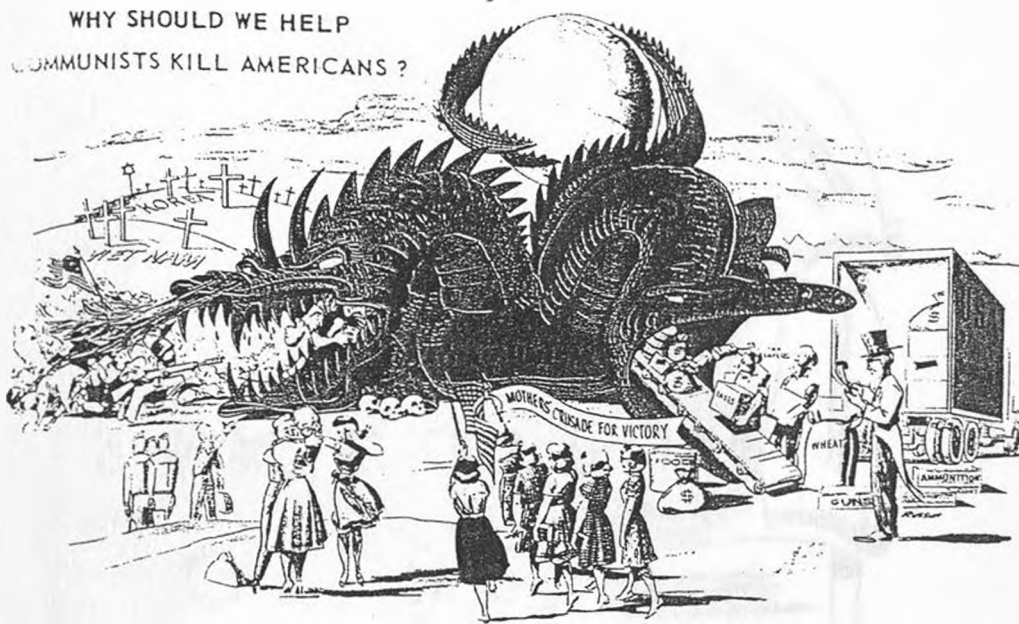


21. Title page, *Wie der Hailig Vatter Bapst Adrianus ein geritten ist* by Pamphilus Gengenbach (Augsburg: 1522).

Wie der Hailig Vatter
Bapst Adrianus ein geritten
ist zu Rom auff dem .XXVIII. Tag des Mo-
nats Augusti. Im Jar M.D.XXII.
Nach dem Gespräch von
dreyen Personen.



22. United States, propaganda for Mother's Crusade for Victory Over Communism, mid-twentieth century.



Mothers' Crusade For Victory Over Communism

We mothers, who are fighting to save our sons and our Republic, need your immediate financial and moral support. WILL YOU HELP US ?????? National Headquarters, Mothers' Crusade For Victory Over Communism, P. O. Box 943, Mesa, Arizona.

23. United States, anti-Turkish propaganda, 1897.



24. *The Monk as Spoon-Seller*, early 1520's

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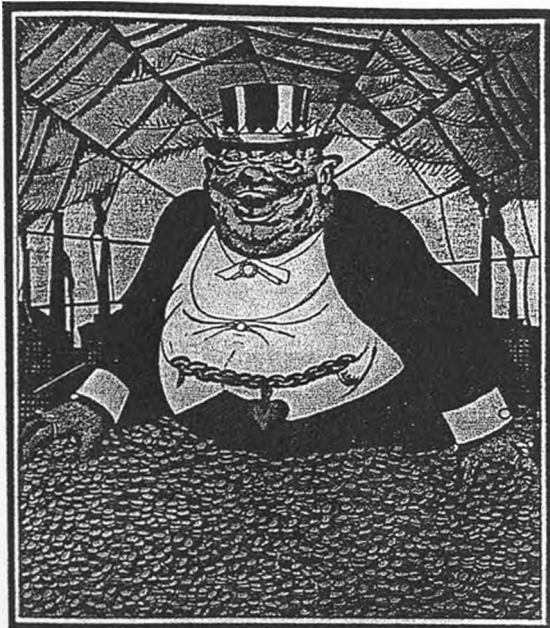


25. Italy, anti-U.S. propaganda, W.W.II.



26. Soviet Union, anti-U.S. propaganda, 1930's.

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27. Jay Darling, anti-German editorial cartoon, *Des Moines Register*, 1917.



28. Thomas Nast, anti-Communist propaganda, 1878.



29. United States, anti-Nazi propaganda, W.W.II.



30. Diego Rivera, *Legacy of Independence* (detail), center arch of *The History of Mexico--From the Conquest to the Future*. Mural, National Palace, Mexico City, 1929-35.



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