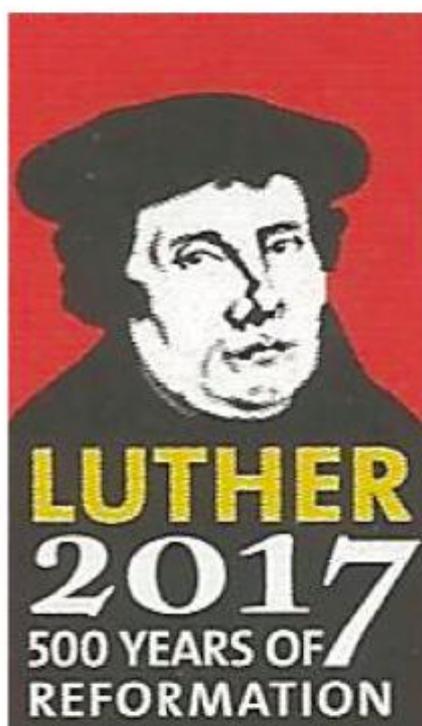


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# Martin Luther, the Jews and the City of Frankfurt am Main

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Martin Luther was born into very troubled times. While we tend to imagine the period of transition from Middle Ages to Renaissance as a new, bright era, most people living that time felt they were going through a time full of despair, fear, insecurity and menace. Here Luther challenges the church, increasing the fear of ones, bringing new hope to others.

In the beginning, Luther had an extremely friendly attitude towards Jews, as opposed to the general increasingly anti-Jewish sentiment. So many Jews welcomed the reformation.

But they were disappointed bitterly when Luther's hopes were not turning into reality. P.Antacido will outline the chain of events and explore possible reasons for why things turned out the way they did.

Frankfurt, situated in the center of the empire, gives a vivid example of the situation of Jewish communities during this period.

Procolino Antacido, teacher for German Language, History and Religion is originally from Frankfurt.

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## Martin Luther, the Jews and the city of Frankfurt am Main

Martin Luther was born into very troubled times. While we tend to imagine the period of transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance as a new, bright era, most people living at that time felt they were going through a time full of despair, fear, insecurity, and menace.

Winfried Frey describes it thus: „People were scared. Terribly scared. The Turks were threatening the empire, society was shaken by social unrest, the plague killed masses of people with dreadful regularity, famine and rises in prices made the common man's life hell, the news of the discovery of countries and peoples at the end of the world unknown until then did not calm people's minds at all – and, above all, were they not on the eve of the end of the world?

And what then? Judgement Day, which meant fear of the torments of hell.

And faith? Religious doubts and the horror at the perversion of faith, the disgust for its official representatives, above all, were what shook people's hope of being saved by God, of the certainty of His mercy, and added fuel to the fear that the sacraments of the Church might not help any more- here and in the hereafter...“<sup>1</sup>

Around 1450, Johannes Gutenberg developed the art of letterpress printing in Frankfurt's neighbouring city of Mainz. It was an art from which Luther was to profit greatly later, for by the aid of it, his teachings and opinions spread quickly throughout Europe. But Frankfurt, too, was to profit considerably. At the Frankfurt Book Fair of 1520 one bookseller alone sold 1.400 copies of Luther's early Reformation writings.

But pictures of the "New World" Christopher Columbus took possession of in the name of King Alfonso of Aragon and Isabella of Castile also spread quickly. On the one hand, there were exotic impressions of a tropical world full of people, free in every sense of the word, but on the other hand there were the pictures in Hans Staden's "True history and description of a landscape of wild naked people, grim man-eaters, situated in the new world America"(1557).

With the discovery of the so-called "New World", the fragile tolerance of Jews in Spain came to an end. King and queen expelled them from the country in 1492- something which happened in many other areas of Europe, too.

When Martin Luther was born into these troubled times in 1483, the Jews in Frankfurt had not been expelled, but had been put in ghettos for about 20 years.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. in the allegedly dark Middle Ages, the Jews were considered "'kammerknechte' of the king. i.e., they belonged to him personally and with all their possessions, and they were not allowed to change their abode without permission, which was punishable by confiscation. In Frankfurt, they lived in an area especially conveniently situated for trade and transport, between the former king's palace and St.Bartholomäus convent and the city walls towards the banks of the Main- from Fahrgasse in the east to Heiliggeistbrunnen in the west, i.e. in an area which had originally been the land of the king.The new community

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<sup>1</sup> Winfried Frey, Die Juden im Frankfurt Passionsspiel, in Gott in Frankfurt? Theologische Spuren in einer Metropole. Herausgegeben von Matthias Benad, Frankfurt am Main 1987, 34f.

/parish which had developed since 1260, after the first Frankfurt pogrom of 1241, settled in the same area, though its cemetery was situated outside the walls since about 1270. The synagogue, first mentioned in 1288, was situated west of Fahrgasse, opposite the parsonage, next to it were the schoolhouse and the dancehall, the Jewish bath in Fischergasse. In the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Jews enjoyed civil rights and were allowed to buy estate. Being 'kammerknechte', they paid taxes to the king.

Whenever the king was in Frankfurt, they delivered parchment to his chamber, beds to his entourage, and pots to his kitchen for free. In 1331 Ludwig the Bavarian entrusted the protection of the Jews to the city... Apart from the rabbi, teacher and preceptor, scribes, bakers, butchers and surgeons were part of the community/parish; for their livelihood, they no longer depended on trade but on moneylending at an interest, forbidden to Christians. Jews were not allowed to work in trades organized in guilds- the only exceptions being those of bakers and butchers, for reasons of religious ritual."<sup>2</sup>

This according to Konrad Bund.

So the situation of the Frankfurt Jews in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries is a relatively good one: They live in their traditional, economically attractive quarters of the city, enjoy civil rights and the chartered rights connected with these, and for theological reasons enjoy some privileges, concerning, for example, the slaughtering of animals according to Jewish rites and the production of kosher food.

But they are still excluded from the guilds, which excludes them from working as craftsmen or from trading. What they are allowed, almost forced to do is moneylending, because by doing this they fill an economic need that cannot be filled by Christians for religious reasons.

Being 'kammerknechte' of the Emperor, they belong to him life and limb and enjoy his personal protection. But they have to pay dearly for this protection in the form of special taxes. This is why the Emperor watches jealously over the Jews in the Empire, as they are a welcome source of income for the chronically hard-up imperial treasury.

But the situation of the Jews grows steadily worse:

"In the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a time of economic crisis, anti-semitic attitudes also increase in Frankfurt. Jews were abused, manhandled, attacked with stones in the street, the town clerk commented on the murder of the Jew 'zum Buchsbaum' by three crosses, te deum laudamus and Christ is risen. In 1431 the city council discussed how to get rid of the Jews, who caused so much trouble with the king; in 1432 and 1438 they discussed the confinement of the Jews- who had lived in the economically most interesting quarter of the city- in a ghetto. King Frederic III objected to the synagogue being situated next to the parish church and to the Jews affecting Christian worship; that is why he demanded, at first without any consequences, the resettlement of the Jews in a different quarter...

In 1458 Emperor Frederic III repeated his request from 1442, and in 1460 the council decided to resettle the Jews in an enclosed ghetto in Wollgraben, in front of the Staufen wall, near the Jewish cemetery."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Konrad Bund, Frankfurt am Main im Spätmittelalter 1311-1519, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 131-136

<sup>3</sup> Konrad Bund, Frankfurt am Main im Spätmittelalter 1311-1519, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 134f

The council try to cover themselves against any reproaches. The Emperor wants the ghetto. And the council would like to get the attractive grounds between the river Main and Bartholomäus Church, the place used for the trade fairs. But the powerful Church is also asked for an opinion; after all, the reason for establishing the ghetto is a theological one.

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Pope Pius II finally reacts favourably to the enquiry of the council and allows the establishment of "Judengasse" (the Jewish alley).

"The new Judengasse with a synagogue, a bathhouse, a community hall, a dance hall, an inn, dwellings, a draw well and three gates to be closed at night was built between 1461 and 1465 and paid for by the city, apart from the synagogue and ritual bathhouse.

Jews were forbidden to live outside the "Gasse". There was enough room for the community of about one hundred people at the time, but the sanitary conditions were far from satisfactory because of the situation near the water, conducive to epidemics.; from a socio-psychological point of view, the establishment of the ghetto was devastating for those enclosed and those who had enclosed them; the exclusion of the Jews from society was meant to be for good, abuse of and discrimination against Jews were daily occurrences. Jews were obliged by order of the council to wear a yellow sign on their clothes."<sup>4</sup>

Due to the new imperial taxes introduced for Jews in 1496, called "Gemeiner Pfennig" (common penny), we know the number of the Jewish taxpayers in Frankfurt exactly: there were 104. For this number, Judengasse initially offers room enough. But we can deduce from the crowded dwellings that after only a few years the space assigned to the Jews was not sufficient at all. There is historical evidence for 3024 people living in Judengasse in 200 houses in 1709.<sup>5</sup>

Goethe, too, tells us about the stifling atmosphere and cramped conditions of Judengasse in his memoirs. He writes in "Dichtung und Wahrheit"(fiction and truth): "Among the ominous things plaguing a boy or youth, belonged, above all, the conditions of the Jewish quarter, actually called Judengasse, because it consisted of hardly more than one single street, which must have been squeezed between city wall and moat like into a cage . The cramped conditions, the dirt, the milling crowd, the accents of an unpleasant language- all this together created a most unpleasant impression, even if you only glimpsed in when passing the gate."<sup>6</sup>

The three gates were closed at night and opened in the morning. On Christian holidays, the gates remained closed. When Luther was 28 years old, in 1511, the council tightened up on the prohibition for Jews to leave their houses or Judengasse during Holy Week, a regulation in existence since about 1430- now they had to pay a fine of 20 guilders, and there were further discriminating rules.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Konrad Bund, Frankfurt am Main im Spätmittelalter 1311-1519, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 134f

<sup>5</sup> Heiny Duchhardt, Frankfurt am Main im 18. Jahrhundert, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 269

<sup>6</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Dichtung und Wahrheit, Band 1, 4. Buch

<sup>7</sup> Ebd.

Here you see the synagogue and the old Jewish cemetery, once outside the city walls. Here a picture of Rechneigraben, leading to Battonstraße.



Already in 1495- Luther is 15 years old- , the council prohibited the Jews from "buying their meat from the 'schirms' (butcher's shops) and preparing it in a kosher way in the abbattoir." <sup>8</sup> These Frankfurt customs were unacceptable to the many strangers in the city, especially to the high councillors of the Imperial Court (Reichskammergericht)- thus the reasoning of the council to justify this prohibition.

When Luther travels from Wittenberg to Worms in 1521, he probably comes to Frankfurt for the first time. He will certainly have known the Frankfurt Jews as such very quickly., due to the discriminatory dress regulations laid down in the "Judenstätigkeit", a set of rules for the Jewish ghetto.

They say that "male Jews had to wear a hat of the type shown here [...]"

Another sign was the yellow ring that had to be worn visibly on clothing. The "Stättigkeit" prescribed wearing it outside the ghetto... In the given text the council reminds people of this; obviously this rule was not minded sufficiently, in their opinion. <sup>9</sup>

In the decade before Luther's first visit to Frankfurt there is an embittered feud between the Empire and the city. It was caused by the writings of a Jew converted to Christianity named

<sup>8</sup> Konrad Bund, Frankfurt am Main im Spätmittelalter 1311-1519, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 134f

<sup>9</sup> Robert Brandt u.a., Der Fettmilch-Aufstand. Bürgerunruhen und Judenfeindschaft in Frankfurt am Main 1612-1616, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 21f.

Johannes Pfefferkorn. In these writings he reproaches the Jews with desecration of the eucharistic host and with blasphemy. He accuses them of slaughtering Christian children at Easter and of other atrocities. In 1509, Pfefferkorn, backed by the powerful Dominicans from Cologne, succeeds in getting a mandate from the Emperor to confiscate all Hebrew documents. "Frankfurt with its Jewish teaching tradition was especially affected by the confiscation ... 168 books were confiscated here, and in 1510 even the prayer-books were seized, which made the Jewish service at the synagogue and school impossible."<sup>10</sup> The city council protest against Pfefferkorn's course of action with the Emperor. "After long, unpleasant disputes involving the Emperor, the Archbishop of Mainz and further princes, in which the council tried not to appear too "friendly towards Jews", the problem was solved because the Emperor was indebted to the Duke of Braunschweig-Kahlenberg because the latter had saved his life, but had got into debt in the Emperor's service. The Duke had pawned his treasures to the Frankfurt Jews, but the treasures were forfeited by now. When the creditors prolonged the deal for a year, the Emperor demanded the immediate restitution of the books and thus unmasked the whole procedure as a shameful cheap trick."<sup>11</sup>

Later we will see later that Luther recommends such measures in 1543. " Thirdly, taking away all their prayer-books and Talmudists, in which such idolatry, lies, curses and blasphemy are taught."<sup>12</sup> In the beginning, though, Luther has an extremely friendly attitude towards Jews, as opposed to the general increasingly anti-Jewish sentiment in the Empire, ranging from the spreading of printed demagoguery to the execution of innocent people. "The dispute about the books developed into a fierce literary feud between the humanist Johannes Reuchlin [and his friend Erasmus of Rotterdam] on the one hand and Pfefferkorn and the Cologne Dominican [and inquisitor] Hochstraten on the other hand, which was fuelled by the printers, especially at the times of the Frankfurt Book Fairs. The city priest Peter Meyer 'distinguished' himself by aggressive anti-Jewish sermons and supported Pfefferkorn's machinations...In 1513, a higher tax on beer triggered riots among the craftsmen who threatened to attack Judengasse and to slaughter its inhabitants. The council defused the quarrel by abolishing the new tax. But instead they decided to restrict the "Judenstätigkeit" which had been conferred for 3 years for a long time, to one year only in the future; but they forewent the expulsion they had considered if the Jews gave up 'usury', probably because the price they expected the Emperor to demand for the permission of the expulsion of the Jews seemed insupportably high.

Instead, the council attempted to achieve a regional expulsion of the Jews without imperial consent in 1515... In 1516 several estates of the empire met, initiated by the Archbishop of Mainz, who was put up to this by Pfefferkorn and the Dominicans, discussing the expulsion of the Jews from their territories. But the Emperor forbade continuing these discussions by mandate."<sup>13</sup>

It was in this atmosphere that Luther arrived in Frankfurt on Sunday, April 14, 1521. The Jews live in a ghetto in Judengasse, are excluded from all honourable trades and professions and have to show by their dress and by signs that they are Jews. Six years before they had a close escape from being murdered by Frankfurt craftsmen, due to the intervention of the council. Since then they have been living in constant fear of expulsion. They are made responsible for Jesus' death on the cross, accused of desecration of the eucharistic host, of blasphemy and of ritual murder. But in the first place they are hated by all those who have borrowed money from them.

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<sup>10</sup> Konrad Bund, Frankfurt am Main im Spätmittelalter 1311-1519, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 134f

<sup>11</sup> Ebd.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Luther, Von den Juden und ihren Lügen“, 1543. in: Martin Luther, Ausgewählte Werke, Ergänzungsreihe, 3.Bd., München 1938, 189f.

<sup>13</sup> Ebd.

Already on his arrival in Frankfurt, Luther could see how the city thought about Jews. The infamous picture of the 'Jewish pig' had been put up on Brückenturm, which was clearly visible and could not to be missed by anyone; this was a picture Luther already knew from the south-east pillar of the Wittenberg city church

In this infamous picture the Jews are "insulted with aggressive obscenity..., as being of 'swinish origin'"<sup>14</sup>. 200 years later, Goethe sees this infamous painting and writes, " The old fairy tales of Jewish cruelties against Christian children we see described in Gottfried's "Chronicles" appear sombrelly in front of the young mind. Even if people thought better of the Jews recently- the large painting, meant to shame and ridicule them, which could still be seen under Brückenturm, on an arch, spoke clearly against them, as it had not ben painted by a private person, but by official people."<sup>15</sup>

Luther's gloomy feeling about the situation of the Frankfurt Jews will not have lasted long. He "took accomodation in the 'Haus zum Strauß' on Kornmarkt, on the corner of Schüppengasse/Buchgasse. As a welcoming present the widow of the patrician Gilbert von Holzhausen sent him tropical fruit and malvasier: Her parents had told her that they had anticipated that a man would one day oppose all 'glitter and atrocity ' of Popism (Kramer,p.94) Those Frankfurt patricians who admired him, among them Hamman von Holzhausen, Philipp Fürstenberger and Arnold von Glauburg, welcomed Luther enthusiastically in the Haus zum Strauß and discussed his teachings with him until late into the night."<sup>16</sup>

Finally Luther travels from busy Frankfurt to Worms, where he, as is well known, refuses to recant his theses. After this deeply upsetting Imperial Diet, Luther travels through Frankfurt again. But the Emperor has put him under the ban of the Empire. Everybody may now kill or imprison Luther without being punished. This is why the Elector of Saxony, Luther's sovereign, fakes an abduction and hides him under the name of Junker Jörg on the Wartburg. There Luther has sufficient time to translate first the New, and then also the Old Testament.

In the meantime the Reformation takes its course, princes and Emperor get into a quarrel with each other, and in Frankfurt, too, the population is divided concerning Luther's theses. People demand new preachers ("Prädikanten") .The council, always having to take into consideration the wishes of Catholic Emperor Charles V, as he can take away the profitable privilege to have fairs or move the place for elections and coronations elsewhere, hesitate and try to bring about change without attracting undue attention. But the situation is explosive. The powerful neighbor, the Archbishop of Mainz, also watches the development closely, always hoping to move the fair to Mainz and to preserve the privileges of the clergy.

In 1523 Luther comments on the way to deal with Jews;. "I hope that if you deal with the Jews in a friendly way and teach them the Holy Scriptures carefully, many of them will probably become true Christians and join their forefathers', the prophets' and patriachs' faith.(...) And even if we sing our own praises, we are still heathens and the Jews are descended from Christ, we are related and strangers, they are blood brothers ("Blutsfreunde"),cousins and brothers of our Lord. So, if one boasts of one's blood and flesh, the Jews are closer to Christ than we are, as St. Paul... says, too.

That's why I would ask and advise you to treat them fairly and teach them the Scriptures; then many might join us. But how to achieve anything worthwhile with them if we meet them

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<sup>14</sup> Lisbeth Ehlers in : FFM 1200. Traditionen und Perspektiven einer Stadt. Herausgegeben von Lothar Gall, Sigmaringen 1994, 59

<sup>15</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Dichtung und Wahrheit, Band 1, 4. Buch

<sup>16</sup> Reformation in der Reichsstadt. Wie Frankfurt am Main evangelisch wurde. Eine Chronik der Jahre 1517 bis 1555, zusammengestellt von Dr. Sabine Hock, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, [www.sabinehock.de/downloads/reformation.pdf](http://www.sabinehock.de/downloads/reformation.pdf)

with violence and lies, accuse them of drinking Christian blood, having bad smell, and I don't know what other foolish things, treat them as if they were dogs?

If we forbid them to work among us, to interact and enjoy other human society, by making them usurers, how shall this better them?

If you want to help them, you should act towards them with Christian love and not according to the law of the Pope, and accept them in a friendly way (...)

Even if some are stubborn, what does it matter? We, too, are not all of us good Christians.

This is all I want to say for now, until I can see what I have achieved.“<sup>17</sup>

This attitude of Luther's is surprising. He demands the end of the segregation of the Jews- They should get access to guilds and through this the chance to work as craftsmen or to trade. The ghetto, Judengasse, should be dissolved, there should be the possibility of contact between Christians and Jews, the lies about ritual murders should stop. Of Course, Luther hopes that the Jews- treated in a friendly way and carefully instructed in the Holy Scriptures- will realize that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and convert to Christianity. With this attitude tolerant of Jews, however, Luther puts himself outside the century-old anti-Semitic tradition and in opposition to the prevailing opinion in the Empire- and in Frankfurt, too.

For here the situation becomes more and more critical in that year.



The parish of Bornheim, belonging to Frankfurt, demand the employment of their own clergyman. When the chapter of St. Bartholomäus declines, the people of Bornheim react by refusing the tithe, i.e. they do not pay church taxes. The parish of Dreikönig from Sachsen-

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Luther, Daß Jesus Christus ein geborener Jude sei, 1523

hausen go even further and demand a parson preaching only the true, pure gospel. The council tries to mediate, because they fear the Emperor and the Archbishop of Mainz. "That is why from early 1525 on the wrath of the common man is directed not only against the orthodox clergy in the fair town, but also against the secular government, whose authority was as radically questioned as that of the old church."<sup>18</sup>

These tensions vent themselves -at the height of the Peasants' War raging in the Empire- in the Frankfurt Guild Riot on Easter Monday, April 17, 1525. The rebels, predominantly craftsmen organized in the guilds, turn against the orthodox clergy and the patrician city government. They meet on Petersfriedhof (a cemetery) and go to the Dominican monastery where they loot the wine cellars and the cellar storerooms. "Violence against the ... Jewish community could be prevented with the greatest difficulty."<sup>19</sup> The council, proceeding with prudence, succeeds in keeping the Jews out of the dispute and thus saving their lives. As often before, the council do not act on humanitarian grounds, but because they fear the demands for compensation of the Emperor, who would not tolerate the dispossession, expulsion or murder of his tax-paying 'kammerknechte'. How far Luther's friendly attitude towards the Jews may have been an attempt to placate the rebels cannot be reconstructed today. What is certain, however, is the fact that the Jewish community get away unharmed that time.

The 46 articles the rebels manage to push through mainly deal with Reformation, socio-economic and political/legal demands. But some also refer to the Jews, are directed "against the business practices, the conduct in finance and trade of the Frankfurt Jews... whose competition was to be eliminated."<sup>20</sup>

The 46 articles are taken back in the same year that the Emperor defeats the rebellious peasants and a defeat of the rebellious artisans/craftsmen in Frankfurt is in the offing. The following 20 years are characterized by the shilly-shallying of the council in Frankfurt.

On the one hand, there is strong pressure on the part of by the population to build up the Protestant church and to forbid the Catholic rites. On the other hand, the council fears the withdrawal of the privilege to have fairs and of the other special privileges of a free imperial city. When the Emperor has his brother elected and crowned king in Cologne in 1531- against what is laid down in the Golden Bull- the worst fears of the council seem to come true. When the Archbishop of Mainz blocks the delivery of wood to Frankfurt from Höchst in the west and from Aschaffenburg in the east (both situated in the customs territory of the Archbishop of Mainz), the basis of existence of the town is in danger.

A fierce battle rages in the city between the Catholic clergy, the Protestant majority of the population, and the council who are maneuvering cautiously. "The city government were as powerless in the face of the drastic agitation from the pulpits of the Protestant preachers, calling for the right to private warfare, as in the face of the riotous violence and iconoclastic devastations with which the people hindered the Catholic clergy in Bartholomäus church from saying Mass at Christmas 1531 and 1532 and at the beginning of 1533...

In early 1533, even Martin Luther attacked the occurrences accompanying the religious upheaval in Frankfurt in a warning letter to the council and parish of Frankfurt, which was circulated in the whole Empire."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sigrid Jahns, Frankfurt am Main im Zeitalter der Reformation, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 165

<sup>19</sup> a.a.O., 166

<sup>20</sup> a.a.O., 169

<sup>21</sup> a.a.O., 175

It is surprising that no attacks on the Frankfurt Jews are reported from that time. One reason may have been the protective attitude of the council, even if it was for selfish reasons, but another one may have been Luther's friendly attitude towards the Jews, which he had published in his text, "That Jesus Christ is a born Jew" in 1523.<sup>22</sup>

Even if we have no explicit proof of this concerning Frankfurt, we know from other European towns that Jews, too, welcomed Luther's invitation to a dialogue.

Rabbi Abraham Farrisol (1421 – 1525) writes, for example, "After the successes of the Inquisition, after the bloody expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal in 1492 and the utter destruction of the Andalusian co-existence of Jews, Christians and Muslims..." "All Christians in many countries, influenced by this noble man (Luther), are well disposed towards the Jews. While formerly there were countries in which every single travelling Jew was killed, nowadays they invite us to their religious service, cheerfully and with a polite mien."<sup>23</sup> I quote here from Martin Stöhr.

Against this background the pamphlet in which Luther comments on the Jews in 1543 is terribly upsetting. There Luther gives seven pieces of advice to the rulers on how to deal with Jewesses and Jews – which shows his shocking hatred of the Jews:

"In the first place, that they should set fire to their synagogues and schools and that they should cover with earth what does not burn...

Secondly, that they should break and destroy their houses in the same manner...

Thirdly, that they should take away their prayer-books and Talmudists...

Fourthly, that they should forbid their rabbis to teach on penalty of death..."<sup>24</sup>

What was the effect of these words on the Jewesses and Jews of Frankfurt? The council, driven further and further into the arms of the Protestant princes by the Emperor, joined the Protestant union "Schmalkaldener Bund" in 1536, and in exchange, had "to commit themselves to having all preachers in the fair town preach in accordance with Confessio Augustana, formulated in 1530, which was based on Luther's teachings on the Eucharist."<sup>25</sup> That is, Frankfurt was clearly Lutheran. But in contrast to Graf Albrecht von Mansfeld, who had the Jews expelled from Eisleben, Frankfurt did not follow Luther's advice on treatment of the Jews. The Jewesses and Jews did not fare better or worse than before. Once again, it was the council that protected the Jewish community in Frankfurt. On the one hand, they didn't want to cloud the relationship with the Emperor who didn't want to forgo his income from the Jewish taxes. But on the other hand, they could not do without moneylending and pawnbroking in a fair and trade town in times of a growing monetary system.

When religious peace was agreed in Augsburg in 1555, the only religion that could be practised in all principalities and territories was that of the respective ruler.

Frankfurt was granted a special licence: Lutheran Protestantism as well as Roman Catholicism were allowed to be practiced here. In addition to the two Christian denominations, the Jewish religion was tolerated, too. But this forced co-existence did not mean that the followers of the different confessions were treated equally: Catholic Frankfurters were not granted political rights, the Reformed Church was not allowed to hold church service within the city walls. The Jewish community grew after the Augsburg religious peace: in 1556, there were

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther, Daß Jesus Christus ein geborener Jude sei, 1523

<sup>23</sup> Martin Stöhr, Luthers Sündenfall. Kirchnereneruerung und Antisemitismus des großen Reformators, in: in BlickPunkte Nr. 6/2010; Materialien zu Christentum, Judentum, Israel und Nahost, herausgegeben von: ImDialog. Evangelischer Arbeitskreis für das christlich-jüdische Gespräch in Hessen und Nassau, 27

<sup>24</sup> Martin Luther, „Von den Juden und ihren Lügen“, 1543, Martin Luther, Ausgewählte Werke, Ergänzungsreihe, 3. Bd., München 1938, S.189f

<sup>25</sup> Sigrid Jahns, Frankfurt am Main im Zeitalter der Reformation, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 183

550 Jews living in Judengasse, whose numbers grew to 1200 in 1580 and finally, in 1610, to 2700.

But just how fragile this peace actually was becomes obvious in 1614, in the Fettmilch Riot, when the conflict between the magistrate and the citizenship mingles with anti-Semitic sentiment and turns into a pogrom.<sup>26</sup> "Most Jews got to safety in the cemetery, others took refuge with Frankfurters. The lootings went well into the night... Those people who had gathered in the cemetery had to leave the city by Fischerpforte- the majority fled on boats to Hannau and Offenbach. But first they had to pay export duty on the meagre possessions they were taking with them."<sup>27</sup>

I would like to conclude my lecture with the view of Klaus-Peter Lehmann, a retired pastor. He writes in an essay in the magazine "BlickPunkte", published by "Evangelischer Arbeitskreis für das christlich-jüdische Gespräch in Hessen und Nassau " (Protestant study group for Christian-Jewish dialogue in Hesse and Nassau), "Luther's attitude towards the Jews, valid throughout his life, is rendered by his own words: As long as they convert to Christianity, give up usury and adopt Christ, we will gladly consider them our brothers."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Anton Schindling, Wachstum und Wandel. Frankfurt am Main 1555-1685, in: Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen, herausgegeben von der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission (Veröffentlichungen der Frankfurter Historischen Kommission XVII), Sigmaringen 1991, 232

<sup>27</sup> Der Fettmilch-Aufstand. Bürgerunruhen und Judenfeindschaft in Frankfurt am Main 1612-1616, Robert Brandt u.a., Frankfurt am Main 1996, 32f.

<sup>28</sup> Luthers letzte Kanzelabkündigung am 15.2.1546, zitiert nach: „Luther“, Klaus-Peter Lehmann, Pastor i.R., Augsburg, in BlickPunkte Nr. 6/2010; Materialien zu Christentum, Judentum, Israel und Nahost, herausgegeben von: ImDialog. Evangelischer Arbeitskreis für das christlich-jüdische Gespräch in Hessen und Nassau, 17-19

### Postscript:

On 9 November 1938, the Nazis burnt synagogues throughout the Reich, laid waste businesses of Jewish merchants and damaged the dwellings of Jewish fellow citizens. In November next year it will be 80 years since that black day in German history.

The Nazis took every opportunity to legitimate their barbaric doings more or less religiously by referring to Luther's sinister recommendations. According to the Nazis, they had done what Luther, the patron of the Germans and the father of the German language, had demanded centuries before.

However, I would like to draw your attention at this point to an important difference that, unfortunately, is often overlooked today: Luther was, if you want to put it that way, an anti-Judaist. That means he, like the whole church in the Middle Ages, discriminated against the Jews because they were of the Jewish faith. Those who took over the Christian faith were protected from persecution and exclusion, of course at the price of having to give up their own cultural and religious identity. There is the example of the courageous Bishop of Regensburg which clarifies this. He had the Jewesses and Jews driven into the Danube, made the sign of the cross over them and baptized them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to protect the Jewish community of the town from the approaching army of the Crusaders. This compulsory baptism saved their lives. Now that they were Christians, the crusaders lacked every pretext to line their pockets with the Jews' possessions. By the way, many Jews returned to their Jewish faith as soon as the crusaders had moved on.

Discrimination and exclusion of the Jews during the Third Reich is called anti-Semitism and was justified differently: The Jewish race was said to have inferior genes, was said to be "lebensunwert" (not worthy of life) and thus had to be wiped out.

Converting to the Christian faith was said to be unable to remove these inferior genes and thus did not help to escape persecution in the Third Reich. In both churches we find heart-wrenching examples, like that of Elisabeth Neumann, who, as a christened and confirmed parish nurse, cared selflessly for the sick of the Reformed Community in Frankfurt's west end. Her creed could not prevent her being removed from service because she was a Jewess. She only closely escaped being murdered by escaping to Switzerland.

This anti-semitic persecution - in which the protestant Church also made itself guilty- has only been assessed reluctantly. This painful assessment was only made in December 1991, with the amendment to the basic confessions of the Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau, in Dominikanerkloster (Dominican monastery), a place closely connected with the Jewish-Christian history in Frankfurt, as we have seen.

It says, "Called to change its ways from blindness and guilt, the EKHN newly testifies to the lasting fact of the Jews as the Chosen People and of God's covenant with them. The faith in Jesus Christ includes this testimony."

Thank you for your attention.

## **Procolino Antacido**

### **Bio Profile**

Mr. Procolino Antacido took over the German School New Delhi as Principal in August 2015.

The DSND is one of more than 140 overseas German schools abroad – recognized by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the states in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and hence authorized to award German school leaving certificates. In 2013 the school was awarded the title “Excellent German Overseas School” by an official Federal states inspection. The school offers pre-nursery, kindergarten, pre-school, primary school (grades 1-4) and secondary level I (grades 5-10) and II (grades 11-12)-education. Presently approximately 150 students are enrolled.

Mr. Antacido, during his long career as an educator, had longstanding sojourns at local government schools in the Frankfurt area and at German schools abroad in Riyadh/Saudi Arabia and at the Colegio Humboldt at Sao Paulo/Brazil.

Prior to his present assignment to India he was the Head of the Department of Senior Students at the Bettina-Schule in Frankfurt/Main.

His alma mater is the Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt/Main from where he graduated in the subjects German Literature, History and Protestant Theology.

He is engaged in the Lutheran Church of Hessen and Nassau (EKHN) and was parish council member of the Evangelische Luthergemeinde in Frankfurt. New Delhi.