

Woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Dürer's Time

1950

Woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Dürer's Time

*Albrecht Dürer's Woodcuts Plus Five Other Sets
from the 15th and 16th Centuries*

Compilation and Introductions

by

KENNETH A. STRAND

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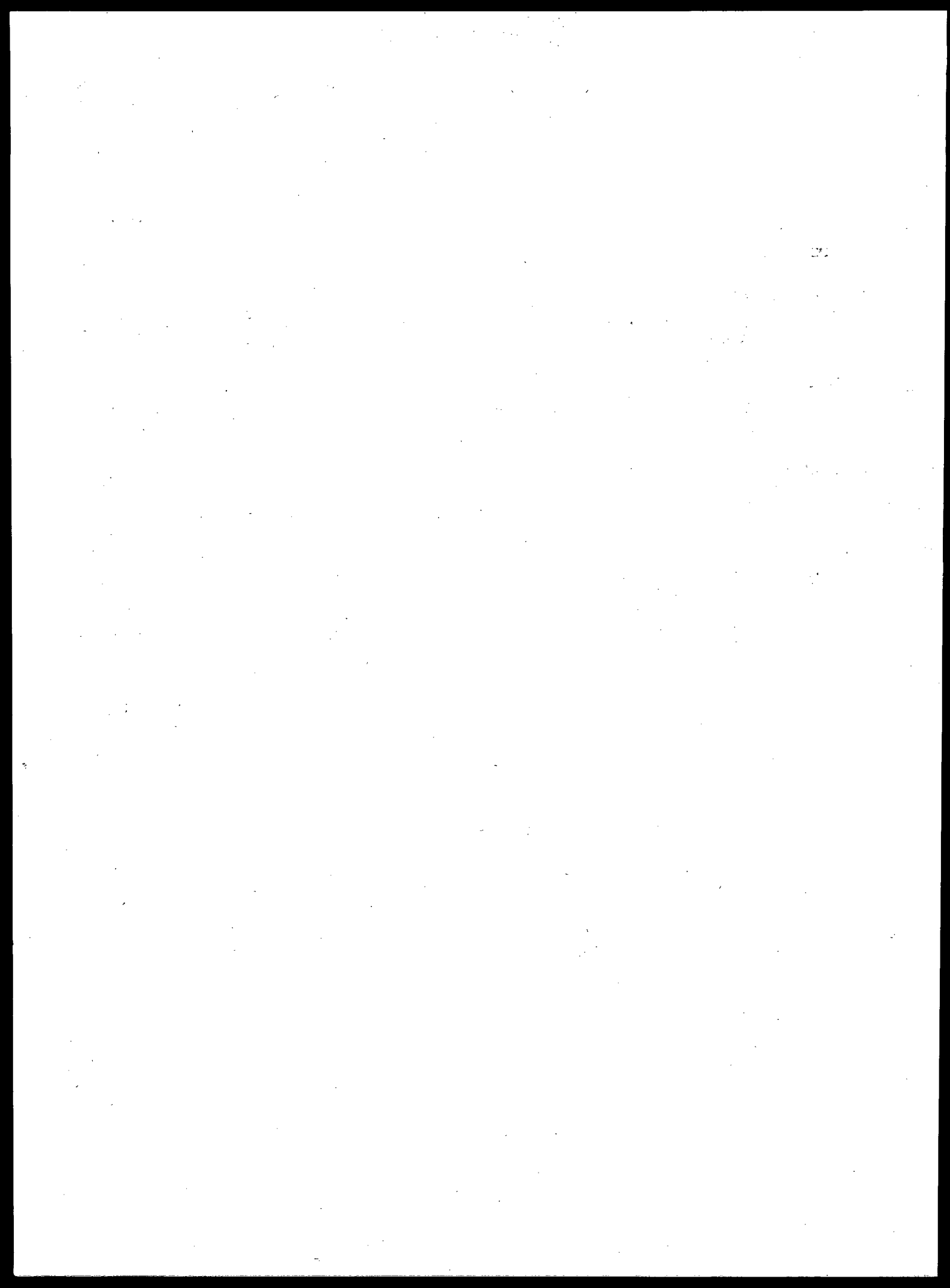
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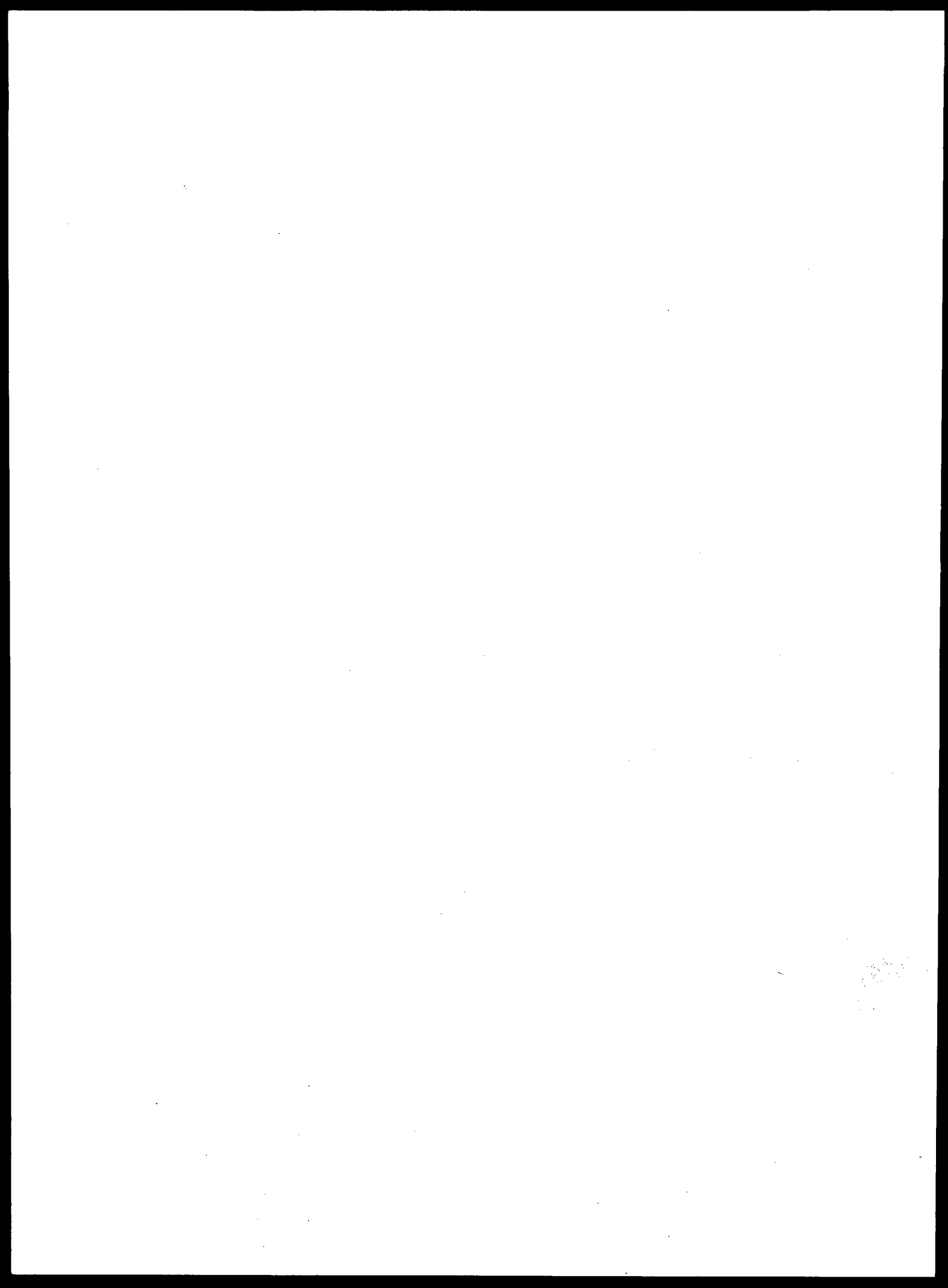
DANIEL WALTHER

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Revelation, so rich in symbolism, was a favorite subject and source for woodcut artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Albrecht Dürer's *Apocalypse* of 1498 (printed in both German and Latin editions that year, and later reprinted in further Latin ones) is particularly noteworthy. Its 15 magnificent woodcuts, which measure some 11 by 15 or 15½ inches, are reproduced in Part I of the present publication (in reduced size). Among the sources believed to have been used by Dürer in producing his illustrations for the Book of Revelation are 9 woodcuts to that book in a West-Low-German Bible printed in Cologne about 1479 and 8 woodcuts to it in a High-German Bible printed by Johann Reinhard de Grüningen in Strassburg in 1485. These two sets are reproduced in Part II.

But Dürer not only drew upon forerunners; he also influenced successors, among whom was the artist or artists responsible for the 21 full-page pictures to the Apocalypse in the first edition of Luther's New Testament published in Wittenberg in 1522 (the famed "September Bible"). Certainly Lukas Cranach (and/or his elder son Hans) produced the majority of these. It is interesting that contemporary persons, places, and events or circumstances are interpretatively depicted in some of these illustrations—for example, Duke George as a rider on one of the lion-headed horses of Revelation 9, the Rome of Hartmann Schedel's *Weltchronik* as the falling "Babylon" of Revelation 14 (and the burning "Babylon" of chapter 18), the monastic garb on the second beast of Revelation 13, the oppression of the lower classes by the horsemen of Revelation 6, *et cetera*. Hans Burgkmair also produced 21 woodcuts to the Apocalypse, which, however, show less intermingling of contemporary affairs with the scenes from the Bible text. Burgkmair's woodcuts decorate several editions of Luther's New Testament which came from the press of Silvan Otmar in Augsburg during the years 1523 and 1524. These two sets of 21 woodcuts are presented in Part III, and also included are three of the Cranach pictures in a revised form in which they appeared in the second Wittenberg edition of Luther's New Testament (the "December Bible" of 1522).

A number of woodcutters, including G. Lemberger and Anton Woensam, produced similar series of 21 woodcuts to the Apocalypse. But some Bibles soon began to use an expanded set of 26 pictures. Among such was the first edition of Luther's complete Bible, published in 1534. Its woodcuts to the Book of Revelation are reproduced in Part IV.

Preceding the woodcuts in each main Part of the present publication is a listing of the woodcuts in that Part, as well as a few general introductory remarks. The present book is, however, a book of pictures rather than discussion; and for detailed information the reader is referred to readily available literature on woodcutting and woodcutters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Treatments of Dürer are, of course, particularly numerous, and we may mention here but one: Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (4th ed.; Princeton, N.J., 1955). Earlier editions were entitled *Albrecht Dürer*. An excellent discussion of woodcuts in various editions of Luther's Bible is provided by Ph. Schmidt, *Die Illustration der Lutherbibel 1522-1700* (Basel, 1962). The fifteenth-century German Bibles have been treated by the present writer in his *German Bibles Before Luther* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1966) and *Early Low-German Bibles* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1967).

The woodcuts reproduced herein are for the most part shown in actual size or only very slightly reduced. A notable exception is Dürer's woodcuts, whose size here is about 60 or 65 per cent of the original.

1917
1918

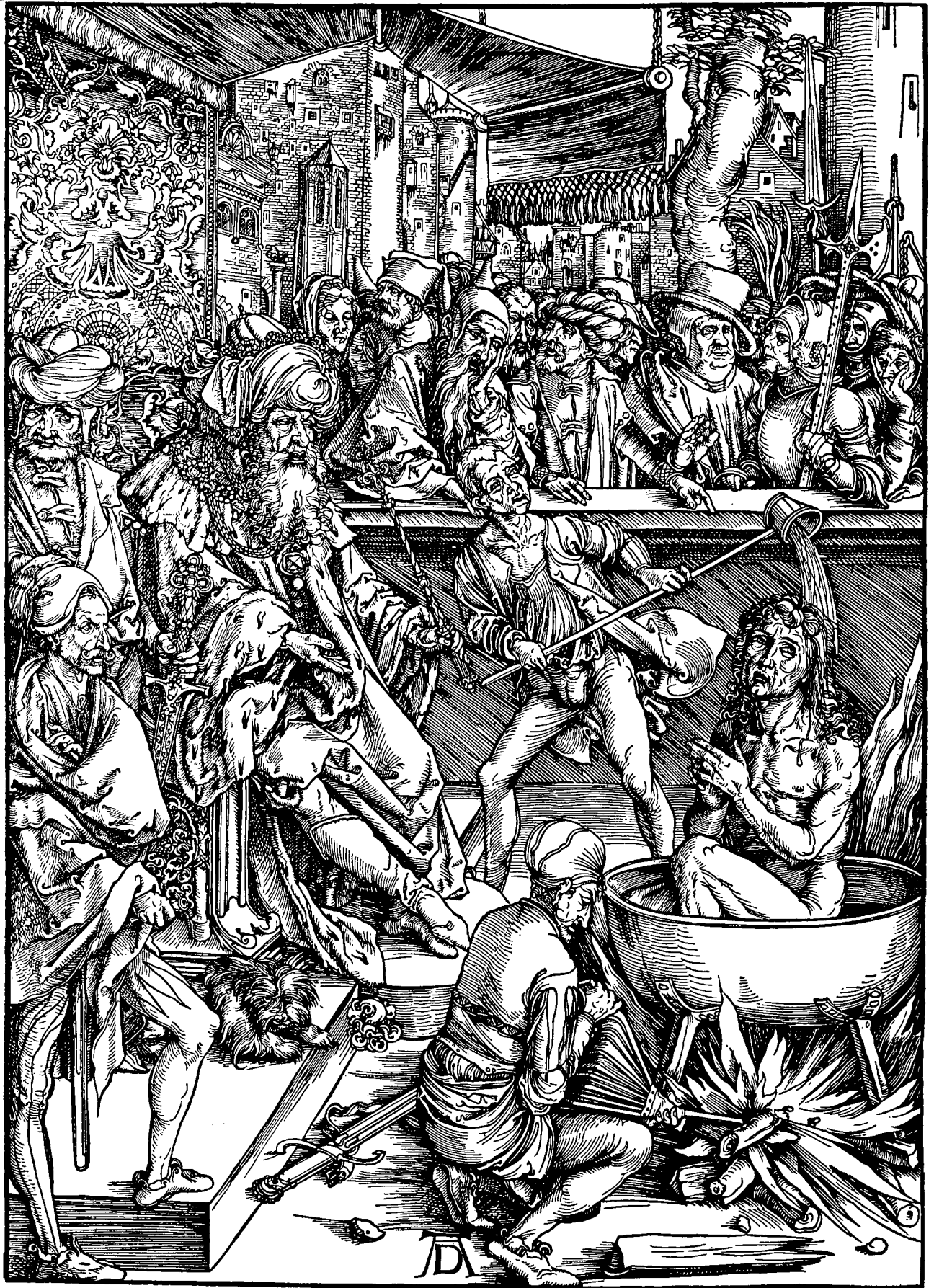
Part I

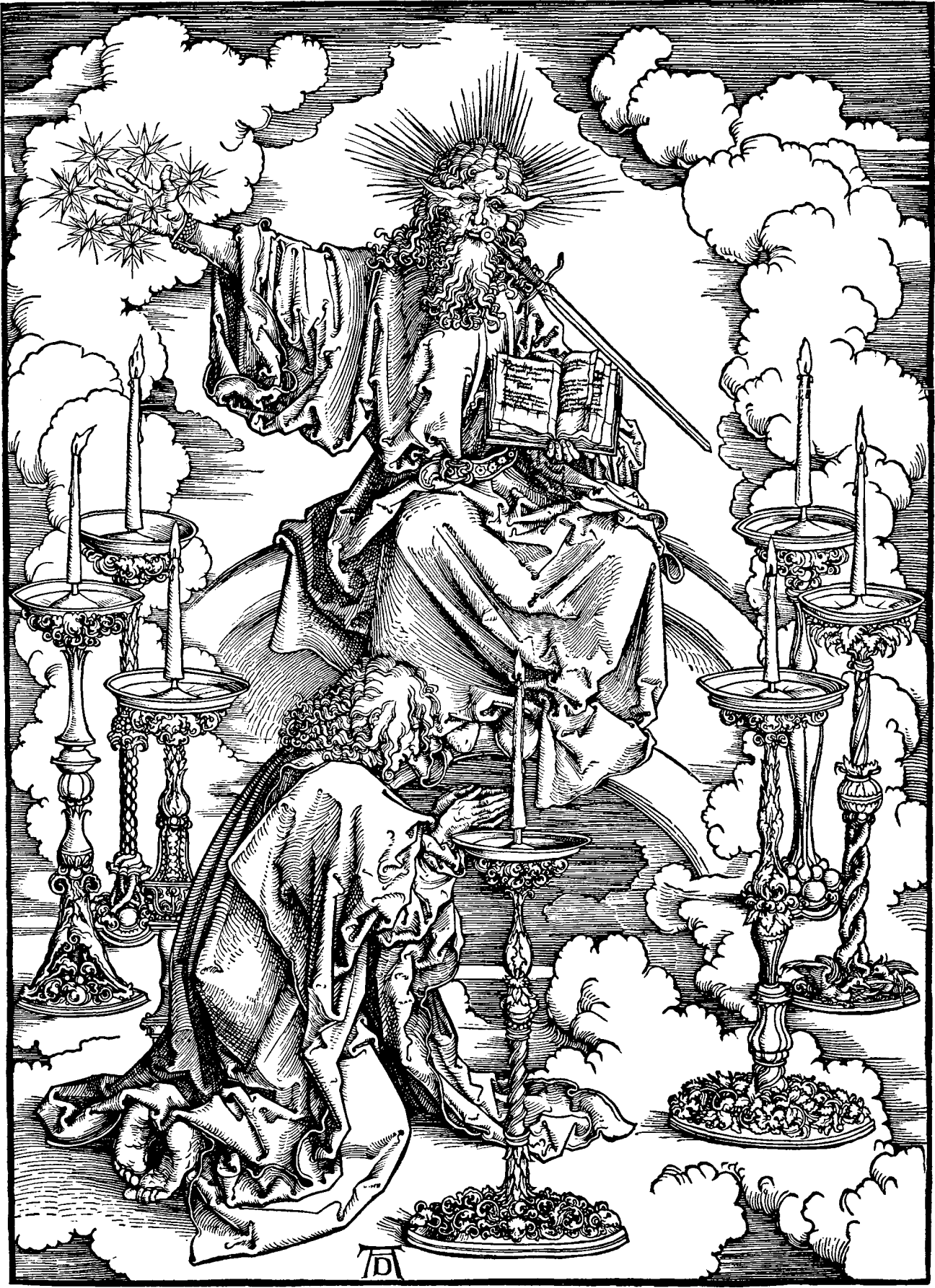
DÜRER'S WOODCUTS TO THE APOCALYPSE

The woodcuts for the Book of Revelation produced by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) are truly magnificent as to style and workmanship and are of impressive size as well, measuring some 11 by 15 or 15½ inches. They appear on the right-hand pages of Dürer's *Apocalypse*, with accompanying text on the facing left-hand pages. This beautiful *Apocalypse* was first published in 1498 in Nuremberg in both Latin and German editions, with further Latin editions appearing in the early sixteenth century (notably 1510-11). Almost identical woodcuts appear also in Martin Graeff's German edition of 1502. For his publication, Graeff used Dürer's general format as well; but he incorporated a text based on Koberger's High-German Bible of 1483.

List of Woodcuts

	<u>Woodcut</u>	<u>Page</u>
JOHN IN BOILING OIL (from ancient tradition)	1	12
CHRIST AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS (Rev. 1)	2	13
THE THRONE, FOUR LIVING CREATURES, SEALED BOOK, AND LAMB (Rev. 4, 5) . . .	3	14
THE FOUR HORSES AND HORSEMEN (Rev. 6:1-8)	4	15
SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR, AND SIGNS IN THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS (Rev. 6:9-17)	5	16
THE SEAL OF GOD (Rev. 7:1-8)	6	17
THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS (Rev. 8:2-13)	7	18
THE SIXTH TRUMPET (Rev. 9:13-21)	8	19
THE ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK (Rev. 10)	9	20
THE WOMAN AND THE GREAT RED DRAGON (Rev. 12:1-6, 13-16)	10	21
WAR IN HEAVEN: THE DRAGON THROWN OUT (Rev. 12:7-9)	11	22
THE TWO BEASTS (Rev. 13)	12	23
THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION, AND THE 144,000 (Rev. 14:1-5)	13	24
THE WOMAN AND BEAST IN THE WILDERNESS, THE DESTRUCTION OF BABY- LON, AND THE ARMIES OF HEAVEN (Rev. 17; 18; 19:11-16)	14	25
THE DRAGON THROWN INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT, AND A VISION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (Rev. 20:1-3; 21)	15	26







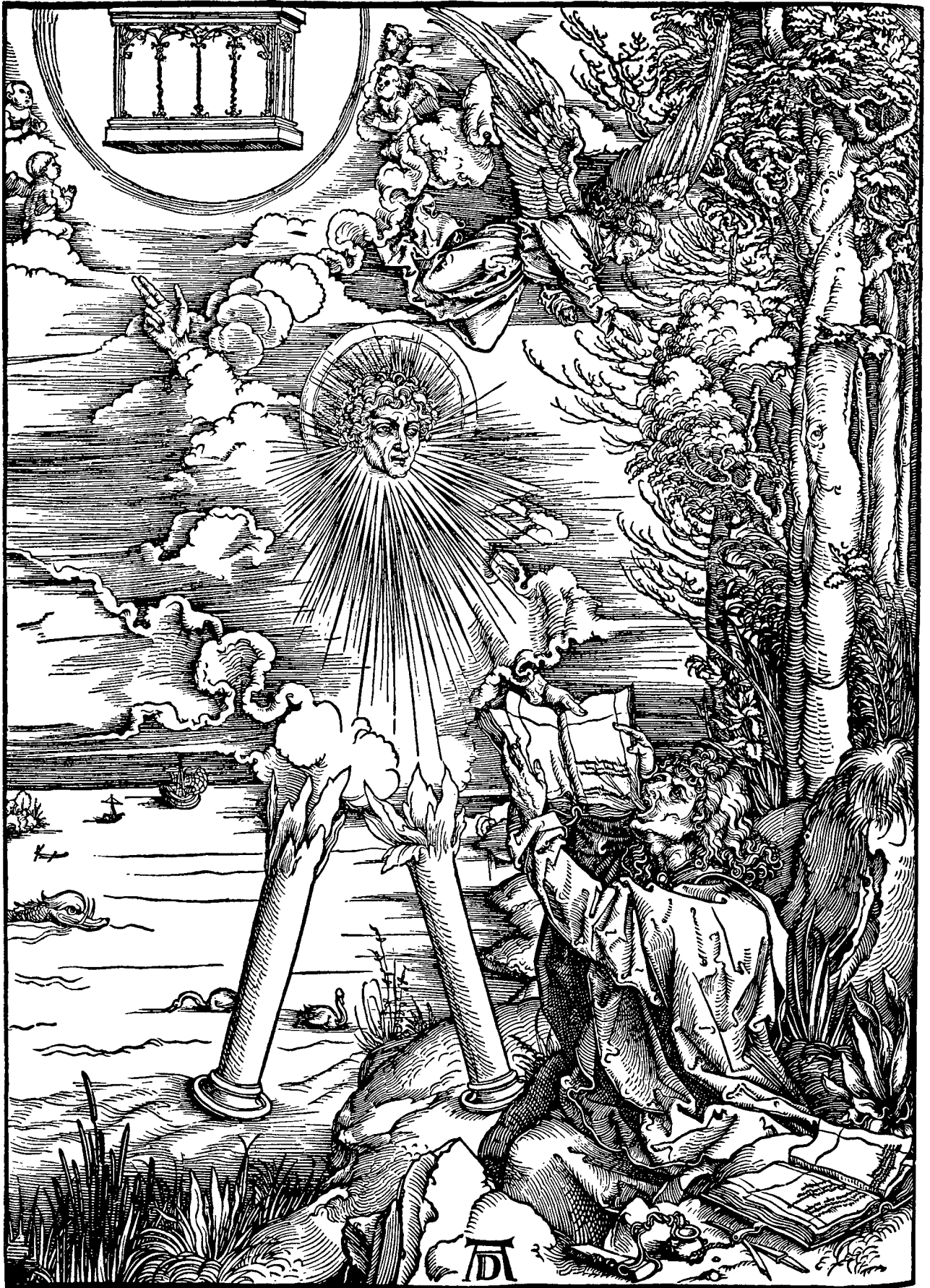








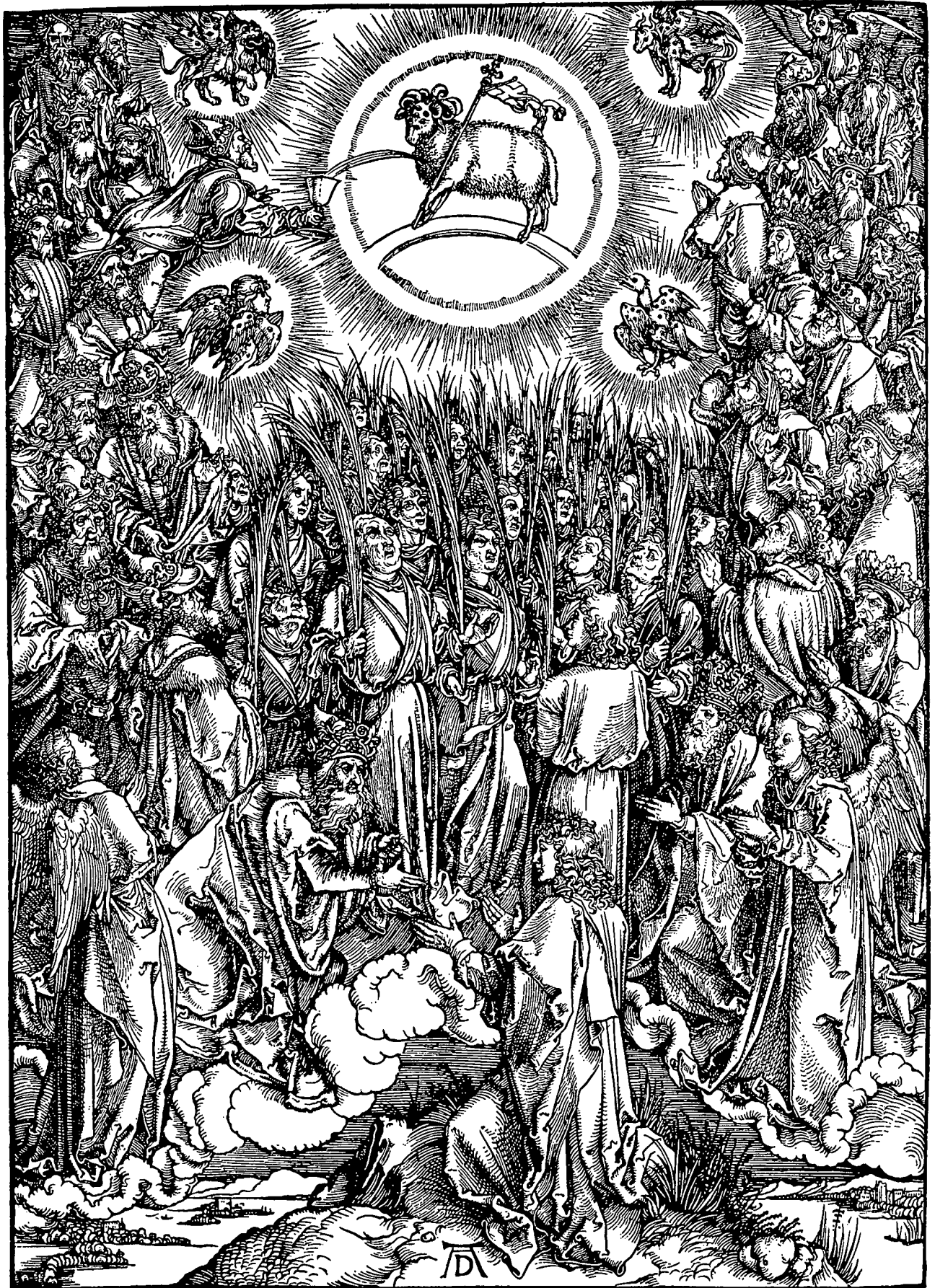














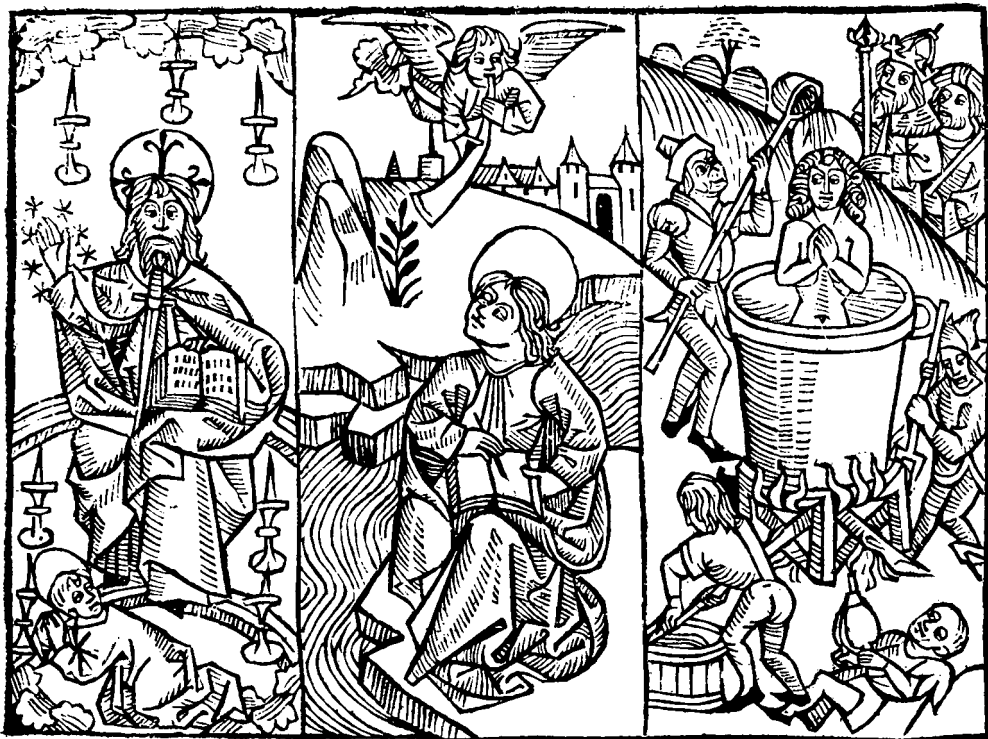
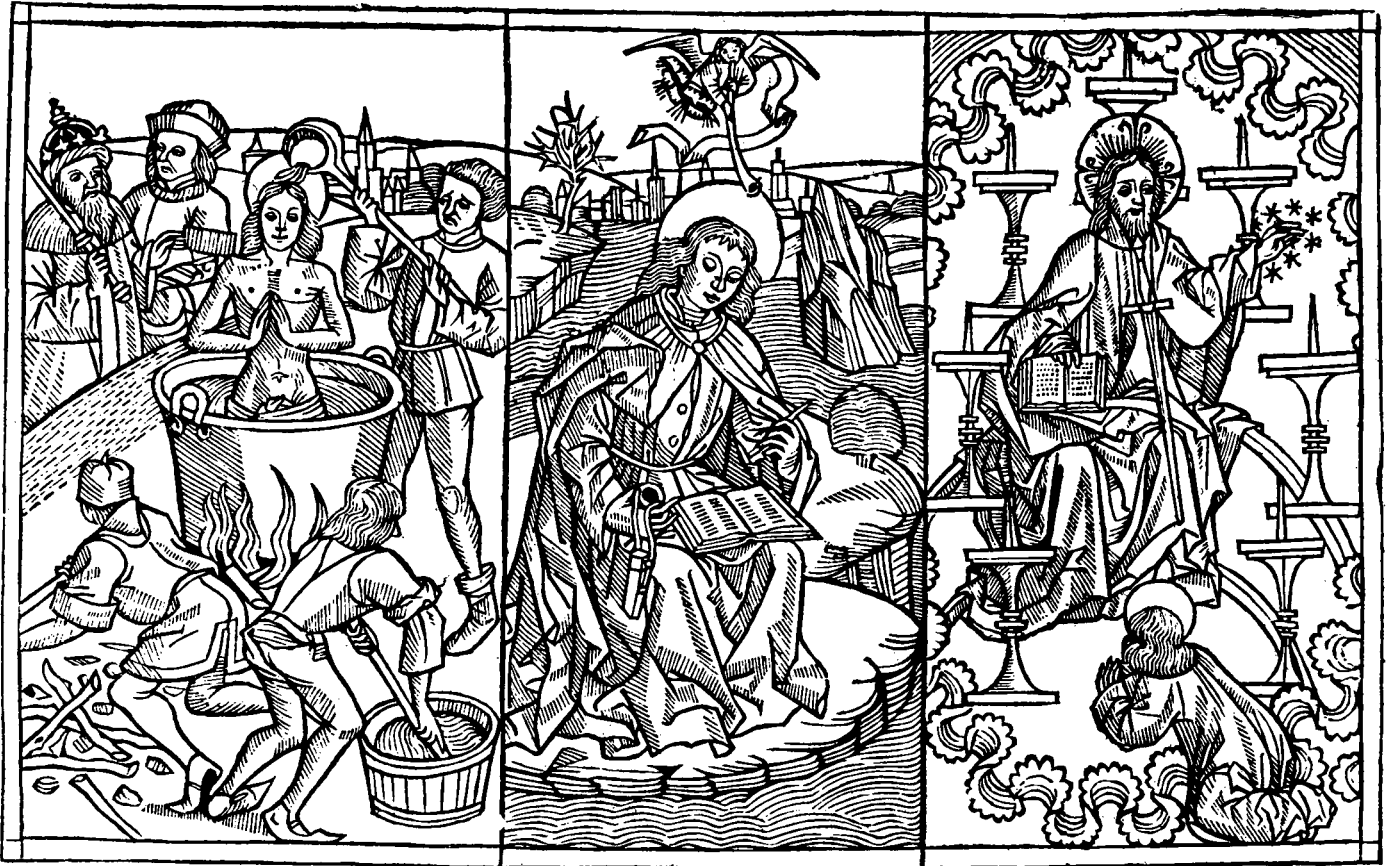


Part II

TWO FORERUNNERS OF DÜRER

Among sources believed to have been used by Albrecht Dürer as he produced his woodcuts for the Apocalypse are the pictures decorating the Book of Revelation in the Cologne West-Low-German Bible of *circa* 1479 (reprinted in Koberger's High-German edition of 1483 and in the Halberstadt Low-German edition of 1522) and in Johann Reinhard de Grüningen's High-German Bible printed in Strassburg in 1485. The artists responsible for these woodcuts are not known. The dependence of the later set upon the earlier is clear, and it is also interesting to note that multiple scenes are usually reversed in the later set.

<u>List of Woodcuts</u>	<u>Woodcut</u>	<u>Page</u>
JOHN IN BOILING OIL (from ancient tradition), JOHN RECEIVING THE REVELATION, CHRIST AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS (Rev. 1)		
Cologne Bible, left to right	16	28
Grüninger Bible, right to left	17	28
THE FOUR HORSES AND HORSEMEN (Rev. 6:1-8)		
Cologne Bible	18	29
Grüninger Bible	19	29
SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR, SIGNS IN THE HEAVENLY BODIES, THE SEAL OF GOD (Rev. 6:9-7:8)		
Cologne Bible, left to right	20	30
Grüninger Bible, right to left	21	30
WORSHIP OF THE LAMB, TRUMPET BLASTS, FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS (Rev. 7:9-8:13)		
Cologne Bible, left to right	22	31
Grüninger Bible, right to left	23	31
FIFTH TRUMPET (Rev. 9:1-11)		
Cologne Bible	24	32
SIXTH TRUMPET (TWO SCENES), THE ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK (Rev. 9:13-10:11)		
Cologne Bible, left to right	25	33
Grüninger Bible, left to right	26	33
THE TEMPLE AND TWO WITNESSES, THE BEAST AND THE WITNESSES, THE WOMAN AND THE GREAT RED DRAGON (Rev. 11:1-12:5)		
Cologne Bible, left to right	27	34
Grüninger Bible, right to left	28	34
WAR IN HEAVEN, MEN WORSHIPPING THE 7-HEADED BEAST, THE SECOND BEAST BRINGING FIRE DOWN FROM HEAVEN (Rev. 12:7-9; 13:1-4, 11-13)		
Cologne Bible, left to right	29	35
Grüninger Bible, right to left	30	35
THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST IN THE WILDERNESS, THE FALL OF BABYLON, THE HARVEST OF THE WORLD AND THE DRAGON THROWN INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT (Rev. 17; 18; 14:14-20 and 20:1-3)		
Cologne Bible, left to right	31	36
Grüninger Bible, right to left	32	36





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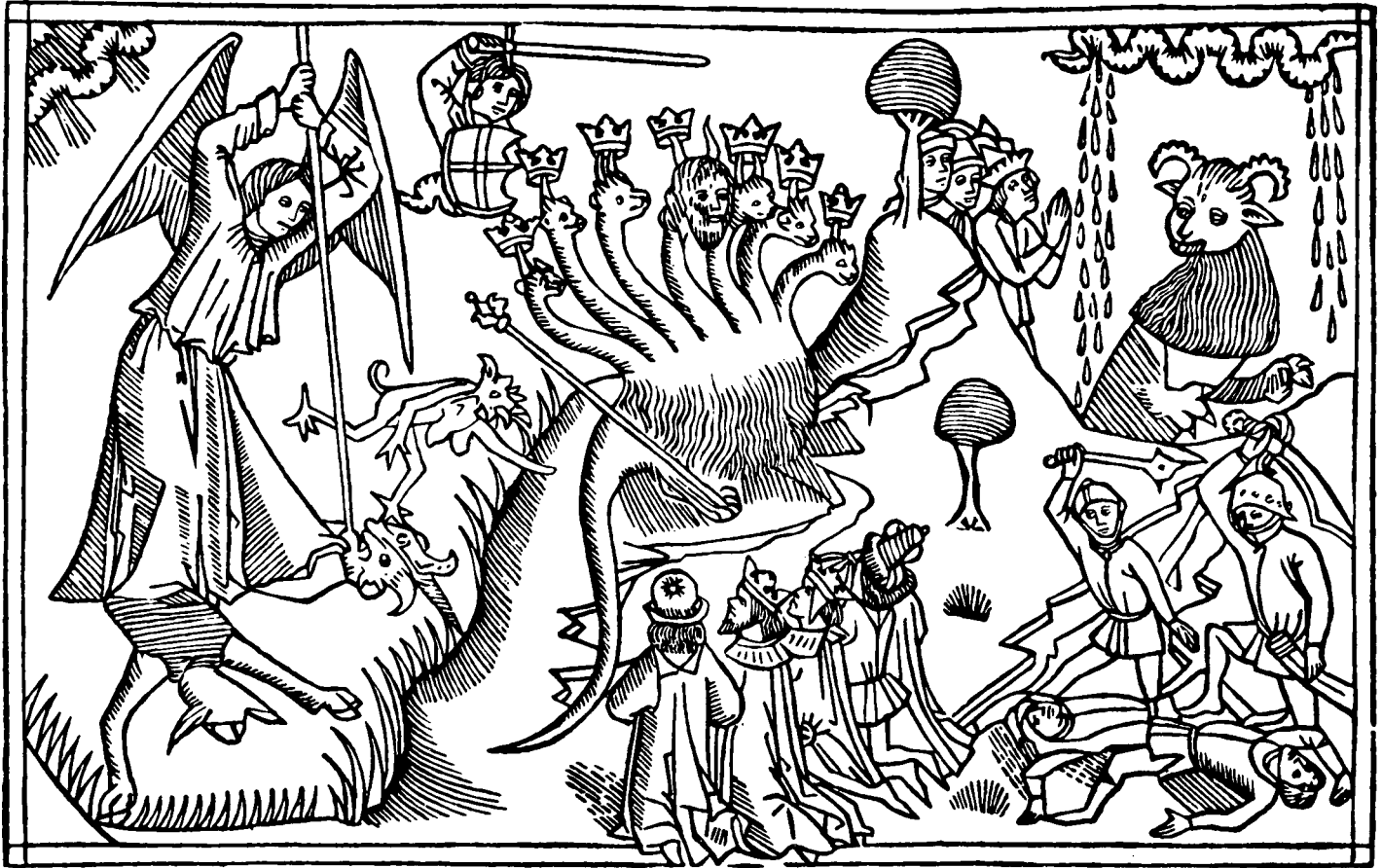














Part III

THE WOODCUTS OF LUTHER'S "SEPTEMBER BIBLE" AND OF HANS BURGKMAIR

The first edition of Luther's New Testament was published by Melchior Lotther in Wittenberg in September, 1522, and has been called the "September Bible." Although the Book of Revelation took a somewhat subordinate place in this edition (together with Hebrews, James, and Jude), it nevertheless was the one book chosen to be illustrated with large, full-page pictures. Inasmuch as Lukas Cranach (or was it possibly Lukas' elder son Hans?) produced a number of these woodcuts during Luther's stay at the Wartburg, it may be that the inspiration for these particular illustrations came from Karlstadt and/or the Zwickau radicals who visited Wittenberg. The content of several of the woodcuts, with implication concerning contemporary circumstances, would lead to the same conclusion—as, for example, the suggestion of the oppression of the lower classes in the woodcut of the Four Horses and Horsemen (no. 35, p. 40). Interpretation of the contemporary scene is manifest in these woodcuts in other ways as well: We may note, for instance, the monastic garb on the two-horned beast in Woodcut 46 (p. 51), and the papal triple crown on the beasts in Woodcuts 43 and 49 (pp. 48, 54) and on the head of the whore in Woodcut 51 (p. 56). This tiara was reduced, however, when the woodcuts were used in the second Wittenberg edition—the "December Bible" of 1522—, perhaps at Luther's own request (see Woodcuts 44, 50, and 52, on pp. 49, 55, 57). Specific persons were at times depicted too. It is believed, for example, that the first individual shown as being sealed in Woodcut 38 (p. 43) is Lukas Cranach, and that the double-bearded warrior shown in the forefront among the riders of the lion-headed horses in Woodcut 41 (p. 46) is Duke George of Albertine Saxony, a foremost enemy of the Lutheran Reformation.

Whether all the large woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Luther's September Bible are to be attributed to Lukas Cranach (and/or Hans) has been a matter of dispute. Those which have been considered as most likely from at least the "Cranach school" are the ones numbered herein as 33, 34, 36, 42, 43 (and 44), 51 (and 52), and 53 (see pp. 38, 39, 41, 47, 48 [and 49], 56 [and 57], and 58), although there is strong likelihood that all but Numbers 55 and 56 are indeed Cranach woodcuts. The "HB" which appears clearly in the final woodcut is particularly intriguing—and puzzling!

Hans Burgkmair the elder (d. 1531) provided a series of woodcuts used in several editions of Luther's New Testament printed by Silvan Otmar in Augsburg during the years 1523 and 1524. Except for the first woodcut to the Apocalypse, which occupies a page by itself, the rest of the pictures are interspersed with the text; but they are all nearly full-page size nonetheless. The initials "HB" may be noted in Burgkmair's woodcuts. These illustrations occasionally show a greater independence from Dürer than do those in Luther's September Bible, though both woodcutters undoubtedly had made use of Dürer's work. For instance, whereas Cranach follows Dürer in depicting the four horses and horsemen in battle line, Burgkmair has placed them in succession—which is, incidentally, more true to the text (see Woodcuts 4, 35, and 59, on pp. 15, 40, and 63). Burgkmair, in fact, frequently has shown an interest in capturing the text quite literally. Mention may be made of the three frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, beast, and false prophet in contrast to six frogs from the beast alone in the corresponding woodcut of the "September Bible" (contrast Woodcut 72 on p. 69 with Woodcut 49 on p. 54); and of the sword proceeding from the mouth of the Leader of the armies of heaven rather than just being held by Him (contrast Woodcut 75 on p. 71 with Woodcut 54 on p. 59). It may also be noted that Burgkmair was less interested than Cranach in interpreting contemporary events through the woodcuts. Both of these artists, however, knew the Lutheran text of the New Testaments they were illustrating and endeavored to be true to it, as may be seen in the fact that whereas Dürer's woodcut for the first four trumpets depicts an eagle uttering the threefold "Woe," Cranach and Burgkmair pictured the cry as being given by an angel (see Woodcuts 7, 39, and 63, on pp. 18, 44, and 65).

List of Woodcuts

	Woodcut	Page		Woodcut	Page
CHRIST AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS (Rev. 1)			THE WOMAN AND GREAT RED DRAGON (Rev. 12)		
September Bible	33	38	September Bible	45	50
Burgkmair	57	62	Burgkmair	68	67
THE THRONE, FOUR LIVING CREATURES, SEALED BOOK, AND LAMB (Rev. 4,5)			THE TWO BEASTS (Rev. 13)		
September Bible	34	39	September Bible	46	51
Burgkmair	58	62	Burgkmair	69	68
THE FOUR HORSES AND HORSEMEN (Rev. 6: 1-8)			THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION, THE 144,000, AND THE THREE ANGELS (Rev. 14:1-12)		
September Bible	35	40	September Bible	47	52
Burgkmair	59	63	Burgkmair	70	68
SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR (Rev. 6:9-11)			THE HARVEST (Rev. 14:14-20)		
September Bible	36	41	September Bible	48	53
Burgkmair	60	63	Burgkmair	71	69
EARTHQUAKE AND SIGNS IN SUN, MOON AND STARS (Rev. 6:12-17)			THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES (Rev. 15,16)		
September Bible	37	42	September Bible	49	54
Burgkmair	61	64	December Bible	50	55
THE SEAL OF GOD (Rev. 7:1-8)			Burgkmair	72	69
September Bible	38	43	THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST IN THE WILDERNESS (Rev. 17)		
Burgkmair	62	64	September Bible	51	56
THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS (Rev. 8:2-13)			December Bible	52	57
September Bible	39	44	Burgkmair	73	70
Burgkmair	63	65	THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON (Rev. 18)		
THE FIFTH TRUMPET (Rev. 9:1-11)			September Bible	53	58
September Bible	40	45	Burgkmair	74	70
Burgkmair	64	65	THE ARMIES OF HEAVEN (Rev. 19:11-21)		
THE SIXTH TRUMPET (Rev. 9:13-21)			September Bible	54	59
September Bible	41	46	Burgkmair	75	71
Burgkmair	65	66	DRAGON THROWN INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT (Rev. 20:1-3)		
THE ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK (Rev. 10)			September Bible	55	60
September Bible	42	47	Burgkmair	76	71
Burgkmair	66	66	THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM (Rev. 21)		
THE TEMPLE, TWO WITNESSES, AND BEAST (Rev. 11:1-7)			September Bible	56	61
September Bible	43	48	Burgkmair	77	72
December Bible	44	49			
Burgkmair	67	67			





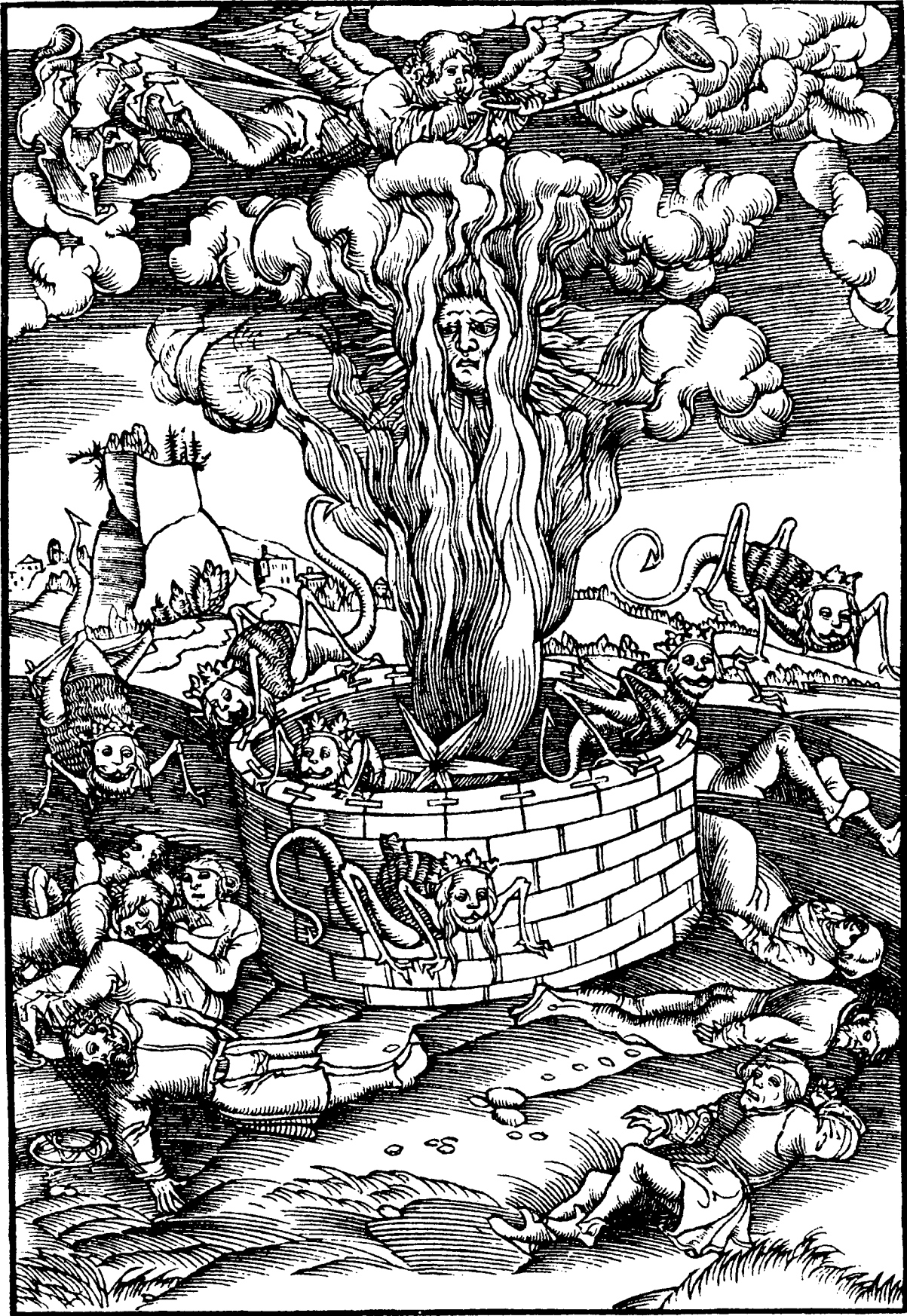




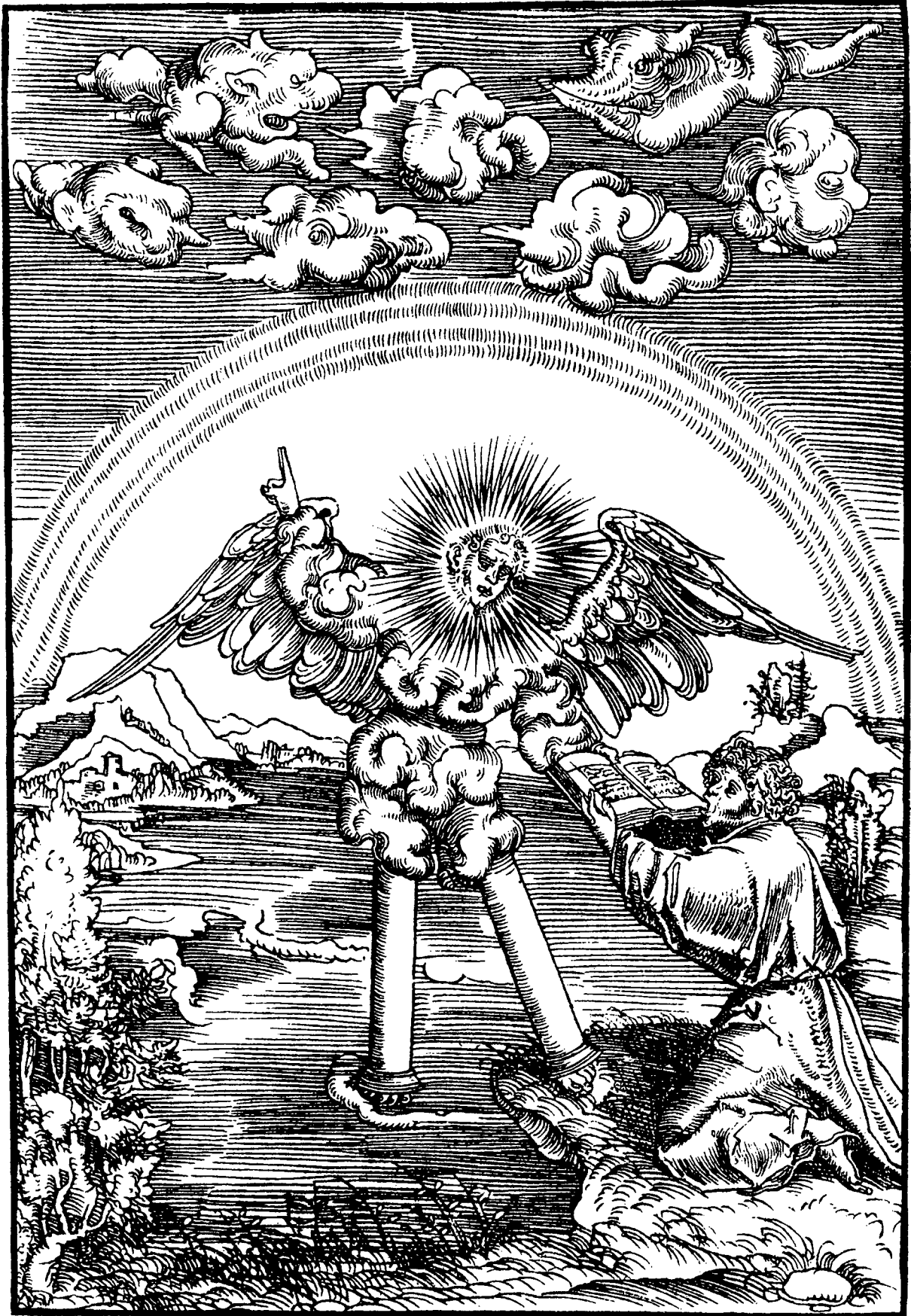




















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Part IV

THE WOODCUTS TO THE APOCALYPSE IN LUTHER'S FIRST COMPLETE BIBLE

Various editions of the New Testament which appeared after 1522 contained series of 21 woodcuts to the Apocalypse similar to those in Luther's September Bible or to those by Hans Burgkmair. However, the series was sometimes expanded to 26 pictures. In the first edition of Luther's complete Bible, published by Hans Lufft in Wittenberg in 1534, such a series of 26 pictures for the Book of Revelation appeared. In fact, this Bible was illustrated throughout, containing a total of about 125 pictures. There is, unfortunately, no absolute certainty as to who the woodcutter was. Melchior Schwarzenberg and Martin Schaffner have been suggested as possibilities because of the monogram "MS" appearing in some pictures, but Lukas Cranach has also been suggested. Regardless of who the artist may have been, it seems quite certain that Luther himself took an interest in the planning and preparation of the pictures for this Bible. Remarkably, a triple crown has reappeared, in woodcuts 92, 97, and 98 (pp. 81, 83, and 84).

List of Woodcuts

	<u>Woodcut</u>	<u>Page</u>
CHRIST AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS (Rev. 1)	78	74
THE THRONE, FOUR LIVING CREATURES, SEALED BOOK, AND LAMB (Rev. 4,5) . . .	79	74
THE FOUR HORSES AND HORSEMEN (Rev. 6:1-8)	80	75
SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR (Rev. 6:9-11)	81	75
EARTHQUAKE AND SIGNS IN SUN, MOON, AND STARS (Rev. 6:12-17)	82	76
THE SEAL OF GOD (Rev. 7)	83	76
THE TRUMPETS READY TO BE SOUNDED (Rev. 8:2-6)	84	77
THE FIRST TRUMPET (Rev. 8:7)	85	77
THE SECOND TRUMPET (Rev. 8:8,9)	86	78
THE THIRD TRUMPET (Rev. 8:10,11)	87	78
THE FOURTH TRUMPET (Rev. 8:12,13)	88	79
THE FIFTH TRUMPET (Rev. 9:1-11)	89	79
THE SIXTH TRUMPET (Rev. 9:13-21)	90	80
THE ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK (Rev. 10)	91	80
THE TEMPLE, TWO WITNESSES, AND BEAST (Rev. 11:1-7)	92	81
THE WOMAN AND THE GREAT RED DRAGON (Rev. 12)	93	81
THE TWO BEASTS (Rev. 13)	94	82
THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION, THE 144,000, AND THE THREE ANGELS (Rev. 14: 1-12)	95	82
THE HARVEST (Rev. 14:14-20)	96	83
THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES (Rev. 15,16)	97	83
THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST IN THE WILDERNESS (Rev. 17)	98	84
THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON (Rev. 18)	99	84
THE ARMIES OF HEAVEN (Rev. 19:11-21)	100	85
THE DRAGON THROWN INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT (Rev. 20:1-3)	101	85
THE LAST BATTLE AND THE LAKE OF FIRE (Rev. 20:7-10)	102	86
THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM (Rev. 21)	103	86





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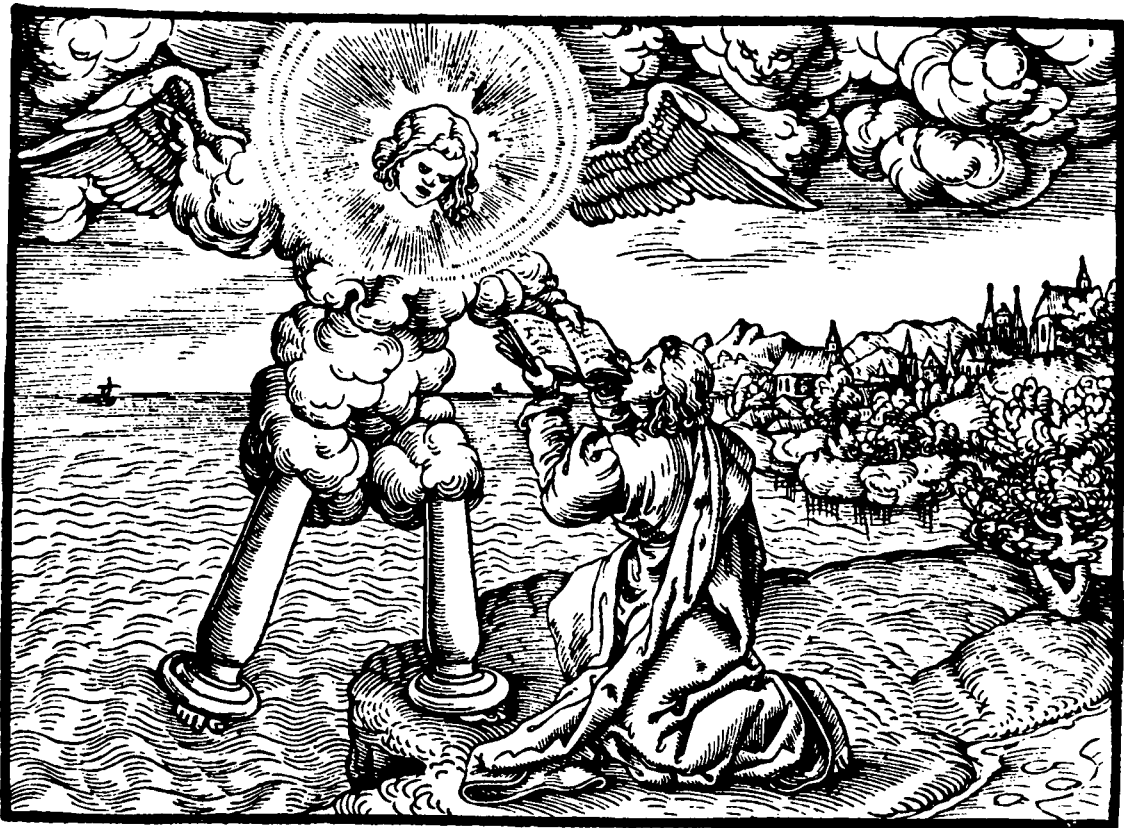
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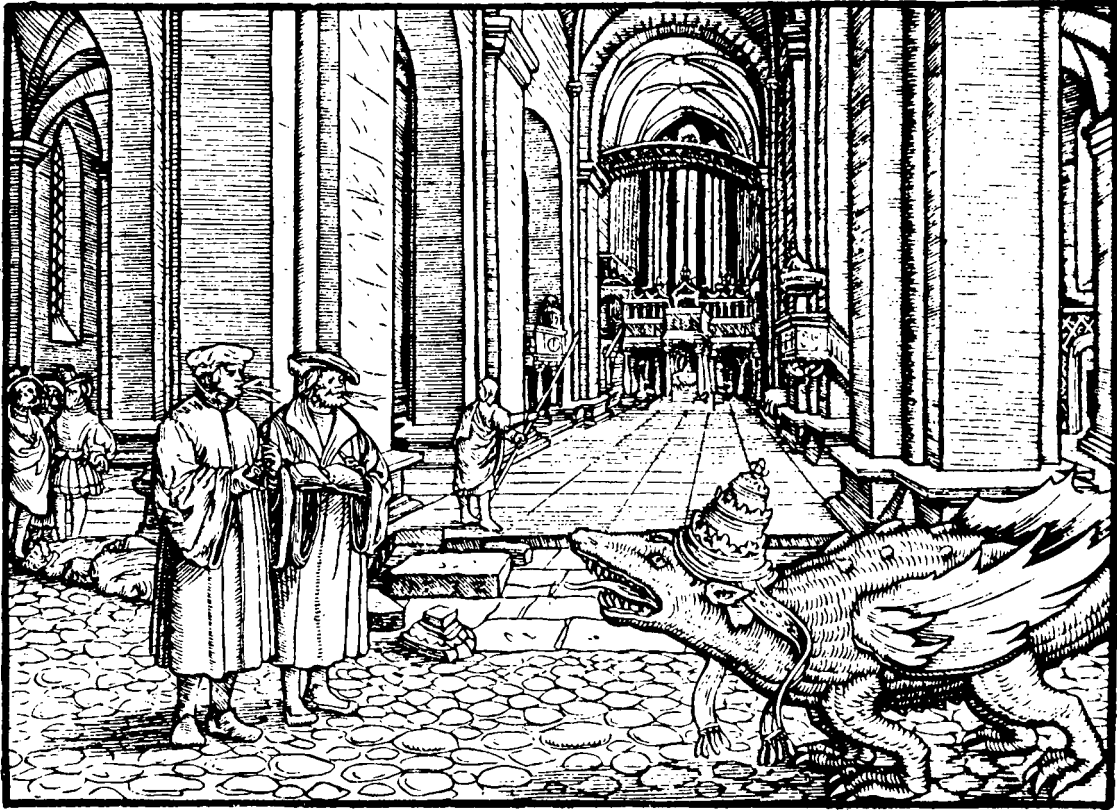


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92



93





96



97





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101



102



103