

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING*The Cathedral of Bourges:
A Witness to Judeo-Christian Dialogue in Medieval Berry*

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Presented at the "Was there a 'Golden Age' of Christian-Jewish Relations?"
Conference at Boston College, April 2010

The term "Golden Age" appears in several contexts. In most venues, it both attracts and inspires controversy: Is the Golden Age, as technology claims, the year following a stunning breakthrough, now available for use? Is it, as moralists would aver, a better, purer time? Can it be identified, as social engineers would hope, as an epoch of heightened output in art, science, literature, and philosophy? Does it portend, in assessing human development, an extended period of progress, prosperity, and cultural achievement? Factoring in Hesiod's and Ovid's understanding that a "Golden Age" was an era of great peace and happiness (*Works and Days*, 109-210 and *Metamorphoses* I, 89-150) is not particularly helpful because, as a mythological entity, their "golden age" was far removed from ordinary experience and their testimony is necessarily imaginative. In the end, it is probably as difficult to define "Golden Age" as it is to speak of interactions between Jews and Christians in, what Jonathan Ray calls, "sweeping terms." And yet, there were epochs when the unity, harmony, and fulfillment that are so hard to realize seemed almost within reach. An era giving prominence to these qualities seems to deserve the appellation "golden age." Still, if religious differences characterize those involved, the possibility of dissonance inevitably raises tension. Although Golden Ages in such highly charged circumstances can be real, they are probably going to be brief, pointed, and poignant. This paper details a period of this type; it maintains that by examining a single artifact—the Cathedral of St. Etienne—which rose at a specific time and place—Bourges-en-Berry between 1195 and 1235—one can gather convincing evidence of a short but "golden age" in Jewish-Christian relations.

Positing any kind of Jewish-Christian "golden age" in Western Europe during the medieval centuries may seem somewhat foolish in light of what happened to Jews between 1240 and 1492: expulsions, forced conversions, social and political ostracism, deprivation of income and comparable economic oppression, accusation of and prosecution for so-called "crimes" against Christians, periodic rampages by Crusaders, and other attacks—both physical and mental—which functioned as insults to Judaism. These disastrous—often criminal—events escalated in violence and frequency from the preaching of the First Crusade (1095) onwards and, because of their arbitrariness, their ability to engender a sense of powerlessness, and their capacity for inspiring anger and disgust in future generations, they tend to overwhelm any other vision of the medieval period. The horrific nature and bloody outcome of some attacks obscures the fact that they did not exist in all places or at all times. It also vitiates any appreciation for the points where interaction between the two communions resulted in respectful understanding. From the skeptics' perspective, certain twelfth-century initiatives, like the Jews' consultative role in scriptural interpretation,¹ their participation in dialogues and scholastic disputations that sincerely explored

¹ Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor frequently sought out and seem to have carefully considered the biblical interpretations made by Jewish exegetes; see B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN,

theological difference as well as their functioning as instructors in Hebrew² have no favorable aspects. Fortunately, one cross-cultural, long-standing, and almost invariably positive interchange has recently been explored and affirmed: the influence of Jewish culture on early Christian, Byzantine, and ultimately medieval art.³ Texts as varied in time of composition and content as the Vienna Genesis and the Duke of Bedford's Book of Hours clearly show this influence; illuminations in the manuscripts of Caedmon's poetry and the Aelfric *Paraphrases*, as well as paintings by William de Brailles, exhibit a Christian revisionist view of the same material.⁴ Architectural decoration was also affected by Judaic tradition. The nave vault of the church at Saint Savin sur Gartemps, for example, uses continuity and movement patterns that are unconventional in Christian iconography and may point to an earlier pictorial model of Jewish origin.⁵ In the Saint Savin sequence, the two giants who cling to the roof of Noah's ark (as they also do in the murals of the church of St. Jean Baptist de Chateau-Gontier) are undoubtedly the Og and Sihon described in the *Pirke of Rabbi Eleazar*, a well-known component of Hebraic apocryphal literature.⁶

Admittedly, the apparently midrashic elements at Saint Savin are limited to the ceiling frescoes. The Jewish influences on nearby St. Etienne at Bourges are much more pervasive; there the message conveyed by design and decoration reflects a respectfully integrated *weltanschauung*. This extraordinary cathedral, begun in 1195—just one year after Chartres—and essentially complete some forty years later, is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture,⁷ an imaginative fusion of northern engineering and southern spatial unity whose every aspect contributes to the sense of unstructured spaciousness.⁸ The soaring verticals of the nave arcade are pointed to and echoed in the elevation of the inner aisle⁹ and the great church's immense pyramidal shape is dramatized by light entering at three levels of height and in three planes in space from the outer wall to

1964), 149-95. Also informative is H. Hailperin, *Rashi and the Christian Scholars* (Pittsburg, 1963) and G. Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens et les juifs au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1990), particularly part 3.

² "Especially before the era of the Crusades, the disputation was a more or less friendly conversation between Jewish and Christian intellectuals eager for a firsthand knowledge of each other's faith" (M. R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross* [Princeton, 1994], 143-44). G. Dahan characterizes the milieu surrounding these interchanges as "ouverte," or open, "ou les relations entre chrétiens et juifs sont normales" except for a few crises; see his *La polémique chrétienne contre le judaïsme au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1991), 21. A good survey of the disputation process is found in Norman Roth, *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (New York, 2003), 212-18. Perhaps the most positive view is expressed by J. Elukin, in *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2007), 64-88; Elukin mentions instruction in Hebrew on p. 67. Other scholars discern no rapprochement, as in J. Cohen, "Scholarship and Intolerance in the Medieval Academy," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 599-600.

³ Mira Friedman has joined a long list of scholars who have studied the Vienna Genesis; her comments on the Duke of Bedford's Book of Hours can be found in "The Tower of Babel in the Bedford Book of Hours," *Studies in Bible and Visual Arts*, 111-17 (www.etf.cuni.cz/~prudky/OTculture/O-content.pdf); see also the first footnote in M. Friedman, "L'arche de Noe de Saint Savin," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 40 (1977), 124. The cooperative ventures of Jewish and Christian artisans between 400 and 700 C. E. is discussed in this volume by Eliya Ribak; Vivian Mann's *Uneasy Communion: Jews, Christians, and the Altarpieces of Medieval Spain* (New York, 2010) concentrates on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

⁴ M. Friedman, "L'arche de Noe" (as in note 3), 129-30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁶ Friedman notes that other midrashic texts also contribute to discussions of these giants in *ibid.*, 127.

⁷ J.-Y. Ribault, *Un chef d'oeuvre gothique: La cathédrale de Bourges* (Paris, 1995).

⁸ J. H. Acland, *Medieval Structure: The Gothic Vault* (Toronto, 1972), 103.

⁹ These architectural features are studied at length in J. Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals* (Oxford, 1961); W. Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral* (Garden City, N.Y., 1969); C. Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral: The Architecture of the Great Church, 1130-1530* (New York, 1990); and D. Kimpel, R. Suckale, et al., *L'architecture gothique en France, 1130-1270*, trans. F. Neu (Paris, 1990).

the inner aisle to the nave vessel itself.¹⁰ A web of fine vertical lines fosters the eye's movement upward to the clerestory; at the same time, "the suppression of the transept unifies the internal axis so that there is no impediment to the focus upon the altar."¹¹ No jarring variations in style mar the regularity of the exterior, which culminates in five carved doorways on the western end. Beginning at the right as one faces them they are dedicated to St. Ursin, St. Stephen, the Last Judgment, Mary the Virgin, and St. William de Donjon, the Bishop who spearheaded the cathedral's construction.¹² Like several other structural elements at St. Etienne, these portals are a testimony to the complex set of circumstances—some historical, some sociological, some fortuitous—which allowed the great church to rise, both physically and intellectually, in an epoch mutually advantageous to Jews and Christians.

This positive atmosphere was fostered, wittingly or unwittingly, by the French monarchy. In 1100, Bourges-en-Berry, a prosperous urban center, had become part of the French royal domain when King Philip I purchased it from Viscount Eudes Arpin.¹³ Some thorny incidents involving Jews marked the following reigns, culminating in the series of financial maneuvers executed by Philip Augustus (Philip II) which impoverished them.¹⁴ Since they now seemed worthless, the king expelled them in 1182, hoping thereby to win popular support for himself and to replenish his treasury by taking possession of their property.¹⁵ It is certainly possible that the Jews of Bourges could have been affected by this expulsion order. Nevertheless, given that the city is in central France, far from Paris, and that areas well to the south remained significantly more civil to Jews throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than those in the north,¹⁶ whether the edict was accompanied by draconian enforcement and irreparable social damage is uncertain. In any case, the king recognized the fiscal irresponsibility of his action and repealed the expulsion order in 1198.¹⁷ Except for Philip's eighteen campaigns to have "his" Jews returned from neighboring duchies and baronages,¹⁸ and his interventionist policies which subjected their economic activities to registration and audit,¹⁹ the three decades following their return were comparatively peaceful for the Jews. The king valued the capital funds he could extract from them and the revenue which flowed from the requirement that all monetary transactions had to bear a royal

¹⁰ J. Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Berkeley, 1983), 220. The importance of light in Gothic architecture is a major focus of O. von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order* (New York, 1956); cf. M. Hurlimann and J. Bony, *French Cathedrals* (New York, 1967), 12.

¹¹ Acland, *Medieval Structure* (as in note 8), 103.

¹² Since the north tower fell in 1506, damaging the Virgin doorway and destroying the one on the far left, its original subject is not certain (T. Bayard, *Bourges Cathedral: The West Portals* [New York, 1976], 4-5). William de Donjon's appearance in the clerestory, his canonization in 1218, and his significance in the life of William of Bourges, however, suggest that the original and the present subjects are identical.

¹³ R. Branner, *The Cathedral of Bourges and Its Place in Gothic Architecture*, ed. Shirley Prager Branner (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 8-9.

¹⁴ L. B. Glick, *Abraham's Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe* (Syracuse, 1999), 158.

¹⁵ E. Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton, 1999), 16-17.

¹⁶ W. C. Jordan, *The French Monarch and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia, 1989), 255.

¹⁷ Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (as in note 15), 16.

¹⁸ Between 1198 and 1231, eighteen such accords of non-retention were signed; see Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (as in note 15), *ibid.*

¹⁹ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 161-62.

stamp; that these government policies were gradually making Jews indentured servants was not publicly explored.²⁰

During a comparable time span, that is, throughout most of the twelfth century and into the thirteenth, the church's attitude remained officially protective, although there were points of friction.²¹ The Jews' staunch resistance to conversion, for instance, prompted some negative measures: in 1179, Pope Alexander III interdicted the construction of new synagogues. Also, when regal decrees made it impossible for Jews to collect either money owed to them or interest thereon, funds realized from the seizure and sale of Jewish possessions were allowed by the church to finance crusades.²² Nevertheless, the papal bull *Sicut Judaeis*, first promulgated by Pope Calixtus II in 1120, was reissued in 1199.²³ Although it initially had applied only to Rome, by the end of the twelfth century and because of numerous reiterations and adaptations, the bull now extended to most of Western Europe.²⁴ It forbade forced baptism, arbitrary physical or fiscal punishment, violation of Jewish rites and sanctified places, and disturbance of customary relations.

This ecclesiastical "charter of rights" had a sort of lay counterpart in France in the *Constitutio* of 1218-19 which seemed to stabilize the financial health of the Jewish community.²⁵ Although the *Constitutio* was annulled in November 1223, shortly after Philip's son, Louis VIII, attained the throne, Louis's own death in 1226 delayed his projected series of debt restructurings. These adjustments, incidentally, would have had a radically negative impact on lenders, most of whom were Jews.²⁶ This period of almost benign neglect, paralleling that of the construction of Bourges Cathedral and extending into the era of its decoration, continued with some intermittent difficulties for Jews until 1234, when Louis IX took control of the kingdom. Dynastic records indicate the reign of Louis IX began in 1226. He was, however, only twelve at that time and his mother, Blanche of Castile, acted for eight years as regent.²⁷ The Queen Mother had considered some initiatives relating to credit in 1227 and was party to the 1230 Treaty of Melun, where the crown and the leading barons of the kingdom abolished the obligation to pay off the interest on debts previously contracted with Jews.²⁸ Still, Blanche has been described, perhaps euphemistically, as "a capable ruler respected by the Jewish community for her sense of justice,"²⁹ a statement which—even if only partially accurate—indicates that she did not condone anything comparable to the overt persecutions that marked her son's long ascendancy.

In Bourges itself, a small but vibrant Jewish community had been in place for several centuries; it flourished especially in the twelfth when Jews all over Europe gravitated toward the cities.³⁰ Although efforts to demonize the Jew in the popular imagination had been underway in neighboring

²⁰ Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (as in note 15), 16-17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15. A useful overview is provided by Robert Chazan, ed., *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1980).

²² Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (as in note 15), 18.

²³ William Chester Jordan, "Princely Identity and the Jews in Medieval France," in *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (Wiesbaden, 1996), 266.

²⁴ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 120.

²⁵ Jordan, "Princely Identity and the Jews" (as in note 23), 267.

²⁶ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 163-64.

²⁷ Blanche's mercurial existence at court is well explicated in G. Sivery, *Blanche de Castille* (Paris, 1990); cr. Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 164.

²⁸ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 166 and Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (as in note 15), 17-18.

²⁹ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 164.

³⁰ Jordan, *The French Monarch and the Jews* (as in note 16), 53.

Germanic areas from shortly after the millennium,³¹ they had not yet taken root in Berry. There was no history in Berry of accusations of ritual murder like those that led to the almost complete destruction of the Jewish communities in Blois (1171) and Pontoise (1179).³² The conflicting demands of justice and feudal rights, the latter prevailing, which resulted in the massacre of the Jews of Bray in Champagne (1192), were not pressing issues.³³ The area seemed likewise untouched by the burgeoning anti-Semitism of northern France, where the peace and prosperity of Jews began to erode as Christian authors like Gautier de Coincy (1177-1236) implied that, because they hated the Virgin, Jews were the source of various innuendos about her chastity.³⁴ The animosity displayed by de Coincy—which, as it spread, gradually gave rise to more serious irritations between adherents of the two religions—was demonstrably absent in early thirteenth-century Bourges. Witness to this state of affairs is given by Simon de Sully, Archbishop of Bourges, who turned a blind eye toward the newly constructed synagogues in his diocese, an action apparently supported by local congregants. When Pope Honorius III, in a May 19, 1221 letter addressed to Simon, demanded that these synagogues be destroyed, the pope fully expected that protests by Christians would ensue; hence, he instructed the archbishop to invoke ecclesiastical censures against the faithful without possibility of appeal.³⁵

By 1233, unfortunately, the toleration that characterized the 1220s and early 1230s was probably under grave threat. In a letter to the archbishops and bishops of France, Pope Gregory IX fulminated against those lords who exacerbated the situation of Jews "by means of hunger and thirst, by the privations of prison and intolerable tortures of the body."³⁶ Jewish-Christian interaction and the mutually advantageous relationships thus developed were further undermined by 1236 when the same pope commanded that the archbishop-elect of Bourges curb the depredations of marauding Crusaders and attain proper satisfaction for the crimes perpetrated against Jews as well as for the goods stolen from them.³⁷

But 1236 is already beyond a crucial point in the timeline of construction and decoration at St. Etienne. Possibly as early as 1208, William of Bourges, who was born into Judaism, had converted to Christianity, and become a deacon at the growing cathedral.³⁸ A noted teacher and rhetorician, he gathered about him a number of people who described themselves as Christian Hebraists and who seriously studied Jewish tradition and the Hebrew bible. This group could have been well placed to exercise some influence over the chapter at Bourges, the chapter being the assemblage of clerics who administered the fabric fund and employed the architects and

³¹ A. C. Gow, *The Red Jews: Anti-Semitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200-1600* (Leiden, 1995), 2-3 and 26-33.

³² Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (as in note 15), 19.

³³ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 160.

³⁴ The collections entitled *Miracles of Our Lady* repeated these accusations; see W. C. Jordan, "Marian Devotion and the Talmud Trial of 1240," in *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewohner (Wiesbaden, 1992), 69-70.

³⁵ "Pervenit ad audientiam nostram, quod Judei in tue dioecesi habitantes, synagogas de novo contra sanctiones canonicas construere presumpserit, ideo fraternitati tue per apostolica scripta mandamus, quatenus, si ita est, synagogas ipsas facias demoliri, fideles si qui se opposuerint, per censuram ecclesiasticam appellatione postposita, compescendo"; quoted in S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (Philadelphia, 1933), 168. Bourges was not unique in its support of Jewish and Christian social relations; see Elukin, *Living Together* (as in note 2), 75-88.

³⁶ Quoted from Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 157.

³⁷ Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews* (as in note 35), 229.

³⁸ G. Dahan, ed., *Guillaume de Bourges: Livre des guerres du Seigneur et deux homilies* (Paris, 1981), 7-12.

masons.³⁹ Among Deacon William's surviving works is a text that he described as the "Libri bellorum domini contra Judeos et contra Hereticos."⁴⁰ Therein, heretics are actually attacked much more vehemently than Jews, and scholars describe the book's format as closer to "testimony" than to diatribe.⁴¹ If one compares this treatise with other treatises having similar aims, Deacon William's seems moderate; comparing it with other treatises written by converted Jews, it seems mild.⁴² In exhibiting these qualities, the *Wars of the Lord* (*terminus a quo*: 1225 or earlier) may at least partially reflect the tenor of Jewish-Christian relations at the time when Bourges' great church was rising. In the text, William obviously feels free to demonstrate his knowledge of rabbinic learning and of the Hebrew language; he even points to difficulties in translation which can occur through misunderstanding its vowel usage.⁴³ Each of the first thirty chapters (constituting eighty-five percent of the work) begins with a biblical citation transliterated from the Hebrew and then explicated; often reference is made to other scriptural texts. In some cases, the nuances proposed are taken from the patology and, in others, from rabbinic sources.⁴⁴ Despite its bellicose title and the fact that William repeats and even amplifies several of the standard accusations of the anti-Jewish polemic, his text adopts intellectual positions frequently at variance with the adversarial tracts of the era. He makes clear that the inflammatory characterization "perfidia" refers only to lack of belief. He theorizes that Jews are in the shadow of truth, not the shadow of error; he laments that they are satisfied with merely literal interpretations, thereby giving them status as exegetes.⁴⁵ More pointedly, the text's use of rabbinic literature and its focus on Hebrew Scripture and vocabulary as an enrichment of discussions about the infancy narratives, the Transfiguration, the Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, and other elements of Christian catechesis communicate a tone of respect. It is reminiscent of the respect accorded to Judaic interpretations of the Scriptures in the works of Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor.⁴⁶

One wishes that the somewhat tolerant stance demonstrated by the *Wars of the Lord* could be emblematic of an era marked by moderating tensions between Christianity and Judaism. Unfortunately, both the hoped-for era and entente were short-lived. In 1236, another Jewish convert, Nicholas Donin, presented Pope Gregory IX with a list of thirty-five indictments of rabbinic Judaism.⁴⁷ Three years later, the Pope ordered that Talmuds be seized.⁴⁸ On March 3, 1240, Louis IX organized a disputation,⁴⁹ put the entire Talmud on trial, and, as predetermined, the trial

³⁹ Branner, *The Cathedral of Bourges* (as in note 13), 13. Several groups of Christian Hebraists existed in France even into the sixteenth century; see Francoise Secret, "Notes sur les hebraisants chretiens et les juifs en France," *Revue des etudes juives* 126 (1967), 417-33 and 129 (1970), 223-37.

⁴⁰ Dahan, *Guillaume de Bourges* (as in note 38), 66.

⁴¹ The basic methodology of "testimony" texts involves explication of and argumentation from the Scriptures, usually the Hebrew Scriptures; see Dahan, *La polemique* (as in note 2), 58.

⁴² Dahan, *Guillaume de Bourges* (as in note 38), 42 and B. Blumenkranz, "Judische und christliche Konvertiren im juedisch-christlichen Religionsgesprache des Mittelalters," in *Miscellanea Medievalia*, 4 (Berlin, 1966), 264-82.

⁴³ Between *veycare* and *vaiecrea*, for example, in chapter 5, "De nativitate Domini," in Dahan, *Guillaume de Bourges* (as in note 38), 109.

⁴⁴ Chapters XXIII and XXX clearly illustrate this methodology, although every chapter is touched by it. Dahan (*Guillaume de Bourges* [as in note 38], 336) provides a list of rabbinic sources used by William of Bourges.

⁴⁵ For specific references, see *ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁶ From studying Jerome, Andrew had concluded that Jews had a vibrant and long-lived tradition of biblical interpretation and were, therefore, a useful source of information about the Old Testament. His Jewish teachers confirmed him in this attitude; see Smalley, *Study of the Bible* (as in note 1), 169-72.

⁴⁷ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 194.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews* (as in note 35), 241.

⁴⁹ Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (as in note 15), 18.

concluded with the Talmud's condemnation.⁵⁰ In June 1242, approximately ten thousand talmudic manuscripts were burned.⁵¹ This event entrenched both Christians and Jews, making fruitful interaction almost impossible. In 1251, even in once-tolerant Bourges, the synagogue was ransacked and "the books of the law consigned to the flames."⁵² It is difficult to come to terms with the reversal of fortune, the inversion of feeling, and the demise of communication represented by the attack on the synagogue. Less than half a century earlier, and especially in the years between 1210 and 1235, the cadre of Christian Hebraists and their well-known leader seem to have insured the respectful portrayal of Judaism exemplified in several of Bourges' iconographic programs. That once vibrant interreligious dialogue—to paraphrase Henrik Karge—resulted in the Jewish "accent" which permeates St. Etienne's glass and stone.⁵³

Of course, art historians correctly maintain that it is difficult to find a Gothic church of any significant dimension which does not have, as part of its decoration, representatives of the Hebrew Scriptures. Veritable catalogues of patriarchs, kings, priests, and prophets were carved into the archivolts of many cathedrals, and life-size or larger-than-life-size statues commemorating the same groups were consistently placed in prominent positions.⁵⁴ Indeed, the twenty-two Old Testament figures who gaze serenely at worshipers entering Chartres by its royal portal⁵⁵ might have been duplicated at Bourges, a circumstance now unverifiable because of the Huguenot depredations of May 1562. With rare exceptions—like the Abraham on the north transept's central portal at Chartres, who, in caressing Isaac and standing on a ram, encapsulates the Genesis narrative (22:1-13)—these scriptural personae were understood to be important because they related typologically to events in the life of Christ or to the development of the Christian church. This is not the perspective developed at Bourges where typology is only rarely invoked as a way of interpreting the meaning of personages from the Hebrew Scriptures. Much more descriptive of what happens there is the term "contrapuntal" which, like counterpoint in a musical composition, highlights by means of juxtaposition or contrast. The contrapuntal relationship between Jewish and Christian elements in the iconography is clearly demonstrated in the early thirteenth-century glazing of both the ambulatory and the upper clerestory.

That the ambulatory windows were designed before 1210 by Bishop William in collaboration with Deacon William may be sufficient explanation for the fact that their narratives relate contrapuntally in developing the theme of "rapprochement." Dunlop discusses the composition and placement of each grouping thoroughly contending that "as the arc of the ambulatory draws the windows on each side closer and closer to each other, so the theme of rapprochement

⁵⁰ Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 198; see *ibid.*, 293 for references to the numerous scholarly discussions of this event. What might be termed a "transcript" of this "trial" has been translated by M. Braude in *Conscience on Trial: Three Public Religious Dispensations between Christians and Jews in the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York, 1952), 33-68.

⁵¹ The Jews were probably able to bribe Walter of Sens to intervene and prevent the book burning; when Walter fell ill and died, there was no other recourse. See Glick, *Abraham's Heirs* (as in note 14), 200.

⁵² Ribault, *Un chef d'oeuvre gothique* (as in note 7), 91 and Jordan, *The French Monarch and the Jews* (as in note 16), 147.

⁵³ H. Karge, "Die Kathedrale von Toledo," *Kritische Berichte* 20 (1992), 16-28.

⁵⁴ Except for the cathedral of Beauvais, whose great height created so unstable a structure that the nave was never completed and the choir collapsed in 1284, Gothic cathedrals were invariably decorated with jamb statues which functioned typologically. "Everywhere links are established between the Old and the New Testaments: around Christ the Teacher, and Christ the Judge, are grouped the Precursors; around the Virgin, her ancestors of the flesh and of the spirit; ... everything is presented in the form of the great doctrinal truths with which the unfolding of human history is stamped, by which it is unified" (J. Bony, *French Cathedrals* [London, 1954], 17).

⁵⁵ M. Stokstad, *Art History* (New York, 1995), 554.

intensifies.”⁵⁶ The message of each set of windows is the same: the Old Law of the Hebrew Scriptures is not abolished but rather enriched by the New Law of the Christian Scriptures. In the “nouvelle alliance” window which flanks the high altar, counterpoint is discernible within the window as well as with the corresponding window (the window of the Passion) on the altar’s other side. At the apex of the “nouvelle alliance” is Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim and Manasses, Joseph’s sons by the Egyptian Aseneth who were adopted by their blind grandfather in Gen 41:50-52. The polysemous quality of the scene in which Jacob crosses his arms so that his right hand rests on the head of the young man on his left frequently engaged Christian exegetes who identified Manasses (the older son) with the Jews and Ephraim with the Gentiles. Firmly establishing the counterpoint is the label “Joseph: Filii: Isaac” which proclaims that, although these are Joseph’s sons, the situation depicted is neither tragic nor unique. Their great grandfather, Isaac, had also switched birthrights in favoring his younger son, Jacob, over his older son, Esau and, while there was trepidation on Jacob’s part about his reception by his brother, ultimately there was harmony between them.⁵⁷ In addition, the identical nature of the sons’ familial status—both have been adopted—and their equality in size and posture can serve as a reminder to all who gaze on them of the necessity for according respect to each. Symbolized vividly in this window is the expectation that Christianity does not overwhelm Jewish tradition; rather, it unites with it, suggesting that the barriers raised by religion can be overcome.

The Judeo-Christian interchange at Bourges is further signaled in the very large windows of the upper clerestory which are devoted, on one entire side, to David, Moses, and the major and minor prophets and, on the other, to the apostles, disciples (Barnabas, Cleophas, and Silas), and an unnamed Bishop, possibly William de Donjon, great friend of Deacon William. Although its sequencing of the apostles is the standard one found in Matt 10, Mark 2, and Luke 6 and it follows Acts 1:13 in omitting Judas Iscariot, the latter catalogue is discontinuous as it interposes Barnabas between James and Matthew. It is also difficult to determine why Cleophas and Silas are placed before the Bishop at the end. On the other hand, the windows depicting the great figures from the Hebrew Scriptures—their names spelled here as they appear in the cathedral’s windows—indicate a sure knowledge of Hebraic tradition. David and Moses, the king and the lawgiver, stand at the fountainhead of prophecy, followed by Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, Daniel, and the minor prophets. It is noteworthy that the sequencing of the minor prophets does not follow that of the Vulgate; the latter places Osee, before Joel, and Amos, Habacuc between Naum and Sophonias, and Ageus before Zacharias and Malachias. In Bourges’ upper clerestory, Ageus precedes Joel and Osee, Amos stands between Naum and Sophonias, and Habacuc is at the end, a clearly non-canonical succession. The fact that equal time is accorded to both Old and New Testament figures is at stunning variance with what happens in other medieval cathedrals and is neither ambivalent nor condescending. Rather, at Bourges, the realization that the household of God is built upon the foundation of the prophets as well as the apostles is, contrapuntally, certainly affirmed

This affirmation, however, is not restricted to the stained glass since it is also conveyed by the other aspects of the decoration.⁵⁸ Several features of the latter clearly project a respect for Judaism. The bosom of Abraham, which is portrayed in two of the great windows and is a very

⁵⁶ I. Dunlop, *The Cathedrals’ Crusade: The Rise of the Gothic Style in France* (New York, 1982), 107. 57. The list includes Hilarius (PL 9.588), Ambrose (PL 17.988-89), Jerome (PL 23.1079), Augustine (PL 34.820, PL 36.719, and 1022), Paulinus of Nola (PL 61.283), and Peter Comestor (PL 198.1415) as well as several citations in Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, and Haymo of Auxerre.

⁵⁷ Genesis 27: 1-45; cf. Ribault, *Un chef d’oeuvre gothique* (as in note 7), 102.

⁵⁸ Dunlop, *The Cathedrals’ Crusade* (as in note 56), 107.

significant carving in the central (Last Judgment) portal, is particularly important in this regard. Here, the emphasis seems to be on a paradoxically specific, yet inclusive, understanding of kinship. It was initially conceptualized as the bond of the flesh in Judaism where Abraham is patriarch and with whom Yahweh seals his covenant on three occasions in Gen 15, 17, and 22. But, a second type of kinship arises in the early thirteenth century—kinship of the spirit. Thus, the bosom is not just a reminder of the bond of the flesh; it also indicates Abraham's spiritual paternity as well as the cohesiveness and brotherhood of all the elect.⁵⁹ Since the saved who are depicted in the carving on the central doorway have no identifying attributes, father Abraham may hold in his bosom both those with kinship of the flesh as well as kinship of the spirit.

Perhaps the most significant illustration of what can be called a golden age of Judeo-Christian interaction at Bourges occurs in the thirty-two spandrel sculptures which flank three of the great medieval doorways: fifteen concentrate on the Creation, Fall, and Cain/Abel narratives, seventeen detail the story of Noah. Previously, their unusual selection of subjects and disconcerting sequence puzzled iconographers. Recently, it has been indisputably proven by Laurence Brugger that both the order and the content of most of these carvings relate, not to the canonical scriptures, but to the *Pirke of Rabbi Eleazar*, the *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*, the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Vita Adae et Evae*, and the *Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan*, and even to a very early version of the *Zohar*, a compilation providing comments of a mystical nature on the *Tanakh*. As was demonstrated in the *Wars of the Lord*, these texts were certainly familiar to Deacon William since he used them consistently in his book.⁶⁰

In addition, what was *not* done at Bourges is powerful testimony to concern for the feelings of members of the Jewish community. The stoning of St. Stephen, in the middle register of the tympanum just right of the Last Judgment, accurately reflects the narrative from Acts 7, but omits the conical hats and hate-filled faces that characterize the executioners in an antiphony from St. Peter's in Salzburg (1160), in miniatures from the Breviary of Seckau (1170), in bronze reliquary figures from Halberstadt (1220), on the Stephen doorway at Chartres and in the tympanum of Breisach, both dated about 1230. At Bourges, no depiction of Christ's passion contains sneering or gloating Jews. Synagoga is not pushed by demons into hell as she is at Amiens (ca. 1235), and Jews are not seized, presumably for the same purpose, as they are at Autun (1130) and Bamberg (1230). Most tellingly, on Bourges' Last Judgment portal, hell mouth is stuffed—not with Phrygian-capped *condemnati* as in illustrations from the *Hortus deliciarum* of Herrad of Landsberg (1185) or in illuminations from a *Bible moralisée* of ca. 1233—but with figures whose headdress suggests that they might be a king, a queen, a pope, and a friar!

A final illustration of the contrapuntal relationship between Judaism and Christianity which fosters respect for both traditions at Bourges can be found in the north doorway of the present cathedral. Resituated there is a sculpture extracted from Bourges' Romanesque church which is usually identified as a "Virgin Enthroned" because of the oversized, hieratically posed Mother and Child who occupy the central position. Six pillar-like structures surround this doorway, three on each side, but only the ones adjacent to the aperture have been carved into human form. Controversy has swirled around the identification of these figures. Yet, given the visual evidence,

⁵⁹ J. Baschet, "Medieval Abraham: Between Fleshly Patriarch and Divine Father," *Modern Language Notes* 108 (1993), 755.

⁶⁰ L. Brugger, "'Hebraii dicunt': Le soubassement de la façade occidentale de la cathédrale de Bourges," *Cahiers archéologiques* 41 (1993), 111-33 and L. Brugger, *La façade de Saint Etienne de Bourges*, Civilisation médiévale, 9 (Poitiers, 2000).

they most likely signify queens from the House of David.⁶¹ In that case, queens would surround another queen, both contrapuntally, in positions of honor. Whatever the final determination of their status, these portrayals, which relate to some aspect of Judaism, are unquestionably sympathetic.

How does one account for William of Bourges' success in incorporating Judaica at Bourges? A comparatively benign political and social climate and the growing influence exerted by the Christian Hebraists may certainly be telling factors. Perhaps one could also suggest that William felt secure as he advanced in age. The Jewish community flourished at Bourges in the era of the cathedral's construction.⁶² For various reasons it was somewhat protected by the church and not consistently harassed by the crown and/or by non-Jews. In addition, its traditions were honored within and studied carefully by a significant Christian group. In his mature years, then, William of Bourges did not need to define himself against Judaism. He could openly advocate what his book and the windows in the ambulatory suggested: that both traditions had to be respected and, given this respect, a golden age of reconciliation might be within reach. History testifies to the tragic demise of this noble aspiration, but the cathedral still stands as a witness to the Judeo-Christian dialogue that existed in medieval Berry.

⁶¹ A. N. Smith, "Twelfth-Century Sculpture and the Cathedral of Bourges" (Ph. D. diss., Boston University, 1974), 105-7.

⁶² Dahan, *Guillaume de Bourges* (as in note 38), 8.