"Ears and Eyes and Mouth and Heart… His Soul and His Senses": The Visual St. Stephen Narrative as the Essence of Ecclesiastical Authority

Kara Ann Morrow
“EARS AND EYES AND MOUTH AND HEART . . . HIS SOUL AND HIS SENSES”:
THE VISUAL ST. STEPHEN NARRATIVE AS THE ESSENCE
OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

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ABSTRACT

Narrative cycles of St. Stephen, proto-martyr, are common, frequently found on ecclesiastical monuments of thirteenth-century France. The cathedrals of Bourges, Chartres, and Paris, to name only a few, support visual imagery inspired by the legend of Stephen. Ordained by the apostles, ostensibly to aid the widows and orphans of the congregation, Stephen quickly shows himself “full of grace and fortitude” (Acts 6: 8). His inspired, vitriolic sermon incurs the wrath of the Jews who lead him from the city of Jerusalem and stone him.

The prevalence of Stephen’s cult in the Gothic cathedrals of medieval France has been recognized by scholars; however, little attention has been devoted to the bishops’ development and use of the cult, or the churches’ production or interpretation of visual imagery. Explanations of the extant images have been driven by text based, iconographic models, which have often obfuscated the relevance of intricate compositional elements and relationships that are key to a more artistically and historically relevant understanding of the compositions. The intricately sculpted Stephen cycles in thirteenth-century France and the historic circumstances that informed their conceptions and receptions are the subjects of this dissertation.

Drawing from a survey of the extant, architectural, sculptural narratives and relevant historical resources, this dissertation begins with a discussion of the establishment and dissemination of Stephen’s cult in France. The following chapters focus specifically on the thirteenth-century images at the cathedrals of Rouen, Paris and Bourges chosen for their intricacy and unique compositional formulations. Ultimately, I propose the retelling of the Jewish/Christian debate at the root of Stephen’s story was subtly reconstructed by ecclesiastical officials and articulated by artists to reference and comment on contemporary anti-Jewish conflict and ideologies in the mind of the medieval, Christian viewer. I continue to argue that St. Stephen was an exemplar of ecclesiastical succession and an idealized manifestation of the extension of the bishop’s power within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In addition to situating the proto-martyr’s imagery in social and political context, this endeavor also contributes to the broader understanding of the construction and function of pictorial, hagiographic narrative.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

*Imitatio Christi*: An Introduction to St. Stephen the Proto-Martyr

From seeing the images as books of the illiterate, to dismissing them as the propaganda of worldly clerics, interpretations of medieval architectural sculpture have followed a wide range of approaches. Nevertheless, few creations offer more drama or opportunity for exposition than the façades of the great medieval churches with their scenes of high-minded moralization, courtly grace, and gruesome martyrdom. The visual renditions of St. Stephen, such as the one on the thirteenth-century façade at Bourges Cathedral (figure 1), testify to the intricacy of monumental Gothic architectural sculpture with displays of the martyr’s lapidation and vision. From his ordination on the bottom left of the tympanum, to his stoning in the center of the composition, the life of Stephen was interpreted by the Early Christian fathers as paralleling the life of Christ. Stephen’s life is depicted in a myriad of details on twelfth- and thirteenth-century ecclesiastical architecture across France. I suggest these pictorial narratives, while based on textual sources, were artfully constructed to reiterate the policies and concerns of the literate Christian majority, and sometimes even manipulated to effect and justify the agendas of Christian attacks against medieval Jewry.

St. Stephen, differentiated from his numerous saintly namesakes by the designation *proto-martyr*, was the first to follow the example of Christ by enduring torture and death at the hands of unbelievers, the Jews of Jerusalem. In other words, he was the first martyr, literally the first witness to Christ. *Martyr* means *witness* as translated from the Greek. Stephen’s secondary title was *proto-deacon*, or the first deacon. When the needs of the Greek congregation became too great for the twelve apostles, they searched among the disciples for seven men who could be appointed to minister to the widows of the followers. The first among these men was Stephen (Acts 6:1). Although the diaconate and its relationship to ecclesiastical prerogative would be refined throughout the Middle Ages, St. Stephen’s cult would flourish as that of the only saint outside of the apostles whose story is included in the Gospels (Acts 6-7). Furthermore, after the miraculous discovery of Stephen’s grave in 417, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), attested to the veracity and efficacy of the saint’s relics, encouraging their dissemination.

According to the New Testament, Stephen worked diligently among the people, but found his calling as a preacher to the Jews. However, Stephen’s final vitriolic speech so enraged his Jewish audience that they, bearing false witness against him, took him from the city of Jerusalem and stoned him in the presence of Saul, the unconverted Paul. In the tradition of Christ, Stephen’s last words were prayers for his persecutors. Where the New Testament’s testimony

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1. All biblical references are taken from the Douay Rheims English Bible as translated from the Latin Vulgate at http://www.tc.umn.edu/~joela/cgi-bin/dbible2.cgi.
concerning St. Stephen ends, medieval letters and sermons pick up the narrative thread, explaining the *inventio* and dissemination of the martyr’s relics (see Appendices A and B).

After the discovery of Stephen’s relics outside Jerusalem in the early fifth century, many institutions claimed possession of his bones, dalmatic, blood, or the stones with which he was executed and consecrated churches with these relics. First housed in the Church of Sion in Jerusalem, where Stephen once served as archdeacon, the holy relics would be taken as far as Constantinople before being brought to Rome and finally distributed across Christendom. Ecclesiastical institutions such as the cathedrals at Paris, Sens, Bourges, Caen, Orleans, Limoges, Meaux, Nevers, Cahors, Arles, and Auxerre identified Stephen as their patron saint in the Middle Ages (figure 2). The cathedrals at Châlons-sur-Marne, Rouen, Reims, Soissons, Chartres, and Bayeux were also major cult centers for the proto-martyr in the Middle Ages. More French cathedrals in the Middle Ages were devoted to St. Stephen than to any other holy figure except for the Virgin, and sculptural narrative cycles of the stories surrounding the martyrdom of St. Stephen are common throughout twelfth- and thirteenth-century France. The popularity of Stephen in France, in comparison with other areas, is evident in the fact that 19% of medieval French cathedrals were devoted to St. Stephen.

The Statement of the Problem

Although the iconography and style of the Stephen narratives have often been reviewed in monographs of individual churches, the narratives constitute a largely unconsidered corpus and have not been thoroughly studied in conjunction with the political and social forces affecting the Romanesque and Gothic periods in France. Stephen’s presence on church buildings has been

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3For example, only 1% were devoted to the proto-martyr in Italy. Matthias Zender, *Räume und Schichten Mittelalterlicher Heiligenverehrung in ihrer Bedeutung Für die Volkskunde* (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag GmbH, 1973), 179-182.

4Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals that I have located with extant, narrative, architectural sculpture devoted to St. Stephen in Western Europe: (France) Arles, Autun, Auxerre, Bayeux, Bourges, Cahors, Chartres, Limoges, Mantes, Meaux, Paris, Reims, Rouen, Sens, Strasbourg (Italy) Aosta, Piacenza, Uppsala, (Germany) Breisach am Rhein, Bremen, (Spain) Burgos, Leon and Corullon Parish Church. Churches: (France) St. Benoit sur Loire, Chambon-sur-Lac Chapel, S.-Étienne at Vaux-sur-mer, S.-Étienne at Beauvais, S.-Étienne at Lubersac, St.-Just at Valcabrère, Notre Dame of Vermonton, St.-Pons, Montsaunes, St.-Serge at Angers, St.-Pierre at Moissac, (Italy) St.-Stephano in Monopoli, (Germany) Schaffhausen, Mehringen. I do not suggest this list is complete.
repeatedly identified; however, a cohesive, comprehensive study of these narratives and their contexts has not been published. These narratives raise several questions that lie at the core of this dissertation: Why is the figure of a deacon-saint used by bishops to symbolize ecclesiastical power and to mold and manipulate the bishop’s public images? How do the changing concerns of the ecclesiastical hierarchy affect these narratives? How do the variations in the visual narratives reflect and impact changing social circumstances and audience expectations, especially with regard to Jewish communities in France?

Most of the Stephen images are public, some appearing on nave and cloister capitals, but most occurring on portal tympana and other façade decoration. Their appearance, realized at great expense to their patrons, suggests that ecclesiastical officials intended the narratives to be viewed by the public or by specific audiences. All Stephen images seem, at least initially, to be based on the narrative of his martyrdom and the translation of his relics as established in the New Testament, elaborated by St. Augustine and others, and retold by Jacobus de Voragine (1230-1298) in the thirteenth century. However, even with this enshrined and well-known visual and literary tradition, most of the visual narratives of Stephen’s story vary significantly from the biblical text and from one another in subject matter and composition. Furthermore, regardless of the origins of the imagery, the narratives are often associated with episcopal power, perhaps an unexpected association since Stephen was not a bishop.

That Stephen is intimately associated with medieval ecclesiastical authority has been commented on by a number of theologians and art historians, including Émile Mâle, Romuald Bauerreiss, and Eugen Ewig, who notes: “It seems the practice that there should be a place of veneration of the proto-martyr at each cathedral . . . .” Theodor Kemph comments that such material “. . . constitutes the veneration of the cult of Stephen, without doubt, with few exceptions.” Scholars have also commented on the paucity of scholarship pertaining to the longevity of Stephen’s cult and his role in medieval cathedrals. M. Roblin notes “it is difficult to

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7Theodor Kemph, “Ecclesia cathedralis eo, quod duabus ecclesiis perficitur,” Arte del primo millennio. Atti dell llo convegno per lo studio dell’arte dell’alto medio evotenuto presso l’Università di Pavia nel settembre 1950 (Torino: Viglongo, 1954), 3-10, esp. 3.
know the reasons why there is a spread [of the veneration of Stephen] between the third and fourth centuries notably in the cathedral churches.”

These scholars have not pursued the observations concerning Stephen’s cult or why Stephen was considered an appropriate symbol for medieval ecclesiastical authority. They have not addressed his visual role on any French cathedral or suggested why each composition varies from others despite a written narrative that could have acted as a stabilizing force for the visual subject matter. No discussion exists concerning the information these images conveyed to the medieval public or how the public’s expectations influenced the subject matter and compositions of the narratives.

One might assume that a narrative as well known as St. Stephen’s life, so embedded in literary tradition, would have had a standard, static, and predictable visual interpretation, but such an assumption could not be further from the truth. There are constant variations in the imagery chosen for depiction, from the different conceptions of Stephen’s divine vision, to the varying backgrounds, postures, gestures, dress, and props of the participants. Often, important scenes are omitted from otherwise complete narrative cycles, and other scenes are added. For example, Stephen’s preaching sequence is conspicuously omitted from the Bourges tympanum (figure 1), whereas his ordination is included. Iconographers practiced selectivity in composing the monumental representations. Although these variations have been taken for granted by art historians, I argue that the variations result from the expectations of the audiences and the agendas of the patrons, which can be determined by understanding the social and religious history of individual dioceses. At its most basic level, my thesis continues to challenge art history’s designation of the Gothic church’s façade as an monument created for the edification of the illiterate. I do not believe these complicated sculptural programs functioned as readable texts, regarded strictly for the religious content of the verses they represented. Even though they were inspired by textual sources, I argue that the visual narratives of Stephen were manipulated to reflect emerging theological ideals and social ideology, particularly in the renegotiation of the status of medieval Jewry in the thirteenth century. The pictorial reinvention of Stephen’s life and martyrdom that I believe took place every time his story was visually retold is the ultimate subject of this dissertation.

Through the course of this endeavor, I suggest that Stephen, in his role as the proto-deacon, was considered the “ears and eyes and mouth and heart” of the bishop, “. . . his soul and his senses,” as stated in the Apostolic Constitution. As the traditional rights (judicial, financial, and evangelical) of the bishop are threatened by the popular religious movements of the Vita

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9See, for example, James Snyder, Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture 4th-14th Century (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 344 and 345.


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and the rise of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century, the role of the deacon, and thus the bishop, is reinforced through the narrative of Stephen, the proto-deacon. The text of the *Apostolic Constitution* goes far in explaining the relevance of depicting Stephen on cathedral façades in general. Because Peter and the apostles laid hands upon him while praying, the ecclesiastical hierarchy was established through the formal act of ordination, and the office of the deacon would be forever linked to the power and privilege of the bishop. As twelfth- and thirteenth-century bishops reinvented the visual narratives of the proto-deacon, they did so with the knowledge of Stephen’s special relationship with the first bishop, St. Peter. As such, I believe Stephen’s popular visual presence on French cathedrals—literally speaking the seats of bishops—received special attention and focus from the leaders of those episcopal sees. As per the *Apostolic Constitution*, the visual imagery of St. Stephen, the pre-eminent deacon, serves as a locus for the communication of the bishops’ preoccupations and concerns. From theological interpretations to anti-Jewish rhetoric, the sculpted narratives celebrating St. Stephen’s cult are an extension of episcopal authority, and an expression of the bishop’s interests and goals.

Specifically, the proto-deacon’s preaching and heavenly vision prove malleable in the hands of medieval bishops. In early renditions of the martyr’s story (as will be discussed in Chapter 3 below) Stephen’s vision is used to explicate complex theological and political concepts such as the Trinity, the Ascension, and divine coronation. Stephen’s story is told not only to provide a saintly role model and intercessor for the Christian faithful, but also to create a foil to the martyr’s Jewish persecutors (which is the focus of the second half of this dissertation). As his story is retold visually, the identities of both the saint and his persecutors are subtly reinvented. Stephen is depicted in some early imagery as a manifestation of the ideal of Christian forgiveness, praying for his persecutors. The executioners, with little visual ethnic or

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13See for example Peter Lombard (c. 1100-1164), *Distinctio XLII, “De spirituali cognitione,”* PL 192: 941. Stephen is also linked with Peter in visual imagery (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 7) even though the Acts of the Apostles is not so specific.
religious identity, are treated kindly and perhaps as ideal targets for conversion. This concept will be discussed below in conjunction with the imagery on the façades of Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire, Saint-Trophime at Arles, and the writings of St. Augustine and Caesarius, bishop of Arles. Nevertheless, Stephen never loses his designation as the first Christian to mirror the sacrifice of Christ at the hands of Christ’s own accusers, the Jews of Jerusalem. In later representations of the stoning of Stephen, addressed below in the imagery on Rouen and Paris Cathedrals, Jewish identity is painstakingly rendered through physiognomy, gesture, and attribute. No longer candidates for absolution, these executioners are visually conflated through dress, contemporary rhetoric, and political agenda with both the accusers of Christ and thirteenth-century Jews. I argue that this visual conflation of thirteenth-century Jews with first-century persecutors and executioners provided a unique opportunity for medieval Christians to focus their own antisemitic agendas onto medieval Jews through the Stephen narrative.

History of Scholarship: A Review of Secondary Resources

St. Stephen in historiography

Very little scholarship has focused on the specific visual role of St. Stephen in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Middle Ages. The only monograph devoted exclusively to the cult of St. Stephen in association with medieval ecclesiastical authority is Romuald Bauerreiss’ *Stefanskult und frühe Bischofssstadt*. Bauerreiss’ short study is, at its core, a list of ecclesiastical institutions with connections to the proto-martyr either through patronage or as a site for the saint’s cult. The sees are divided according to modern geography into German, French, and Italian, with emphasis given to the German bishoprics. While Bauerreiss’ study is of primary importance to my endeavor and is a valuable source for basic documentary information, his is a study of ecclesiastical, not art, history. He takes notice of the presence of Stephen imagery and of chapels devoted to the saint; however, he does not consider the specific scenes or narratives present at any site. The goal of his study is to explore the extent of the proto-deacon’s role in medieval episcopal patronage.

A number of other scholars have commented on the conspicuous representation of St. Stephen in and on medieval cathedrals. Eugen Ewig in *Kathedralpatrozinien* notes that almost every cathedral seems to hold Stephen in a place of admiration. Émile Mâle likewise documents the proto-martyr’s presence on French cathedrals in his *La fin du paganisme en Gaule et les plus anciennes basiliques chrétienes*. Theodor Kemph notes the same phenomena in his “*Ecclesia cathedalis eo, quod duabus ecclesiis chrétien.“* M. Roblin is more specific in his *Sur l’ancienneté du culte de S. Étienne*; however, he acknowledges that it is difficult to understand the thread of development of Stephen’s cult from the early centuries of Christianity to the late Middle Ages.¹⁴

Recent articles have studied the place of St. Stephen in the history of art and patronage of the early Eastern empire. Ioli Kalavrezou reviews the use of relics and hagiographic imagery in

¹⁴See notes 2 through 9 for bibliographic citations.
Constantinople in her “Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics.” She suggests the arm of Stephen played an integral role in the crowning of the emperor and empress and was housed in a specially built chapel in the imperial complex, referred to as the oratory. In his “Pulcheria’s Crusade A.D. 421-422 and the Ideology of Imperial Victory,” Kenneth Holm examines the acquisition of relics in the fifth century through the efforts of Eudoxia, the empress of Constantinople. In a separate article, “The Trier Ivory, Adventus Ceremonial and the Relics of St. Stephen,” Holm and Gary Vikan identify the scene on an ivory plaque in Trier as the arrival of the relics of St. Stephen in Constantinople. Ultimately, the consensus of these scholars is that Stephen held a position closely aligned with imperial authority in the East. Because the Greek, Stephanos, literally translated as crown in Greek, this pun on Stephen’s name was associated with imperial authority, the crowned emperor, and his family. The translation of relics to western Europe and the introduction of the Stephen cult to Venice are addressed by Giorgio Cracco in his “Santitá straniera in terra Veneta” in Les fonctions de saints dans le monde occidental.

Much less recent attention has been paid to the visual culture of St. Stephen in the west. Thus, the best resource on the development and dissemination of the cult of St. Stephen in the medieval west remains the primary literary and visual images, and the secondary sources on the medieval cult of saints.

**Hagiography, Narratology, and Anti-Judaic Iconography**

Early historians considered the cults of the relics of saints to be little more than the material remains of superstitious folk beliefs touted by the ignorant of late antique and medieval society. Encouraged by Protestant sensitivities among American and English scholars, only the

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perceived religious practices of the elite of society—the educated, the male, the wealthy, and the powerful—were judged as deserving scholarly inquiry. As such, the cult of the saints received little serious consideration in scholarly literature and its visual culture was relegated to the status of antiquarian curiosity. Modern scholarship in the field of hagiography is fairly new and has been greatly advanced by the foundation studies of Hippolyte Delehaye and the Bollandists. Delehaye’s *Les origines du culte des martyrs*, though written in 1933, is still relevant today even though it is considered a “Catholic response to positivist historicism.”20 Self-conscious evaluation of historical approaches to the study of hagiography began with René Aigrain’s *L’hagiographie: ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire* of 1953.21 Aigrain’s study is a historiographic analysis of the study of saintly vitae. This reflective line of inquiry has been taken up more recently in the work of David Knowles and of Helen Damico and Joseph Zavadil.22

With the careful analysis of historiographic methods in the mid-twentieth century, sophistication of historical and methodical approach grew in the later twentieth century. Importantly, in the 1970s and 1980s the study of the saints and their writings was consistently used as a resource in the study of literature, history, and art history. Peter Brown in his many ground-breaking publications challenges the concept that the cult of the saints had been a leftover manifestation of paganism which persisted with the lower, uneducated classes of late antique society. He establishes that the cult of saints was not an ignorant form of folk belief, superstition, or curiosity, but had the participation of the upper levels of society. On a grander scale he challenges the two-tier system of religious devotion that differentiated the lower class in society from the elite.23 Roughly contemporary with Brown’s *The Cult of the Saints*, Patrick Geary’s *Furta Sacra* of 1978 focuses on “the significance of saints’ relics as a human


23Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*. 
phenomenon, an integral part of medieval civilization.”24 Through his study on the invention, theft, and veneration of relics, Geary highlights the fact that the cult of relics did not arise from pure religious devotion, but from a multitude of religious, social, and political interests and goals. Specialized, focused studies on facets of the medieval cult of saints would follow over the next decade. For example, in his *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, originally published in French in 1981, André Vauchez examines the formal canonization process that the Church initiated in the later Middle Ages in order to control the vibrant cult of the saints.25 His work suggests that, in an effort to control contemporary religious practices, the papacy sought to control the canonization of new saints by either advocating for or against emerging cults. This information further testifies to the importance of medieval hagiographic traditions in the realm of religious and political control of Europe in the Middle Ages.

As the twentieth century ended, hagiographic scholarship became more specialized and innovative, especially in the field of art history. Attention began to focus on specialized devotional practices—such as the devotion of women—as seen in the work of Caroline Walker Bynum and Jeffrey Hamburger.26 New approaches reflected theoretical concerns such as in the Marxist scholarship of Barbara Abou-El-Haj.27 Perhaps most important to this dissertation are the strides made by these scholars and others in the field of hagiography who used the political context of production of a saint’s written and visual legend to elaborate on the construction of saintly identity.28

Today the medieval cult of saints is understood as an effective tool used in asserting the power and status of a community or city through the prestige and efficacy of its patron saint. The patron saint of a monastery, cathedral, city, or other community was an important element in the construction of public identity in the Middle Ages. The visual cult of the saint was created in such a way that it testified to the community’s piety, the saint’s power, and the supposed loftiness of the community’s political, social, and economic status. Sculpted façades of churches, like bejeweled reliquaries, illuminated manuscripts, woven tapestries, and assembled vestments,

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28See, for example, Thomas Head, Sharon Farmer, and André Vauchez, discussed below.
boasted of the glory of the patron saints and the preeminence of their human patrons. These constructions—along with other performative and sensory experiences—provided a lens through which the community focused veneration for its saint, shaping each individual’s experiences and expectations of both the saint and his or her own community.

Scholarly studies that focus on the development or the rewriting of hagiographic texts to serve the interests of medieval cities have been abundant in recent historical scholarship. The resulting versions of a saintly legend promoted the piety of the authors and supported their privileged relationship with the saint. Such reinterpretations touted their ownership or control of relics, as well as the saint’s prestige and miraculous efficacy. Factions within communities such as court members, clerics, monks, nuns, and guilds represented their own interests in versions of saints’ lives. Such approaches to interpretations of saintly lives have focused on the compositional variations found in narrative sequences of saints’ lives. This suggests that different patrons emphasized different aspects of the very same stories according to their specific agendas. Illuminated manuscripts and sculpted portals have provided the evidence for many such studies.

Sometimes historians and art historians have focused on the structural and narrative devices employed by hagiographers, both literary and visual, that created meaning and defined sanctity for martyrs, virgins, and confessors. Establishing the recurring pattern that provides the first contextualized meaning of the saint’s life is fundamental in deciphering the layers of meaning inherent in the architectural sculpture of hagiographic narrative. Only then can one turn to identifying the unique variations and omissions in images of the saints’ stories. These patterns often served to emphasize the saint’s likeness to Christ, whose life and death were constantly imitated in the deeds and experiences of the saints. Such repeated and replicated narrative

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structures have also been the focus of narratologists. As scholars examine broad questions dealing with the use of images and saints’ cults in site- and patron-specific environments, art historians such as Cynthia Hahn continue to focus on the subtleties of composition, gesture, dress, and subject matter. These variations reflect audiences’ expectations and patrons’ needs while underscoring the importance of repeated elements or structures common in all hagiographical texts whose structure provides meaning to the saintly legend.

As important as the repeated and structured elements are in creating meaning in all hagiographic narrative, “narrative is constituted by the viewer, who, by establishing the connections between events, creates a story.” The ability of the viewer to create meaning cannot be understated even though the access to some portals was restricted, whereas other façades were available to all residents and visitors of a city. The patron’s agenda makes use of the artist’s ability and strives to manipulate viewer reception with an infinite capacity for variation. Each time a story is newly represented, meaning is reinvented. Even well known hagiographic narratives are constantly recreated.

Word and image scholars have argued convincingly that it is not solely the verbal text that carries narrative meaning. While important for general classification, the text-driven iconographic approach to identifying visual meaning can obfuscate intricate compositional elements and relationships that are key to a more artistically and historically relevant understanding of meaning within a visual composition. Furthermore, references to the


33Head, The Diocese of Orleans; Farmer, Communities of Saint Martin; Vauchez, Saints et les Villes.


36Typically, in considering the structure of visual imagery, the storyteller does not appear, or does not have a visible role to play in the retelling of the story that a verbal storyteller—or patron operating through the artist—would have. Richard Brilliant, Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 16.


38For the iconographic, or more specifically, the iconologic approach, see Erwin Panofsky, Meaning in the Visual Arts (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1955), 51-81. That the iconographic interpretative model falls short in considering the compositional nuances informed
by oral and performative medieval practices is well recognized. See, Michael Camille, “Mouths 
and Meanings: Towards an Anti-Iconography of Medieval Art,” in Iconography at the Crossroads, 

For the importance of the differentiation between the literary and the oral community, 
and the interpretation of artistic meaning see Peter J. Rabinowitz, Before Reading: Narrative 
Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), esp. 58-
64 and 185-191; Walter J. Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London: Methuen, 1982); and Michael Camille, “Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of 

Michael Camille, “Mouths and Meanings”; Brilliant, Visual Narratives; Vitz, Medieval 
Narrative; and Hahn, Portrayed on the Heart.

See Lawrence G. Duggan, “Was Art Really the Book of the Illiterate?” Word & Image 
of narrative reception in an architectural format see Rabinowitz, Before Reading, esp. 58-64.

For approaches to visual and literary antisemitic narrative see Sara Lipton, Images of 
Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible Moralisée (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Miri Rubin, Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late 
Medieval Jews (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Debra Higgs Strickland,
Jewish visual imagery has often been judged according to a litany of readily identifiable iconographic attributes: differentiating headgear, grotesque physiognomy, and classifying badges on clothing. While important for cultural or religious designation, these attributes within a composition only provide an initial introduction to the anti-Judaic imagery.

Also informing and organizing my approach to visual anti-Jewish themes is Gavin Langmuir’s thesis differentiating anti-Judaism in the early Middle Ages from antisemitic efforts after the eleventh century. According to Langmuir, in the eleventh century a new heightened awareness of Jewish Otherness developed within Christian communities partially in response to Christian crusading efforts, a growing homogeneity of the European population, and critical debate on issues of Christian dogma. Langmuir divides medieval, Christian, anti-Jewish philosophy into three categories associated with three time periods: the early Middle Ages, the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the thirteenth century through the late Middle Ages. He associates these periods with the “realistic,” the “xenophobic,” and the “chimerical” in Christian anti-Jewish philosophies, respectively. This change would develop over centuries. It recast medieval Jews from a mythic, timeless entity characterized by Old Testament Prophets, to the obstinate, historic unbelievers replicating the disbelief of their forefathers. Finally, and most dangerously, anti-Jewish attitudes developed into the antisemitic, hysterical fantasies of later medieval Christians, characterized by accusations of ritual murder and even cannibalism in the thirteenth century. This was, in part, the result of a crises of belief confronting medieval

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43 Gavin Langmuir, “Anti-Judaism as the Necessary Preparation for Antisemitism,” in Toward a Definition of Antisemitism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 55-100. My word choices, “anti-Judaism” and “antisemitism,” through the course of this dissertation are informed by the voluminous works of scholars such as Salo Baron, David Berger, and of course, Gavin Langmuir, “Toward a Definition of Antisemitism,” in Toward a Definition of Antisemitism, 311-340. I acknowledge Langmuir’s observations that the terms “Antisemitism” or “anti-Semitism” are modern inventions riddled with assumptions about race that were unknown in the Middle Ages and are currently being challenged as modern assumptions on race are being undermined. Like Gilman and Katz, I see the shift between the variety of words used to communicate the attitude that informed the treatment of European Jews in the Middle Ages as “shifts in the articulation of perception, not in the basic perception itself.” Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz, “Introduction,” in Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis (New York: New York University Press, 1991), esp. 5; Salo Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, 2nd ed., vol. 11 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 191-201; David Berger, “From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Antisemitism,” Second Annual Lecture of the Victor J. Selmanowitz Chair of Jewish History (New York: Teuro College Graduate School of Jewish Studies, 1997), 1-29. For a review of the historiography, Johannes Heil, “‘Antijudaismus’ und ‘Antisemitismus’: Begriffe als Bedeutungsträger,” Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung 6 (1997): 92-114.
Christians, which included the validity of the Eucharist. Langmuir characterizes the earlier less-threatening phases as anti-Judaism, and the later more dangerous attitude as antisemitism. By incorporating Langmuir’s observations on the development of medieval antisemitism and by locating my interpretation of visual hagiography beyond the iconographic, text-based approach, this dissertation proposes new interpretation of the visual narratives of St. Stephen and elaborates on the interpretative possibilities of the proto-martyr’s life and death in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France.

Chapter Overview

This project is organized to present initially a general introduction to the life of St. Stephen, both written and carved. The chronology of the images provides some order to the chapters, considering first the Romanesque narratives and finally the early and late Gothic sequences. This organization is also formulated with Langmuir’s thesis on the development of medieval antisemitism in mind, as discussed above. The entire dissertation is meant to be read in conjunction with three appendices: Appendix A, “Stephen in Word: The Primary Sources,” Appendix B, “Stephen in Augustinian Texts,” and Appendix C, “Stephen in Stone: The Visual Narrative in French Architectural Sculpture,” which follow the formal chapters and conclusion.

Chapter 2, “A man full of faith and the Holy Ghost’: St. Stephen in Word and Image,” introduces the story of St. Stephen’s life and martyrdom as reflected in Early Christian and medieval literary sources. Ordained by the apostles, who laid hands upon him, Stephen proves himself a gifted orator. The Acts of the Apostles relays the story of Stephen’s sermon to the Jews of Jerusalem as he stands before the Sanhedrin accused of blasphemy and ends in the martyr’s divine vision at his stoning outside the city gates. The writings of St. Augustine popularize the history, reiterating the invention of the relics in 417 and their translation and dissemination, stories that were circulated by medieval theologians, and finally retold in the highly influential, thirteenth-century Golden Legend. This chapter also discusses the circumstances that give rise to Stephen’s designation as proto-deacon. This popular appellation, not a part of the New Testament text, was an Early Christian construction. Similarly, the pun on Stephen’s name—crown—was not explicitly mentioned in the biblical account. However, the association of Stephen with the Crown of the Martyr is a reference to the structure of the martyr’s life, that is, the telling pattern of Christ’s life. Each Christian martyr who dies for the faith—mimicking the sacrifice of Christ and the proto-martyr Stephen—receives the martyr’s crown. Ultimately, Stephen, and thus all martyrs, must be understood as a type for Christ. Stephen’s life is understood in the primary sources as a series of chronological events that parallel, replicate, and clarify the actions, words and sacrifices of Christ.

In the earliest, extant images of the narrative of St. Stephen on French architectural sculpture (late eleventh to early twelfth century), the saint’s story often explicates complex theological concepts which are the subjects of Chapter 3, “Visualizing the Invisible: Heavenly Visions and Divine Coronation.” When representing Stephen’s private, divine vision,
iconographers capitalized on the opportunity to visualize invisible subjects, including the holy Trinity and divine coronation. These complicated theological constructions were depicted on the Romanesque façades of monuments such as Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire in the late eleventh century and Saint-Trophime at Arles in the 1170s, in accordance with contemporary theological and political ideas.

As in the story of Christ, the Jews of Jerusalem were a significant part of Stephen’s biblical story. Christian relations with the Jewish community were at the heart of the Stephen narrative even in the New Testament. Chapter 4, “Uncircumcised Hearts: From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism in the Stephen Narratives,” addresses changing attitudes towards Jews in western Europe which encouraged the renegotiation of the role and identity of the persecutors in the visual Stephen narratives. Against the backdrop of a developing and ever changing anti-Judaism in medieval Europe, I argue in this chapter that the Jews in the earlier narratives are associated with the tolerated, even protected communities that were to be converted at the end of days according to the theology of St. Augustine and others. The Jews of the Stephen legend are first the “prayed for” who are the objects of ideal Christian forgiveness, especially as viewed in the martyrdom scene on the façade of Saint-Trophime at Arles. Later, the Jews become, both in the stone of the church façades and within the population of the late medieval communities, the subject of vilification, receiving the projected sins of their fathers. They are segregated from Christian society and eventually ejected from the very communities where these anti-Jewish Stephen narratives are located.

Sometimes the form of anti-Jewish ideology represented in public, monumental Stephen imagery is specialized in accordance with local anti-Jewish policy. Chapter 5, “Ancient Iconography and Medieval Disputation: Jews Imagined on the St. Stephen Portal of Paris Cathedral,” argues that the interaction pictured between St. Stephen and the Jews of Jerusalem references the contemporary, medieval interactions of Parisian Christians with their Jewish counterparts. The trial of the Talmud, 1240, held just a few years before the portal was constructed, introduced a new anti-Jewish action in France. At the staged, forced disputation, French rabbis and other Jewish community leaders were summoned to the capital and forced to debate the content of the Talmud with recent Jewish converts to Christianity. Involving both the Parisian bishop and royal authorities, the trial resulted in the burning of the Jewish texts in 1242. The political influence on the composition of the Stephen tympanum on Paris Cathedral, dated 1258, does not end with the royal involvement in the debate, however. The acquisition of the Grand cameé de France, housed in the treasury of the Sainte Chapelle, I believe, influenced the iconography of the portal imagery, creating a unique compositional interpretation of the Stephen story. Moreover, the medieval, Christian interpretation of this Roman imperial cameo, as an image of Joseph at the court of Pharaoh, would have reinforced the meaning behind the idealized triumph of the proto-martyr whose seeming misfortune, like Joseph’s, is actually a pious triumph.

The Stephen portal on Paris Cathedral is located on the southern transept of the building, the bishop’s private entrance to his church. Both the northern and southern programs were part of a massive rebuilding effort in the mid-thirteenth century that revamped both the bishop’s portal and the canon’s entrance opposite it on the northern side of the cathedral. Chapter 6, “Theophilus and Stephen: Dichotomy in Hagiography at Paris Cathedral,” considers the unlikely
pairing of Theophilus and the proto-martyr and suggests a relationship between the two portal programs. I suggest the choices in iconography displayed on the canon’s portal were, like the bishop’s entrance, influenced by ecclesiastical involvement in the disputation of the Talmud. Furthermore, I argue that the charges leveled at French Jews — that anti-Marian sentiments appeared in the Talmud — also influenced the choice of iconography and subject matter at the canon’s portal. The association of the devil, as envisioned in the Theophilus narrative, with a Jewish sorcerer, and the pairing of Stephen with Theophilus in sculpture and stained glass windows in France suggest more than an accidental juxtaposition of two clergymen.

Chapter 7, “‘These they set before the apostles; and they praying, imposed hand upon them’: Stephen, the Proto-deacon, and Ecclesiastical Succession,” moves away from Stephen’s relationship with medieval anti-Judaism, but continues to elaborate on the role of the bishop in the dissemination and appropriation of Stephen’s cult and identity. Focusing first on the sculptural program of the west façade of Bourges Cathedral, Chapter 7 explores the thirteenth-century representation of the initial consecration of the first building at the hands of St. Ursin, Bourges’ first bishop and apostle to Berry. Consecrated to St. Stephen, the cathedral at Bourges associates the proto-deacon with the great bishops of the establishment in its windows and sculptural program. St. Ursin, William of Bourges (Bishop 1200-1209), and even the first bishop of Rome, St. Peter, are represented in the visual imagery of the cathedral. The public narratives retelling the translation of the proto-martyr’s relics into Bourges were intended to situate the diocese among the great centers of Christianity that shared in the possession of Stephen’s relics: Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome, and now, Bourges.

Scenes of the consecration of the church and the ordination of the deacon at Bourges are unique constructions within France’s repertoire of Gothic monumental sculpture. Illuminated manuscripts provide an opportunity to consider better these compositions as well as to understand St. Stephen as the manifestation of the bishop’s authority. His close association with the bishop is even found in art not commissioned by ecclesiastical officials. Abundant representations of the proto-martyr in the Bible moralisée, for example, reinforce his association with episcopal authority in medieval France.

The dissertation concludes with three appendices. The first, “Stephen in Word: The Primary Sources,” provides a list of medieval citations that form the primary vitae of St. Stephen. The second, “Stephen in Augustinian Texts,” lists the Bishop of Hippo’s voluminous references to the proto-martyr. The third appendix, “Stephen in Stone: The Visual Narrative in French Architectural Sculpture,” surveys the visual images on French twelfth- and thirteenth-century monuments. From cloister capitals to portal tympana, these images provide a visual context essential to evaluate the closely scrutinized images at the center of later chapters. While the literary texts conveying the legend of Stephen are remarkably homogenous, the visual narratives are unique, suggesting a need for close scrutiny of the patrons’ motivations and artists’ conceptions of compositional choices.

Conclusion

The connection of the deacon to the bishop as explained in the Apostolic Constitution is always present and important to the images of St. Stephen, the proto-deacon. In addition, social
and religious trends of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries influence how these images were composed by patrons and interpreted by the medieval public. By using Stephen’s narrative, as told in the Acts of the Apostles, medieval bishops proclaimed the legitimacy of the apostolic, ecclesiastical hierarchy. As the first bishop laid hands upon Stephen proclaiming the proto-deacon his servant, Peter’s successors mirrored the relationship in their own sees. Stephen, by virtue of his well known story, advocates the bishop’s right to pastoral, judicial, and financial control over his diocese, wherever the proto-martyr’s narrative appears. Public and religious preoccupation with the Jewish populations of France determines the version of the story told in the sculpture of cathedral complexes. As medieval Jews are threatened in the medieval cities, the apostolic-era Jews imagined on the church façades are overtly vilified, and defined in the position of the Other. However, these attitudes did not only create iconographically hateful imagery. The patron’s preoccupations with medieval Jewry are reflected in infinitely varied and subtle compositional choices.
St. Stephen is one of very few saints directly linked to the apostles and the life of Christ. Unique among all saintly lives, Stephen’s life and death were recorded in the New Testament, firmly establishing his history within both the genre of hagiographical text as well as canonical history. The story of Stephen was first recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, attributed in the Middle Ages to the Evangelist Luke, grounding his reputation and cult in Christian scripture and guarding against accusations of inauthenticity. Furthermore, Stephen’s reputation was championed by a father of the western Church just after the relics were discovered in Jerusalem in the early fifth century. St. Augustine promoted the cause of Stephen’s cult by acknowledging the discovery and translation of the martyr’s relics and enumerating the miracles and conversions accomplished by the holy remains throughout Christian North Africa. Moreover, he returned to the subject in various sermons.

While many Greek and Latin early Christian theologians added layers of meaning and interpretation to the Stephen legend, their words are always grounded in the New Testament and emphasize the proto-martyr’s role as a type of Christ. As the proto-martyr, Stephen is depicted as an exemplar who demonstrated how a Christian should live, testify, pray, and die for the faith. As the proto-deacon who was ordained by St. Peter, the first bishop, Stephen was considered an ideal cleric whose authority was directly, even corporally, linked to the apostles and especially the first bishop.

This chapter introduces the construction of the identity of St. Stephen in early Christian and medieval texts as that construction relates to the subject matter represented in French Romanesque and Gothic sculptural imagery of the saint. The designations, proto-deacon, proto-martyr, and crown, long established by patristic theologians, were essential to twelfth- and thirteenth-century medieval conceptions and interpretations of the visual narratives of St. Stephen. These titles were incorporated into the saint’s story to satisfy the most basic requirements of the martyr’s passion for the Christian faithful: the definition of belonging in the Christian community that justified the martyr’s status as a witness; the trial, testimony, torture, and death/birth that created a parallel structure to the passion of Christ; and the confirmation of the elevation of the martyr to the court of heaven. These were integral elements in the construction of meaning in the martyr’s life. They were necessary for the affirmation to the faithful of Christian truths through the martyr’s sacrifice.

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1 Please refer to Appendix C.
Chapter 6 verse 1 of Acts explains how the Greek followers of Christ complained to the Hebrew leaders that their widows were not being served due to the swelling numbers of Christians joining the congregation. Because the disciples could not abandon their duty in spreading the word of God in order to attend to the tables of the neglected Greeks, they collected from their congregations seven men “of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3) to serve tables. Stephen was the first of seven men whom the apostles ordained by placing their hands on the young men and praying. The apostles’ choice of representatives was rewarded with the continued success of the young church in Jerusalem. Stephen “full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8) and demonstrated himself exceptional among the seven deacons.

Stephen quickly attracted the attention, and the disapproval, of members of the synagogue. Because the deacon spoke such compelling and convincing words, the men of the synagogue falsely accused him of blasphemy against Moses and God. They rallied Jewish suspicion of the young preacher and finally brought Stephen before the synagogue’s council, the Sanhedrin: “And they set up false witnesses, who said: This man ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place and the law. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the traditions which Moses delivered unto us” (Acts 6:13-14). As Stephen stood before the perjurers and the judges, he took on the appearance of an angel (Acts 6:15).

The majority of Stephen’s story, as communicated in Acts, recounts the proto-deacon’s impassioned speech before the Jewish council. While the encounter is presented as a trial, Stephen’s sermon is anything but a defense and only incurs the wrath of the Sanhedrin and the future saint’s Jewish listeners. He begins by acknowledging the common patrimony of Christians and Jews, focusing on Abraham as God’s chosen. Stephen summarizes Abraham’s trials as the patriarch leaves his homeland under the direction of God. Stephen also indicates God’s promises to Abraham regarding the success of his progeny: “And he gave him the covenant of circumcision, and so he begot Isaac and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob; and Jacob the twelve patriarchs” (Acts 7:8). Stephen goes on to recap the tribulations of Joseph, sold into slavery at the hands of his brothers but never abandoned by God. Moses’ life and deeds then become the focus of Stephen’s oration. As God was with Joseph during the betrayal of his brethren, God was with Moses through the Israelite’s faithlessness. Stephen only focuses briefly on the charges leveled against him by addressing the temple built by Solomon, recalling, “Yet the most High dwelleth not in houses made by hands, as the prophet saith: Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool. What house will you build me? Saith the Lord; or what is the place of my resting? Hath not my hand made all these things?” (Acts 7:48-51).

Finally his sermon turns from a historical overview of the Old Testament and develops into a scathing accusation:

You stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do you also. Which of the prophets
have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who foretold of the coming of the Just One; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. Now hearing these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed their teeth at him. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said: Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:51-55).

Here, the account introduces the Apostle Paul, as the yet unconverted Saul, who passively witnesses the death of the proto-martyr and consents to the execution.

And they crying out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and with one accord ran violently upon him. And casting him forth without the city, they stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, [he was] invoking, and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge (Acts 7:56-59).

Saul, guarding the coats of Stephen’s executioners, “was consenting to his death” (Acts 7:59). On the issue of Stephen’s burial, the text says only that devout men saw to the martyr’s funeral and mourned him greatly (Acts 8:2). For details regarding Stephen’s postmortem acts, one has to mine patristic and medieval sources. The most prolific advocate of the proto-martyr’s cult was St. Augustine.

A Saintly Biographer for a Saintly Biography: St. Augustine on St. Stephen

Augustine of Hippo preached and commented on the life, death, and cult of St. Stephen more than did any other early Christian or medieval theologian. He firmly established for the

However, St. Augustine was not the only, or the first, early Christian theologian to testify to Stephen’s power and influence. Treatises and sermons elaborating on the reputation of the proto-martyr survive from Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 120-200), Tertullian (c. 160-230), Cyprian (early third century-258), Origen (c. 185-254), Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-341), Ephrem of Edessa (early fourth century-373), and John Chrysostom (c. 347-407). See for example, Irenaeus of Lyon “Irenaeus against Heresies,” ANF 1: 480, Irenaeus, Contra haereses IV.xv.1., PG 7: 1012-1013; Tertullian, “On the Resurrection of the Flesh,” ANF 3: 588-589, Tertullian, De resurrectione carnis, caput LV, PL 2: 877A; Cyprian, “Treatise 9: On the Advantage of Patience,” ANF 5: 484-491, Cyprianus Carthaginensis, “De bono patientiae,” PL 4: 632C; Eusebius of Caesaria, Eusebius: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, trans. G. A. Williamson,
Western Church Stephen’s designations as proto-deacon, proto-martyr, and heavenly crown. As such, Augustine’s influence on the later exegetical treatises and medieval sermons is extensive, as is his indirect influence on Stephen’s visual narratives in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France, which relies on those designations for meaning.3

Augustine was particularly focused on Stephen’s relevance and reputation in the years following the invention of the relics, some of which were translated to Hippo and the surrounding areas in northern Africa during Augustine’s episcopate. Stephen’s post-mortem deeds in North Africa and its environs figure most prominently in Chapter 8, Book 22 of the City of God: “Miracles, wrought so that the world might come to believe, have not ceased now that the world does believe.”4 These miracles included a series of impressive resurrections: that of a resurrected child who had been crushed beneath a wagon and of a nun who was resurrected before the congregation. The grieving father of a dead girl sent her tunic to the shrine of Stephen; after touching the relics and being brought back to her, it was laid over her body and revived her. Similarly, a boy was brought back to life after his body was rubbed with oil exuded from Stephen’s relics. Another child was resurrected in the name of Stephen at the saint’s shrine. Furthermore, Augustine offers even more testimony regarding the miracles performed by the proto-martyr enumerated in detail as he chronicles the movement of the relics across North Africa. Importantly, St. Augustine is careful to note that the relics are virtually always shepherded by an orthodox bishop, as opposed to an heretical churchman. The association of Stephen and his relics with episcopal authority in the work of the early Christian father would


surely have been attractive to the late medieval bishops whose cathedrals were established on the same sacred relics.\textsuperscript{5}

According to Augustine, it was the bishop Praejectus who brought the relics of St. Stephen to the Christian faithful in North Africa. Upon their arrival, the congregations swarmed the shrine to receive the bishop and the blessings of the proto-martyr. The first person in a long list of the healed was a blind woman who begged that she might approach the bishop as he carried the holy relics. Praejectus gave her the flowers he was carrying with the relics, and as she pressed the blossoms to her eyes, she was able to see.\textsuperscript{6} Likewise, the bishop Lucullus took the relics to the castle of Sinita, near Hippo. Each time the relics were transferred, throngs of people followed the procession. During the walk the bishop was cured of a fistula that had long plagued him, depriving his physician of the opportunity to operate on the holy man.\textsuperscript{7} Another bishop named Possidius took relics to another presbyter by the name of Eucharius in Calama in Spain. Eucharius had long suffered from an illness referred to as the stone. Upon receiving the relics at the hands of the bishop, his distress ended. At the end of his life, when he lay dead and attendants were preparing his body, Eucharius’ cloak was sent to Stephen’s shrine. When the cloak was returned and then laid across the dead man’s body, Eucharius was rejuvenated. Similarly, a terribly sick but devout young woman’s parents sent their imperiled daughter’s dress to the shrine of the proto-martyr. However, she died before the dress returned. Nevertheless, when the grieved parents wrapped their daughter’s corpse in the dress, she was restored to life. A dress similarly prayed over at the shrine of Stephen in Hippo and applied to the dead body of a Syrian Christian’s daughter had the same restorative effect.\textsuperscript{8}

Other miracles of Stephen retold by St. Augustine focus on the conversion of individuals outside the Christian fold. A man named Martialis, whose daughter and son-in-law were devout Christians, was near to death and continued to reject baptism. His son-in-law traveled to St. Stephen’s shrine and prayed there for the soul of his father-in-law. As the young man left the relics, he picked up flowers from the shrine and, returning home, deposited them on the old man’s pillow as he slept. When he woke, Martialis called for the bishop to prepare for his baptism. Although the bishop was visiting Augustine in Hippo at the time, his presbyters baptized the old man. For the rest of his life, Martialis uttered the words “Christ, receive my


\textsuperscript{6}Ibid, 1128.

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid, 1128.

spirit,” even though he did not realize he was quoting the proto-martyr.⁹ Ultimately, Augustine exclaims:

> What am I to do? I am so much driven by the need to fulfil my promise of completing this work that I cannot record all the miracles of which I have knowledge. No doubt many of our people, when they read these things, will scold me for having omitted so many of which both they and I certainly know. . . . It is not yet two years since there began to be a shrine of St. Stephen at Hippo Regius; and though many of the miracles wrought there have not, to my certain knowledge, been recorded, those which have been published come to almost seventy in number at the time of writing.¹⁰

That being said, the author continues for several more pages enumerating various miracles performed by the saint.

Augustine also takes up the subject of Stephen’s sacrifice and sanctity in his sermons.¹¹ Augustine’s treatment of the proto-martyr’s cult provides evidence of the bishops’ efforts to organize the circulation of, and access to, the relics in early Christian communities. More relevant to this dissertation, Augustine’s sermons provide the impetus for the themes pondered by medieval theologians advocating Stephen’s power and preeminence through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Augustine supplies many details of the life and death of Stephen that are not found in the New Testament, and yet inform later medieval interpretations of the proto-martyr’s narrative. For example, Augustine writes that “Peter was one of those who ordained Saint Stephen . . . . Peter ordained him, Paul persecuted him.”¹² Thus Stephen’s life and death are used to link Peter and Paul in Augustine’s theology. Augustine also provides interpretations for details within the biblical narrative. He is particularly interested in explaining the relevance of Stephen’s vision. That Stephen witnesses Christ’s presence at the right hand of God in heaven, is especially important in Augustine’s sermons. Stephen’s testimony reinforces the Christian belief of Christ’s

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⁹Ibid, 1128-1129.

¹⁰Ibid, 1130

¹¹For a list of Augustine’s sermons using Stephen as an exemplar or expounding on Stephen’s life and miracles, with both the original Latin and the English translation listed, see Appendix B, “Stephen in Augustinian Texts.”

resurrection and the opening of the gates of heaven after Christ’s sacrifice. Jesus standing (as opposed to sitting) at the right of God in Stephen’s vision receives significant attention from Augustine. Christ’s standing position is different from the more typical conception of Christ in heaven sitting at the right hand of God at the Second Coming. According to the theologian, Stephen “could see Jesus standing; the reason he was standing, and not sitting, is that standing up above and watching from above his soldier battling down below, he was supplying him with invincible strength, so that he shouldn’t fall.”

Thus the Church father interprets the standing position of Christ in Stephen’s testimony as Christ bolstering the resolve of the martyr. Augustine goes on in another sermon to link this interpretation to Stephen’s own posture. He explains that as Stephen begins to pray for his persecutors, he bends his knees in supplication to Christ: “Receive my spirit from the hands of those who hate yours.’ That’s what Saint Stephen said, still standing. And after that, he knelt down and said, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’” As such, Stephen is presented by Augustine as an ideal intercessor. Stephen repeats the words of Christ on the cross. By suggesting that Christians follow the example of Stephen when they do not feel able to follow the daunting example of Christ, Augustine also proposes Stephen as a role model: “But it’s too much for me,’ he says, ‘to imitate the Lord,’ By the grace of the Lord, then, imitate your fellow servant, imitate Stephen . . . .” The particular behavior worth imitating, according to Augustine’s sermons, seems to be loving and praying for one’s enemies.

Invention and Translation: Dissemination of the Cult in Medieval Literary Sources

The primary medieval narratives relating the discovery and translation(s) of St. Stephen’s relics have been collected assiduously by the Bollandists, a Jesuit society known for their ongoing work in hagiography and especially the collection of the Acta Sanctorum. While much of the


16 Ibid, 93.

17 On the invention of the relics and their translation to Rome: Avitus presbyter (first half of fifth century), “Epistola aviti ad palchonium, re reliquis sancti Stephani, ed de Luciani
information related in the documents on Stephen is contradictory, a general story had emerged by the mid-fifth century.

Episodes of the Stephen legend that post-date the New Testament story begin with Gamaliel and Nicodemus burying the proto-martyr in a grave that belonged to Gamaliel. Stephen’s death initiated a great Christian persecution in the Holy Land. The congregations were dispersed in fear, all except the apostles. St. Stephen’s body lay hidden and its invention did not occur until the year 417. A priest by the name of Lucian received a vision as he rested one Friday in the vicinity of Jerusalem. A majestic old man, clad in vestment-like garments, appeared to the priest. He touched Lucian with a golden staff and commanded him to find and open the tombs of Stephen and his companions. The mysterious old man instructed the priest to go to John, the bishop of Jerusalem, and tell him to have the holy bodies transferred to a more fitting resting place. The old man explained that, through the priest and the saints, God was taking pity on men and allowing them access to their saintly intercession. When Lucian inquired as to the identity of the speaker, the vision revealed it to be Gamaliel, who had schooled St. Paul in the law. He finally explained that St. Stephen was interred in the tomb beside his own. It had been Gamaliel who saved the martyr’s body from being eaten by the vultures and scavengers.

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18 For specific titles see footnote 17 above. PL 41: 805-806 and BHL 7850; PL 41: 8-8 and BHL 7853; and PL 58: 1081, 1084-1085.
outside the city walls of Jerusalem, where the Jews had left the saint’s body after stoning him. Gamaliel continued to explain that Nicodemus, his nephew, was also buried there with him and Stephen. Nicodemus, seeking and receiving baptism covertly, provoked the Jewish officials who beat him savagely. Upon his death Gamaliel buried him near Stephen. Also entombed with them was Gamaliel’s son Abibas, who, retaining his virginal purity, had lived and studied with the Apostle Paul. Gamaliel judged the other members of his family unworthy of burial near the saintly proto-martyr because they were not faithful Christians. Lucian, unsure of the nature of his dream, prayed to God for the dream to appear to him a second and third time if the vision were true.  

On the following Friday, Gamaliel again appeared to the priest and impatiently inquired why Lucian had not acted on his directions. Lucian explained his prayers and Gamaliel answered with information that would enable the priest to identify the holy bodies once they were excavated. Lucian saw four baskets: three of gold and one of silver. One of the golden baskets was filled with red roses, and the other two contained white. The silver basket was full of saffron. Gamaliel explained the roses represented the holy relics of each of the men. The red roses represented Stephen, who earned the honor of martyrdom. The white roses represented the bones of Nicodemus and Gamaliel for their steadfastness in belief. The saffron was associated with Gamaliel’s son Abibas, a celebration of his virginity. With that revelation Lucian’s second vision ended.  

When Gamaliel appeared for the third time to the priest, he angrily reproached the cleric for his neglect in following the saint’s orders. Lucian traveled quickly to Jerusalem and diligently reported all he had learned in his dreams to the bishop, John. The priest, the bishop, and many other bishops joined together and proceeded to the place where Lucian had been directed by Gamaliel. An unearthly, sweet aroma permeated the air and cured the ailments of many present when the excavators broke ground. The saintly bodies were retrieved from their original graves and taken, in part, to the church of Sion in Jerusalem, where Stephen had fulfilled his clerical duties as the archdeacon. Some of the relics were disseminated before being interred in the Church of Sion. Lucian appropriated some of the remains which eventually found their way to Minorca where they converted Jews.  

However, St. Stephen’s relics were not to remain long in Jerusalem. In a saga that provides a tour of the great capitals of medieval Christendom, the proto-martyr’s remains would soon be bound for the East. A senator of Constantinople by the name of Alexander traveled to Jerusalem along with his wife and built a magnificent church devoted to St. Stephen. Not only

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20 Ibid.

21 See the Translation to Constantinople, PL 41: 817-822 and BHL 7857-7858; Miracles Wrought by the Relics, PL 41: 831-0853 and BHL 7859-7877.

22 PL 58: 1081, 1084-1085; PL 41: 805-808, 821-834; and Vanderlinden, 188-189.
would his patronage celebrate the cult of the proto-martyr, but it would also provide a place for the senator’s body to be interred upon his death, near the holy relics. Seven years after Alexander’s death, his wife, Juliana, wished to return to Constantinople with her husband’s body. The bishop, after many prayers, presented the lady with two silver coffins and explained that he did not know which one contained her husband’s remains and which held the holy relics of the saint. She threw herself on one of the caskets and assured the bishop that she knew the proper container. However, unknowingly she claimed the relics of St. Stephen. With the body of the saint, she boarded a ship destined for Constantinople. The true nature of her cargo was revealed at sea when a sweet smell wafted through the air and the angels commenced a heavenly song. Demons began to cry and, tormented by the saint’s presence, conjured a horrible storm. The sailors beseeched Stephen for help, and he appeared to them, assuaging their fears and calming the sea. Nevertheless, the demons continued to speak against him, demanding that the prince of demons set fire to the ship, but an angel appeared and drowned the devils in the sea. When the ship finally arrived in Constantinople, Stephen’s body was delivered to an unnamed church.23

Once in the Eastern capital, Stephen’s relics continued to distinguish themselves by doing great miracles. Eudoxia, Emperor Theodosius’ daughter, was possessed and tormented by a demon. The emperor ordered that the princess be brought to the relics of the proto-martyr now housed in Constantinople so that she might touch them and be exorcized. The devil in her announced that he would not be dislodged unless Stephen’s relics were moved to Rome as that was the will of the saint. The emperor arranged with the clergy of Constantinople and Pope Pelagius in Rome to exchange Stephen’s body for that of St. Lawrence, long venerated in Rome. Cardinals were sent east to escort the proto-martyr to Rome, and the Greeks traveled with them to retrieve the relics of Lawrence. The dissemination of Stephen’s relics began on the journey west when the people of Capua were rewarded for their devotion with the right arm of the proto-martyr and they erected a church in his honor. Finally the party arrived in Rome, but when Stephen’s escorts tried to cross the threshold into the church of St. Peter in Chains, they found they could progress no further. The Devil, still possessing Eudoxia, notified the entourage that Stephen was to be placed beside Lawrence, his brother-deacon. As soon as the relics were deposited beside Lawrence, the princess touched them, and the Devil left her body. Lawrence, animating his own relics, moved to the other side of the tomb, making room for the proto-martyr. However, when the Greeks tried to remove the body of Lawrence, they fell to the ground almost lifeless. Even though they were prayed over for a week, they all eventually died. The Latin authorities who had consented to Lawrence’s removal fell ill and could not be cured until Stephen and Lawrence were left to rest together in the tomb, all plans to separate them abandoned.24

The sermons of the sixth through twelfth centuries in which the proto-martyr is an exemplar for medieval Christians rarely venture far from the standard texts established by Lucian and by Augustine. In the extant fifth-century literature, stories with subtle variations retelling the

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23 The Translation to Constantinople, PL 41: 817-822 and BHL 7857-7858.

24 The Translation to Rome, BHL 7878-7881 and 7882-7884; On Laurence, BHL 4788.
invention, translation, and miracles of St. Stephen dominate the subject matter. Once disseminated, contact with Stephen’s reliquaries cured the blind. The proto-martyr also healed the sick, helping paralytics to regain their mobility. He even resurrected the dead. These miracles complement the events recorded by Augustine.\(^{25}\) There are, however, a few notable innovations in Stephen’s literary legend between Augustine and the thirteenth-century *Legenda aurea*. For example, as the proto-martyr’s relics were translated to the island of Minorca by Orosius (b. 380-390), they converted a community of Jews.\(^{26}\) Given the importance of the Jewish persecutors in the original narrative, it is surprising that such conversions are not more common in the literary sources.

After the initial flurry of literature establishing the cult of Stephen, medieval theologians began writing interpretive works concerning the proto-martyr, and documented the translation of the relics to important Christian centers in northern Europe.\(^{27}\) Often these works use Stephen to comment on the place of Jews in the Christian universe. For example, Fulgentius of Ruspe (468-533) finds St. Stephen integral in the conversion of St. Paul. Fulgentius also links the symbol of the martyr’s victory, the crown, with Stephen’s name. The Venerable Bede (672-735), writing in the first quarter of the eighth century, references early medieval sources—possibly Lucian’s letter—when addressing the cult of St. Stephen in his tract on the Acts of the Apostles.\(^{28}\)

Such acknowledgments of the original authors of Stephen’s invention are rare within medieval sermons after the eighth century. However, references to the role of the Jewish persecutors in the Stephen story become more prominent. In his *Exposition of the Canticle on Habacuc*, Bede quotes the proto-martyr as the saint addresses his Jewish audience: “You stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7: 51). Bede goes on to contrast Christian humility and faith with Jewish obstinacy, suggesting that

\(^{25}\) On other miracles performed by the relics see, Auctor incertus, *De miraculis s. Stephani protomartyris, I & II*, PL 41: 831-853 and BHL 7859-7877; and Gregory of Tours, PL 71: 881B and BHL 7820.


\(^{27}\) Volume forty-one of the *Patrologia Latina* is devoted to the *Opera omnia* of Augustine. However, many texts by various authors of direct relevance to Augustine, his writings, or the see of Hippo (including the early cult of St. Stephen) are included in the volume. On the dissemination of the relics in western Europe in the twelfth century see as noted above, The Translation of the Blood to Saint Trond, BHL 7890; Translation of the Body to Venice in 1100, BHL 7891; Translation of Relics to Cluny in 1120, BHL 7894; and Translation of a hand to Zwiefalten in 1141, BHL 7895.

\(^{28}\) Bede, “*Liber retractationis in actus apostolorum, “* caput V, PL 92: 1011.
Stephen’s reputation in chastising the Jewish unbelievers continued uninterrupted and even grew through the Middle Ages. Writing a little later, Rabanus Maurus (776-856) maintains the connection between the proto-deacon and biblical Jews, noting that Stephen is the deacon who “disputed against the Jews.” The tradition of linking St. Stephen with efforts at converting Jewish individuals and communities was maintained in the early twelfth century by scholars such as Peter Abelard (1079-1142), who identifies Stephen in recalling the proto-martyr’s biting sermon. Abelard basically recaps the biblical text of Acts, emphasizing Stephen’s criticism of his Jewish listeners as well as the saint’s vision. As the theologian expounds on Stephen’s testimony, he does not reference the early Christian discoverers of Stephen’s relics, as Bede had done. Rather, Peter Abelard references Bede, asking the listener to “keep Bede in mind.” In the tradition of Augustine and many other theologians of the previous millennium, Abelard also acknowledges that Stephen’s name in the Greek means crown and refers to Stephen as the “archdeacon.” When it comes to the translation and miracles, Abelard (like many other twelfth- and thirteenth-century theologians) cites Augustine repeatedly as a resource for the translation of the saint’s relics and documentation of the martyr’s miracles. Roughly contemporary, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) also acknowledges Augustine as the expert on Stephen’s cult. However, Bernard’s treatment of Judaism is much more caustic than his predecessors’ discourses. As Bernard elaborates on the cult of Stephen and the saint’s efforts with his Jewish persecutors, the theologian associates the synagogue mentioned in the biblical narrative of Stephen with Satan. This association is repeated by other late twelfth-century, Parisian theologians such as Adam of St. Victoire (second half of the twelfth century). This change in the medieval literary sources is indicative of the shift from anti-Judaism to the more dangerous antisemitism, as defined by Langmuir and discussed above. This observation will be key to Chapter 4 of this thesis.

29 Bede, “Expositio in canticum Habacuc,” PL 91: 1248B.


32 Ibid, PL 178: 576A and D.

33 Ibid, 577A and 578A.

34 Ibid, 581A-582A.

35 Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermo in festo beati Stephani protomartyris,” PL 184: 845C-850C.

By the thirteenth century, the presence of the life of St. Stephen in the *Legenda aurea* testifies to the widespread knowledge and celebration of the proto-martyr’s cult in western Europe as originally compiled by Avitus, Lucian, and Gennadius. The text was written by the Genoese bishop, Jacobus de Voragine (1230-1298) around 1260. The *Golden Legend* enjoyed great popularity from its initial inception under the name *Legenda sanctorum*. There are over five hundred manuscripts of the text still extant, and in initial printings beginning in the 1450s it appeared in more than one hundred and fifty editions and translations. The *Golden Legend* not only tells the story of the invention of Stephen’s relics, but it also provides an insight into how the Stephen cult had come to function in the liturgical calendar of the thirteenth-century church.

The December 26 calendrical entry entitled “The Finding of St. Stephen” in *The Golden Legend* explains that Stephen’s martyrdom took place the same year as the death and Ascension of Christ, but on August 3. Jacobus de Voragine concludes the excerpt from Stephen’s feast day by quoting Augustine: “Turn thy thoughts to Stephen thy fellow-servant! He was a man as thou art, of the mass of sin, redeemed with the same price. And being a deacon he read the Gospel, as thou readest or hearest it . . . .” The chronological thread is taken up again at the end of the December 26 entry, where *The Golden Legend* turns to the numerous miracles performed by the saint’s relics as relayed by St. Augustine. Jacobus de Voragine quotes Augustine and identifies the twenty-second book of the *City of God* as the source for the stories of the miracles of the holy relics.

“*And being a deacon . . . .”*: The Proto-Deacon

Even though the Acts of the Apostles never identifies Stephen or any of the chosen seven as holding the clerical office of the diaconate, they are identified as deacons already by the early Christian period. St. Irenaeus is the first of the church fathers to associate Stephen with the


39Jacobus de Voragine, vol. 2: 41. The discrepancy is addressed below.

40Ibid, 2: 44. My emphasis added.

41Ibid, 2: 43-44.
Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Historia ecclesiastica* (c. 325) explains, “by prayer and the laying-on of the apostles’ hands there were appointed to the diaconate for the service of the community of men of proved worth to the number of seven. These were headed by Stephen . . . .” Importantly, Eusebius designates Stephen as first among the seven, establishing him as the archdeacon. Augustine, in his Sermon 210, “On the birth of St. Stephen protomartyr,” underscores the designation when he acknowledges “the blessed martyr Stephen, the first after the Apostles to be ordained deacon by the Apostles.” Much later, in the twelfth century, Peter Abelard acknowledges the seven elected deacons among whom Stephen was the archdeacon.

Stephen’s status as a member of the ecclesiastical community is integral to his role as a witness. In order to testify, a martyr’s faith must be demonstrated and his belonging to and status in the ecclesiastical community must be apparent before his words can be given just weight and authority. According to patristic literature, Stephen was a member of the most exclusive of communities. He was of clerical ranks, the archdeacon, first to be imbued with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. Moreover, he was touched and ordained by St. Peter, the first bishop. Stephen’s belonging in the early Christian community was indisputable. Through the Middle Ages, Stephen is presented visually as a medieval deacon. As such, his role in the Early Church is conflated with the popular medieval conception of the deacon and his connection to the medieval bishop. The functions of the medieval deacon and archdeacon should be addressed in order to consider the medieval conception of Stephen and his founding clerical role.

The term deacon, or *diakonos* in Greek, translates as minister or servant and was originally used without reference to any formal religious office. However, during the apostolic era the title acquired a much more finite and specialized meaning. Approximately thirty years after the appointment of the first seven deacons, Paul makes reference to a specific group of the

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44Augustine, *Sermones ad populum, classis IV. de diversis, sermo CCX*, “*In natali sancti Stephani protomartyris, I*,” PL 39: 2137-2140.

45Peter Abelard, *Sermo XXXII*, “*De laude sancti Stephani protomartyris*,” PL 178: 578A.


47See for example Peter Lombard, *Distinctio XLII*, “*De spirituali cognatione*,” PL 192: 941.
 elect, including those ordained by the apostles, among whom Stephen was the first.\textsuperscript{48} Ancient church law mirrored the ordination of the first seven deacons in Acts by limiting the number of deacons that could serve in Rome to seven. The limitation was sometimes adopted by other Christian sees, only to be overturned completely in the eleventh century.

The duties performed by the medieval deacon were reflected in the roles of the original seven; that is, they all served the congregation. Stephen and his fellows were, literally speaking, elected to serve tables and see to the needs of the widows so that the apostles would not be taken from their task of spreading the word of God. To the modern scholar, this task seems, at first, somewhat lowly and mundane. However, when one considers the role in the early church of the \textit{agape}, or love feast, which these attendants would have facilitated, the shift to serving at the altar during communion and acting as an intermediary between the congregation and the presbyter is not difficult to imagine.\textsuperscript{49} Eventually, the responsibilities of the deacon expanded in order to relieve the bishop of his more tedious and nonessential duties. While Stephen was ostensibly elected from the congregation to serve tables, we never see him fulfilling that role in the literary texts.

The work of the deacon in the Middle Ages included the collection and distribution of church alms, the establishment and maintenance of order in the church, the preparation of the altar for the liturgy, and the removal and storing of the consecrated wine and bread. He also presented the gifts of bread and wine from the congregation to the altar and sometimes administered communion, which was always officiated over by a priest or bishop. At high mass the deacon supported the arms of the celebrant or the foot of the chalice. He also assisted the bishop in administering baptism. Particularly relevant to the cult of Stephen, the deacon was responsible for reading the gospel and held the Gospels open over the head of a bishop during his consecration. Even though Stephen is known as a preacher, very rarely did medieval deacons preach. Medieval deacons maintained order during mass in addition to the important task of reading the scriptures.\textsuperscript{50} The role of the archdeacon differed only slightly in ways that linked him even more closely with the bishop.

The roots of the archdiaconate lie in the early Christian tradition of the \textit{diaconus episcopi}, the deacon chosen by the bishop as his individual attendant. This is an important connection given that, by the Middle Ages, Stephen, the first archdeacon, was believed to have been ordained by St. Peter, the first bishop. The responsibilities of the archdeacon focused more on the administration of the see and the supervision of the other deacons than on service at the altar. In the fourth century, the duties of this specialized deacon took on a decisively judicial tone. As the supervisor of lower ranking clergy, he was responsible for discipline. The archdeacon functioned as an intercessor in the reconciliation and absolution of penitents. The \textit{Catholic}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{48}Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{49}Theodor Klauser, \textit{A Short History of the Western Liturgy}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 5-8.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{50}DACL “Diacre,” 4: 738-746.}
Encyclopedia refers to the archdeacon as “the bishop’s chief confidant, his assistant, and when it was necessary, his representative in the exercise of the manifold duties of the episcopal office.”

In the eighth century the archdeacon’s powers expanded in scope and depth until he was “next to the bishop, the regular organ of supervision and discipline in the diocese.” This influence reached a high point in the twelfth century, when archdeacons exercised a quasi-episcopal power, critiquing clergy, holding low court, and distributing punishment to clerical defendants. Pope Innocent III (1160-1216) called the archdeacon the eyes of the bishop. By the thirteenth century the archdeacons’ powers were limited due to the prohibitive effect their authority was having on the bishop’s prerogative.

The singling out of Stephen as the first archdeacon was firmly established by the time The Golden Legend was compiled. In that text Stephen is referred to as having served in the office of the archdeacon in the church in Jerusalem before his martyrdom. Not only is Stephen linked with the medieval deacon/archdeacon through title in literary sources, he is also always depicted in a contemporary medieval dalmatic, visually eliding his historic role with that of the medieval cleric.


Type and Antetype: The Structure of Martyrdom

Stephen’s life and death were seen by early Christian and medieval theologians as paralleling, even imitating, Christ’s actions and execution. The term “proto-martyr” is the title most commonly used by medieval writers to differentiate St. Stephen from those martyrs and saints who followed.\(^{58}\) Stephen is the first martyr in *imitatio Christi*.\(^{59}\) His ordeal created a pattern paralleled in the lives of subsequent martyrs who would follow.\(^{60}\) Although there is subtle variation within the lives and deaths of Christian martyrs, the correspondence in experience gives each individual’s life and death meaning in Christian ideology. Martyrs, on a fundamental level, repeat the sacrifice of Christ and testify to the veracity of his teachings. Each martyr’s experience provides the saint with the opportunity to exhibit the ideal Christian faith for Christian observers. The Christian community is then able to reaffirm solidarity against non-Christian adversaries. The Greek term *martureo* literally translates as *witness*, one who gives testimony.\(^{61}\) The ordeal of the ideal witness often culminates in a judicial trial where he faces


\(^{58}\) For examples of the “proto-martyr” designation see PL 14: 865D; Carthuitus (eleventh century), *caput primum*, “Sancti pater, natales visionibus praevisi illustrati, baptismus, regni initia et cura religionis propagandae, victoria de rebellibus, et hinc monasterium s. Martini ex voto fundatum,” PL 151: 1211B; Hildebert of Lavardin (c. 1056-1133), *Sermones de sanctis* LXXVIII “*In festo sancti Stephani protomartyris sermo primus*,” PL 171: 715C; Rupert of Deutz (c. 1075-1129), “*In opus de gloria et honore filii hominis super Matthaeum*” *liber septimus*, PL 168: 1472A, and “*Commentarium in duodecim prophetas minores*” *Libri XXXI*, PL 168: 118D-832A, to reference only a few.


\(^{60}\) *DACL*, “Martyr,” 10: 2359-2523, esp. 2359-2361.

\(^{61}\) Stephen witnesses through his divine vision, very commonly cited by medieval theologians. For references to Acts 7: 2-53, see, “*Ecce video coelos apertos, et filium hominis stantem a dextris Dei*,” is possibly the most quoted line from the proto-martyr’s life used by medieval theologians. See for example, Prudentius (d. 861), *Liber peristephanon, II hymnus*, “*Incipit passio s. Laurentii*,” PL 60: 319A-320A; Paschasius Deacon (d. after 511), “*De spiritu sancto, libri duo, caput X* *De actibus apostolorum assertorio Trinitatis iteratur, ubi et Cristus con ovatianos ad dandum poenitentiammissus assitutur*,” PL 62: 20C; Peter Damian (1007-
false witnesses and submits to the judgment of unworthy magistrates. This is one of many parallels that the life of Stephen shares with the passion of Christ and other Christian martyrs. Furthermore, the life of the martyr is filled with subverted outcomes. His defeat in court is actually considered a victory for the martyr and all Christians. His death is considered the ultimate birth. Death on earth translates as birth into heaven.\textsuperscript{62}

In Stephen’s case, this sense of reversal is heightened. The feast of St. Stephen, tellingly, was placed on December 26, the day after the word was made flesh in the birth of Christ. The assignment of this day to Stephen was hardly coincidental. According to the December 26 entry of \textit{The Golden Legend}, there was a two-fold reason that the church placed the celebrations of John the Evangelist, Stephen, and the Holy Innocents just after the Nativity of Christ.\textsuperscript{63} “Firstly, the Church wished to place Christ and His first companions together. Secondly, the Church wished to group the three kinds of martyrs close to the birth of Christ, which is the first reason for all martyrdom.”\textsuperscript{64} The entry explains that martyrdom can be divided into three categories: when death is wished for and granted, when death is wished for but not granted, and finally when death is not wished for but granted. St. Stephen, St. John, and the Innocents, respectively, are the representative saints for each of these groups. This \textit{duplex nativitatis}, the double Nativity of Christ and Stephen, is the subject of sermons and will be the focus of further discussion in later chapters.\textsuperscript{65}

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\textsuperscript{64}Jacques de Voragine, vol. 1: 50.

\textsuperscript{65}For example see Joannes Belethus (late eleventh century), \textit{Rationale divinorum officiorum, caput LXIX “De nativitate Domini,”} PL 202: 77A; Sicard of Cremona (d. 1215), \textit{Officiis ecclesiasticus summa, liber nonus, caput VI “De sancto Stephano,”} PL 213: 408A.
Invention of the proto-martyr’s relics was celebrated on August 3, the date of his martyrdom. The Church’s placement of the invention within the liturgical calendar demonstrates the flexibility with which the liturgical calendar was treated. Feast days were moved so that the calendar’s arrangement reflected the eschatological view of medieval Christendom. De Voragine includes a second reason for the change in date. Since the Feast of the Invention was joyous, a more somber feast was necessary to celebrate Stephen’s martyrdom. Thus the Church moved the feast day in proximity to the Nativity. 

Like Christ’s, Stephen’s life and death centered on efforts at conversion through preaching, especially to the Jews of Jerusalem. Arousing the anger of the Sanhedrin after announcing the arrival of a New Covenant that nullifies the old, both Christ and Stephen were arrested. Christ was taken into the custody of Roman officials, while Stephen was arrested and brought before the Jewish council. Both men, innocent of the charges brought against them, faced false witnesses, standing before a judge. There was little effort at any defense on the part of either condemned man. As Stephen was stoned, he was granted a vision of the divine, paralleling Christ’s vision at his baptism. Thus Stephen’s birth into heaven proved the possibility of human rebirth established at the first baptism. Moreover, his vision of Christ standing on the right hand of God also paralleled the experiences of the apostles at the Transfiguration and of Moses on Sinai (Matthew 17: 1-10 and Exodus 19: 20-25). After his glimpse of Christ and God the Father, Stephen’s countenance took on the radiance of an angel. Christ and Stephen both died at the hands of Jewish persecutors; in fact, many commentators identify Stephen’s executioners as the very same Jews who persecuted Christ. 

66 Stephen’s body was found on the same day of the year on which his martyrdom is commemorated and is said to have occurred [December 26]. The Church, however, changed the dates of the feast days for two reasons. The first was that Christ was born on earth in order that man could be born in heaven. It was appropriate, therefore, that the feast of Stephen’s birth in heaven should fall close after Christ’s birthday, since he was the first to suffer martyrdom for Christ, and martyrdom is the martyr’s heavenly birth and follows as a consequence upon Christ’s birth. Therefore the Church sings: ‘Yesterday Christ was born on earth, in order that today Stephen might be born in heaven.’

67 Jacobus de Voragine, vol. 2: 41. While Jacobus de Voragine is certainly not an authority on the Early Church, his compilation does reflect the popular, medieval understanding of the liturgical calendar and the reasons for its particular organization. The medieval interpretation of Stephen’s place at the beginning of the calendar will be of particular interest in later chapters.

68 While the Gospels identify Christ’s executioners as the Romans, medieval sources often refer to Jews as the killers of Christ. This is an important observation for Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. As such, the sources of this transitional paragraph are discussed below.
Stephen were both entombed by pious Jews including Nicodemus.  Stephen’s vision verified Christ’s redemption of Adam.  Although Stephen was stoned while Jesus was crucified, the proto-martyr was considered to have shared in Christ’s sacrifice.  Perhaps most influentially, both martyrs pray for their persecutors and commend their own souls to heaven.  Early Christian and medieval theologians elaborate on these parallels and add layers of interpretation, and thus meaning, to the literary narratives.

Irenaeus of Lyon was one of the first Christian theologians to take up the topic of Stephen and his relationship with Christ and the apostles.  In his Contra haereses (c. 180-190), the Church father uses the proto-martyr to form his polemics against the second-century heretics, the Gnostics.  He quickly establishes the contribution of Stephen “who of all men, was the first to follow the footsteps of the Lord, being the first that was slain for confessing Christ, speaking boldly among the people and teaching them.”  Irenaeus continues in detail, explaining how by teaching in the apostolic tradition, receiving a revelatory vision, and praying for his persecutors, Stephen was “copying in every respect the Leader of Martyrdom.”

Irenaeus links the apostles and their disciples through the act of preaching as well as martyrdom.  He presents Stephen as the exemplar for the martyr/witness.  The saint taught the Christian faith and testified to truths by verbally relaying his vision during his execution.  He went on to pray for his persecutors and to commend his soul to God in the same way as did Christ.  Moreover, the martyr’s selfless interaction with unbelievers, in the case of Christ and Stephen the Jews, is acknowledged by Irenaeus.  It is not only the message of Christ contained in the martyr’s life and words that attracted the attention of early theologians, but also the contrast between the perfected souls of the witnesses and the error of their persecutors.

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69 For Nicodemus as the pupil of Christ, see Gospel of John 3: 1-9, 7: 50, and for Nicodemus taking the body of Christ from the cross, John 19: 39.


71 Both the apostles and their disciples thus taught as the Church preaches, and thus teaching were perfected, wherefore also they were called away to that which is perfect—Stephen, teaching these truths, when he was yet on earth, saw the glory of God, and Jesus on His right hand, and exclaimed, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.’  These words he said, and was stoned; and thus did he fulfil the perfect doctrine, copying in every respect the Leader of Martyrdom, and praying for those who were slaying him, in these words: ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.’  . . . inasmuch as they [martyrs] did preach things contrary to those persons who did not ascent to the truth, for that reason they suffered.”  Ibid, 435;  Irenaeus of Lyon, Contra haereses III.xii.10, PG 7: 903-905.  See also Stephen R. Wiest, “Stephen and the Angel: A Typological Reading of the Story of Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles” (Diss. Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2001), 225-232.
John Chrysostom also draws a direct connection between the persecutors of Christ and the persecutors of Stephen. Stephen reproaches the Jews as “also did Christ, forasmuch as they were always boasting much of their fathers. ‘Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain they which shewed before the coming of the Just One.’” Chrysostom continues to draw a parallel in the executions themselves: “they did not wish it to look as if they killed him [Stephen] because of what he had said against them - just as they acted in the case of Christ; no, but for impiety.” This interpretation is consistent through the Middle Ages. Eusebius, writing a generation before Chrysostom, comments that Stephen’s death is in proximity to Christ’s, and conflates the Jews who stone Stephen with Christ’s own murderers. Ephrem, writing in the mid-fourth century, provides several interpretive links to Stephen’s typological connection to Christ, not only by designating Stephen’s executioners as the same as those of Jesus, but also by highlighting the importance of his vision. Ephrem refers to Stephen as a champion among Christ’s executioners, the Jews. The deacon was awarded a prize for his steadfastness, a crown, as Christ wore in Stephen’s vision as Ephrem interprets it. Stephen’s vision of the heavens opened is likened to the gates to paradise opening at the baptism

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75 It is clear, lo, that the sufferers for Christ enjoy the glory of the entire Trinity. He [Stephen] saw the Father and Jesus on his right hand; for Jesus only appears to his own, as after the resurrection to the apostles. And as the champion stood in the midst of the mad slayers of the Lord without a helper, and as it was the hour of the crowning of the first martyr, he saw the Lord with a crown who stood on his right hand as one encouraging victory over death, to show that in the same way he secretly aids those who for his sake are given over to death. Therefore he reveals what he saw, the heavens opened, which since they were shut to Adam were first opened to Christ alone in the Jordan, but after the cross were opened also to the sharers of Christ’s cross, and first to this man . . . . See you not, that he revealed the cause of the lightening of his countenance, for he was about to behold this marvelous vision. That is why he was changed into the likeness of an angel, that his testimony might be trustworthy . . . . Wherefore the saint, desiring to frighten them, cried out with a loud voice. With high-pitched voice he pealed into their ears . . . . in order to quell their frenzy. But they what? They stopped their ears like serpents.” Ephrem of Edessa, “The Commentary of Ephrem on Acts,” 405 and 407.
of Christ which, since the sin of Adam, had been closed. As such, Stephen is the first Christian to see and enter heaven, and it is this promise of salvation that he confirms in testimony for the Christian audience. Ephrem interprets the angelic change in Stephen’s features as an effort at proving his forthrightness to his persecutors. So in the tradition of Moses, Stephen’s countenance glows after seeing the face of the divine. Tertullian, in his *De resurrectione carnis* (c. 208), also sees Stephen among those transfigured by the vision of the divine. The proto-martyr is compared to Moses whose face glows with a divine light after seeing the divine glory on Sinai (Exodus 33: 11 and 34: 29-30 and 35) and more closely to Christ, whose countenance beamed during his Transfiguration:

The face of Moses is changed, with a brightness which no eye could bear. But he was Moses still, even when he was not visible. So also Stephen had already put on the appearance of an angel, although they were none other than his human knees which bent beneath the stoning. The Lord, again, in the retirement of the mount, had changed His raiment for a robe of light; but He still retained features which Peter could recognize.  

Stephen’s credibility as witness to Christ’s place at the right hand of God is heightened as his appearance changes. The precedents are illustrious. Moses’ brightness and Christ’s robe of light provide a lineage that connects Stephen to the great witnesses of the Jewish and Christian faiths. Stephen’s ability to testify is now not just related to his belonging to the ecclesiastical community. He is now associated with an even more exclusive group, those who have seen the divine with their own eyes, reflected in their bodies aglow.

In a homily on forgiveness, John Chrysostom interprets Stephen’s actions as the ideal response of the Christian who prays for his persecutors. He continues by emphatically constructing a typological kinship between Joseph, Moses, Paul, and Stephen:

But has thou also done good, and received evil? . . . come let us bring thee to thy fellow-servants, to Joseph, who suffered countless things, and did good unto his brethren; to Moses, who after their countless plots against him, prayed for them; to the blessed Paul, who cannot so much as number what he suffered from them, and is willing to be accursed for them; to Stephen, who is stoned and entreating this sin may be forgiven them.  

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With a similar interpretation, another Church father, Cyprian of Carthage, incorporated Stephen into his treatise on Christian patience, *De bono patientiae* (c. 256). When called on to love one’s adversaries and pray for one’s enemies according to the precepts of Christ, Cyprian refers to Stephen’s success in following Christ’s example:

Can you accomplish these things unless you maintain the steadfastness of patience and endurance? And this we see done in the case of Stephen, who when he was slain by the Jews with violence and stoning, did not ask for vengeance for himself but for pardon for his murderers, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” It behooved the first martyr of Christ thus to be, who, forerunning the martyrs that should follow him in a glorious death was not only a preacher of the Lord’s passion, but also the imitator of his most patient gentleness.⁷⁸

Cyprian sees Stephen’s role in *imitatio Christi* not as a simple rote pattern of faithfulness, trial, testimony, and death, but as an ideal that should govern Christian behavior and be a model for future martyrs.

One of the most intriguing tropes used in both the original passion sequence and the proto-martyr’s legend is the symbol of the crown. In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Eusebius explains that Stephen was the first to follow Christ and the first to win the crown, called by the same name.⁷⁹ With all the similar patterns and parallels in the stories of Christ and the proto-martyr, it is possibly the crown that Stephen was “the first to win” and “called by the same name as he” that provides the richest topic for elaboration.

### The Sign of the Martyr: The Crown

The most compelling parallel in the New Testament account between the narratives of Stephen and Christ is the use of the crown, as is eloquently sculpted on the Stephen tympanum at Bourges (figure 3). Providing a context through which to consider the crown of Stephen is the crown of thorns placed on the head of Christ at his Crucifixion: “And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews” (Matthew 27: 29).

This crown connects Jesus to Stephen by way of his name. For example, *The Golden Legend* begins its introduction to the proto-deacon by explaining the etymology of Stephen’s name: “The name Stephen—Stephanus in Latin—comes from the Greek word for

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crown—*stephanos*. . . . Stephen was the crown of the martyrs in the sense that he was the first martyr under the New Testament, as Abel was under the Old.” Such an etymology is provided in virtually every medieval sermon written on the proto-martyr. The association of the first martyr with a crown would have long-lasting effects on the representations and designations of subsequent witnesses. Each martyr would receive a divine crown at his or her death, a sign of his or her victory and entrance into the court of heaven.

Eusebius draws the connection between Stephen’s name and the word “crown” and stretches the eloquent metaphor to include the crown as an award of honor to the winner of the Christian contest of martyrdom:

[The deacons] were headed by Stephen, who was the first after the Lord—almost as soon as he was ordained, as if this was the real purpose of his advancement—to be put to death, stoned by the Lord’s murderers. Thus he was the first to win the crown called by the same name as he, and reserved for Christ’s worthily victorious martyrs.

Augustine also explains the conflation of meanings in the proto-martyr’s name when he refers to Stephen’s trial and testimony.

However, the recognition of this word play does not exist in all early Christian sources. Stephen R. Weist draws attention to the interesting and conspicuous absence of the notice of Stephen’s metaphoric name in Tertullian’s *De corona*. In his tract against the wearing of crowns by Christians, Tertullian conveniently overlooks “this obvious Greek pun despite his quotation of many verses from the Old Testament and New Testament containing the word crown.” Nevertheless, “the word-play between the proper name—Stephen—and the noun that it signifies—crown—makes possible the exegetical encirclement of the Protomartyr in an ornate

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80 Jacobus de Voragine, vol. 1: 45.


84 Weist, 241.

85 Ibid, 240-41, n. 28.
matrix spanning both Old and New Testaments.”86 Upon closer inspection the term “crown” is used in a variety of contexts. Weist suggests that the use of the metaphor in Ecclesiasticus 32:1-3 prefigures the ministry of Stephen as it is recounted in Acts: “Have they made thee ruler? Be not lifted up: be among them as one of them. Have care of them, and so sit down, and when thou hast acquitted thyself of all thy charge, take thy place: That thou mayst rejoice for them, and receive a crown as an ornament of grace, and get the honour of the contribution.” Here, the crown is not so much a sign of secular kingship, as it is a symbol of the favor of God.87

Within the medieval Christian community such a constructed figuration would have reinforced Christian doctrine with a familiar symbol of secular authority and absolute power. The martyr, a confirmed member of the Christian community (in Stephen’s case a deacon), undergoes a judicial trial. He testifies and confirms the absolutes of the Christian faith under great duress and even torture. He is judged by unbelievers and dispatched to God. The placement of the crown on the head of Stephen marks his transition. He is now a member of yet another new exclusive community, the court of heaven.88 The status of royalty has been confirmed upon the judged, who is now available to the living Christian community as an intercessor. The translation of the mortal into heaven, then, can also be read as the elevation of the earthly meek to a position of heavenly power.

Given the extensive use of the motif—the term crown is mentioned eighty-four times in the Vulgate—it is no wonder that the theme has many meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Important to my study, the crown of martyrdom (accompanied by the palm or reed) is present in Maccabees and is repeated in Matthew’s use of the crown of thorns.89 This twisted diadem connects the royal and martyrlogic associations of the crown, since Christ was executed as a royal usurper or pretender. Thus Matthew 27:29 reads, “and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” The crown of thorns has been interpreted as an interpretation of the crown of light represented on early Roman imperial coins which carry images of apotheosized rulers.90

86Ibid, 240-41, n. 28.


88For references to crowned elders and saints at the end of days, see Apocalypse 2:10, 3:11, 4:4-10, 6:2, 9:7, 12:1, and 14:14.

89It is rather interesting that only three of the four Gospels mention the crown of thorns in the retelling of the Passion. Luke, understood as the writer of Acts, omits the crown from Christ’s Passion.

The books of James, Peter, and Revelation also take up the metaphor of the crown as a sign of victory through Christian martyrdom. James 1:12 uses the metaphor of the crown to reference the prize of salvation bestowed on the faithful after they have passed the test. Revelation 2:10 directs the faithful at the Second Coming: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” The reader of these texts wonders if Stephen’s name was the result of this prevalent trope (used before and after Acts was written), designated to explicate the metaphor, or if Stephen’s martyrdom changed the way the crown was understood by Christians throughout in the entire biblical text.

In conclusion, the Church fathers developed the legend of St. Stephen beyond the biblical account. Building on the story of the proto-martyr in the Acts of the Apostles, they established Stephen’s titles—proto-martyr, proto-deacon, and crown—so as to more closely associate Stephen’s life with the Passion of Christ. Their efforts established a structure to which the vitae of other martyrs would conform, providing affirmation of Christian beliefs to the Christian faithful. Medieval theologians depended upon the works of the Early Christian fathers when composing their own texts and sermons on the glory of the most blessed Stephen. They depended on the designations of the first imitator of Christ, deacon, and crown to give their own exempla meaning. As early medieval theologians recorded the events surrounding the invention and translation of Stephen’s relics through the capitals of Christendom, they provided evidence of the preeminence of his cult and the desirability of his relics.

At the centers of the celebration and veneration of these relics in twelfth-century France, theologians devised innovative, complex conceptions of the proto-martyr’s visual narrative. Although at no point does the Stephen narrative adhere strictly to a textual source, these images often seem inspired by seemingly unrelated theological concepts. Through the course of the next chapter, I will suggest that public Romanesque visual narratives depicted at the sites of the proto-martyr’s cult in France were composed to elucidate complex, abstract, theological principles: the Trinity, prayer, and coronation. As I shall show in later chapters, Gothic constructions provide evidence of a new, public preoccupation of the medieval church with Stephen’s persecutors. While early biographers recorded an inversion of outcomes—Stephen’s relics proved effective in the conversion of a Jewish population—late medieval theologians devised narratives that emphasized the violence and blindness of Stephen’s persecutors. Chapter 3 also addresses the climate of anti-Judaism in medieval France as it was projected through the lens of St. Stephen’s narrative, encouraging anti-Jewish imagery in visual conceptions of the proto-martyr’s narrative.

91See David P. Scaer, James the Apostle of Faith: A Primary Christological Epistle for the Persecuted Christ (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1983), 53; and Weist, 241.

92Severus of Minorca, “Epistola Severi ad omnen ecclesiam, de virtutibus a judaeorum conversionem in minoricensi insula fact,” BHL 7859 and PL 41: 821-832.
CHAPTER 3

VISUALIZING THE INVISIBLE:
HEAVENLY VISIONS AND DIVINE CORONATION

There is a lack of uniformity in conceptions of Stephen’s martyrdom and vision in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, indicating a variety of influences at work on the individual narratives. Extant Romanesque representations of St. Stephen’s narrative in public monumental sculpture often accentuate the proto-martyr’s divine vision, prayerful posture, and Christ-like assumption into heaven. Eleventh- and twelfth-century French images such as those at Chambon-sur-Lac, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, and Cahors Cathedral, discussed in this chapter, demonstrate a connection not only with the account in Acts, but also with the complex religious principles of early medieval theologians such as Augustine and Gregory the Great (540-604). The imagery at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and Cahors Cathedral has much in common with tenth-century manuscript illuminations of St. Stephen’s martyrdom. A careful observation of Stephen’s vision in the relief at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and the portal at Cahors suggests the influence of Augustine’s writings on the nature and appearance of the Trinity. Moreover, this complex theological conception seems to be influenced by Gregory the Great’s explanation of the Ascension of Christ. I believe this conflation of imagery and literary texts was an erudite effort to emphasize Stephen’s role in *imitatio Christi*. The divine presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit is also envisioned on the later twelfth-century façade of Saint-Trophime at Arles through Stephen’s vision. However, here the conflation of the assumption of Stephen’s soul with the Ascension and the Trinity is absent. Rather, Stephen’s martyrdom is conceived in the context of a coronation and compositionally paired with the crowning of St. Trophime, bishop and patron of Arles. Here, I argue, the crown (as per the translation of Stephen’s name) is used to reinforce the importance of the cathedral as the place of the coronation of Frederick I Barbarossa in 1178. Furthermore, I believe that Stephen’s vision and the inclusion of the angelic messengers of God, who escort the proto-martyr’s soul to heaven, provide an opportunity through narrative to envision symbolically the coronation liturgy in reference to the crowning of the emperor.

The imagery at Arles also provides the opportunity to comment on the visual creation of a martyr. The separation of Stephen’s body and soul through a violent, tortuous death emphasizes the presence of the proto-martyr’s relics inside the church, while stressing his spiritual presence as an intercessory saint in the court of heaven. At the point of death, Stephen prays for his persecutors who hover close to the body with the instruments of the martyr’s execution prominently displayed for the viewer. I suggest that by emphasizing the martyr’s pain and execution, the iconographers at Arles created a composition that conveyed a heightened awareness of Stephen’s victory through death to the viewer. The Romanesque narratives of the

These images are also thoroughly considered in Appendix C.
proto-martyr are varied and imaginative, especially in their configuration of Stephen’s private, divine vision. Their unique compositions provide an interesting comparison to the Gothic compositions that become more rigidly, as sometimes formulaically, organized in the thirteenth century, as will be discussed in the next chapter. In short, the Romanesque visual narratives of the proto-martyr are artfully used to visualize the invisible.

The Trinity and the Ascension in Stephen’s Vision

The martyrdom and vision of St. Stephen set into the porch façade of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire (late eleventh or early twelfth century) is set high above the viewer’s head. The relatively small, understated relief is composed of two rather separated compositions. The stoning of the proto-martyr before Saul is carved with a grooved frame and set into the porch pillar as the lower half of the composition. Above, with a matching frame, Stephen’s assumption and vision are sculpted. Scholars have commented on the influence of medieval writers on this composition, likening the two registers of the relief to the Ascension of Christ and to the Trinity as related by St. Augustine. This early configuration is also present in Stephen’s vision on the north portal at Cahors Cathedral from the first half of the twelfth century. Before the conceptions of the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and Cahors compositions, St. Stephen’s vision was rather awkwardly and symbolically composed at Chambon-sur-Lac in the eleventh century. Here, the right hand of God the Father issues from the clouds in the pinnacle of the composition, and a round star—rather like a cruciform halo—references the presence of the Son of Man. The visual interpretation defies a literal reading of Stephen’s stoning in Acts 7.

The more detailed and particularized Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire composition (which also does not reflect a literal reading of Acts) does indicate the influence of St. Augustine’s writings on the proto-martyr. In a sermon on the passion of Stephen, Augustine explicitly interprets the proto-martyr’s vision as the Trinity. Sermon 216 begins, “Stephen here sees the Trinity,” and ends, “... the blessed Stephen merits a vision of the Trinity.” Augustine’s interpretation of the witness’s celestial vision provides one explanation for the variations in the visual narratives. However, in the center of the upper register of the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire relief—just to the left of the Trinity—Stephen adopts the pose of Christ at the Ascension in the saint’s vision. The connection between the proto-martyr and Christ’s ascent into heaven after his resurrection was made by Gregory the Great in his homilies on The Ascension of the Lord:

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Our Redeemer was assumed into heaven; he judges all things now, and at the end of everything he will come as judge. Mark describes him as sitting after his assumption, since we will see him as judge at the end after the glory of his ascension. Stephen, who was still engaged in a painful struggle, saw the one who was his helper standing, because his grace was fighting for him from heaven so that he could overthrow the unbelief of his persecutors on earth.\(^5\)

Although Gregory’s passage does associate Stephen’s vision with the Ascension, it does not conflate the two events as the relief at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire might suggest. Thus, the plaque cannot be considered a rote illustration of Gregory’s treatise.

The comparison of the relief to the Ottonian Fulda Sacramentary Cod. Theol 231 (c. 975) also suggests a relationship between Stephen’s vision and the Ascension.\(^6\) The picture plane is divided roughly in half horizontally like the composition of the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire plaque. The lower level is also devoted to the lapidation of Stephen. On the illuminated page the saint occupies the center of the picture plane and gazes up at his vision, Christ in glory holding a codex out in his right hand. Angels and the heavenly court flank the central figure, whose mandorla and feet extend subtly into the terrestrial space, almost connecting Stephen with the heavens. Stephen kneels on his left knee with his right foot on the ground in front of his body. His arms are in the posture of an orant, which seems to be reflected in the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire panel in which Stephen is stoned. This antique gesture of prayer sets these images apart from later imagery of the proto-martyr in which Stephen strikes a more modern, prayerful pose.

To the right in the manuscript composition, Saul stands and watches the execution, directing the viewer’s attention with a pointed right hand. His position in the design, as well as his standing posture, encourage a reevaluation of the standing figure on the right of the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire relief. In addition to possibly holding a scroll and a sword—both attributes of the Apostle Paul—he occupies the same space as the future convert on the manuscript page. Behind him, the city of Jerusalem looms on the horizon of the painted pages of the manuscript.

On the other side of Stephen, three men stand at a distance poised with stones. Rocks surround Stephen more like raindrops than projectiles. The compositional space occupied by the Ascension-like Christ in the manuscript is adopted by Stephen in the upper level of the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire relief. The figure is missing the cruciform halo of Christ, wears a dalmatic, and supports a book in his right hand. This individual is no doubt the proto-martyr, whose image is conflated with Christ’s in images of the Ascension, as is also suggested visually in the


\(^6\)Vergnolle, 109-110.
sacramentary. The placement of Stephen in such a seemingly unlikely position might be a visual reference to the martyr’s role in imitatio Christi. Stephen follows the path of Christ into the gates of heaven. However, I would add that even though the imagery is suggestively similar, there is really no reason to conflate the iconography. Gregory compares the scenes of the Ascension with the vision of Stephen in the quotation above. He does not equate them. The iconography of the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire relief remains firmly rooted in the visual tradition of the proto-martyr. This scene is not entirely an anomaly in the tradition of the visual Stephen narrative. I believe that ultimately it is less tied to the meaning of the Ascension and more an interpretation of the assumption of Stephen’s soul, as will be addressed below. The visual transfer of the proto-martyr’s soul to heaven at his stoning certainly has a history in the Romanesque sculpture of southern France. The carved image on the west façade at Arles is an ideal example.

**Intercession, Pain, and Divine Coronation: Visualizing the Invisible at Arles**

One of the most public and monumental French Romanesque images of the stoning of St. Stephen can be found on the façade of Saint-Trophôme at Arles. The cathedral was built in the mid-twelfth century, replacing the original cathedral of S. Étienne, which occupied the same location. At that time the relics of the famous first bishop of Arles, Trophôme, were transferred to the new cathedral, where the relics of Stephen had been venerated for centuries. Sculptural reliefs of the new and original patron saints were erected opposite one another on the new cathedral’s façade. The greatest part of the façade is taken up by standing reliefs of apostles and saints flanked by adjacent columns. They include, from north to south, Bartholomew, James the Less, and Trophôme. John and Peter face the passageway to the portal. Continuing on the south side of the portal, Paul and Andrew face Peter and John. Around the corner, facing west, is a narrative relief of the stoning of Stephen, followed by images of James the Major and Philip. All of the apostles hold books, except for Paul, who holds a scroll. Stephen’s relief is differentiated from the other images by virtue of its position symmetrically opposite the image of the patron, the bishop and saint, Trophôme. Moreover, his image is the only narrative within the sculptural program of portrait-like images of apostles and St. Trophôme.

At the bottom center of the composition, St. Stephen kneels in profile. His hands are held in a position of prayer, and his face is turned up to the upper half of the relief. His position and gesture emphasize his piety and connection with the celestial realm above him. His feet overlap the bottom molding so that his body seems to protrude into the viewer’s space. Stephen’s

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7Vergnolle, 109-110. That the architectural images of St. Stephen at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and Cahors Cathedral share compositional characteristics with manuscripts provides an interesting visual aside to an observation by Gregory of Tours. In his *History of the Franks* he observes that the wife of the bishop walked through the new church of St. Stephen at Tours with a book in hand so that she could direct the application of visual imagery to the walls of the establishment. Gregory Bishop of Tours, *History of the Franks*, trans. Ernest Brehaut (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 34-35.
clothing is differentiated from the robes of the apostles. The martyr is flanked by two tormentors standing over him. Each has both of his arms raised above his head, clutching rocks. These figures, while fixed on Stephen, are not depicted as overly dramatic. Their posture is erect and shows no sense of lunging or lurching toward Stephen in the tight space. The persecutors dominate the perimeters of the composition by virtue of their scale. The Jewish men are differentiated from the martyr by their short tunics, shapeless caps, and long beards. They are old. Typically, Stephen’s executors are young men. These individuals have sagging, lined faces, soft shapeless frowns, and scraggly thin beards. Their age provides a metaphorical comparison to the martyr’s youth. This juxtaposition provides a visual commentary on the superceded place of the Jews and the Old Law in Christian philosophy, which will be discussed further here in the next chapter. However, there are no aggressive diagonals that so often characterize action or violence within compositions. The relief’s design is dominated by stable vertical elements creating a sense of balance and upward momentum. Stephen’s body unites the terrestrial world with the celestial sphere—both literally and metaphorically—as his foot slips into the viewer’s space and his soul, emerging from his mouth, is assumed into heaven. The Jewish executioners bracket and highlight the action. The rendition of these figures seems matter of fact, and if it were not for the stones held above their heads, their countenances could be considered passive. The most striking aspect of the composition of the relief is the rather large, naked, child-like soul being lifted by angels directly from Stephen’s mouth, over the hands of the persecutors. The hands of the executioners, as they grasp their stones, literally seem to support the celestial beings. The angels bend gracefully over the soul, framed by a veil. The proto-martyr’s soul looks directly at the viewer. Above the angels’s heads is a symbolic interpretation of Stephen’s vision, invisible to the Jews. A bust of Christ looks out at the viewer, offers a blessing with his right hand, and gestures to the assumption of Stephen’s soul with his left.

The climax in the narrative depicted on the façade of the cathedral is the instant of Stephen’s death; the point at which he intercedes on behalf of his persecutors, saying “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7: 59). The scene therefore depicts Stephen’s role as one of the elect, an intercessory figure. His persecutors are included for two reasons. First, with their rocks in hand, they become an attribute of the saint and thus they identify Stephen. Second, they highlight Stephen’s role as the intercessory figure and may be exemplars for the possibility of divine forgiveness, recalled in the martyr’s and Christ’s last words. Through the Early Christian and medieval periods Stephen is cited as an exemplar of forgiveness. The old men are not there first and foremost as executioners or murders, and they are certainly not there as vilified medieval Jews.

This interpretation is of particular relevance in the context of the writings of Caesarius of Arles (470-543), the famous bishop of the cathedral’s see. He invokes the name of Stephen and uses him as an exemplar of forgiveness. In Sermon 149, “On the Two Paths, the One to be Desired, and the Other to be Feared,” Caesarius develops a metaphor: a Christian requires two healthy feet to follow the righteous way of Christ. One foot is provided by one’s love of the Lord

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8For examples of more youthful executioners see the imagery at Benoît-sur-Loire (early twelfth century), Cahors Cathedral (first half of twelfth century), Paris Cathedral (c. 1258), and Bourges Cathedral (c. 1250).
and the other by one’s love of his neighbor. Without both, one is lame. Caesarius exhorts his listeners as follows:

run on the way of Christ, or rather run through Christ, the Way, for He Himself is the Way. Through this way of love even the Lord Himself ran when He hung on the cross and prayed for His enemies, saying: ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ On the same way blessed Stephen also was so anxious to run manfully that he desired to see the heavens opened and Christ standing there as if to meet and assist him.\(^9\)

In none of Caesarius’ sermons on the proto-martyr does he stress or dwell on the identity of the executioners. He incorporates the example of Stephen’s life and martyrdom primarily as an ideal of saintly intercession, Christian forgiveness, brotherly love and ideal patience. He even relates these ideals to Stephen’s posture during his martyrdom, suggesting the listener visualize the saint’s narrative when considering the intercessory role of the apostolic deacon: “First blessed Stephen stood up and prayed for himself when he said: ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ After he had said this, he fell on his knees, and when he had done this, he said. ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep in death. O blessed sleep and true repose! Behold what it means to rest happily: to pray for one’s enemies.”\(^10\) To emphasize the relevance of the intercessor’s posture, Caesarius invokes the saint:

I ask you, blessed Stephen, to deign to explain to me why it was that you prayed for yourself standing, but for your enemies when you had fallen on your knees. If you were in our presence, doubtless this is what you would reply: I stood when I prayed for myself because I did not work hard as I begged and pleaded for myself, since I served God by an upright life. A man does not labor strenuously in praying for a just man, and for this reason he stood when he prayed for himself. Then he came to the point of praying for the Jews who had killed Christ and the saints, and who were then stoning him. He fell on his knees, because he recognized that their wickedness was fast and excessive and could only be condoned with great


\(^10\)Caesarius of Arles, Sermon 220, “For the Feast of St. Stephen,” Mueller, 3: 133, noting the influence of Augustine’s Sermon 49; and for primary source, ibid, 826-828, esp. 827.

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difficulty. Therefore, dearly beloved, let us imitate blessed Stephen as far as God gives us the grace to do so.\textsuperscript{11}

The image of the saintly narrative recalls Caesarius’ invocation on the feast day of Stephen. However, the Stephen panel addresses a variety of Christian prayer types: personal prayer, liturgical prayer, and intercessory prayer. The martyr, while standing, prays for the deliverance of his own soul as a supplicant might pray privately for his own salvation. This is a common motif in martyrologies. The inclusion of Stephen’s narrative on the façade of a church would have encouraged faithful viewers to mimic his efforts, even his posture, in praying for themselves. More relevant and visually explicit in the visual narrative at Arles, Stephen, kneeling, prays publically for his persecutors at the moment of his death, in the tradition of Christ. Because Stephen’s ordeal is consistently likened to Christ’s Passion, the proto-martyr’s public prayer can be viewed liturgically, recalling the Eucharistic sacrifice and prayer at mass.\textsuperscript{12}

The reference to intercessory prayer is not only evident in the posture of the stoned martyr, but it is also linked to his dying words on behalf of his executioners. It is also apparent in the visual reference to Stephen’s spiritual presence in the court of heaven and corporal presence within the church. As the child-like soul issues forth from the deacon’s mouth in a vision of

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid. Caesarius’ position on intercession is derived directly from the work of Augustine on Stephen. Augustine explains, “You see, he was demanding his due when he said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ He was demanding the due which had been promised to martyrs; the due about which the apostle says, ‘I, for my part, am ready being prepared for sacrifice, and the time of my casting off is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have completed the course . . . .’ In the same way too Saint Stephen, a good soldier, had fought well, had not given in to the enemy, had trampled on fear, scorned the flesh, overcome the world and the devil; that’s why he stood up when he said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ . . . He turned his attention to them, and felt sorry for them, and for them he knelt down. For himself he stood up, for them he knelt down. He distinguished the just man from sinners; for the just man he made his request standing up, because he was claiming a reward; for sinners he knelt down, because he knew how difficult it could be to be heard on behalf of such vicious men. Though he himself was just, though he had that crown waiting for his head, he didn’t presume, but knelt down; he didn’t consider what he himself deserved to receive on request, but what those deserved to receive from whom he wished to lift such horrifying punishments. ‘Lord,’ he said, ‘do not hold this sin against them.’” Augustine, “On the Feast of the Martyr Stephen,” Hill, 129-135, Augustine, \textit{Sermones suppositii de scripturis, sermo CCCXV, “In solemnitate Stephani martyris, II,” PL 38: 1426-1431.} On forgiveness and judgment in Stephen’s words and vision see J. D. M. Derrett, “The Son of Man Standing (Acts 7, 55-56),” \textit{Bibbia e oriente} 30 (1988): 71-84; and François Boespflung, “‘Voici que je contemple les cieux ouverts . . . .’ (Acts 7,55) Sur la lapidation d’Etienne et sa vision dans l’art médiéval,” \textit{Revue des sciences religieuses} 66/3-4 (1992): 262-95.

earthly death and celestial rebirth, Stephen’s soul is escorted into heaven by angels, leaving his corpse behind. With the separation of his body and soul, the saint becomes more powerful than his executioners, representing an inversion of the intended outcome of torture and death. In an ironic shift, the persecutors render the martyr infinitely more powerful in death than he was in life.13

In her extensive study, The Body in Pain, Elaine Scarry deconstructs the relationship between torturer and inmate, executioner and martyr. She characterizes the eradication of the victim’s awareness of the outside world, through the application of pain or promise of execution, as the “uncreating” or “unmaking” of the victim’s voice.14 However, in Christian martyrlogies, the inversion of the intended outcome—where the martyr achieves a heavenly victory—challenges the “uncreating” or “unmaking” of the victim’s voice during interrogation and execution where a tormentor would ordinarily coerce a confession from a victim. In Stephen’s situation a saint is “made” or “created” through persecution, torture, and ultimately execution, a common topos in Christian martyrlogies. Scarry explains that the end result of pain is the obliteration of the outside world for the person whose body houses the pain. She characterizes this process as a “path-clearing logic that explains the obsessive presence of pain in the rituals of large, widely shared religions as well as in the imagery of intrinsically private visions.”15 Thus, where one would expect a coerced confession, exorcized in the throws of agony, Stephen speaks a Christian truth as observed through his private vision: “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7: 55).

Throughout her study Scarry focuses on the nature of a viewer’s observation of another’s pain. She argues that pain is characterized universally by an absence of language and so must be objectified before anyone other than the person experiencing it can grasp its presence. Moreover, she convincingly argues that one must “hold steadily visible the referent” for the characteristics of the pain.16 In the case of torture, Scarry explains, the referents are the instruments of the infliction of pain or death: a drill, an electrode, a wooden cross with hammer and nails, or stones. Her thesis explicates the prominence of the rocks in narratives of Stephen’s life, as seen on the façade of Saint-Trophîme. Their presence heightens the viewers’ sense of the sacrifice of the martyr. Not only is the proto-martyr’s death acknowledged in the composition by the escaping soul, but his pain is also objectified by visible referents, the stones. The image of the weapons “enable us to see the attributes of pain . . . ,” which is made more poignant by the stones’ proximity to and placement over the body of the martyr.17 As the viewer is included in the

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14Scarry, 20.

15Ibid, 34.

16Ibid, 17.

17Ibid, 17.
acknowledgment of Stephen’s pain, death, and vision, the torturers/executioners continue to deny the power of the martyr’s body and spirit, leaving Stephen’s remains outside the city to be devoured by wild animals. The seeming subversion of power in the saint’s death further confirms the truths of the faith for Christians. Even in death, only Christians recognize the power of the proto-martyr.

The corpse—now relics—housed in the cathedral provides the Christian supplicants access to Stephen’s intercessory prayers in the court of heaven. For the members of the congregation the large sculpted panel, on the façade of the main church entrance, is a reminder of the proto-deacon’s role in their salvation and his literal presence within reliquaries behind the doors in front of them. Because even a minuscule piece of a saint maintains the efficacy of the entire individual, the tiniest part of the saint’s relics provides a link between the supplicant and the divine. In the De laude sanctorum, Victricius of Rouen explains “even the smallest relics and particles of dust share the virtue of the whole.” The saint mediates for the devout, who then benefit from the saint’s spiritual proximity to Christ, referenced in the relief by the assumption of the soul. Gamaliel, when he appears to Lucien, explains explicitly that God wants the body of Stephen to be found so that man may have recourse to his intercession. The intercessory prayers of the martyr, on behalf of the faithful, are more likely to be heard and considered by God because of the saint’s faithful endurance and blessed suffering. The martyr, whose testimony was so terribly important in his death, is now depended upon in his afterlife as a witness for the devout Christian. By combining Stephen’s kneeling, intercessory posture with the progression of his heaven-bound soul, the artist of the Stephen panel in Arles was able to represent both the proto-martyr’s earthy intercession for his persecutors and his capacity for intercession for Christian suppliants in heaven. The audience viewing the west façade of the cathedral of Saint-Trophîme in Arles was diverse. The audience would have included Christians of all ages, sexes, and classes: monks, priests, peasants, merchants, aristocrats, and even royals. Non-Christian viewers, Jews, would also have been able to see the composition. For clerics and monks, the narrative of the proto-deacon’s stoning could have been interpreted as a reflection of their duties as confessors and intercessors throughout the Middle Ages.

Saint-Trophîme was not just a cathedral catering to the needs of the Christian faithful of Arles. It was also a coronation church of the Holy Roman Emperor. It has been suggested that the program of the portal at Saint-Trophîme was greatly influenced by royal politics surrounding the Burgundian inheritance of Frederick I Barbarossa. In her dissertation, currently in progress, Einat Segal argues that the prominent placement of an extensive narrative of the journey and Adoration of the Magi was influenced by the coronation of Barbarossa at Arles the same decade.

18Victricius of Rouen, De laude sanctorum, PL 20: 443-459A, esp. 453A; see also, Hahn, Portrayed on the Heart, 15; and Eric Waldram Kemp, Canonization and Authority in the Western Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 5.

in which the façade was built. I will suggest that the narrative of Stephen at the entrance to the
coronation church was an integral part of the politically charged sculptural program.

Upon his marriage in 1156 to Beatrice, the daughter of the Burgundian count, Rainald,
Frederick Barbarossa was to inherit control of the Kingdom of Burgundy to the great detriment of
the nobles of eastern France. While the Barbarossa had to resort to military power in an effort
to gain control over parts of Italy, his holdings in eastern France were ostensibly attained through
the rights of succession. However, previous emperors had taken little interest in the French
kingdom, so little that Burgundian nobles benefitted politically and economically from their
independence. The disagreement between the emperor and the pope had encouraged divided
loyalties and allowed the counts of Burgundy to exercise a certain amount of self government.
In fact, Beatrice’s uncle, William, Count of Mâcon, had seized control of the kingdom, which
according to local rights of inheritance was the proper legacy of Beatrice. By marrying the
young heiress, Frederick could easily enforce his power over eastern France and turn his military
focus to exploits in Italy.

After the Treaty of Venice, Barbarossa traveled north through the Italian peninsula paying
state visits and concentrating his diplomatic activity on the Italian city-states. As he crossed the
Alps, he shifted his efforts at statesmanship to his kingdom in eastern France. He traveled to his
official capital at Arles and formally received the regional lords. On July 30, 1178, he was
finally, formally crowned King of Burgundy by the archbishop at Saint-Trophime. The
coronation must have been a politically charged occasion. As Marcel Pacaut observes, “This was
the first time an emperor had visited this region, and his presence clearly reflected the wish, after
the somewhat humiliating Treaty of Venice, once again to exalt the empire.”

20Einat Segal, Tel-Aviv University, personal communication and paper, “The Three Magi
on the Portal of Saint Trophime at Arles: The Political Context,” given at the 41st International

21Also called the Kingdom of Arles and Vienne. It was located between the Rhone and
the Alps and extended from Lake Geneva south.

22Marcel Pacaut, Frederick Barbarossa, trans. A. J. Pomerans (New York: Charles
Scribner’s Sons, 1970), 39. Barbarossa was not the first German emperor to inherit Burgundy.
King Rudolf III (993-1032) designated that the kingdom become part of the empire upon his
death because he had no descendants. Therefore in 1032 the Emperor Conrad II inherited the
Kingdom of Burgundy.

23These rights of inheritance must have been of primary importance to Frederick
Barbarossa. His uncle and biographer, Otto of Freising, included an account of them in his The
Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow (New York: Columbia
University Press, 1953), 164. The author reemphasizes Frederick’s claim to the Kingdom of
Burgundy through his marriage to Beatrice, the Burgundian heiress, 187.

24Pacaut, 168.

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Frederick had been absent from his German capital for years, he lingered in Burgundy the entire summer receiving lords and paying visits to the nobles of the region. Frederick’s handling of his Burgundian inheritance was particularly successful and even allowed him to compete with the King of France for the loyalty of Burgundian nobles.  His controlling, imperial presence was surely forcefully felt and, according to Segal, it was commemorated in the fabric of the cathedral in Arles.

The Magi cycle occupies an extensive frieze on the west façade, placed just beneath the primary frieze and just above the heads of the full-length figure reliefs. The story of the Three Kings begins on the north side of the portal, above the relief of St. Trophime, which is the first image that faces west adjacent to the doorway. The Magi sequence ends just above the relief narrative of St. Stephen, directly opposite St. Trophime. Segal has noted that there are, in fact, four Magi depicted traveling in the frieze, one extra crowned figure beyond the three mentioned in the New Testament. To explain the inclusion of the conspicuous fourth king, Segal references the precedents of emperors who conflated themselves with the Magi witnessing the Epiphany and bearing gifts to the Christ Child. For example, Justinian and Theodora visually take part in a liturgical procession, bearing gifts to the altar in the mosaics at the church of San Vitale in Ravenna. The three Magi are depicted on the hem of the Empress’ dress. Of greatest relevance to her argument is the association of Frederick Barbarossa with the cult of the Magi. The emperor himself procured the relics of the three Magi from Milan in 1164 and had them installed in the cathedral of St. Peter in Cologne in a reliquary that pronounced the import of the royal cult to Barbarossa and subsequent German emperors. The cathedral of Saint Andrea at Pistoia may have fashioned portal decoration that focused on the Three Magi in order to “underscore the

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27Although the emperor attained the relics from Milan in 1164, it was probably Archbishop Rainald von Dassel who helped form the cult of the Magi in Cologne, binding the identification of the relics to German kingship. See Patrick J. Geary, “The Magi and Milan,” Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 243-56. Ciresi, points out that “Rainald von Dassel was the mastermind who launched the 1165 campaign to promote the sainthood of Charlemagne. Perhaps Rainald intended the two events—the sainthood of Charlemagne and the acquisition of the Magi’s remains—to revive and reinforce the legitimacy of temporal and sacerdotal lordship for the emperor.” Ibid, n. 3, 220.
privileged relationship with the emperor . . . .”28 The famous reliquary-shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne was begun in the early 1180s, only a few years after Frederick’s most recent coronation, and was completed around 1230.29 Frederick’s successor, Emperor Otto IV (1198-1218), influenced the iconography of the shrine after he was crowned king in Aachen in 1198. Reinforcing his hard-won claim to the throne, he donated the materials to finish the front of the reliquary just after his coronation. In 1200, Otto IV bestowed three crowns upon the Magi, which he placed on the holy heads himself during mass on the feast of the Epiphany. By 1205 the reliquary was adjusted so that the tops of the crowned heads could be visible above a small sculpted sequence of the Adoration of the Magi, and finally an image of Otto IV was included among the Magi as they approach the Virgin and Child. Thus, as Segal has argued, the inclusion of the fourth Magi at Arles could be a precursor to Otto IV’s bold gesture twenty years later.30

Such an inclusion over the cathedral’s entrance, Segal suggests, is a direct reference to Frederick I’s coronation in Saint-Trophime at Arles in 1178. She also notes that the image of the first bishop and patron saint of the cathedral, just below the initial appearance of the Magi sequence, is in fact the coronation of St. Trophime. Two angels descend from the heavens with the bishop’s mitre and place it on his head. The heads of two witnesses protrude from the background watching the heavenly spectacle. In his left hand the saint holds a crozier. His right offers a blessing to the viewer. Thus the theme of coronation, the crowning of Christ’s chosen, abounds in the upper and lower zones of the façade’s program. However, this interpretation is incomplete without the consideration of St. Stephen’s place on the right of the portal.

Stephen, in fact, balances the coronation program since he is juxtaposed with St. Trophime on the opposite side of the portal. Moreover, just as the Magi sequence begins just over the crowning of the bishop saint, it ends just over the narrative of the proto-martyr. As discussed in the appendix, this relief is exceptional among the others on the façade. It is the only narrative among the reliefs of the standing figures. One must ask, why was this particular scene in the story of Stephen chosen for representation? I argue that its inclusion punctuates the end of the Epiphany sequence above and completes the reference to divine coronation while highlighting the saint’s intercessory role. Within the narrative, this is an image of the coronation of the crown, at the moment of Stephen’s own epiphany. The heavens have opened to reveal Christ to the martyr, much like the Christ Child was revealed to the Magi above. As the angels have descended to crown Trophime, they have also descended to crown the proto-martyr and will return to the heavenly court with his soul. Behind the little nude soul, the angels hold a veil stretched between them, which forms a mandorla-like shape framing the child-like figure. Interestingly, the veil does not form a boundary between the angel’s hands and the soul’s body as one might expect. Between them and just behind the soul’s head, the angels grasp a softly rounded halo-like shape that they hold behind his head. This object is unlike any other halo in


29It was possibly begun by Nicholas of Verdun and completed by his workshop.

30Segal’s thesis as per personal communication.
the composition or on the entire façade. It is not sculpted as a solid disk, but rather is composed of radiating spirals giving it a permeable appearance. The structure does not simply hover behind the head. It must be supported by the angels as they descend. Could this be a reference to the martyr’s crown earned by St. Stephen at the moment of his death? While Stephen’s forehead is graced with a well balanced stone below, his soul’s head is framed by an object delivered by angels.

This iconography is well known in the thirteenth-century tympanum at Bourges Cathedral, north of Arles. Here, a coronation can be solidly identified. In the very center of the composition, angels descend from the heavens just beneath Christ’s blessing hand to place a crown on the dying martyr’s head. As at Arles, he is framed by his executioners. This interpretation was part of the liturgical tradition associated with the celebration of the saint. Importantly, it expresses a goal befitting a king. Augustine writes: “it’s as though a crown came forth from heaven, so that by following him to the reward, those might receive it who had first imitated the example he set of courage in the combat . . . . And now, brothers and sisters, it’s hanging down from heaven . . . .”

This interpretation of the death of St. Stephen by Augustine—coupled with the unique imagery at the coronation church in Arles—should be considered in light of the coronation liturgy employed at the end of the twelfth century. The royal anointing of the king as Christ’s vicar on earth was done by the archbishop. The ceremony itself acknowledged the role of God and the Holy Spirit in the preordination and investment of the power of the king. As Lisa Victoria Ciresi discusses, the symbolic participation of angels in the coronation liturgy was important in conjunction with the royal imagery on the reliquary of the Three Kings in Cologne. In the coronation liturgy, the Holy Spirit was invoked a number of times during the rituals. Angels served as intercessory messengers who ascended with the offerings presented by the king, which were placed on the altar by the celebrant. This aspect of the ritual is reflected in the imagery on the Magi Reliquary in Cologne. On the upper zone of the Cologne shrine, an angel stands beside Christ and holds a crown with veiled hands. On the zone below, Otto IV and the Magi approach the Virgin and Child. It is difficult to tell whether this is the crown offered to Christ by Otto or if this is Otto’s coronation crown blessed by Christ. Either way, the angel with veiled hands is the vehicle by which the crown is transported across terrestrial and celestial spheres.

31 Augustine, “On the Birthday of the martyr Stephen,” Hill, 126-127, Augustine, Sermones suppositii de scripturis, sermo CCCXIV, “In natali Stephani martyris, I,” PL 38: 1426-1431. The content of this sermon was often reiterated through the Middle Ages on December 26, the feast day of the proto-martyr. The proximity of this date with the feast day of the Epiphany, January 6, would have provided ample opportunity to verbally link the two events.

32 Ciresi, 202-230.

33 Ibid, 211.

34 The presentation of the crown by an angel with veiled hands is a fairly common imperial tradition and can also be seen in the Aurum coronarium or the Sacramentary of Charles the Bald,
influence, the façade at Arles must be considered in light of the iconographic interpretations present in other imperial imagery. As such, the veiled hands of the angels escorting the soul of Stephen, the crown, into celestial space can be viewed as a visual commentary on the coronation of Frederick Barbarossa.

In conclusion, divine coronation, saintly intercession, and the holy Trinity are abstract, invisible concepts that are rendered visible in the Stephen narratives in Romanesque medieval sculpture. The imagery at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and Cahors Cathedral, in particular, are influenced by the treatises of St. Augustine on the appearance of the Trinity and Gregory the Great on the posture of Christ at the Ascension. A comparison of the martyrdom of St. Stephen from the Fulda Sacramentary with the images on the churches of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and Cahors Cathedral provides an interesting visual commentary. The assumption of Stephen’s soul at Saint-Benoît appears strikingly similar to the manuscript’s figure of Christ in a mandorla. Through this comparison the modern viewer can better evaluate the construction of the Stephen narrative in stone and his role as the first imitator of Christ.

The proto-martyr’s narrative at Arles is unique among the images of the apostles and St. Trophême. However, the cathedral at Arles is also unique among the buildings discussed here; it is a coronation church. I argue that Frederick Barbarossa’s coronation heightened the medieval viewers’ awareness of St. Stephen as “the crown.” The pairing of Stephen’s death with the crowning of St. Trophême was purposeful and, beneath the cycle of the Magi, referenced Barbarossa’s dynastic ambitions in the Kingdom of Burgundy, as noted by Segal. Furthermore, I suggest that Stephen is depicted at Arles as an intercessory figure and an exemplar for forgiveness as is exemplified in the writings of Arles’ own saintly bishop, Caesarius. In this composition Stephen’s Jewish persecutors—with their large stones poised overhead—become the proto-martyr’s attributes. The presence of the torturers and the stones in close proximity to the martyr’s body emphasizes Stephen’s pain and death while heightening the viewer’s awareness of Stephen’s sacrifice. The Jewish persecutors remain objects of forgiveness.

However, by the Gothic era, conceptions of Stephen’s vision in monumental sculpture were constructed in a decidedly formulaic manner. The attempt to incorporate complex theological concepts such as the Trinity, the role of prayer and intercession, and divine coronation was abandoned. Rather than echoing the theology of the Church fathers, many Gothic narratives of the proto-martyr were constructed to resonate with medieval viewers who may have recognized antisemitic aspects of the narrative in their world, which is the focus of the following chapter.

Paris, B.N.F., Ms. Lat. 114, fol. 5v. Ciresi, 214-216.
CHAPTER 4

UNCIRCUMCISED HEARTS:
FROM ANTI-JUDAISM TO ANTI-SEMITISM
IN THE STEPHEN NARRATIVES

The variations in the imagery of St. Stephen’s vision, apparent on Romanesque monuments such as Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and Cahors Cathedral discussed in the previous chapter, are virtually absent in the Gothic narratives of the proto-martyr’s lapidation. The thirteenth-century visual legends seem to focus primarily on Stephen’s Jewish persecutors at a time when anti-Jewish sentiments were growing in France. This observation may be best characterized as the development of antisemitic trends from the earlier anti-Jewish traditions, as Gavin Langmuir explains.¹ As such these designations inform not only my word choice in this dissertation, but also the overall structure of this chapter.

In the first half of this chapter, I briefly consider the place of the proto-martyr’s Jewish persecutors in the Romanesque images at Chambon-sur-Lac and Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire. Through the use of scale and distance, the artists and patrons of these images emphasize the importance of the martyr, minimizing the presence of his persecutors. Nevertheless, the interaction of Jews and Christians was at the heart of the Stephen story from its recording in the Acts of the Apostles. This connection is made by medieval theologians who incorporate Stephen’s words into their own anti-Jewish rhetoric. By referencing Stephen’s metaphor “uncircumcised in heart” (Acts 7:51), writers such as Justin Martyr and Maximinus provide a connection between Stephen’s biblical story and anti-Jewish philosophy of the second through twelfth-centuries. However, it was the writings of St. Augustine that provided the foundations for Christian attitudes toward Jewry until at least the twelfth century. His policies of tolerance, segregation, and evangelism would characterize anti-Judaism, and highlight the historical and religious differences between Christians and Jews, as defined by the Church. As discussed above in the introduction, Langmuir differentiates “anti-Judaism” from the more hateful policies advocated by Christians by the thirteenth century, “antisemitism.”

In the second half of this chapter, I review emerging antisemitic attitudes, providing a context for the interpretation of the Gothic narrative of St. Stephen. By highlighting the developing antisemitic trends in the city of Rouen, I suggest that the thirteenth-century visual narrative of St. Stephen on the façade of Rouen Cathedral (figure 4) complemented contemporary antisemitic decrees and policies. By the mid-thirteenth century, the Jews of Rouen were no longer regarded as objects for conversion. They were subjected to ruinous financial policies and real bodily harm as Jews in the region were accused of irrational crimes: ritual murder, cannibalism, fratricide, and eventually deicide through host desecration. I suggest that the visual

¹Gavin Langmuir, “Anti-Judaism as the Necessary Preparation for Antisemitism,” in Toward a Definition of Antisemitism, 55-100, esp. 55-57.
narratives of the proto-martyr were used by the Christian community in Rouen to further denigrate the place of medieval Jewry there. Thirteenth-century imagery, such as that at Rouen Cathedral, seems to emphasize the role of the persecutors in the story almost over that of the martyr.

The Romanesque Persecutors in Stephen’s Visual Narrative

Romanesque images of the Stephen narrative may reflect the relative tolerance of Jewish populations associated with the early Middle Ages. Eleventh- and twelfth-century images certainly contrast with the overt, methodical, antisemitism of later narratives, which are the primary subjects of the final chapters of this dissertation. Rather, it seems that the composers of the earliest, extant monumental stone narratives were much more concerned with explicating complex theological ideas, rather than advocating a specific anti-Jewish agenda. For example, design devices such as scale and distance are used to emphasize the import of the martyr in the earlier scenes, minimizing the presence of his persecutors. One of the earliest extant stone narratives of the proto-martyr with his executioners appears on the eleventh-century façade of the chapel at Chambon-sur-Lac. Here the proto-martyr’s figure is significantly larger in scale than that of any of his persecutors. Kneeling in prayer on the left of the composition, Stephen is monumental. He is also separated from his executioners by the angel of God, with whom he exchanges an object. By virtue of their scale and distance, the persecutors seem of little threat to the deacon. Except for the fact that they hold rocks in the presence of Stephen, there is no identifiable characteristic that marks them as Jews.

On the lower register of the early twelfth-century relief at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, Stephen seems a giant among his persecutors. Although here they congregate dangerously close to the proto-martyr (a large figure who kneels toward the right), the figures again are religiously undifferentiated. Stephen’s vision and assumption, above, is given the same compositional space allotted to the lapidation. These are unique compositions when compared to the Gothic constructions which often emphasize the stoning of the Saint and accentuate the identity of his Jewish executioners.²

Circumcision: The Metaphor in Christian Theology and Stephen’s Sermon

Christian-Jewish relationships were at the center of the Stephen narrative from its conception and recording in the biblical text. Stephen made his impassioned and vitriolic speech to the Jews of Jerusalem calling them “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears” (Acts 7:51). While this imagery was gleaned from the Old Testament, it is through Stephen that it is introduced to the New Testament, presenting the phrase in an entirely Christian context. It is noteworthy that Luke, the supposed Christian composer of Acts, chose a term to introduce

²I am referencing the composition at Rouen discussed below, as well as the images at Paris and Bourges addressed here in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.
Stephen’s speech that was used first by Jeremiah and Ezechiel in their original accusations against the Israelites for their abominations and covenant breaking. These charges would be essential to the Christian view of Judaism throughout the Middle Ages and would be used continually by medieval theologians. The use of this phrase aligns Christians with the Creator and Judge who corrects and chastises the impious and errant Hebrews of the Old Testament.

In Chapter 44 of his prophecy, Ezechiel, accusing the Israelites, reiterates the words of God: “In that you have brought in strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, and to defile my house: and you offer my bread, the fat, and the blood: and you have broken my covenant by all your wicked doings” (Ezechiel 44:7). Ezechiel continues one verse below: “Thus saith the Lord God: No stranger uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, no stranger that is in the midst of the children of Israel” (Ezechiel 44:9). In these passages God differentiates his chosen people from those unbelievers who live in their midst and provides regulations for their interactions. The circumcision, both of the heart and of the flesh, is the sign of the covenant with God in both the letter of the law and in the intent of the soul. In neither passage are the Israelites themselves accused of being uncircumcised of heart even though they are being chastised and corrected for their “wicked doings.”

Jeremiah’s use of the phrase is different from Ezechiel’s. Rather than differentiating the impious from the chosen, it is the chosen who receive the scathing designation. The epithet is metaphorical and is even more poignant. AsJeremiah encourages his people to repent of their sins, he quotes God:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me . . . . Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, and I will visit upon every one that hath the foreskin circumcised . . . . [the prophet now exhorts] for all the nations are uncircumcised in the flesh, but all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart (Jeremiah, 9: 21-26).

In Jeremiah’s text God speaks of the knowledge of the divine above all other human accomplishments. He reminds the reader of the end of time when all the faithful will be face to face with God. Jeremiah then interjects that while other nations may be unbelievers, the nation of Israel is unfaithful in their hearts, if not in the letter of the law. With this metaphor, the Israelites are denounced, even though they are the Chosen of God. It is this Old Testament

manifestation of the concept “uncircumcised in heart” that would influence the proclamation of St. Stephen and be reiterated through the Middle Ages by Christian theologians.

Regardless of their scathing polemics, Christian leaders acknowledged that Early Christians were Jews. Medieval Christians never ceased to acknowledge the identities of Christ and the apostles as Jews.\(^4\) The first Christians defended the tenets of the Old Testament and the Laws of Moses against heretics, while building theological rhetoric that announced the place that the People of the Book now held in Christian society.\(^5\) But while Church fathers including Origen and John Chrysostom condemned the Jewish population, the Old Testament was considered integral, not only to the foundations of Christianity, but also to the validity of the miracles of the true faith. The prophets, kings, and patriarchs had foretold the birth and life of Christ in innumerable ways. The validity of the Old Testament was unquestioned by Christians; if undermined, the very foundations of the Church itself would crumble. Both literally and metaphorically, the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament supported the revelation of Christ.

The Old Law, explained and supported by Old Testament scriptures, was considered, in the simplest of terms, superceded. The prophets and patriarchs stood in testimony to the fact on the jambs of churches such as the cathedral at Chartres where the early thirteenth-century northern façade is ornamented with the images of Abraham and Moses. Christian theologians confirmed that the Old Laws were a preparation for the new and became obsolete when God provided the New Covenant to the new Chosen People. Similarly, the physical sign of the Jew’s covenant with God, physical circumcision, was considered unnecessary in the Christian community, for it was not circumcision of the body that now marked one as God’s chosen, but rather \textit{circumcision of the heart}, a differentiation taken from Jeremiah as quoted above. As the Old Covenant was replaced by the New Covenant of Christ, the Chosen People of the Old Testament were replaced by the followers of the Gospels. Physical circumcision became not a sign of piety, but a sign of blindness to the true faith as defined by the medieval Church. The reader of the New Testament is introduced to the Apostle Paul, in the persona of the young Jew, Saul, at the same moment that he or she is first introduced to the phrase “uncircumcised in heart,” in the famous sermon of St. Stephen. Stephen’s phrase, redefining or even subverting the Old Testament sign of piety and Jewish belonging, was to have long-term applications throughout the New Testament during the Middle Ages.

The Christian call for a new “circumcision” was used by Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) in his \textit{Dialogue with Trypho}: “. . . you do not understand. What you really need is another

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\(^4\)I am using “Medieval” here in the most general of terms, suggesting 200-1400 timeframe.

circumcision, though you boast of that of the flesh.” Justin’s reprimand of Trypho is at once a correction of the Jewish man’s erroneous faith and a rebuke of the outward sign of religious identity. By referring to Trypho’s regard for his bodily mark as a “boast,” Justin denounces not only the mark, but all it symbolizes. Justin Martyr’s disputation ends with the conversion of the targeted disputant. Stephen’s conflict ends with his martyrdom as ultimately does Justin’s life.  

Stephen’s infamous phrase was also the focus of a treatise by Maximinus (first half of the fifth century), the Arian Bishop of Hippo, in the so-called An Arian Treatise Against the Jews (c. 427). Maximinus’s writing testifies to the popularity of Stephen’s identification of Jews: “For the Jews have always been stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart, as Scripture says, in spite of their claim to be circumcised. But we tell them, Would that you were circumcised indeed for true circumcision is of the heart, to be circumcised a second time by the Gospel.” While neither Stephen nor Acts is credited with the quote, the source is clear. The bishop continues, “By God’s help, then, we say this, not to injure and destroy them. God Forbid! It is a spiritual warfare that we wage, not carnal. So we seek to bring them back and save them, bring them under the dominion of Christ our King. For we fight under a peaceful King, and follow the camp of peace.” The theme of peaceful tolerance and conversion was popularized by a contemporary of the Arian bishop Maximinus, Augustine, the orthodox bishop of Hippo.

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8 A. Lukyn Williams, 306-311, esp. 308-309. Williams cites Maximinus, the Arian Bishop of Hippo, as the author of this text. He states that it was commonly attributed to Maximus of Turin (427-451 for text), but authorship has been seriously challenged. See, Maximus of Turin, Contra judaeos, caput IV, PL 57: 793-806, esp. 797.

9 Ibid.
Augustine and Early Medieval Anti-Judaism

It is generally accepted that it was St. Augustine’s ideas on the place of the Jews in the Christian universe that had the greatest influence on medieval attitudes. Augustine advocated a policy of tolerance, segregation, suppression, and conversion of Jews in Christian communities. The call for tolerance was based on the designation of Jews as living witnesses to the validity of scripture, having preserved the original text that foretold the coming of the messiah. Jews were primary targets of evangelism and conversion. However, Jews were to be enticed to conversion by the charity and kindness of Christians. Augustine explains, “This, my dear friends, let us preach to the Jews, wherever we can, in a spirit of love, whether they welcome our words or spurn them. It is not for us to boast over them . . . .” An attitude of tolerance and a need for peaceful, sincere conversion dominates Augustine’s theology.

Nevertheless, his policies were hardly kind; he did advocate the segregation and suppression of Jews in society. He concluded that their circumstances as a people rejected and dispersed by God, with little real temporal power, were evidence of the scriptural truth of prophecy and Christian preeminence in the eyes of God. Similarly, the Christian community’s domination of the Jews from the fifth century was believed by Augustine to be further proof that medieval social order followed the divine eschatological plan. Augustine relegates the position of Jews in Christian society to the denigrated place of slaves when he explains: “The Jews are our attendant slaves, who carry, as it were, our satchels, and bear the manuscripts while we study them . . . . When we argue with the heathen we adduce the predictions found in manuscripts written by Jews.” Also at the heart of Augustine’s comment—as well as Stephen’s sermon—was the Christian belief that Jews no longer interpreted their own scripture correctly. Rather, they read the text too literally, or more specifically, too carnally. Augustine also


11 A. Lukyn Williams, “A Discourse in Answer to the Jews A.D. 354-430,” 317, Augustine, Tractatus adversus judaeos, caput VIII, PL 42: 51-64, esp. 63-64,


14 On St. Stephen specifically, his speech, and the Christian shift away from Jewish communication and tradition, see Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz, 1-19, esp. 16-17.

15 “Carnal” is used here to refer to the literal interpretation of scripture; however, it more literally refers to the body or the temporal world, as opposed to spiritual ideals. The term is informed by the medieval Christian interpretation of the way that medieval Jews understood their covenant with God and the sign of that covenant, circumcision, a literal mark upon the body.
associates “carnality” with Judaism when he references Stephen’s speech and acknowledges Jews as “the people from whom the kingdom would be taken away when Christ Jesus our Lord should come to reign not carnally, but spiritually, through the new covenant.”

Christ’s reign, according to Augustine, takes the Kingdom of God or the promise of salvation from the Jews, as accorded to the Chosen People. By designating Christ’s reign as spiritual, Augustine infers that the Jewish interpretation of God’s rule is merely carnal, that is temporal. As such, Jews misunderstand the nature of God’s rule, associating it with the physical world, symbolized by their physical mark.

Augustine warns that Jews should be segregated within Christian society, but also be kept subservient to Christians in all situations. His sermons on the subject are consistently demeaning to Jews; however, he decrees that within a Christian community, Jews were not to be killed. He based his judgment on Psalm 59:11: “My God, his mercy shall prevent me. God shall let me see over my enemies: slay them not, lest at any time my people forget. Scatter them by thy power; and bring them down . . . .” In Augustine’s philosophy the place of the Jews in Christian society was proof of Christians’ station as God’s new Chosen People. Ultimately, the conversion of Jewish populations would indicate the End of Days.

St. Augustine’s understanding of Stephen’s association with Jewish perfidy is not limited to the spiritual/carnal opposition or the “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart” metaphor. In his account of the miracles achieved by Stephen’s relics, he tells the pointed story of a great lady named Petronia. Her name suggests the word petra, Latin for rock, which was the instrument of Stephen’s martyrdom and a pun on Peter’s name. Seeking a cure for an illness, Petronia was instructed by a Jewish healer to take a little rock set into a ring and wear it against her skin tied in a hair circlet. After preparing the little rock, she headed for Stephen’s shrine nearby, at which time the stone fell from her body. When she looked to find the break in the ring or circlet that

However, Anna Sapir Abulafia suggests that both characterizations, “literal” and “carnal,” are not entirely correct. Jewish scholars only refused metaphorical interpretations that required a Christological interpretation, and Christians were certainly capable of reading a text literally if it supported their beliefs. See, “Jewish Carnality in Twelfth-Century Renaissance Thought,” Christianity and Judaism: Papers Read at the 1991 Summer Meeting and the 1992 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, ed. Diane Wood (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 59-75.

16 Augustine of Hippo, City of God, 788, Augustine, Civ Dei XVII. vii. 4, PL 41: 537-540.

17 Psalms 58: 11-12; see also Ibid, xli. 12; see also, A. Lukyn Williams, 400.

18 Augustine, Civ Dei XVII. 52, “An credendum sit, quod quidam putant, impleitis decem persecutionibus quae fuerunt, nullam jam superesse praeter undecimam, quae in ipso antechristi tempore sit futura,” PL 41: 614-616; see also Hill, on Sermon 63b, 3: 181. For only two of many biblical references see, Acts 1: 6, and Romans 11: 15.
allowed the stone to fall, she found them both intact.\textsuperscript{19} The relics of the saint cured Petronia when the \textit{petra} of the Jew proved ineffectual. Moreover, the miraculous intervention demonstrated the perfidy of the would-be-healer and the error of the Christian’s association with the nonbeliever.

The sixth-century sermons of Pseudo-Augustine, believed in the Middle Ages to be by Augustine, bishop of Hippo, solidified policies of tolerance and Jewish servitude. The author paraphrases the Psalmist’s words: “Slay them not, lest they forget Thy law, but scatter them in Thy power.”\textsuperscript{20} This sermon was used as the basis of a liturgical drama as early as the eleventh century, the \textit{Ordo prophetarum}, and is found in a manuscript of the eleventh century at the abbey of St. Martial of Limoges.\textsuperscript{21} It would seem, therefore, that the policy was well known in France before 1100. Pseudo-Augustine’s \textit{De altercatione ecclesiae et synagoge dialogus} is even better known as a religious play in which the personified Church argues with Synagogue, evoking Stephen’s sermon and terminology, even his vision.\textsuperscript{22} “True circumcision is of the heart,” Ecclesia pronounces in reference to Christians who achieved the spiritual procedure through the sacrament of baptism.\textsuperscript{23} Synagogue asks, “How can you say he lives, rose, and sits on the right hand of the Father? Tell me in such a way that you can seal your evidence from the Prophets.”\textsuperscript{24} This dialogue suggests that even in the eleventh century, Christians were still defining Christian spirituality in contrast to perceived “Jewishness.” Stephen’s role as a witness to Christ’s place at the right hand of God was still relevant.

Augustine’s and Pseudo-Augustine’s writings are consistently cited in theological treatises, sermons, and plays of the Middle Ages. Their ideas are also evident in the policies of


\textsuperscript{22}A. Lukyn Williams, 326-338, Pseudo-Augustine, \textit{De altercatione ecclesiae et synagoge dialogus}, PL 42: 1134. The arguing personifications are common in liturgical plays. See also, Young, 242-243 and 388-390.

\textsuperscript{23}A. Lukyn Williams, 326-338, Pseudo-Augustine, \textit{De altercatione ecclesiae et synagoge dialogus}, PL 42: 1134; see also, Lipton, 56; and Young, 125-171.

\textsuperscript{24}A. Lukyn Williams, 332.
religious and political leaders. Medieval secular and religious leaders use an Augustinian framework of pseudo-tolerance, suppression, segregation, and conversion in which they create highly self-serving and fluid policies regarding Jews in Christian communities. A letter to Louis the Pious by Agobard of Lyon (d. 840-841) On the Insolence of the Jews, demonstrates the policy of “tolerance” and separation as medieval Jews are identified as villainously impious:

And therefore, since we know that the Jews are blasphemers and men who curse, so to speak, the Lord God Christ and the Christian, we should not be joined to them through the sharing of food or drink in accordance with the rule (modus) that was given long ago and commanded by the holy fathers in their words and examples. For the rest, because they live among us and we should not be wicked to them nor act contrary to their life, health, or wealth, let us observe the rule that has been ordained by the Church. The way in which we should be cautious or human towards them, is not at all obscure but has been clearly expounded . . . it even reaches the point when naive Christians say that the Jews preach to them better than our Priests . . . . Churches of the Gauls and their rectors, kings as well as bishops, should hold to regarding the separation of the two religions, namely that of the Church and that of the Jews, and what they should pass down in writing and leave to posterity to be maintained, and how it is consonant with authority, that is the Acts of the Apostles . . . .

Here Agobard pronounces the Jews blasphemers and warns that Christians should not interact with them as the Church fathers warn. However, he then advises that acting in a way that threatens the Jews’ lives, health, or property is disallowed. His letter is a call for the enforcement of the policy of separation, not condemnation or exploitation. Agobard declares that what is passed down from each group in the form of written texts be maintained for the sake of posterity. This stance will provide a striking contrast to the position taken in Christian France in the thirteenth century where Jewish libraries will be seized and burned, a subject in the next chapter of this dissertation. However, condemning arguments can be consistently located in treatises from the patristic era through the Middle Ages.

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By and large, scholars associate the writings of theologians such as Agobard of Lyon with Christian leaders who wished to see the liberal treatment of Jews in Carolingian society reversed to a policy of strict control and suppression. Importantly, sources before the crusading era that suggest real efforts to suppress, threaten, or do violence against medieval Jewry are relatively rare. As such the negative attitudes of the Christian majority toward Jewry from the patristic era through the eleventh or twelfth century is characterized by Langmuir’s term anti-Jewish. He identifies the Christian characterizations of Judaism in this period as historical, or xenophobic. Ultimately, policy regarding medieval Jews in this time period is informed primarily by realistic differences between Christian belief systems, ritual, and culture and their Jewish counterparts. The thirteenth century would witness a shift in this dynamic. Differentiation based on actual cultural difference or perceived historic sins would develop into fantastical accusations against the Jewish community, followed by real calls for violence and actual instances of physical attack.

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Gothic Narratives and Late Medieval Antisemitism

The written sources of later medieval theologians can provide significant insight into the Gothic narratives of St. Stephen. The volumes of *Adversus judaeos* literature in the form of sermons, treatises, apologia, and letters grow exponentially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This increase is due to a number of causes, including the heightened hostility toward non-Christians associated with the Crusades, the change to a money economy, and a growing homogeneity in Christian society that encouraged a Christian hostility to the “Other.” Ultimately, tolerance and conversion of Jews emerge as secondary concerns. Powerful sectors of Christian society express a desire for a controlled and complete separation of subservient Jews from dominant Christians. During this period, not only are Jews vilified as impious blasphemers, but they are also typified as usurers and eventually disastrously associated with ritual murder. The validity of this final charge is reinforced by the traditional allegation of Jews as Christ-killers. In short, the perceived historic sins of Judaism are translated and projected onto the actions of contemporary Jews by medieval Christians through the construction of an anachronistic imaginary idea of Jewish identity.\(^3\)

The theme of separation and subservience is seen consistently in anti-Jewish literature from the beginning of Christianity, as discussed above. However, Church officials of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries fixated on and condemned the unsupervised interaction of Christians and Jews to an even greater degree than had Early Christian fathers. If the ultimate goal was the conversion of the Jews, the Church elite understood that evangelism and conversion worked both ways. Innocent III writes in a letter to the King of France on January 16, 1205:

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“Jews are not permitted to have Christian servants in their homes neither under pretext of rearing their children, nor for domestic service, nor for any other reason whatever.”

Christian authorities worried that Jews might influence, even convert, unguarded Christians under Jewish supervision. In the same letter the pope warns that unless Philip Augustus restrains the French Jewry through persecution, “Christian liberty [will] become less than Jewish servitude. . . . should your Royal Highness permit wolves who hide in sheep’s clothes in order to destroy the ewes.”

A comparison that harkens back to Sarah and Hagar is habitually referenced in this period, “lest the children of the free woman should be servants to the children of a slave . . . .” Finally, the likelihood that Christians and Jews might “mingle” is a constant worry for the Church. Honorius III, in a letter dated April 29, 1221, writes that because Jews are not donning the prescribed differentiating dress, “Christians mingle with Jewish women, and Jews wickedly mingle with Christian women.”

The mere opportunity for such sexual interaction had to be avoided in the Church’s judgment.

As medieval Europe moved into a money economy system, the Church continued to denounce the practice of usury among Christians. This policy which allowed only Jews to act as money lenders, placed the Jewish community in a unique position and allowed the enemies of Jewry the opportunity to vilify an entire population. Innocent III writes in another letter to the King of France on January 16, 1205 “in the French Kingdom the Jews have become so insolent that by means of their vicious usury, through which they extort not only usury but even usury on usury . . . .” they profit from Christian loss. The usurious Jew was a stereotype habitually referred to in Christian circles. Usury was associated with filth and excrement. As such, Jews, whether money lenders or farmers, were considered both physically, morally, and spiritually polluted. According to antisemitic legends, Jewish moneylenders accepted pawned liturgical items which they promptly desecrated, and they even accepted pitiable children from distraught Christian mothers in exchange for usurious loans.

Christian denigration of Jewish culture was not limited to the economic realm. Christian authorities also targeted scholarly activity within learned Jewish communities. From the time of Augustine through the late Middle Ages, Christian theologians considered Judaism a timeless unchanging belief system. The entire community existed to prove the tenants of Christianity at

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34Ibid, 167.


36Lipton, 36.

37Rubin, 26.
the end of days, as acknowledged above. As such, there was no tolerance for innovation in Jewish ideology and no place for the growing corpus of rabbinical texts in the Christian understanding of Jewish belief. Similarly, Jews were continually associated with perceived historic sins. In the same letter to the King of France cited above, Innocent III continues, “sons of the crucifiers, against whom to this day the blood cries to the Father’s ears, to the heirs of the Crucified Christ . . . .”38 Not only are thirteenth-century Jews associated with the actions of ancestors, but those actions were literally worsened in the Christian retelling. Literally speaking, the Jews of the New Testament did not crucify Christ. The Romans executed Jesus by crucifixion. However, the conflation is prevalent in thirteenth-century sources. In a correspondence to the Archbishop of Sens and Paris in July 15, 1205, Innocent III begins, “Christian piety accepts the Jews who, by their own guilt, are consigned to perpetual servitude because they crucified the Lord.”39 Similar connections were made between medieval Jews and the allegation of fratricide through the Old Testament figure of Cain.40 Cain, the first born of Adam and Eve, committed the first murder in the Old Testament (Genesis 4: 1-15). He killed his brother, Abel, out of vengeance when the Lord favored Abel’s offering over Cain’s. Christians interpreted Abel as the first type of Christ, slain by the evil Jewish Cain.41 These charges are not historical and as such fall under Langmuir’s rubric of antisemitism.

As unreasonable and vilifying as the charge of fratricide or deicide was against medieval Jews, a much more dangerous allegation was to emerge. Charges of ritual murders of Christians at the hands of Jews in medieval Europe were leveled as early as 1205 and became most numerous in the fifteenth century. In the same letter addressed to the Archbishop cited above, Innocent writes, “The Jews [who] . . . remain living among the Christians . . . take advantage of every wicked opportunity to kill in secret their Christian hosts. Thus it has recently been reported that a certain poor scholar had been found murdered in their latrine.”42 Once established, the outrageous charges of ritual murder grew more and more gruesome in their details encompassing the ruin and poisoning of Christian wells, the murder and dismemberment of young children, and the torture and cannibalism of Christian bodies. From the charge of the acceptance of the pawning of babies, the transition was easily made to the accusation of child ritual murder, and ultimately the reenactment of deicide through host desecration.43

38Grayzel, 107.


41Ibid, 16.

42Grayzel, 109.

43Miri Rubin deals thoroughly with the narratives of these allegations in Gentile Tales cited above; see also, Lipton, 37.
The Narrative of Antisemitism: The Case of Rouen

While antisemitism had been growing stronger through the thirteenth century, such outrageous accusations had to be supported with the theological rhetoric, common folklore, and visual culture of the Christian communities in order to vilify neighbors, business partners, and associates.\textsuperscript{44} Only at that point could the individual identities of Jews be obscured, enabling the redefinition of the community as a collective Other on which the Christian majority could exercise its own hysterical fantasy. Such fictions often had absolutely nothing to do with Judaism. Christian antisemitic attitudes and policies were not reflective of the Jewish community, nor were they conceived to sway, convince, or convert the Jewish minority. Specifically, anti-Jewish imagery was conceived and executed for Christian eyes. Anti-Jewish rhetoric called for cohesiveness in the Christian community and sought to reaffirm the homogeneity of that majority. If Christians were in fact in agreement on the status of Jews and proper Christian-Jewish interactions, efforts at the vilification of that group would have been unnecessary. Certainly these outrageous allegations say much more about the instabilities within the Christian groups that made them, than about the Jewish communities that suffered their consequences. Very often charges were made that profited a local king, lord, or bishop financially and included the sporadic seizing of Jewish property and the extortion of the wealth of entire communities.\textsuperscript{45} The consequences were extraordinarily damaging to the medieval Jewry across France. Nowhere were the ramifications of the outrageous treatment received by Jewish communities more ruinous than in Rouen.\textsuperscript{46}

From the beginning of anti-Jewish movements in France the Jewish community of Rouen was targeted. The justification for the infamous violent attacks against Jews in 1096—when the real targets of the crusaders were the Saracens in a far away land—came from Rouenaise crusaders: “Our intention is to attack the enemies of God in the East, but without having to cross vast territories, since we have, right here under our noses, the Jews. Whereas there exists no race more hostile to God. Not a single one possessing either head or tail!”\textsuperscript{47} During the Second Crusade, in 1146, the threats of violence against Jews were renewed.

\textsuperscript{44}Rubin, esp. 1-6 and 40-48.


The king of France took over the administration of Rouen in 1195 from the English Angevin monarchs who had traditionally shown much more favor, especially in commerce, to the Norman Jewry than to Jews in England. From that time, tallages and taxes of the Jewish population became more and more typical. Nevertheless, the Rounaise Jewry flourished; there was a remarkable increase in Talmudic scholarship between 1180 and 1230. The Jewish population of Normandy and especially the capital, Rouen, increased greatly in the last two decades of the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{48} There were numerous councils and decrees that were issued by bishops and popes during the first two decades of the thirteenth century that were meant to limit the freedom of Jews across Europe. However, the Jews of Rouen had been shielded from the regulatory decrees of the pope and Church councils through at least 1223. The king, Philip Augustus, did not enforce the Church’s written public policy of remission of usury and crusader postponement of principal payment.\textsuperscript{49}

Similarly, according to Norman Golb, there were no real efforts to comply with the edicts of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. These decrees would have required Jews to wear identifying clothing that would have heightened the sense of separation sought for decades by the Church. They would have kept members of the medieval Jewry from leaving their homes on sensitive Christian holy days. It is unknown whether or not the community was forced to wear the designated \textit{rouelle},\textsuperscript{50} as in Paris after 1215. But in 1231 the archbishop was still issuing decrees that the clothing of Jews be differentiated from that of Christians by the wearing of a distinguishable badge.\textsuperscript{51} This proclamation suggests that the Jewry of Rouen maintained a greater degree of privilege and autonomy than did the Jewish population of the Île-de-France. This autonomy, a comparative freedom to conduct business unmolested, had created a very successful population in Rouen, known for its scholarship and wealth through money lending. While Philip Augustus had confirmed the ancient privileges of the Jews of Rouen on April 22,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48}Norman Golb, \textit{The Jews in Medieval Normandy: A Social and Intellectual History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 410.
\item \textsuperscript{49}I am referring to two decrees of the Council of 1212 at either Reims or Paris and the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 which were not enforced by the king. They decreed separation and subservience. They specifically stated that no Christian midwives were to assist Jewish mothers or nurse Jewish children. Christian servants were not to work in Jewish homes. Christian officials also stopped the teaching of Hebrew writing for record keeping in conjunction with money lending. Most telling was the requirement that Jews wear identifying dress or badges. Golb, 413-416. The lack of enforcement does not suggest an affinity for the Jewish population on the part of authorities. Rather, it may imply the presence of Christian leaders’ financial entanglements with the Jewish lenders. The policies’ enforcement, or lack of enforcement, always served the Christian majority.
\item \textsuperscript{50}The circular badge that secular and Church authorities intermittently forced medieval Jews to wear.
\item \textsuperscript{51}Golb, 417, citing Mansi, \textit{Sacrorum conciliorum XXIII}, 213, 219; Grayzel, 322-25.
\end{itemize}
1207, in 1218 they were required to register the debts owed to them. This registration of what amounted to liquid assets was an ominous sign of things to come.

**St. Stephen’s Narrative at Rouen: Visual Antisemitism in Context**

The city of Rouen, including its cathedral, was destroyed by a fire on April 9, 1200. As part of the new thirteenth-century cathedral, the image of the martyrdom of St. Stephen, on the south doorway of the west façade (figure 5), was conceived as antisemitic attitudes began to change from the earlier anti-Jewish traditions. Over the two decades leading up to the rebuilding of the cathedral’s west façade, Jewry’s place in the community was seriously threatened. The Jewish community of Rouen was no longer allowed to use seals as of November 8, 1223, as was issued in a royal decree that banned loans that produced usurious interests. Additionally, loans over four years old were considered null and void. Finally, in December 1230, an ordinance was issued that initiated an extreme financial crisis for the Jewish population of Normandy and especially Rouen. Neither the king nor the barons would allow the Jews to contract loans at all. The decree was harsher than Church officials had dictated, and it was upheld in Normandy.

In addition to great financial hardship, the Jews of northern France in the third decade of the thirteenth century faced the dangerous and degrading possibility of wearing identifying symbols. Nearly half a century earlier, Archbishop Maurice de Sully (c. early twelfth century-1196) had decreed that Jews must differentiate themselves with a badge. This order would be enforced sporadically, even though papal letters confirmed that Christian authorities understood that such differentiation of clothing “subjected the Jews to danger.” In 1233 a letter from Pope Gregory IX acknowledged the imprisonment of key members of the Jewish population who were tortured and enchained so that debts owed to them could be seized by royal officials.

The narrative relief at Rouen Cathedral, which was composed during the third decade of the thirteenth century during the declaration of harmful decrees and the extortion of Rouen’s Jewry, is almost unrecognizable as the same narrative represented on the façades of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire or Saint-Trophême at Arles. The majority of the composition is devoted to the

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52 Ibid, 416.
53 Ibid, 366.
54 Ibid, 418.
55 Ibid, 418.
56 Ibid, 420.
57 Innocent III “ordered that they need not be made to wear it under extraordinary circumstances.” Ibid, 69.
58 Ibid, 422. On the actions of the 1230s see pp. 422-27
Arles, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loir, and Chambon-sur-Lac are here now not only identified as Jews, but also reference contemporary Rouenaise Jews. Their presence is no longer justified only as an inactive attribute of the saint, and their postures do not encourage any interpretation of possible forgiveness beneath the judging Christ. Rather, they are the antithesis of Stephen: blasphemy to his piety, aggressiveness to his passivism, blindness to his sightedness. They now carry sacks of rocks. The large door to the city wall is open on the right side of the register, balanced with a towering figure of Saul on the far left, now emphasized in the composition. Saul, on this throne of coats, towers above the other figures, and his head remains exposed.

Scholarly attention has been paid to the variety and meanings of hats on Jews in medieval Christian art. Important here is that in Rouen the conical hat, as seen on the heads of the persecutors in the Stephen tympanum, is a motif found on contemporary Jewish seals associated with legal documents and loan-deeds. It also appears in thirteenth-century manuscripts produced by and for the Jewish community in Rouen. As such the appearance of the distinctive head covering is not in and of itself a sign of anti-Jewish or antisemitic intent. However, at the least, the compositional choice of including the motif suggests the conflation of the executioners—and their sins—with contemporary Rouenaise Jews. If Jews were guilty of fratricide and deicide, charges that were reiterated repeatedly in anti-Jewish rhetoric and Passion imagery, then their attack on the proto-martyr established a pattern of violence. The repeated public narration of Stephen’s martyrdom established that the violence against Christian holy figures was habitual.

Since Early Christian times Jews had been associated with deicide; however, it was not until the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that accusations of symbolically repeating this event were leveled against them in allegations of ritual murder and even cannibalism. Many of these Christian fantasies revolved around the desecration of the host by a Jew who wished to symbolically reenact the crucifixion. The first such accusation against a Jewish community was

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**Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period** (Brill: Leiden, 2002); and Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews.*

61 Based on a small detail of the tympanum just beneath Saul, this composition might originally have been significantly larger in the narrative’s original composition (figure 6). Such an adjustment in the composition would have emphasized the looming figures of the persecutors over the kneeling proto-martyr.


leveled in Paris in 1290. While no such charges of ritual or symbolic murder were associated specifically with Rouen, a window in the church of St. Eloi in Rouen was devoted to the Parisian story. The cycle includes an image of a Jewish man striking a host wafer until it bleeds. Stephen’s role in *imitatio Christi* is important in understanding the reception of his narrative at Rouen by medieval viewers. Through his martyrdom at the hands of Christ’s own killers, Stephen’s lapidation parallels Christ’s crucifixion. In this capacity, the image of the Jewish aggressors stoning the proto-martyr reinforces the thirteenth-century allegations of ritual murder and host desecration. Christ’s death is the antetype informing the martyr’s saga. Ultimately the narrative of Stephen, even with its overemphasized and demonized Jewish persecutors, is about the relevance of the Passion and the miracle of Resurrection that Stephen’s sacrifice mirrors. By highlighting the murderous blindness of the persecutors, the truth of the martyr’s sacrifice and the sacrifice of Christ becomes heightened. As the Jews of the scene become more overtly vilified, Stephen’s piety is heightened by the juxtaposition. Stephen’s passive, peaceful faith is paired with the active, murderous disbelief of the Jews. The narrative fulfills the new thirteenth-century antisemitic agenda of the patron as well as the expectation of the viewer.

In conclusion, Jewish and Christian relations are at the center of the literary and visual narratives of St. Stephen. The proto-martyr’s metaphoric language—“uncircumcised in heart”—was incorporated into the *Adversus judaeos* texts of early theologians in order to communicate the historical and religious divide between medieval Christians and Jews. Even with the appropriation of this denigrating metaphor, anti-Jewish policies before the twelfth century echoed Augustine’s policies of tolerance and conversion. I suggest that these policies are reflected in Romanesque imagery of the proto-martyr’s narrative by a lack of compositional emphasis on the Jewish persecutors of St. Stephen. The executioners are compositionally understated so as to better focus and elaborate on the sanctity of the proto-martyr. I believe the lack of artistic attention and religious differentiation of the executioners reflects the relative tolerance associated with early anti-Jewish traditions prevalent in Europe through the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Conversely, Gothic images, such as the one on Rouen Cathedral (figure 4), emphasize emerging antisemitic trends in Rouen and France more generally. As Jews are accused of ritual murder, fratricide and deicide, the image of the stoning of St. Stephen references these charges by recalling Stephen’s role as the first imitator of Christ. Similar observations can be made when considering the south transept’s tympanum at Paris Cathedral, the subject of the next chapter. Built only a decade and a half after the façade at Rouen, the detailed narrative cycle in Paris advocates a specific anti-Jewish policy in the royal capital.

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64 Rubin, 40-48.

65 Ibid, 153.
CHAPTER 5

ANCIENT ICONOGRAPHY AND MEDIEVAL DISPUTATION:
JEWS IMAGINED ON THE ST. STEPHEN PORTAL OF PARIS CATHEDRAL

While the visual narratives of St. Stephen have made fleeting appearances in published scholarship on antisemitic iconography, no scholar has made an attempt to study the variations in the visual retellings, or even identify the specific antisemitic polemics that often seem present in the hagiographic narratives of the proto-martyr. It is the martyrdom, the stoning of Stephen by his Jewish executioners, that became the most iconic representation of the proto-martyr’s story in the Middle Ages, a story that was often manipulated by ecclesiastical officials to communicate very specific agendas to the Christian faithful. However, an approach that suggests the many visual narratives of the martyrdom of St. Stephen depend primarily on readily identifiable iconographic symbols to construct antisemitic meaning, or that these narratives are primarily illustrations of written texts, lacks the frame of reference that contemporary theological, social, and political contexts contribute.

The goal of this chapter is to situate the intricately sculpted Stephen tympanum on Notre Dame among the historic circumstances and interests of Christian hegemony that informed its particular conception and reception in thirteenth-century Paris. The approach followed in the next two chapters reflects a rather extensive and explicitly political interpretation of antisemitism in the visual narrative of St. Stephen. Outside the bishop’s entrance to his cathedral, artistic production and viewer reception was highly influenced by the self interests of the powerful patron. Specifically, I propose that the imagery on the Paris tympanum is the result of a new and specific form of antisemitic practice, the forced disputation of the Talmud, and is directly informed by the events surrounding the 1240 conflict between Jewish rabbis and their Christian contemporaries in Paris. The royal acquisition of the Grande camée de France by Louis IX (1214-1270), the organizer of the disputation, provided a formative compositional model for the retelling of Stephen’s martyrdom in Paris. Originally dismissed by scholars as charming anecdotal details, the iconographic anomalies on this tympanum prove to be valuable clues to the local use of the Stephen story as it is retold on the bishop’s portal at Paris Cathedral.

The Parisian ecclesiastical see was originally devoted primarily to St. Stephen. However, with the rise of the popularity of the Virgin’s cult and the power of the chapter of canons who adopted the Virgin as their particular patron, the Cathedral was eventually rededicated to the Virgin. Nonetheless, the original patron and his association with the power of the bishop was never entirely forgotten. After considering the variations in the medieval visual narratives of Stephen and reviewing the anti-Judaism inherent in the primary Stephen texts in the previous chapters, my focus turns now to the exploration of the histories of the cult and disputation in Paris.
The Parisian Imagery and the Parisian Audience

The Stephen tympanum (figure 7) on the south transept of Paris Cathedral (c.1258) is one of the most detailed thirteenth-century visual narratives still extant on the cathedrals of France. The imagery begins on the lower left of the tympanum with St. Stephen disputing with the rabbis. His sermon extends across most of the lowest register of the tympanum. A nursing woman is found in the center of the register, which terminates in the arrest of Stephen at the hands of a Roman soldier with African features. In the central register on the left, Saul, the unconverted Paul, sits on the garments of the executioners who stone Stephen, stretched before them. The narrative terminates in the entombment of the saint. Above the scene Stephen’s vision is depicted.

Often, Stephen’s disputation and preaching are omitted completely to focus better on the martyrdom and vision of the saint. While renditions of Stephen interacting with the rabbis are not unheard of, they are significantly less common than his martyrdom. Louis Réau identifies only two images of Stephen’s discussion with the rabbis in the thirteenth century: a window at Chartres and the Paris tympanum. The imagery is not represented at all before this time, and would not appear again until the mid-fifteenth century. I The unique scenes present in the Paris tympanum include: the preaching sequence, a nursing mother, an African soldier, and the entombment. The incorporation of these images on the south transept of Paris Cathedral suggests the patron’s motivations were not governed by artistic convention or textual adherence.

Access to the north and south sides of the Cathedral of Notre Dame was restricted in the thirteenth century. The Stephen portal, the only entrance on the south transept, was and is the bishop’s entrance. The cathedral’s medieval, ecclesiastical buildings, including the bishop’s palace, surrounded the portal and created a rather private informal court for the bishop, his entourage, his clerics, and his guests. As can be seen in a late seventeenth-century engraving, gated entrances flanked the sides of the cathedral. Behind the baptistry, just beyond the northern buttresses of the west façade, the entrance to the cloister of the canons can be seen. On the opposite side of the façade, barely visible behind the medieval Hotel Dieu, the bishop’s entrance can be glimpsed. The gated “court of the Archbishop” can be discerned in a eighteenth-century plan executed by Abbé Delagrive, which identifies the “cour de l’Archêveché” surrounding the Stephen portal (figure 8). Not only were these exclusive ecclesiastical spaces gated at the

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1 Réau, Iconographie de l’art chrétien, tome 3, 451. I would, arguably, add to that short list the tympana at Bayeux and Meaux. Earlier renditions of Stephen with the rabbis are difficult to identify because the Jews in most Romanesque images are not thoroughly differentiated by dress or age.


3 The diocese of Paris did not become the seat of the archbishop until 1622.
cathedral itself, they were also sequestered from the rest of the island by architectural barriers and of course, the river which flanked the east end of the island. Thus the narrative of Stephen on the tympanum was intended to be seen by the bishop’s politically and theologically knowledgeable associates. The north side of the cathedral was similarly configured for the canons of Notre Dame, suggesting the juxtaposition of the ecclesiastical powers in the city.  

The transept portals had for centuries been the symbolic battlegrounds for the canons and the bishops. Each group asserted their claims to authority through art at their exclusive entrances to the church. The resulting sculptural programs conform to the agendas of their patrons. The canons’ portal, facing the canons’ close on the northern transept, is associated with the Virgin. The bishop’s entrance, emerging from the southern transept and facing the episcopal palace, is devoted to Stephen. The reinvention of the Stephen narrative gave ecclesiastical authorities the opportunity to assert their specific religious and political ideologies in a highly visible, permanent, form. The renovation of the transepts was expensive and daring, lengthening each transept by half a bay. The plan, begun by Jean de Chelles, required a massive and intricate stained glass rose window on each transept and, of course, an intricately carved portal. Upon Jean de Chelles’s death, the bishop’s new entrance on the southern transept was basically only in the design stages. The plan would again be reconsidered and finally completed around 1258.

**Patronage and Procession in Paris**

It was not typical for churches to be identified with a singular titular saint until the seventh century in Christian Gaul. Parisian cartularies list a litany of saints associated with the diocese when identifying Paris Cathedral in the earliest medieval documents. Stephen is a

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6 Erlande-Brandenburg, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, 158.


consistent and prevalent member of this list. The designation of Stephen as a patron saint at Paris probably dates to the mid-seventh century. Even then, Paris’s ecclesiastical center was a group cathedral; it was a conglomeration of buildings associated with an assortment of saints. An oratory, and eventually a church, was dedicated to the Virgin and stood to the east of the Cathedral of St. Stephen. A baptistry was erected on the north side of Stephen’s church and was appropriately enough dedicated to John the Baptist. St. Christopher was the patron saint of a hospice on the south end of the parvis. Later, secondary churches were dedicated to St. Germain and St. Denis.

St. Stephen’s relics, stones from his lapidation, were probably introduced to the fourth-century basilica not long after their discovery in 415. Because the bishop’s church housed the prestigious relics and served as the locale of the proto-martyr’s cult, Stephen was closely associated with the Parisian bishop. In the mid-eighth century, significant political and organizational changes were taking place, resulting in the formation of a chapter of canons linked to Paris Cathedral. The canons’ influence was spatially manifested in the northern section of


11Just before the year 1000, a list of the major relics in the treasury of Paris Cathedral was added to a tenth-century sacramentary. Under the heading, “These relics in the reliquary of the Holy Mary,” a stone from the lapidation of St. Stephen is listed. BN, MS Latin 2294, 97v, cited by Craig Wright, Music and Ceremony at Notre Dame of Paris 500-1550 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 69, who also cites Léopold Delisle, “Notice sur un sacramentaire de l’église de Paris,” Mémoires de la société impériale des antiquairies de France, 3rd series, 3 (1857), 165-71, esp. 169; and B. Guérard, ed. Cartulaire de l’église Notre-Dame de Paris, vol. 3, 375.


the cathedral and associated artistically with the Virgin. Her name was often found alongside that of St. Stephen as co-patron of the diocese. In the late tenth century, as the privilege and influence of the chapter soared, the Virgin was designated the sole dedicatee of the cathedral, but Stephen remained closely associated with the place and office of the bishop. During certain liturgical performances Stephen was called on to “sucor the bishop and the clergy of the cathedral.” Finally, the altar of the famous Gothic edifice, begun by Maurice de Sully in the twelfth century, was dedicated in 1196 to the favored patroness of the Canons of Paris, Notre Dame. The change in dedicatees reflected not only the movement in popular devotion toward the cult of the Virgin, but also shifting political powers in Paris, where the influence of the canons often superceded that of the bishop. However, the bishop did not shy from using Stephen’s prestigious designations, proto-martyr and proto-deacon, to bolster his power. As the first deacon who was ordained by the laying on of hands of St. Peter and the apostles, Stephen is the primary saintly representative of the apostolic hierarchy at the service of the bishop.

The movement of Stephen’s relics in the late twelfth century might provide hints to his resurgent popularity at Paris Cathedral in the thirteenth century. During the early construction of the Gothic cathedral, in the 1160s, several important relics were moved from the cathedral to a dependent church in Paris. This group included Stephen’s stones. However, in the 1180s, the relics were “rediscovered,” and King Philip Augustus (1165-1223) reinstalled them in the new cathedral with great ceremony as the new building was reaching completion. The occasion was commemorated in the Parisian liturgical calendar as the Susceptio reliquiarum. A short time

14 Lasteyrie, Cartulaire général de Paris, vol. 1. St. Stephen’s name and designation as the proto-martyr is consistently acknowledged when officials address the cathedral in Paris or a bishop in particular.

15 Wright, Music and Ceremony, 201; and Paul Perdrizet, Le calendrier parisien à la fin du moyen âge (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1933) 71-81 and 143.


17 St. Peter’s relics and cult were most closely associated with the pope and the church of St. Peter in Rome which was built over the relics of the first bishop of Rome. Stephen’s popularity in France was not only due to his association with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but also a matter of good timing. His relics were invented and translated at a time when Merovingian Gaul was establishing ecclesiastical sees. See Chapter 2 above.

later, during the episcopacy of Odo de Sully (1197–1208), the liturgy of the birth of Stephen, celebrated on December 26, underwent a reformation under the personal direction of the bishop. Bishop Odo charged the Chapter of Notre Dame with the responsibility of increasing the participation in the proto-martyr’s celebration. Moreover, the ceremony was to be made more splendid with the addition of choral performers, an increase in musical complexity, and the inclusion of the organum and bells. The bishop funded the celebration with his own private monies. He claimed that his motivation was to honor St. Stephen, who was also the patron saint of the cathedral of Bourges, where he had begun his ecclesiastical career. It should also be noted that his brother was the archbishop of that ecclesiastical see.\(^{19}\)

According to the obituary of Bishop Odo de Sully, by 1208 an altar devoted to the proto-martyr had been erected in the ambulatory of the cathedral just to the south of the easternmost bay.\(^{20}\) According to Rebecca A. Baltzer, its placement must have been too recent an addition to influence the processions which moved through the Gothic cathedral; St. Stephen has been noted as “conspicuously absent” from extant thirteenth-century Parisian liturgical sources, a noteworthy gap in the hagiographic liturgy given the importance of his cult at the ecclesiastical see.\(^{21}\) However, she points out that Stephen did figure prominently in earlier processional routes that traversed the city, celebrating the titular saints of the Parisian community on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Ascension and three Rogation Days.\(^{22}\) While these processions date from a period when the Cathedral of St. Stephen was still functioning as a church, they may very well have continued long after its demolition. Baltzer believes this commemoration would have continued outside the west façade of the Gothic Notre Dame, in the place that Stephen’s church had stood.\(^{23}\)

As the cult of the proto-martyr was celebrated in and around the cathedral of Paris, antisemitic attitudes were swelling in the royal capital. As in Normandy, demeaning decrees


\(^{22}\)Baltzer cites Brussels 1799, fols. 67v, 76v, 82, and 88v; Brussels 4334, fols. 69, 77, 82-82v, and 89-89v. In each processional, St. Stephen is sandwiched between St. Christopher and the Virgin on the procession’s return to the cathedral. Such a consistent placement reflects the arrangement of the buildings housing the cult sites. The church of St. Christopher was located just opposite the parvis of Notre Dame, in line with St. Jean-le-Rond. Thus, the old Merovingian Cathedral of St. Stephen was in between the newer Notre Dame and St. Christopher on a roughly east/west axis.

were being issued for the subordination and control of Jews in Paris. However, on the Île-de-la-Cité, antisemitic efforts took on a unique tone in the forced trial of the Talmud.

The Talmud on Trial: Disputation in Paris

The infamous, forced, public debates over the Jewish texts collectively known as Talmud, beginning in Paris in 1240, announced a new era in antisemitic action and ideology among medieval Christians. Like much of Christian knowledge of Judaic theology, even the medieval Christians’ understanding of what the Talmud encompassed was skewed. Instead of a veritable library of books chronicling hundreds of years of Jewish experience—from legal, ethical and medical commentaries, to historic, folkloric, and comedic notations—Christians believed the Talmud was “a text” that had come to rival the place of the Old Testament in Jewish philosophy. In the words of Pope Gregory IX (c. 1170-1241) in a letter to French ecclesiastical officials, “For they, so we have heard, are not content with the Old Law which God gave to Moses in writing: they even ignore it completely, and affirm that God gave another law which is called ‘Talmud’ . . . .”

The terms “trial” and “disputation” are both problematic as descriptions of the 1240 encounter over the Talmud from any perspective other than that of the medieval Christian majority. The rabbis, representatives of a precariously situated minority, could hardly have been expected to pursue an aggressive, effective defense for the Talmud that would absolve the text of the charges of blasphemy leveled against it. The readily apparent concern of the rabbis for their safety—which would have been even more threatened if they had mounted a vigorous defense—surely would have prevented such an effort. The rabbis actually requested assurance from Blanche of Castile (1187-1251) that Christian forces would be kept in check. Moreover, the verdict of the ‘trial’ was a forgone conclusion; the winner of the disputation was established

24Samuel Krauss, 150.


26Grayzel, 241.

before the leaders were summoned. Nevertheless, the confrontation was staged for the sake of reinforcing Christian hegemony and, at least ideologically, encouraging Jewish conversion.

Given the staged nature of the conflict, it is surprising that the king did not order the Talmud texts seized and burned until a full year after the disputation. The burning did not actually take place until 1242. Some scholars suggest that Blanche of Castile was a tempering force, having been raised in a more tolerant region of Christendom. Others suggest that time was needed to search for copies, scrutinize the texts, and consult with papal authorities. Possibly, further testimony concerning the blasphemous slurs was collected over the next year and tipped the scale against the Talmud.28

The disputation was contrived when Pope Gregory IX sent letters to royal and ecclesiastical officials across Europe, after being informed of the blasphemous content and erroneous place of the Talmud in the lives of European Jews.29 The allegations proposed by a Jewish convert to Christianity, Nicholas Donin, ranged from the substitution of the Talmud for the Old Testament30 to blasphemies against Christ and God, slurs against the Virgin and obscenities about Christians. The most detrimental of these allegations was the replacement of the Old Law by the new, written texts. According to the Latin account one rabbi admitted, “. . . there are two Laws and one of them cannot exist without the words of the sages, and that is the Talmud, which contains in it the assertion that the words of the sages deserve to be heeded more than the Written Law . . . .”31 That God was fallible and even capable of sin was a subject for debate.32 Several men named Jesus, one designated as being from Nazareth, were disparaged in the Jewish historical texts according to the charges. This Jesus of Nazareth, the Talmud explains, was stoned on the eve of Passover for leading Israel into the practice of idolatry. In another text Jesus was said to be reaping his just punishment in hell where he was placed in boiling excrement.33 One of the most famous profanities was meant to demonstrate the Jews’ hatred of mankind. A quote from a victim of vicious Roman persecution, “Kill the best of the Gentiles,” was stripped of its historic context for the trial.34 It was also alleged that Mary was not in fact a virgin, and her conception of Christ was not miraculous, but adulterous. Mary was even


31Maccoby, Judaism on Trial, 167, translating Extractiones de talmut, Bibliothèque Nationale, no. 16, 558, f. 231.

32Ibid, 34.


34Ibid, 31.
associated with a thinly veiled reference to a woman named Miriam, who took a lover in the Talmud text. 35 William Chester Jordan points out that both the Latin and Hebrew transcripts of the trial indicate that the only display of Christian anger came during the accusations over Mary. 36 The belief that the Talmud contained blasphemies against the Virgin was of primary concern to the organizers of the Paris disputation. 37 While Mary’s virginity was a subject of ridicule and was slurred in a variety of Jewish texts, it was her association with the Talmud in particular that encouraged the staged debate and the burning of those texts in 1242. 38 It should be recalled that the Virgin was the primary patroness of Paris Cathedral by the thirteenth century. A center for her cult, the portal of the north transept, balancing the Stephen narrative on the south, was devoted to the Mother of Christ and her role as intercessor of the repentant faithful.

Notorious for his devotion to the Virgin, as well as his antisemitic ideology and rhetoric, 39 only Louis IX, among all the Christian leaders with power over Jewish communities, was moved to action in conjunction with ecclesiastical officials from the royal demesne. Donin, not only an apostate, but also a mendicant monk, 40 was the primary witness and disputant for the Christian position. The Queen Mother, Blanche of Castile, 41 presided over the Paris Disputation, held at the royal palace, with various Christian clerics acting as judges, including William of Auvergne (end of twelfth century-1249), the Bishop of Paris. 42 Highly respected rabbis from the region


38 Jordan, “Marian Devotion.”


40 The secondary sources contradict one another when discussing Nicholas Donin. Some say that he was Franciscan, others cite him as Dominican. For the involvement of the mendicant orders in the harassment and conversion efforts of thirteenth-century Jews, see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: the Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

41 Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 22.

42 The number of bishops and royal clerics present is noteworthy: Geoffrey of Belleville, the Chaplain of Louis IX; Walter, the Archbishop of Sens; Adam de Chambly, the Bishop of Senlis and Chancellor of the University of Paris. Interestingly, Bishop William of Auvergne drew
were brought to Paris, where they were forced to answer to the charges presented. While the formal organization of the encounter is debated,43 there is no doubt this was an adversarial confrontation in which Donin faced-off with his contemporary, Rabbi Yehiel ben Joseph. The Christians assumed the offensive, while the rabbis were placed in a defensive position. A Latin and a Hebrew account of the encounter survive. Both are equally propagandistic tools, full of racial epithets, boasts, and religious rhetoric.44 Nevertheless, they are valuable descriptions of how each side interpreted and regarded the conflict. According to the Hebrew account, Rabbi Yehiel, the Christian clerics’ chosen disputant, “faced his antagonist,” the Christian convert Nicholas Donin, and “answered him directly.”45 The disputation was confined to the translation and veracity of the allegedly anti-Christian sections of the Talmud. Nicholas Donin sat before Rabbi Yehiel and read passages from the Talmud, demanding his acknowledgment of the correctness of the translation and his explanation for its content. According to the Latin account, the Rabbi sat in silent consternation or lied.

**Disputation in Stone**

It is my contention that the disputation, or trial of the Talmud, informed the patronage and reception of the Stephen tympanum at Paris Cathedral. The involvement of the patron in the disputation, the unique choice of and emphasis on Stephen’s role as disputer/preacher, and the structural relationships sculpted by the artist in the tympanum reference the Parisian contest, making Stephen’s efforts to convert the Jews a type for the 1240 Parisian trial. In the first scene heavily on the work of Ibn Gabril and Maimonides for his own theological work and is noted as strongly antisemitic by modern scholars. Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 22.


44For mutual polemic attitudes around the time of the disputation see Jeremy Cohen, “Towards a Functional Classification of Jewish anti-Christian Polemic in the High Middle Ages,” 93-114, esp.104-109.

on the tympanum (figure 9), Stephen sits opposite the older Jew, who like Rabbi Yehiel “faces[ed] his antagonist,” the monk Donin, and “answers[ed] him directly.” The saint, seated, cites passages from a book and encourages a response from the man before him. Stephen, with his anachronistic tonsure and dalmatic, anchors the composition and is framed by the presence of another deacon/cleric. He gestures with his right hand to the figure seated opposite him, a bearded Jew, identified by his Phrygian cap. The older Jew is rebutting the saint’s demonstration as he gestures. By the thirteenth century Stephen was consistently depicted with the tonsure; however, it is an anachronistic detail, presented here as a foil to the Phrygian cap on the head of the figure he faces.

**Headgear: Crowned or Capped**

The tonsure, as James Marrow explains in his *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, was symbolically associated with the torments endured by Christ. The agonies related in the Gospels were only a part of the abuse that medieval Christians understood Christ to have endured. Added to the traditional list that included the mocking, flagellation, and bearing of the cross, were the plucking and pulling of Christ’s hair. The meaning of this indignity, especially as it applies to the fate of a martyr, can be gleaned from biblical text: “He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer” (Isaiah 53: 7). Christ, the sacrificial lamb, was led to slaughter and did not defend himself as he was judged. Through the course of his Passion his hair was plucked, that is sheared, by his unjust persecutors. However, it is to the medieval understanding of the plucked head that one must turn for a deeper understanding of the Stephen tympanum at Paris. Around 1130 Rupert of Deutz composed an explanatory text ‘On the shaving of heads’ in his *De divinis officiis libri XII*

> Notwithstanding our being so adorned, we prefer the head untouched, and the tonsure that we call the crown, we cover with no ornament... we are shaved, because... of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified in the place of Calvary... [W]e have decided against hair, because the Lord Christ, leader of the Nazarenes, was shorn; that is, crucified in the place of

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46See above n. 43.


48On the Phrygian cap see Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 89-91. The Phrygian cap might best be understood to identify someone who is foreign, or of a different ethnic or religious identity. It is certainly not unique to medieval Jews and does not carry a negative connotation. It can also denote a foreigner of high social standing.

49Marrow, *Passion Iconography*, 68.
Calvary where the heads of the condemned are cut off. Dalila, that is the poor and stupid synagogue, shaved the head of the most brave Samson . . . Although we may rejoice at His victory in the above-mentioned ornamentation, we still mourn His shearing out of compassion in the shaving of our heads. However we call this sign of humility a crown, that is a victory, because that faithful shearing of our Lord, of which this shaving is a sign, is a victory beyond doubt; it is a triumph, it is our honor and glory!\(^50\)

The tonsure, or as Rupert of Deutz conveys, *the crown* worn by medieval clerics is maintained in order to mimic and rejoice in Christ’s victory through martyrdom. Stephen, the proto-martyr, the first of all the martyrs to follow Christ’s example, is *the crown*.\(^51\) So even though the tonsure did not exist during the apostolic era in the form used by the Roman Church in the Middle Ages, Stephen is depicted with his shaved crown. Upon his martyrdom, he is crowned by angels as is literally communicated on the tympanum at Bourges (figure 3). In the Paris narrative his tonsure is not juxtaposed with a divine crown, but with the Phrygian cap on the head of the Jew he faces. This head covering does not necessarily communicate antisemitic ideas, but it is a designation of religious ideology that, in context, contrasts with Stephen’s sign of blessedness.

**The Book and the Scroll**

In his lap the saint holds a book (figure 9). The artist has placed it on a dramatically tilted plane to make it more readily visible to the Jew in front of Stephen as well as the viewer in front of the portal. Stephen points to the text demonstratively. His hands create a literal, physical link between the text and the Jewish man’s hands that work to refute the words. Only Stephen has physical contact with the codex. While Stephen is framed by another standing deacon/cleric, the Jew or rabbi before him is accompanied by a standing figure who scratches his head and pulls his beard in consternation. Stephen and the deacons are all rendered with youthful, clean-shaven faces, which contrast with the images of the mature, bearded Jews. The Christian response to the Jews’ perceived preference for the Talmud can be explained in “familial terms.” The Jews, the parental representatives of the Christian tradition, had to be convinced of Christianity’s validity. Medieval Jews, in their perceived preference for the Talmud, were denying their own parental legacy, the Old Testament.\(^52\) The *Golden Legend* contributes to our understanding of Stephen’s association with the mature audience as seen on the Paris tympanum or as read about in Acts.

\(^{50}\)Marrow, *Passion Iconography*, 277, n. 275, citing and translating Rupert of Deutz. *De divinis officiis libri* XII.ii.25, PL 170: 54-56.

\(^{51}\)Jacobus de Voragine, vol. 1: 45.

The etymology of his name reveals that, “. . . Stephen comes from *strenue fans anus*, he who speaks with zeal to the aged.”

“The conception of age communicates the conflict between the clerics and the rabbis on the Paris tympanum. As the Jew pulls his beard, his mouth gapes indecorously, and he looks out from the portal at the spectator. The viewer witnesses the debate between a young angelic tonsured cleric in a medieval vestment with an old capped bearded Jew. This debate also recalls the youthful Jesus who appeared before the doctors of the synagogue symbolizing the new covenant before the old (Luke 2: 46-50). Thus Stephen’s appearance with the rabbis continues his role as an imitator of Christ. Behind Stephen other bearded, Jewish men congregate in various states of attention, hearing Stephen’s, argument, discussing among themselves, and importantly, consulting their own text. Their text, however, is not a codex like Stephen’s book. Rather it is depicted in the antiquated format of a scroll. The scroll, traditionally the attribute of Old Testament prophets who foretold the coming of Christ, carries an altogether different meaning on the Stephen tympanum at Paris, where Jewish writings and their place in medieval Judaism were recently the focus of debate and destruction. In this juxtaposition of the text-bearing Subject and Other, the Jew cannot find the answer in his scroll to satisfy Stephen’s logic rooted in his codex. Rabbi Yehiel could not defend the Talmud from Donin’s attack. The Old Testament was literally superceded by the New. The Talmud was confiscated and destroyed.

In the next scene (figure 10) Stephen stands to address his listeners in a more active and formal manner. His congregation is expanded and diversified as Stephen preaches. The reactions of the Jewish audience members are different from the disputants’ responses in the first scene; rapt attention is no longer predominant. They listen now with apprehension. They begin to turn away. Along the bottom, an older man sits dejected, in left profile, with his head in his right hand, the gesture of melancholy (figure 11). Another, his hand to his chin, stares blankly. A woman looks on as she nurses a child on the left side of her body. Certainly no nursing mothers were present at the disputation. However, neither this image, nor the African Roman officer arresting Stephen (figure 12), are quaint ways of injecting picturesque, anecdotal charm, into the scene in order to make it more accessible, as has been suggested.

53 Jacobus de Voragine, vol. 1: 45.

54 Stephen’s face is often referred to as angelic. “[They] saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel (Acts 6:15).”


The Influence of the Iconography of the *Grand cameé de France*

The inclusion of a familial group minus a young male figure in the center of the lintel suggests not only Stephen’s ministration to the widows, but also the changing status of all medieval Jews in the light of their association with the Talmud. Here the Jews are visually associated with the conquered and the vanquished, the tragically excluded exiles seated at the feet of their conqueror. The figural type is, I argue, derived directly from antique Roman sources of captured barbarians. The thirteenth-century French authorities, who organized and supervised the Paris disputation—the very same officials who commissioned the tympanum—would have had access to just such a source.

A 1279 inventory of the Treasury of the Sainte Chapelle verifies the presence of an antique cameo. The *Gemma Tiberiana*, or the Grand camée de France, was acquired by Louis IX, the organizer of the Paris disputation, from Constantinople around 1247. The acquisition of such an important and visually remarkable relic (31 x 26 cm) could easily have influenced the bishop’s portal at Notre Dame. Conspicuously present across the center of the bottom register, a woman sits holding her child to the left of her body. To the right a bearded man sits with his right hand held pensively to his cheek. Above the two, a bearded figure sits dejectedly in a melancholic pose and wears a Phrygian cap. Not only are those specific figures strikingly similar, the gem’s overall composition and division of space is also startlingly similar to that of the Stephen tympanum at Notre Dame. The conquered, dejected Gauls sit on the ground line of the lowest register, corresponding to the tympanum’s lowest compositional space. The mother and child, seated in the center, are emphasized within the composition as the mother and child at Stephen’s feet are punctuated by the portal’s trumeau. In the center of the gem, the victory of the conquerors is celebrated for posterity in a worldly testament in historic terrestrial time and space, just as Stephen preaches the word of God and reenacts the first martyrdom in medieval Paris. The Romans sit triumphantly beneath a celestial vision; they gaze up at the apotheosis of the emperor, but the conquered barbarians all stare unseeing at the ground. Similarly, Stephen experiences his divine vision, a private revelation denied to his Jewish persecutors who are metaphorically blind.

The Grand camée may have had a unique and revealing meaning in the Middle Ages. According to Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, the seventeenth-century discoverer of the antique *Gemma Tiberiana*, medieval viewers understood it not as the apotheosis of Augustus above Tiberius and the Julio-Claudian Roman imperial line, but as the Triumph of Joseph at the Court of Pharaoh in Egypt. The story of Joseph held a privileged place in the repertoire of typological iconography employed by King Louis IX. Even without this *interpretatio christiana*, the

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58William Chester Jordan observes that the miniatures of the Triumph of Joseph have an emphasized place in the *St. Louis Psalter*. The patriarch’s story is highlighted by virtue of the number of illustrations as well as the heightened decorative nature of the scenes. William
priestly iconographers would not have hesitated to borrow motifs from the Grand camée de France, housed in the Sainte Chapelle on the Île de la Cité where the bishop’s activities interacted with the king’s interests. The proximity of the bishop’s portal to the king’s treasury is compelling as Delagrive’s plan illustrates (figure 8).

When one considers the charged imperial imagery and extraordinary appearance of the Grande camée, there is no wonder Louis IX arranged its acquisition from Constantinople. Its connections to the Roman imperial past and its figural representation of the Phrygian capped Gauls/Jews would have appealed to his sense of Capetian might and his antisemitic philosophies regardless of any text the medieval viewer might have attached to it. The cameo, like the tympanum, has a many layered metaphoric significance beyond the original, text-bound meaning.

Physiognomy: Caricature of the Other

As the story on the tympanum continues, one man, his back turned to Stephen, notes the offences uttered against the Jews by the Christian preacher (figure 10). He provides a visual and narrative link to the next scene in which Stephen is arrested (figure 12). A Roman guard with stereotypically African facial features, dressed in a beautifully realized field uniform, holds the saint by a fist-full of hair and presents him for judgment to the Sanhedrin and two Jewish witnesses. Stephen’s hands are symbolically crossed before his body, a gesture recalling the Crucifixion of Christ.

There is no reference in the textual sources to provide an iconographic explanation for the presence of a Roman soldier with African features at the arrest of Stephen. The Roman presence is, like Stephen’s crossed hands, a reference to Christ’s Passion, specifically his arrest by Roman guards and subsequent crucifixion at the behest of the Jews. Thirteenth-century Christian ideology concerning “blackness” was greatly influenced by the writings of the third-century Alexandrian, Origen. As Jean Devisse in his monumental The Image of the Black in Western Art explains, Origen proposed that upon the Second Coming the damned cast into darkness would be clad in bodies that would echo their spiritual beings and outcast surroundings.


That is to say, they would be wrapped in a skin of darkness. Following Origen’s analogy, medieval artists depicted spiritually dark beings, demons and devils, with blackened skin and hair. Neither the antique sources nor Origen equated the allegorical interpretation of evil darkness with African people or stereotypically “Negroid” facial features: heavily ridged brows, full round cheeks, short flat nose, and full prominent mouth. However, Tertullian had indicated the presence of an African, actually an Egyptian, executioner at Perpetua’s martyrdom in the Passion of Perpetua in the second century. Furthermore, Gregory the Great in his Moralia on Job commented that Ethiopia represents the blackness that is a sign of evil among the sinful of the world. He also told of an abbot who saw that “a little Negro was tugging at the cloak of the monk who could not stay at prayer.” The monk was struck with rods so that “the ancient Enemy, as if he himself had been whipped, no longer dared to disturb thoughts.” Thus, not only was evil associated with blackness, but also with a sub-Saharan, African people in literary texts. Nonetheless, the association of spiritual darkness with dark complexions and African features would not develop in the iconography of medieval art until the twelfth century. One must consider the face-to-face encounters experienced by medieval Christians in order to consider the exact context in which the African soldier was sculpted on the Paris tympanum.

The most significant encounter western Europeans had with Africans in the Middle Ages was through the conflicts between Christians and Muslims in the struggle over the Iberian Peninsula. The soldiers within the Moorish ranks were often of sub-Saharan origin having not only dark complexions, but also stereotypically African features. The black personification of evil was assigned to the Muslim, especially the Muslim soldier or executioner. Black Africans
were conflated with the tormenters of Christ, much like the executioner of Perpetua in Tertullian’s early hagiography. Sculpted images of the African executioner, appearing in various contexts, can be seen on the Cathedrals at Chartres, Rouen, Auxerre, Reims, and in the form of the arresting soldier, Paris. At Chartres an African male stands ready in a long tunic in the Judgment of Solomon on the north transept. At Rouen an African in a belted knee-length garment holds John the Baptist by the hair, poised with his sword for the fatal blow. At Auxerre an African soldier in a highly detailed Roman cuirass, similar to the one depicted on the Stephen tympanum in Paris, holds the infant before the judging Solomon.

That the physiognomy of an African is exploited on the same portal where undercurrents of Christian xenophobia toward Jews informs the meaning of a narrative should not be surprising. The distortions, and even combinations, of Jewish and African stereotyped physiognomies have actually appeared in roughly contemporary French manuscripts such as the illumination of the Stoning of Stephen in the Life of Christ and the Saints. Here the proto-martyr’s persecutors are depicted with dark skin, whereas the complexions of Stephen, Saul and the hand of God extending from the heavens verges on ivory white. The man on the left of the page has a dramatically emphasized brow ridge which is wrinkled in concentration. The center of his furrowed brow descends dramatically onto the wide bridge of his nose and his nostrils seem to push the edges of his nose into horizontal folds. The end of his nose is wide and upturned in an almost swine-like construction. His cheeks are heavily lined with black pigment. An ample bottom lip underscores his open mouth, a black space framing tiny pale teeth. Compared to Saul’s small, refined features, this Jewish persecutor seems a monstrous amalgamation.

The executioner’s clothing is also distinctive. He wears a bicolored tunic symmetrically divided and painted yellow on one half and red on the other. Around his neck and head he wears a hood with coloration that matches his tunic. Although such colorfully fashioned garments were originally associated with heralds and minstrels, they were eventually donned by fools and miscreants. Artists employed dramatically contrasting color schemes to communicate disparaging characters. Red and yellow seem to be a favorite for the depiction of ill-intended

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against the Slavs, was conceived as a black African in the dress of western Crusaders. At Chartres Cathedral, an African servant or supplicant accompanies the Queen of Sheba, depicted in this instance as a white woman. On the Klosternuenberg Altarpiece she has a distinctly dark complexion. In the later Middle Ages the conception of the black African Magus who paid homage to the Christ child at Epiphany also inspired cults.

Devisse, 73-75.

In the 1280-1290 manuscript from northern France, Images de la vie du Christ et des saints, the “Stoning of Stephen” and the “Carrying of the Cross” support imagery of tormenters that conflate Jewish and African physiognomy and dress, although Devisse (76-77) sees the imagery as particularly African. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. fr. 16251, fols. 76r and 37v. See also, Strickland, “Demons, Darkness, & Ethiopians,” in Saracens, Demons, & Jews, 61-94.
Jews. Red was often symbolically associated with those bent on passionate violence. While yellow had been associated with prostitutes in the Greek and Roman worlds, under Muslim rule it became the designation of Jews. Eventually, the *rouelle*, the designating badge Jews were required to don in French realms, was depicted in yellow. Red was also the color of the testament tablets Jews were required to wear in England.

The juxtaposition of these two bold, contrasting colors sets this individual apart within the scene. By covering this figure with these warm conflicting colors, the artist draws the viewer’s attention to “a scorching image of villainy” in contrast to the coolness of the martyr’s garments. Ruth Mellinkoff calls this compositional device the Color Contrast Principal.

The facial structure of the first of the executioners to stone Stephen in the middle register of the Paris tympanum seems to have the same monstrous facial conception (figure 13) as the persecutor found on the contemporary manuscript page. The similarities in the subject matter, composition, and physiognomy makes one wonder, what kind of effect would the original polychrome on the tympanum have had? Would color have been used in the persecutors’ garments to heighten the sense of their rage? Would complexions follow the racial stereotypes suggested in the facial physiognomies? Biblical exegesis supported the comparison of obstinate Jews with the sinful Ethiopians. According to the medieval Christian interpretation of Psalms 67:32, even the sinful of Ethiopia will convert before the Jews.

The Jews on the Paris tympanum avoid conversion. On the left side of the second register Stephen is stoned by the Jews as Saul witnesses from the far left and points to the execution (figure 13). His position on the tympanum shadows Stephen’s just below him, and their gestures, each pointing with his right hand, reflect one another. Stephen, stretched across the scene, looks up into the faces of his persecutors, who grin with malice. At the peak of the tympanum Stephen’s private, divine vision is depicted for all medieval viewers. As the gaze of the viewer is lifted, the mind and spirit are edified in anagogical fashion. Here, Christ’s appearance between

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69Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 9, 12-20 and 40-46. Yellow was also the color of the testament tablets Jews were required to wear in England.

70Ibid, 40.

71Pieterse, 18-19 and 24. It should be noted that the association of “blackness” with slavery did not exist in medieval Europe. However, the curse of Ham, a biblical justification for slavery, did develop from Augustinian theology. According to Genesis (9:18-27) Noah fell naked into a drunken sleep. His oldest sons, upon seeing the exposed father, covered the patriarch, but the youngest son, Ham, did not “cover his shame”. Upon waking Noah cursed Ham and his descendants for the disrespect shown the father. Canaan, Ham’s son, received the epithet “Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” Importantly, Canaan’s curse was not associated with “blackness” until the development of medieval Talmudic texts, but would not be adopted as a Christian theme until the sixteenth century. Pieterse, 44; David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, 36; Ephraim Isaac, “Genesis, Judaism and the ‘Sons of Ham’,” *Slavery and Abolition* 1 (1980): 3-17; and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, (New York: Norton, 1968), 18 and 36.
two angels breaks with the literal translation of the story.\textsuperscript{72} This vision, like the one at Rouen, is symmetrical and formulaic, breaking the boundaries of time and space; it is at once Stephen’s vision according to the text and the vision of the living observer. In the final scene, the proto-martyr’s body is lowered into the casket from which relics will be exhumed in 417 for dissemination, eventually into Paris Cathedral (figure 14). Gamaliel and Nicodemus witness. Above the saint’s body the Christian codex again appears.

In conclusion, the retelling of the martyrdom of St. Stephen at Paris Cathedral is used to detrimentally alter the place of medieval Jews in Christian society. While religious conflict was at the heart of the Stephen text, it is not only the written history that informs the meaning of antisemitic ideology in the image. The inclusion of Stephen’s disputation, the incorporation of stereotyped physiognomy, and the juxtaposition of Jewish and Christian elements encourage a metaphorical equation of Stephen with Donin, the Jewish disputants with the Parisian rabbis, and thus, the dejected listeners with thirteenth-century Jews. The staged trial of the Talmud and the acquisition of the visually powerful Grand camée de France interpose a lens through which the original hagiography was focused on the tympanum. The royal and ecclesiastical involvement with the disputation indicates that it was the intention of the patron that Stephen’s narrative be conflated with contemporary events, and suggests the intersection of royal authority with an ecclesiastical agenda, creating an iconographically rich and politically meaningful interpretation of the life of St. Stephen at Paris Cathedral. The composition proved so striking that it was replicated on the south transept of Meaux Cathedral by a different workshop.\textsuperscript{73}

Ultimately, Stephen’s narrative on the bishop’s transept portal at Notre Dame is only one part of an extensive building project that incorporated antisemitic ideology in its iconographic plan. The northern transept of Paris Cathedral, the ceremonial entrance of the Canons, seems linked to the southern portal through its antisemitic agenda, iconographic theme, and hagiographic context. Chapter 6 explores the legend of Theophilus and its tentative links to the proto-martyr in thirteenth-century French ecclesiastical imagery.

\textsuperscript{72} For variations of Stephen’s vision in medieval art see François Boespflung, “Sur la lapidation d’Étienne,” 263-295.

CHAPTER 6

STEPHEN AND THEOPHILUS:
DICHTOTOMY IN HAGIOGRAPHY AT PARIS CATHEDRAL

During the transept revitalization project of the second half of the thirteenth century, the
dual patronage enjoyed by the Virgin and Stephen at Paris Cathedral was given a particularly
eloquent visual manifestation at the cathedral’s transept portals. Conceived almost
simultaneously and executed within a few years of one another, the portals, rose windows, jubé,
and ambulatory enclosure reflected a unified program on themes of the Redemption of Man.

The north transept opens onto the cloister of the canons. It is devoted, ostensibly, to the
Virgin and supports images of the Nativity and the story of Theophilus, the penitent (figure 15).
That composition balances the tympanum of Stephen’s story opening onto the court of the bishop
on the south transept arm (figure 7) discussed in the previous chapter.\(^1\) When considered in
conjunction with the overall development of the unified transept project and in the socio-political
context of mid-thirteenth-century Paris, Stephen’s association with Theophilus is more than the
reflection of saintly patronage. This chapter elaborates on the selection and rejection of specific
subject matter such as Christ’s Nativity and Theophilus’ impiety as they relate to Stephen’s
disputation on the opposite portal. The juxtaposition on the two portals of iconographic variants,
such as the scroll and codex and the Jewish religious men and the kneeling penitent, are
compositional themes that must be carefully considered if an understanding of the cult of St.
Stephen in thirteenth-century Paris is to be achieved. Ultimately, I believe Paris Cathedrals’
transept tympana are integral constructions of a unified iconographic program which might be
explicated by considering common motifs employed by thirteenth-century Christians in the
denigration of medieval Jews: the vilification of the Hebrew language and the sinister partnering
of Jews with the Devil. These motifs can be witnessed not only on the cathedral portals, but also
in contemporary manuscripts, liturgical recitations, and exegetical writings. Building on the
involvement of French royalty in the formation of antisemitic policy at Paris Cathedral, and the
preoccupation of Parisian ecclesiastical officials with the trial of the Talmud, this chapter
continues the line of interpretation established in the previous chapter through an analyses of the
northern and southern transept portals at Paris Cathedral.

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\(^1\)The transept portals were not the only entrances to the cathedral from the canons’
cloister. The smaller Port Rouge, east of the transept, was available to the canons and may have
had a counterpart on the southern side of the cathedral in the thirteenth century.
As introduced in the previous chapter, the imagery of Theophilus and Stephen at Paris Cathedral was conceived and constructed in the 1240s and 50s respectively. They were part of an ambitious project, planned by master mason Jean de Chelles, to extend modestly the transept arms of Notre Dame and provide exclusive ceremonial entrances for the cathedral’s canons and bishop’s court. A series of chapels flanking the nave of the cathedral had been constructed in between the massive buttresses and this construction eventually engulfed the transept portals. These additions created recesses in the northern and southern walls of the building at the transept entrances to the church. It seems that Jean de Chelles’ solution was to extend each transept arm by half a bay. This modest extension created a subtle, emphasizing projection at each portal and the opportunity to create a unified iconographic program.

On the north portal, jamb figures of the three Magi bearing gifts decorated the Virgin’s portal beneath the tympanum devoted to the Nativity and Miracle of Theophilus. The Magi were positioned facing the trumeau where the Virgin held the Christ Child. The jambs opposite supported personifications of the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. Personifications of the Virtues and Vices probably flanked the door jambs. After the construction of the southern portal, the Stephen tympanum was complemented by buttress statues of Moses and Aaron, who are invoked in Stephen’s sermon. The jamb figures were composed of six apostles. The niches flanking the door jambs held figures of Saints Denis, Rustius, and Eleutherius on the left, and Martin and two confessors on the right.

However, the overall transept rebuilding effort, which extended into the mid-fourteenth century, did not just include the portals. It also entailed the erection of the great rose windows. The stained glass complemented the overall iconographic program. The north window included an Old Testament cycle that revolved around an image of the Virgin and Child in the center. The petals of the composition included eighty figures from the Old Testament: kings, judges, and prophets. The southern rose was devoted to the Heavenly Host (Apocalypse 5: 11-13). Its petals converged on an image of the Apocalyptic Christ. The window’s eighty-five compartments

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2Erlande-Brandenburg notes that this construction is not unlike that seen on the Virgin portal at Amiens. Images of the Magi were also placed on the top of the north east buttress of Paris Cathedral. Erlande-Brandenburg, 163.

3These identifications are based on eighteenth-century eye-witness reports regarding the badly damaged, dilapidated portal. Ibid, 164.

4Further up on the façade, statues of Stephen and Marcel are now erected in the sculptural niches; however, these spaces were empty by the eighteenth century. There is a statue of Christ above the rose window today, which might originally have been an image of St. Marcel. Ibid, 163-64.

5The image today is of God the Father. While both windows are greatly restored, this is particularly true of the southern rose.
reflected the Christian universe after the first coming of Christ. The innermost sections of the rose’s petals were inhabited by the twelve apostles. Next the twenty-four martyrs and confessors were presented. Finally, virgins were placed along the circumference of the composition.

Ultimately, the choir and apse of the cathedral were transformed with the construction of a rood screen and choir enclosure, no longer extant. These interior elements told the story of the life of Christ, including the Passion and Resurrection, referencing the Redemption of Man through Christ’s sacrifice and the establishment of the New Covenant. The overall program highlighted the importance of the literal, physical presence of Christ at the mass, a prominent issue in late medieval ideology. After the canons or bishop passed beneath their respective tympana on ceremonial occasions, they would have encountered an interior sculptural theme within the transept’s arms. Over the southern doorway, Adam and Eve originally stood in niches beneath diminutive figures of Christ and trumpeting angels. Another angel still holds the instruments of the Passion. Between the two portals in the cathedral’s chancel, the choir screen of Notre Dame can be interpreted as creating an exclusive space. As such, it was developed to emphasize the miracle of the transubstantiation and to isolate the presbyters from the congregation, essentially excluding the laity. On the other end of the spectrum, the choir enclosure was a fundamentally important structure that mapped the sacred space of the chancel within the sacred space of the church. Functioning much like portals, it established the liminal zone between the nave and the altar, molding and literally framing the visual experiences of the faithful during the mass. Much like the restriction of lay people in the cathedral’s interior, very few of the throngs of Parisians attending mass at Notre Dame would have had access to the portals on the church’s transept arms.

Outside the north transept portal, the canons’ close extended across the northeastern end of the Île de la Cité by the thirteenth century. However, the chapter of canons was not established at the Parisian see until the middle of the eighth century when Pepin the Short was inspired at the Council of Vic to organize an institutio canonicorum. As Alain Erlande-Brandenburg points out, the organization of the canons required extensive building efforts. According to the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle of 816, walls were to enclose the canons in order to restrict access to the community except by formal entryways. By 829 the cathedral’s revenues were divided between the bishop and the canons. Land was acquired at such a premium in the close that, in 867, the bishop appropriated an island to the northeast of the Île de la Cité for the canons, which was eventually connected by a bridge to the close. By the late tenth century the

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6Erlande-Brandenburg, 161.


9Erlande-Brandenburg, 19.
canon’s patron, the Virgin, became the primary dedicatee of the cathedral, reflecting the rising influence of the chapter and ultimately influencing the iconography of their ceremonial entrance to the church. Dedicated to the Virgin, the story of the Nativity of Christ and the miracle of Theophilus are depicted on the tympanum (figure 15) of that entrance.

The Story of Theophilus

The story of Theophilus originated in the East but was known in the West by the eighth century. It enjoyed particular prestige in France in the later Middle Ages and became a part of the liturgy in the eleventh century. It quickly made its way into the sermons of prominent French theologians. However, the story of Theophilus achieved its zenith of popularity in the thirteenth century when it inspired the poets Rutebeuf and Gautier de Coinci as well as Jacobus de Voragine, who included the miracle in The Golden Legend on the September 8 feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary.

10Erlande-Brandenburg, 19-20.
12The legend is depicted at Notre-Dame Souillac as discussed below.
13Michael W. Cothren, “The Iconography of Theophilus Windows in the First Half of the Thirteenth Century,” Speculum 59/2 (1984): 308-40, esp. 309; Ulysse Chevalier, Poésies liturgiques traditionelles d l’église catholique en occident (Tournai, 1893), 134. The moralizing tale was used as an exemplum in the sermons of Honorius of Autun (first half of the twelfth century), Fulbert of Chartres (c. 952-1029), and Marbod of Rennes (d. 1123) in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See Honorius of Autun, PL 172: 993; Fulbert of Chartres, PL 149: 323-24; and Marbod of Rennes, PL 171: 1593-1604.
According to the legend, Theophilus served the bishop of Sicily in the sixth century. Theophilus was such a pious and prudent man that upon the death of the bishop the populace called for him to be consecrated in the bishop’s place. But the vidame was too modest and requested to maintain his current office. Another man was made bishop and removed Theophilus from his position. Stripped of his stature and income, Theophilus was embittered, as Rutebeuf writes in his *The Miracle Play of Theophilus*, which was probably performed in the parvis of Paris Cathedral.

Alas, my God and glory-king,
I’ve always spent my time thinking
of you. I’ve given more and more,
yes, all my good, to help the poor,
and what’s left isn’t worth a flea!
The Bishop has said ‘check’ to me,
then cornered me and said ‘checkmate,’
and left me in a sorry state.
Now I shall have to starve instead,
or sell my robe to buy some bread.18

In desperation, as seen on the Paris tympanum (figure 16), Theophilus approaches a Jewish sorcerer named Salatin who serves as a broker for the Devil and “who is able to speak with demons whenever he pleases.”19 The dejected man assures the sorcerer that he would happily renounce Christ and the Virgin to be returned to his former status. Theophilus explains that he cannot stand being forced to depend on the charity of others when once he possessed great wealth. The Jew commiserates with the fallen Christian, assuaging him with his words, “My friend, your troubles I can see./ A man who once had wealth to show/ will suffer much distress and woe/ when he’s reduced to charity/ to beg his food and drink . . . .”20 Theophilus exclaims, “That’s just what causes me such pain, Salatin, dearest, dearest friend—that I on others must depend!”21 Even though Theophilus has second thoughts on denouncing God and the saints, he

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17 According to Fryer a “Vidame (vice-dominus) was a petty noble, who, under the French feudal system, protected the episcopal temporalities, represented the bishop at the count’s court of justice, exercised the bishop’s temporal jurisdiction in his name and led the episcopal levies in war. The title continued to the Revolution of 1780.” 287. See also A. Luchaire, *Manuel des institutions françaises: période des capétiens directes* (Paris, 1892), 288-289.

18 Rutebuef, 207.

19 Ibid, 208.

20 Ibid, 209.

21 Ibid, 209.
agrees to return to Salatin the next day to meet the Devil. Salatin conjures Satan and sets up a meeting between the tempter and Theophilus. At their liaison Theophilus renounces Christianity and enters into a pact with the devil, reenacting the feudal gesture of a vassal confirming allegiance to his lord as seen in the first scene on the second register of the tympanum (figure 16). According to Rutebeuf’s poem, Theophilus proclaims, “In feudal homage I give you my hand./ Just let me get my goods again/ then fealty I shall owe to you.” He writes his oath in his blood and seals the pact with his ring. Through Satan’s efforts Theophilus is restored to his office and continues his duties, reaping the rewards of his evil entanglement and distributing alms with the demon at this side, shown in the second scene on the Paris tympanum (figure 17). After seven years, Theophilus realizes the tremendous folly of his actions and laments his alliance. Repentant, he throws himself on the mercy of the Virgin, as seen in the next scene of the composition (figure 18). After forty days of prayer and penitence, she appears to him and scorns him for his impiety. Ultimately, the Virgin smites the Devil, wrenches the signed pact from his hand, and returns it to Theophilus, events depicted in the final scene in the second register of the tympanum (figure 19). In the pinnacle of the composition, the bishop holds the voided pact before the congregation as he tells them of Theophilus’ error and of his return to the fold. Theophilus sits at his feet (figure 20).

The juxtaposition of the life of the first deacon with that of the corrupted vidame can be interpreted as a factional response to competing ecclesiastical authorities. Like Stephen the first archdeacon, Theophilus was an appointee of the bishop. However, his position was that of the secular vidame, an aid to the bishop in his temporal administrations. He was not a cleric and could be associated by position with the secular canons whose entrance he adorned. As such, the story of Theophilus would be considered a warning to the canons against the temptations confronting those on the ecclesiastical ladder of success.

The Pairing of Stephen and Theophilus in Other Imagery in Gothic France

There are other Gothic compositions in France that pair images of Stephen with Theophilus and seem to caution against moral laxity in clerics. Ellen Shortell suggests the possible connection in French Gothic stained glass windows, noticing iconographic anomalies in the Stephen window at Saint-Quentin that suggest it was once combined with Theophilus imagery. The most famous window combining the Stephen and Theophilus stories might be the northern lancet of the east end of Laon Cathedral. Here, rondels of the story of Stephen are


24Florens Deuchler, in his analysis of the Laon window composition for comparison with the illumination in the Ingeborg Psalter, suggests that the window was a post-restoration conglomeration of two separate windows: one devoted to Theophilus, the other Stephen. Louis

The identity of this figure is admittedly uncertain. Like St. Stephen, he wears the deacon’s dalmatic and maniple, holds a codex (of the Gospels?), and has a clean youthful face. It would not be uncommon for Stephen to be pictured in the company of the first bishop, St. Peter, who ordained him (as will be discussed below). Arthur Kingsley Porter identifies this figure as Stephen in his *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1923). However, Meyer Schapiro, in “The Sculptures of Souillac” (n. 17) disagrees with this identification, citing that “The Crozier excludes a deacon; it is more properly the attribute of a bishop or abbot.” He continues that the “omission of a chasuble in the relief may have been a formal necessity, the V-Shape being unsuited to the design at this point.” However, the mitre and pallium are also missing and I find an explanation of compositional considerations problematic. While Schapiro “provisionally” identifies the figure as St. Benedict, it remains an iconographic anomaly.

juxtaposed with images from the miracle of Theophilus in a jumbled post-restoration state. Thanks to the efforts of Michael Cothren, the Theophilus legend is well studied in glass narratives, but sculpture of the story is not as thoroughly considered. The earliest image of the narrative of Theophilus is recorded on a stone relief in the abbey church of Notre Dame at Souillac. In the center of the panel on the bottom left, the Devil offers the scrolled contract to Theophilus. The pact hangs in the space between their bodies while all four hands support or touch the scroll. To the right Theophilus swears loyalty to the demon. Satan clasps the vidame’s hands in the familial feudal gesture before a great twisted column. Above the two scenes, the penitent lies prostrate before a church, praying for the intervention of the Virgin. In a third, higher celestial register, four figures descend from the clouds, ordered by three arches that span the entire panel. In the center, an angel appears, grasping the Virgin Mary by the shoulders. The Virgin has secured the pact and presents it to Theophilus. Beneath the outside arches, two angels descend holding a scroll on the left and a codex on the right. The lower narrative is flanked by two seated figures. On the right, unmistakably, St. Peter sits with his keys. On the left, a figure that sometimes has been identified as Stephen, the first deacon, mirrors the first bishop who ordained him. The pairing of Stephen with St. Peter is also a common juxtaposition, as
exemplified in a stained glass fragment from Strasbourg where the pontiff lays hands on the proto-deacon.

Even though the juxtaposition of Stephen with Theophilus in the images mentioned above can be explained as a moralizing warning of the temptation of clerics and ecclesiastical officials, there is still more to be considered. As Michael Davis has adeptly observed, Theophilus’ story is composed so as to emphasize the importance of the church’s organization and sanctified space in achieving salvation.28 Stephen, I would add, is presented as the ideal cleric acting within the organization of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This organization is emphasized visually with images of the ordination such as that at Bourges Cathedral (figure 1). Theophilus, in contrast, leaves the church and renounces his faith. But after assuming the proper position of penitence within an ecclesiastical space, he ultimately wins the Virgin’s intercession and the release of his soul from the Devil. Theophilus’ return to the church hierarchy is always staged within ecclesiastical space. The imagery in the window of the Lady Chapel at Beauvais Cathedral depicts Theophilus kneeling before an altar of the Virgin, framed with drawn curtains and among liturgical lamps. Similarly, on the Paris tympanum, the penitent kneels before the Virgin as stone walls, pointed arches, and flying buttresses frame the space (figure 18). One can certainly understand why church authorities would stage such a dramatic intercession within the holy walls of a church. However, why the Paris community of canons would choose a story that speaks to their own fallibility is more difficult to imagine. Given the moralizing, even sanctimonious, message contained in the Theophilus narrative at Notre Dame, I believe there is a more supportable and precise explanation of the legend and the canons’ rationale for its placement on their portal.

The Sinister Covenant: The Devil and the Jews

The new transept program certainly provided the opportunity to express factional responses to competition within the ecclesiastical system, but simultaneously, and I believe more importantly, the canons and bishop of Paris Cathedral expressed a unified antisemitic program intended to support current efforts to suppress Jewish communities in the royal demesne. The infamous, forced, public debates over the Jewish texts collectively known as Talmud, beginning in Paris in 1240, announced a new era in antisemitic action and ideology among medieval Christians. As I have argued in the previous chapter, the loaded meaning of the scroll in the hands of the Jewish religious men as they dispute with St. Stephen over the bishop’s portal (figure 9) was very possibly influenced by the trial of the Talmud and the Christian misunderstanding of the role of auxiliary Jewish texts to contemporary Judaism. Moreover, the antiquated scroll would have been visually associated with the Torah. As such, the juxtaposition of the Jewish scroll with the Christian codex suggests an interpretation that expresses the dichotomy between Jewish and Christian liturgical texts as well as a challenge to the place of Jewish texts in the medieval world.

28See n. 43 below.
A late medieval preoccupation with the scrolls of the Jews within the tradition of St. Stephen’s life and deeds is also echoed in written exegetical texts. Nicholas of Clairvaux writing c. 1178 references Acts and elaborates on Augustine’s sermons on St. Stephen:

“They saw that his [Stephen’s] face was like the face of an angel.” What is it, Jews? By the light of God’s face is the glorious Levite distinguished, so that by vibrant splendor in Stephen serene, your eyes are repelled for the magnitude of envy shuts off the majesty of the vision. *May those unrolling the divine volumes respond to me*, where is a man on earth endowed with an angelic face? And when in both Laws will they rarely if ever be amazed by triumphant glory . . . .

Thus the “Stiff-necked people . . . uncircumcised of heart,” were “unrolling divine volumes” at the proto-martyr’s execution. The format of the Jewish texts, the scroll, may be a conflation of many Jewish texts—Torah to Talmud—in the medieval Christian imagination. The scroll, associated in the Stephen tympanum with the antiquated, erroneous text of Judaism (figure 9), is replicated in the Theophilus story on the north transept portal, along with the dangerously misguided Jewish male elder, Salatin, who is now paired with Satan himself (figure 16). Nicholas of Clairvaux’s sermon on Stephen’s relationship with the Jews also comments that the “men of the Synagogue” were “especially of Satan.” While this nefarious association is not uncommon in the later Middle Ages, it is interesting that it exists in the literary texts informing the two connected tympana.

In the first scene over the northern portal, it is Salatin who oversees the pact with the Devil while Theophilus kneels facing Satan. The Jewish sorcerer is not always depicted in such a revealing location in visual retellings of the story of Theophilus in thirteenth-century France. In the stained glass windows at Troyes and Beauvais Cathedrals which depict the story of Theophilus, Salatin is conspicuously absent. At Troyes Satan stands with the posture of a human, even though his body bears the coat of a goat and his head supports similarly inspired horns. He looks directly into the eyes of the vidame. However, Theophilus averts his glance, with eyes that are cast upwards. Satan holds the damned man’s hand in the familiar feudal gesture. The pair stand beneath a trilobed arch without the Jewish intermediary. At Beauvais the clergyman does not stand on equal ground with the Devil. Rather, he kneels on bended knee on a lower ground line in front of Satan, who clasps Theophilus’ hands in his. The situation of the

29Nicholas of Clairvaux, Sermo LXII, “De s. Stephano protomartyre,” PL 144: 855C. My emphasis added. I am indebted to Professor Lawrence E. Frizzell for this reference. This is his translation from the Latin and he notes that the passage has been falsely attributed to Peter Damien.

figures is, in part, dictated by the round compositional format. This arrangement highlights the cleric’s compromised position before Satan, who looks down at him from on high. As at Troyes, their interaction is not mediated by the soul broker. They deal directly with one another. But at Notre Dame (figure 16) the iconographers chose to include the Jewish sorcerer who stands just behind Theophilus and between the Devil and the vidame. Salatin’s figure connects them compositionally. His left arm is placed intimately over Theophilus’ shoulders. The vidame rests firmly on his knees in front of the sorcerer. On the left side of the composition, Satan, an animalistic form, stands only as high as the kneeling man. Salatin wears a softly rounded cap and his robes extend to the ground not unlike the robes worn by the rabbis in the Stephen disputation. He presses the sealed pact, in the form of a scroll, to his own chest with his right hand in an almost lovingly, self-referential gesture. The seal dangles in front of his body, a sign of the sorcerer’s own illicit pact and misplaced allegiance.

The soul broker in the Theophilus story is not the first Jew in Christian literature to be associated with the dark magical arts. Salatin is only one individual in a long line of Jewish sorcerers that some Christians traced in the Old Testament. For example, Joseph interpreted dreams and honed his magical skills during his forced sojourn in Egypt. His descendants inherited his knowledge through the generations. Similarly, Moses was considered a powerful sorcerer as well as the judicial link between the Israelites and their God. Miriam, the sister of Moses, shared his magical prowess. From as early as the patristic age, non-Jews communicated their understanding that magic played a role in Judaism. It was often associated with healing, as Augustine’s story of Petronia and the Jewish healer related above in the miracles of Stephen. Hebrew, the historic and contemporary language of Jews and Judaism, was considered an integral component of the sorcerer’s powers by Christians. Origen writes that Jews were practiced at the conjuring of demons and use Hebrew incantations to work to these ends. The vilification of Jews and their language through their fictional association with the diabolical arts continued into the Middle Ages. The sixth-century Council of Narbonne addressed the sheltering of sorcerers within the Jewish community. Finally, the magical association erupted into a paranoid delusion that Satan colluded with Jews. One example is the story of Zebulon, a magician associated with the Virgil legend who was born of a Jewish mother and pagan father. Based on astrological calculations, he foresaw the coming of the Savior in the stars. This event would announce the displacement of the Jews as the Chosen People. Even though his attempts

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34 Augustine of Hippo, City of God, 1130-31, Augustine, Civ Dei, XXII, viii, PL 41: 760-771, as discussed in Chapter 2.

35 Trachtenberg makes this observation based on Origin’s Commentary upon Matthew, 58 and n. 7 and 9.
failed, he wrote three magical books to sabotage the birth of Christ. Guibert of Nogent, in the twelfth century, blamed the Jews for introducing members of the Christian clergy to Satan and teaching them to follow him. The Jews “roamed about the convents like troupes of demons, their brothers.”

Such a vivid accusation provided by a French cleric less than a century before the construction of Paris Cathedral’s north transept would certainly have encouraged iconography such as that found in the Theophilus narrative.

Like so many facets of antisemitism, polemics concerning the relationship between the Devil and a Jewish sorcerer took a decidedly new and dangerous turn in the thirteenth century. According to Joshua Trachtenberg, the association of Jews with demonic sorcererry produced truly disastrous results. He explains, “The attacks upon the Talmud at that time were caused perhaps as much by the suspicion that it concealed the secrets of Jewish magic as by its reputedly anti-Christian teachings.”

The Talmud’s mysterious, magical reputation was the culmination of centuries of suspicion. The treatise De judaicis superstitionibus of the Carolingian theologian Agobard of Lyon proclaimed that the Talmud contained “magical elements which he took to be the true expression of the Jewish religion.”

It was not only Christian clerics who adopted this stance. King Louis IX was simultaneously employing his own vicious antisemitic agenda. In 1254 he issued the “ordinance for the reformation of morals” and reinforced the position established and reiterated by theologians. It has long been acknowledged that the iconography and reception of the Cathedral of Notre Dame was greatly influenced by royal power on the Île de la Cité. Virtually nowhere on the cathedral is the king’s saintly reputation and influence more strongly felt than on the exterior of the north nave of the building. The tympanum of the Port Rouge supports an image of the Coronation of the Virgin as she sits enthroned as the Queen of Heaven beside Christ. The privileged witnesses of the divine event are Louis IX and his wife, who kneel behind the Virgin and her Son respectively.

The Port Rouge, located three bays east of the canon’s entrance on the transept, functioned as a general use doorway for the canons. It

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37Trachtenberg, The Devil and the Jews, 68.

38Ibid, 68. See also Agobard of Lyons, De judaicis superstitionibus, PL 104: 77A-100C; and Friedrich Murawski, Die Juden bei den Kirchenvätern und Scholastikern (Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke & Sohn, 1925), 35.


40Trachtenberg, 68; and Heinrich Graetz, Geschichte der Juden, VII, 3rd and 4th eds. 11vols. (Leipzig: O. Leiner, 1897), 410.

was also located on a prominent processional route leading from the cathedral’s west façade past the Theophilus portal. This processional route also passed a series of early fourteenth-century reliefs celebrating the Virgin’s life. One of these reliefs depicts the Miracle of Theophilus. It is noteworthy that the iconographers also chose to include Salatin in this image. Moreover, the sealed scroll is very prominent in the composition. Theophilus and Satan stand cheek to cheek. They each hold an end of the unfurled pact/scroll which extends across their groins with the seal dangling in front of the Devil’s thigh. Salatin peaks over the heads of the two intimates.

**Latin and Hebrew: The Languages of Salvation and Damnation**

The damming association of the Jew with the Devil is also inherent in Rutebeuf’s *Miracle Play of Theophilus*. After the vidame’s first meeting with Salatin, the Jewish sorcerer calls upon the devil, invoking him with a conglomeration of pseudo-Hebrew incantations:

Bagahi laka bachahay  
lamech cahi achabahay  
kyrie-aloss.  
Lamech, lamech bachalioss,  
cabahagi sabbalioss  
Bari-olas.  
Lagozatha cabyolas  
Samahac et famyolas  
Harrahyye!  

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42For the relationship of the legend of Theophilus to the life, and particularly the Assumption, of the Virgin see, Philippe Verdier, *Le couronnement de la Vierge: Les origines et les premiers développements d’un thème iconographique* (Montreal: Institut d’études médiévales, 1980), 110-112.


44Rutebeuf, 212. The Hebrew-like formation of Salatin’s incantation has been recognized by scholars. In fact, incorporation of the Hebrew language with the art of the sorcerer was so common in the Middle Ages, that its use was sufficient to create a religious identity for the sorcerer. Trachtenberg also recognizes the pseudo-Hebrew incantation in the Rutebeuf play but also rightly recognizes that Rutebeuf did not find it necessary to further describe the sorcerer’s religious or ethnic identity, 61. He goes on to note that the medieval audience would have been knowledgeable about the association.
Satan answers Salatin—whose names are strikingly similar—by saying, “You spoke that spell effectively,/ remembered all the words, I see/. . . .”45 as if it were Satan who taught the sorcerer the pseudo-Hebraic phrases. However, Salatin reverses the servant-master relationship by responding “. . . now you cannot let me fail/ nor try to go against my will/ when I call you./ I’m going to make you sweat for use./ You want to know the latest news?/ A cleric’s ours! We’ve had our eye on him for years,/ he’s often caused us grief and tears/ with all his deeds.”46 The Jew is not simply in the employ of the Devil, they are partners in evil. After expressing satisfaction with Theophilus’ intent, Satan warns the sorcerer not to let Theophilus pray. He then continues “And now I’ll flee./ You must treat me with courtesy/ and for a month not bother me./ Go, Salatin—no Hebrew now,/ and not Latin!”47 In other words, you are not to conjure me, and Theophilus is not to pray! The language of the Jews is placed in opposition to the language of the Christians. The first represents damnation, the second salvation. The association of language with the intent of the user is also conspicuously designated on the portals of both Theophilus and Stephen in the form of the scroll and the codex. Considering that these tympana would have been painted, the possibility of the representation of Latin words on the codex and faux-Hebrew characters on the scrolls is interesting, although admittedly conjecture on my part.

Ruth Mellinkoff devotes an entire chapter of her book on the medieval Christian construction of Jewish Otherness to the Christian use of Hebrew and pseudo-Hebrew lettering.48 Mellinkoff explains that medieval Christians recognized Hebrew as the language of contemporary Jews. It was also considered the earliest language of humankind in general. While it was associated with apostolic Christianity, Latin became the language of Christian scripture due to the Jews’ rejection of Christ’s written message.49 The incorporation of Hebrew letters and words into works of art, much like other iconographic symbols, did not necessarily connote antisemitic meaning. Late medieval amulets bearing Hebrew and pseudo-Hebrew letters were originally thought to have been of Jewish craftsmanship and use. However, they are now

45Rutebeuf, 212. Note also the similarity between the name of the Jewish sorcerer, Salatin, and the name of the well known Muslim leader who regained control of Jerusalem from Latin crusaders in 1187, Saladin the Great.


understood to have been made by and for Christians.\textsuperscript{50} Thus the context of lettering must be considered within relevant compositions, and there are several images that might provide additional meaning for the abundant presence of scrolls on the tympana of Paris Cathedral.

On Psalm 52 of the Amesbury Abbey Psalter, Satan and Christ face one another in an historiated initial capital D.\textsuperscript{51}Much like the other thirteenth-century examples discussed here, the Devil’s body is a hairy, horned, monstrous amalgamation, replete with reddened face and hooked nose. He faces Christ, who occupies the right side of the composition. Together they form mirrored, antithetical manifestations of good and evil, reflecting one another’s stances and gestures. Christ raises his right hand as if gesturing to prove a point or offering benediction with an extended index finger. Satan raises his right hand in a similar gesture with an extended menacing claw. In each of their left hands a scroll extends into the area above their heads, dividing the composition. Christ’s scroll supports a Latin text, whereas the Devil’s is composed of pseudo-Hebrew characters. This linguistic designation links Satan with the crucifiers of Christ, even though no Jew is present in the composition.\textsuperscript{52} The derogatory, disparaging use of language also exists in images of Theophilus. One such example of Theophilus making his pact with the Devil exists in the Lambeth Palace Library Apocalypse, a mid-thirteenth-century English manuscript.\textsuperscript{53} The page consists of two compositions which divide the field horizontally. In the top register three Jewish men approach the dejected, defrocked vidame. Their close association with the Devil is eloquently communicated in the imagery. The first man, designated by a funnel-shaped hat, reaches forward and lays his hand on the Devil’s left shoulder. With the same arm, the Devil reaches behind and grasps the man’s robe. With his right hand he gently touches Salatin’s back as the sorcerer converses with Theophilus. Below, another devil pushes Theophilus forward with a long rod. Between the two, Salatin stands escorting the damned man forward. Theophilus kneels with the sealed pact in his left hand and shakes the Devil’s hand with his right. Satan sits enthroned above the scene like a king. A small demon sits at his feet transcribing the event on a scroll. The scroll, here a document of the event recorded by one of the Devil’s minions, is not blank as it appears to be on the weathered Parisian tympanum. Rather it contains a pseudo-Hebrew script.\textsuperscript{54} Michael Camille recognizes this little devil as the recording demon, Tutivillus. He sees the texts of this little scribe of evil deeds, who writes in

\textsuperscript{50}Trachtenberg, \textit{The Devil and the Jews}, 64.

\textsuperscript{51}Mellinkoff, \textit{Outcasts}, vol. 2, IV.13, citing the Psalter of Amesbury Abbey, c. 1250-255, England, All Souls College Library, MS 6, fol. 64v.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid, 105.


\textsuperscript{54}Mellinkoff, \textit{Outcasts}, 105.
Hebrew on scrolls, as a counterpart of the Judging Christ’s book by which all would be judged at the Second Coming.\textsuperscript{55}

I believe this linguistic opposition is relevant to the interpretation of the Paris transept system and possibly may even have been literally present on the transept tympana. The text on which the visual cycle is based also supports this suggestion. The written pact is provided by the Devil who explains: “Well, here’s the covenant between us two. I shall make you a lord so great that no-one’s been of such estate. Then, since it’s your avowed intent, you know I’ll need a covenant, with letters drawn and signed by you, and fully sealed and witnessed, too.”\textsuperscript{56}

The condemning scroll does not appear again in the tympanum until the final scene in the middle register (figure 19). Theophilus has repented and the Virgin has appeared. Now it is the Mother of God who stands between the kneeling vidame and the Devil. She smites the cowering demon with what appears to be a liturgical cross and takes the scroll from him with the dangling seal still intact. After securing the pact, the Virgin sends Theophilus to the bishop to give him the covenant so that it can be displayed before the congregation in hopes that others will not repeat the vidame’s mistakes for “A man whose love of wealth, whose greed, betrays him is shameful indeed.”\textsuperscript{57} In the pinnacle of the tympanum (figure 20) the conspicuous scroll appears for the final time, now in the controlling, orthodox hands of the bishop. His gesture is telling compared to the position of Salatin, who holds the scroll in the first scene. While the sorcerer pressed the document to his own chest, the bishop holds the scroll away from his body. The seal dangles in the air and the pact seems to be a separate compositional entity, sequestered from the congregation.

\textbf{Intercession and Redemption Before the Portals}

At the end of the composition Theophilus, now penitent, kneels in the chapel of the Virgin (figures 18 and 19). Although he assumes the same position he took when proclaiming his loyalty to the devil, his body forms the mirror image of his previous position. The gesture of fealty is transformed into the gesture of prayer before the statue of the Virgin and Child. He prays, acknowledging her purity: “You are like a pane of glass;/ light comes again all unbroken through./ You a virgin remained/ though into you God came,/ a bride and mother too . . . ./ Lady, I can be free if your Son will but say!/ Lady to you I pray . . . .\textsuperscript{58} He begs for her intercession, which she eventually provides, retrieving the damning scrolls and smiting Satan.


\textsuperscript{56}Rutebeuf, 215.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid, 228.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid, 223.

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Throughout the Middle Ages the theme of intercession also played an important part in Stephen’s life. The proto-martyr prays for his persecutors as an idealized figure of divine forgiveness. His final words are constantly referenced by medieval theologians. Fulgentius of Ruspe, probably writing in the early sixth century on St. Stephen and the Conversion of St. Paul, suggests the Lord provided Stephen with the weapon of charity to use against his adversaries: “Through the charity of God he did not change because of Jewish brutalities; through love of neighbor he interceded for those stoning him. Through charity he disputed those in error so that they might be corrected; through charity he prayed for those stoning him that they not be punished.”

Following the same interpretation in the twelfth century, Nicholas of Clairvaux conflates the last words of Stephen with the forgiving last words of Christ: “Lord Jesus, he [Stephen] said, do not hold this sin against them, because they know not what they do.” As always, it is the story of Christ and his sacrifice that informs the proto-martyr’s actions and words. Thus, imagery of Christ’s life placed in proximity to Stephen’s must be considered to determine the particular aspect of imitatio Christi referenced.

Below the story of Theophilus, on the bottom register of the tympanum, the story of the Nativity of Christ is carved (figure 15), reflecting both Mary’s role as the Mother of God and Theophilus’ verbal entreaty. The Miracle of Theophilus is liturgically associated with the Nativity and Assumption of the Virgin and not the Nativity or Ascension of Jesus which makes the choice of subject matter noteworthy. At first glance one might assume it must surely be Theophilus’ exhortation and plea for intercession that promoted the iconographical choices reflected in the tympanum. However, given the connection of the cycle to St. Stephen’s story, the juxtaposition of Theophilus with the Nativity hints at a possible liturgical connection to the veneration of the proto-martyr on the south transept. As discussed in Chapter 2, the feast of St. Stephen was placed on December 26, the day after the word was made flesh in the birth of Christ. “Christ was born on earth in order that man could be born in heaven. It was appropriate, therefore, that the feast of Stephen’s birth in heaven should fall close after Christ’s birthday . . . martyrdom is the martyr’s heavenly birth and follows as a consequence upon Christ’s birth . . . . ‘Yesterday Christ was born on earth, in order that today Stephen might be born in Heaven.’ This was a popular understanding of the proto-martyr’s role in thirteenth-century French liturgy, and medieval theologians often commented on the relationship. St. Bernard of Clairvaux authored a sermon for Christ’s mass devoted not only to the birth of Christ, but also to the birth

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60Nicholas of Clairvaux, Sermo LXII, “De s. Stephano protomartyre,” PL 144: 856.


of Stephen, John the apostle, and the Innocents, whose massacre is depicted on the Theophilus portal.

In conclusion, by liturgical calendar or political agenda, the stories of Stephen and Theophilus, initially so seemingly disparate, were occasionally broadly linked in medieval France. The unlikely pair are sometimes viewed as reciprocal symbols of good and bad clerical behavior. I hesitate to apply that interpretation to the canons of Paris Cathedral, given the moralizing tone of the explanation. The new transept program certainly provided the opportunity for Paris’ canons to compete visually with the sculptural program initiated by the bishop on the opposite portal. However, simultaneously, and I believe more importantly, the canons and bishop of Paris Cathedral expressed a unified antisemitic program intended to support current efforts to suppress Jewish communities in the royal demesne. The trial of the Talmud held at the royal palace on the Île de la Cité in 1240 would have provided a powerful influence on the ways that Jews and symbols of Judaism were envisioned on the transept portals built in the 1240s and 1250s.

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CHAPTER 7

“THESE THEY SET BEFORE THE APOSTLES; AND THEY PRAYING, IMPOSED HANDS UPON THEM”:
STEPHEN, THE PROTO-DEACON, AND ECCLESIASTICAL SUCCESSION

The conception of St. Stephen’s story on one of the five portals on the west façade of Bourges Cathedral (figure 1) provides an interesting foil to the roughly contemporary imagery in the royal capital of Paris just 150 miles to the north (figure 7). The antisemitic agenda demonstrated at the transept portals of Paris Cathedral is utterly absent in the Stephen tympanum at the archiepiscopal see in Berry. Nevertheless, Bourges’ sculptural program uses the story of the proto-martyr to comment on the historical relevance and contemporary importance of this ecclesiastical community, showing Stephen’s importance above and beyond antisemitic polemic. The saint’s story is sculpted across two portals at Bourges, dominating the southern half of the cathedral’s west façade.

I suggest that the St. Stephen program at Bourges was conceived as a promotion of Bourges’ place in the Christian universe and as an idealization of the archbishop’s office in the ecclesiastical history of the see. Here, where Stephen was, and remains even today, the cathedral’s titular saint, the history of Stephen’s relics within Berry is depicted on the church’s most visible and public portals. The tympanum of the Stephen portal is uniquely configured. His story does not begin with his preaching to Jews, as is so common, but rather commences with his ordination (figure 21). In fact, Stephen’s role as a disputatious preacher is completely omitted from the composition, perhaps to better emphasize his role as deacon and martyr. The resulting heightened sense of his identification as the proto-deacon emphasizes his association with the first, and ideal, bishop. St. Peter ordains Stephen on the portal and serves as a constant reminder of the deacon’s role as the bishop’s “soul and his senses.” Many cathedrals in France were devoted to Stephen in the Middle Ages because of the opportune discovery of his relics; however, I believe the prestige of his patronage was considered very appropriate to medieval bishops because of his clerical designation, which was an idealized extension of the first bishop’s authority. This relationship is perhaps best observed in the unique sculptural imagery on the façade of Bourges, but it is also constructed in contemporary French manuscripts.

1However, the tympanum at Bourges devoted to Stephen belies the preoccupation with Jewish texts in other parts of the Gothic cathedral’s iconographic program. Laurence Brugger, *La façade de Saint-Étienne de Bourges: le Midrash comme fondement du message chrétien* (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, 2000), “‘Hebraei dicunt’: le soubassement de la façade occidentale de la cathédrale de Bourges,” *Cahiers archéologiques* 41 (1993): 111-139; and Laurence Brugger and Yves Christe, *Bourges, la cathédrale* (Saint-Léger Vauban: Zodiacque, 2000).
St. Stephen is represented in conjunction with the personification of ideal ecclesiastical authority, St. Peter, in the *Bibles moralisées*. Here, Stephen’s story is repeatedly referenced and juxtaposed to the actions, responsibilities, and prerogatives of the bishop. This connection is not only made through St. Peter and St. Stephen, but also through their visual association with Old Testament types of the bishop and deacon, Moses and Aaron. In contrast to Bourges, where antisemitic commentary does not appear, this pairing provides the Parisian authors of the Moralized Bibles with the opportunity to, once again, expound antisemitic commentary through the narrative of the proto-martyr.

**Bourges Cathedral: Patronage and Program**

The Gothic cathedral at Bourges was begun in 1195 and was virtually complete by the middle of the thirteenth century.  

However, the new cathedral was situated among the long established monuments that represented royal and ecclesiastical power in the ancient city. The thirteenth-century edifice was built into a hillside that marked the edge of the ancient Gallo-Roman city. The cloister enclosure surrounding the northern and southern sides of the building was intercepted by the Gallo-Roman wall, over which the east end of the great Gothic church was built. In previous years the governor’s palace and the first church in the city were built on this site. By the Romanesque period the canon’s cloister, the archbishop’s palace and many subsidiary buildings stood in the precinct.

Bourges came under the jurisdiction of the Capetian dynasty in 1100 from the control of a local viscount. Philip I and subsequent kings enjoyed loyal support from their subjects at Bourges and held the city and region firmly with little resistance in the late Middle Ages. During the Gothic period, the royal palace and garrison known as the *Grosse Tour*, stood inside

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the old Gallo-Roman walls just to the south east of the cathedral. It was a prominent fixture in the early modern configuration of Bourges’ skyline. The royal tower, the canonical cloister, and the archiepiscopal palace were the architectural manifestations of the powerful figureheads of the city: the king, the chapter, and the archbishop.

The archbishop was considered a vassal of the king. From the mid-twelfth century onward, the archbishops provided exceptional support for the French crown, creating a mutually beneficial relationship for both the ecclesiastical see and the monarch. The chapter had the most power, influence, and responsibility in the planning and erecting of the Gothic cathedral at Bourges. They were the primary managers of the fabric fund and were ultimately in charge of raising money for the building efforts, although the archbishop would have had some influence. The archbishop’s private entrance was located on the south side of the choir connecting his palace with the church in much the same way the Parisian complex was arranged. The Stephen portal at Bourges, however, was not the private ceremonial entrance of the archbishop as the southern transept was the bishop’s doorway at Paris. Rather, it was located at the most public part of the building, on the west façade.

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7 Branner explains that the Grosse Tour is datable to at least the Carolingian era, when it was mentioned in extant documents. “The Grosse Tour was a dungeon situated on the butte near the city wall; it commanded the southeastern gate and played an important role in Bourges until its destruction in the seventeenth century in pre-Revolutionary Bourges.” Raynal, Histoire, 2, 555-56. Branner, Bourges 209, n. 14.


9 Branner, Bourges 8.


11 Branner, Bourges, 9, n. 32.

12 Ibid, 13 and 77.

13 Ibid, 15.

14 Boinet suggests that the master who constructed the cathedral at Bourges was selected from the masons who were working on the nave of Notre Dame in Paris. A familial connection
The Sculptural Program\textsuperscript{15}

Five portals pierce the west façade of Bourges Cathedral, initiating the viewer’s expectation of the five aisles of the massive interior. According to Branner, the structure of the portals was finished and the sculpted components were erected after the completion of the structural elements of the doorways.\textsuperscript{16} The five western portals were probably laid out between 1225 and 1230\textsuperscript{17} and the façade was completed between 1255 and 1265.\textsuperscript{18} The principal element of the grand façade’s sculptural program is the central portal of the Last Judgment (figure 22).

Christ sits in majesty in the center of the top register of the tympanum with his heavenly court. Angels surround him, supporting the instruments of his Passion. The sun and moon are

did exist. Henri de Sully, archbishop of Bourges, was the brother of Eudes de Sully, bishop Paris and once canon of Bourges. They were distantly related to Bishop Maurice de Sully, the driving force behind the Gothic edifice at Paris. Boinet, \textit{Les sculptures de la cathédrale de Bourges}, 11-12. Robert Branner disagrees with this hypothesis. Branner, \textit{Bourges}, 13.

\textsuperscript{15}The alterations made to the west façade of Bourges in the nineteenth century have inspired significant enough controversy in the historiography of the cathedral, that it merits mention here. The entire west façade at Bourges was heavily restored in the nineteenth century and the restorations were almost immediately denounced. This perceived lack of medieval authenticity was blamed for a paucity of scholarship on the cathedral’s west façade in the mid-twentieth century. However, in recent years substantial scholarship based on close analysis has differentiated much of the thirteenth-century composition from the nineteenth-century imagery. Tania Bayard asserts specifically “The sculpture of the Stephen and Ursin portals, not so often noticed, is frequently of equal quality (to the Last Judgment scene, and not so highly restored), especially in the archivolts of the Stephen portal.” She continues to explain that there is much that is original in the portals and there is amazingly little that is too restored for study in the Stephen or Ursin portals. Most of the modern work consists of small spots of patchwork, and does not “destroy the character of the figures.” Nor do the repairs greatly impact an analysis of the iconographic program of the portals. Tania Bayard. \textit{Bourges Cathedral: The West Portals}, diss. 1968 Columbia University (Garland Publishing, Inc, New York and London, 1976), and “The Thirteenth-century Modifications in the West Portals of Bourges Cathedral,” \textit{Journal of the Society of Architecture Historians} 34/2 (1975): 215-225.

\textsuperscript{16}Branner, \textit{Bourges}, 234, n. 19.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid, 59 and n. 154 citing an acknowledgment of the \textit{frons ecclesie} in a 1230 charter; Raynal, \textit{Histoire}, 2, 325, no. 4; and A. De Boissoudy, \textit{Les artistes de Bourges depuis le Moyen-Âge} (Paris, 1861), 415 and the first Cartulary, f. 1 v.

displayed over his head. The Virgin and St. John kneel in the outer corners of the register, interceding through prayer for the souls of the judged below. In the middle register, St. Michael weighs the souls of the judged with a large scale. To the right—Christ’s left—devils and demons whisk away the naked souls of the wicked, stuffing them into a great boiling pot at the entrance to the mouth of hell. Two demons fan the fire with bellows while the damned above are tortured. Opposite, on the right side of the register, angels escort the saved to the bosom of Abraham. The figures here are clad in long flowing robes and file peacefully toward the gateway of paradise arching over Abraham. Below, the dead emerge from their graves for judgment.\textsuperscript{19}

To the north of the Judgment portal, the portal of the Virgin tells the story of the Dormition of the Mother of God (figure 23). In the bottom center of the composition, the Virgin’s body is stretched across a bier. She is surrounded by the mourning apostles. In the register above, she is assumed into heaven by angels who support her body with a large drapery. Just above, she is crowned Queen of Heaven by her son. They are both enthroned in their Heavenly Court. Angels look on, swinging censors and adoring the Virgin. It should be acknowledged that this portal was partially destroyed when the north tower collapsed in the early sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the portal was rebuilt using the same toppled, carved figures. Unfortunately, the northernmost portal, now devoted to St. William, the early thirteenth-century bishop of Bourges, was completely destroyed. The current construction dates to around 1542. The original conception of the portal is lost.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Christ’s First Deacon and Bourges’ First Bishop: St. Stephen and St. Ursin}

The south side of the façade is dominated by the story of St. Stephen, Bourges’ patron saint (figure 24). The portal to the right of the Last Judgment displays his ordination, martyrdom, and vision. The narrative begins on the bottom left of the tympanum with the ordination of the first seven deacons (figure 21). A bearded apostle stands facing the kneeling proto-deacon. The apostle’s left hand holds a piece of cloth and touches the deacon’s fingers which are held in prayer in front of him. The apostle’s right hand is blessing Stephen. Behind the proto-deacon, another apostle touches him on the back of the shoulder with his left hand which also holds a book. His right hand blesses the kneeling man. In addition to recalling the biblical ordination of Stephen, the scene also echoes the medieval ordination of a deacon, which reenacts the laying on of hands by St. Peter. Medieval sources explain:

\begin{quote}
You shall ordain a deacon, O Bishop, by laying your hands upon him in the presence of the whole presbytery and of the deacons, and you shall pray . . . let your ears receive our supplication and cause the light of your
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{20}Bayard, \textit{Bourges Cathedral}, 4.
countenance to shine upon this your servant who is to be ordained for you to the office of deacon and replenish him with your Holy Spirit and with power, as you did replenish Stephen, your martyr, and follower of the sufferings of Christ . . . .

As the bishop placed his hands on the kneeling deacon-elect, he spoke, *Accipe spiritum sanctum ad robur . . . .* The deacon then received the stole of his office and a book of the Gospels. It seems probable that the drapery and the book held by the apostles on the Bourges tympanum are meant for St. Stephen, as they would be meant for a medieval deacon. Importantly, the rarity of this scene in Gothic monumental architectural sculpture suggests a sensitivity on behalf of the ecclesiastical community at Bourges to its patron saint’s relationship to the apostles and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The other six deacons stand in a line behind Stephen. Their appearance with their books—suggesting they have already been ordained—is anachronistic, since Stephen was first among the seven to receive the Holy Spirit. However, the inclusion of the six deacons provides a context that enables the viewer to associate St. Stephen with his clerical office. The martyr’s appearance in his dalmatic is usually relied upon for this purpose. However, at Bourges, the iconographers have devoted a significant part of their composition to Stephen’s place at the apostles’ sides.

In the middle of the register, just behind the last deacon, a large tower divides the space (figure 1). This is not the image of the gateway so often seen in Gothic compositions of the

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21 Apostolic Constitutions, VIII, xvii; see also Catholic Encyclopedia “Duties of Deacons.” On the stole and garments of the deacon’s office, see DACL, “Dalmatique” 4: 111-119; see also, Honorius of Autun (first half of twelfth century), *Gemma animae sive de divinis officiis et antiquo ritu missarum, deque horis cononicis et totius annis solemnitatibus, I, clxxx, “De diaconibus, ”* PL 172: 599B- 599C; Gregory the Great, *Opera omnia Gregorii Magni, liber sacramentorum, PL 78: 487D*, in particular. While the quote from the Apostolic Constitution is very early, sources agree that the ordination ceremony changed very little through the course of the Middle Ages, and is still very similar even today.

22 Gregory the Great, *Opera omnia Gregorii Magni, liber sacramentorum, PL 78: 487D; Apostolic Constitutions, VIII, xvii; and DACL, “Dalmatique” 4: 111-119.*

23 It should be acknowledged here that these details are being observed from a restored area of the façade. Heads, costumes, hands and attributes may not be original here. The modern ceremony for the ordination of a deacon has changed very little in appearance from the twelfth century. As such, modern restorers could have depicted the modern details of the scene here. Nevertheless, we know this was an ordination scene. The general position and number of the figures in the composition leave no room for doubt.
stoning of Stephen on cathedrals such as Chartres and Rouen (figure 4). There is no door on the Bourges image (figure 1). This is a fortified medieval tower, with arrow slits and crenelation, much like the Grosse Tour must have looked on the skyline of medieval Bourges. Such an inclusion would have provided the narrative with geographic immediacy, while confirming the mutually beneficial relationships enjoyed by the king, archbishop, and citizens of Bourges.

On the other side of the tower, the condemned saint is escorted from the city. He is depicted twice in the second half of the lower register. First Stephen is sculpted in profile between two executioners. One man holds the condemned man by the right hand. In the final depiction, Stephen is situated between two men marked as Jews by their peaked caps. These two persecutors already hold stones.

Above, the middle register of the tympanum is devoted in its totality to the stoning of the martyr (figure 1). On the left, Saul is perched beneath a tree on the coats of the executioners. The man in front of him disrobes and hands Saul his garment. In the center of the scene Stephen kneels in prayer. He is acting as intercessor for his persecutors. His face is turned up to his vision, and an angel descends with a crown for the martyr. Men with stones raised over their heads stand on either side of Stephen. Three more executioners occupy the right side of the register. They all hold stones. Only one looks out toward the viewer in front of the portal. All the others seem to look at the crown descending from the heavens (figure 3). In Stephen’s vision, in the peak of the composition, Christ is depicted only from the waist up, and he is surrounded by a choir of angels. He offers a benediction with his right hand and holds an orb in his left. His body emerges from a formation of clouds above the architectural frame dividing the registers. As in the Judgment and Virgin tympana, the peak of the composition is devoted to the Court of Heaven.

Just to the right of the Stephen doorway, the portal of St. Ursin is devoted to the life of the first bishop of Bourges (figure 24). However, Stephen’s history, or rather the history of his relics, is closely tied to the life and ministry of Ursin. The narrative begins on the right side of

24 It is not until the thirteenth century that representations of St. Stephen’s gate in the city walls of Jerusalem become common in monumental sculpture of Stephen’s story. The earliest representation in stone in France is at Chartres Cathedral, c. 1215. The gate of St. Stephen in Jerusalem did not exist until at least the twelfth century. Before that time his martyrdom was associated with the Damascus Gate. The late, selective inclusion of St. Stephen’s gate at Jerusalem in the French Gothic narratives seems to have been influenced by late medieval preoccupation with the Holy Land as linked to crusading efforts and pilgrimage.

25 That the persecutors look to Stephen’s vision may be an affectation of the nineteenth-century restoration. In sculpture with prominent images of the stoning of Stephen—Rouen (figure 4), Cahors and Paris (figure 7)—the executioners always look at Stephen. They are metaphorically blind to the truths of the faith, and cannot experience Stephen’s vision.

the tympanum’s lintel (figure 25). The design reverses the typical direction of thirteenth-century narrative tympana, and moves toward the proto-martyr’s imagery, linking the two portals compositionally. In the first scene, St. Ursin and his companion, St. Just, receive the assignment for their ministry from St. Peter, who holds his key. Moving to the left, St. Just and St. Ursin begin their journey. The bishop-saint, Ursin, is differentiated by his miter. They both carry books of the Gospels and walking staffs. In the central scene St. Just dies and angels carry his soul to heaven within a draped cloth. They swing censers over the tomb. St. Ursin buries this companion beneath the celestial scene. On the left side of the burial, the bishop approaches the city gates of Bourges with his walking staff in one hand and a reliquary with the relics of St. Stephen in the other (figure 26). St. Ursin was said to have been a witness to the execution of the proto-martyr and collected the holy blood of St. Stephen in Jerusalem. In the next scene, a crowd of people is converted by the missionary zeal of St. Ursin and the power of St. Stephen’s relics. Now the head of an ecclesiastical see rather than a traveler, St. Ursin carries a crozier rather than a staff.

Moving up the tympanum to the middle register, Ursin converts four men who kneel before him (figure 25). Léocade, the Roman governor, and his son, Lusor, are first in line among the converts. Léocade, according to the legend, donates the land on which his own palace stands for the new church. In the center of the register St. Ursin places the reliquary of St. Stephen’s blood into a miniature Gothic church (figure 27), thus depicting the consecration of the first Cathedral of St. Stephen in Bourges with the first martyr’s relics, once again referring to

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27 As Bayard notes, the sources are contradictory as to exactly who gives St. Ursin his instructions. Faillon suggests Ursin received his ministry from the apostles, Faillon, 423. Labbe’s text notes St. Clement, Labbe, 2, 457. Bayard identifies the bishop in the scene at Bourges as St. Peter, 23.

28 Labbe, 2, 456.

29 Faillon, 423.

30 Ibid, 426.

31 Ibid, 426 and Labbe, 459.
local architecture. The church provides the sacraments necessary for salvation. The neophytes occupy the prominent peak of the composition, reserved for the Court of Heaven in all the other tympana of the west façade. The composition bodes well for the future of their eternal souls. The tympanum presents an ideal outcome for the faithful of Bourges who would have been baptized at this church, literally built upon the relics of the proto-martyr.

While images of the translation of St. Stephen’s relics are common in Romanesque imagery, they are actually rare in the programs of Gothic monumental sculpture. Those twelfth-century images virtually always depict Stephen’s translation from Jerusalem to Constantinople or from Constantinople to Rome. The tertiary movement of the holy relics into a French church is only subtly implied by any translation image. In most other instances the viewer’s knowledge of the presence of the relic inside the church is required in order to make the leap from legendary translation to local veneration. I argue that this is not the case in Bourges where the hagiographies of Christ’s first martyr and Bourges’ first bishop are intertwined and displayed beside one another on the most public space of the monument. By depicting the actual insertion of Stephen’s relics into the fabric of the church by the bishop’s hands, the ecclesiastical officials at Bourges place their archepiscopal see as the culmination of the primary destinations of the proto-martyr’s relics: Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome, and ultimately Bourges.

Much like the image of the consecration of the church with holy relics, the rendition of Stephen’s ordination at Bourges is unique in Gothic architectural sculpture. For other examples of Stephen’s ordination in thirteenth-century France, one must turn to illuminated manuscripts. The imagery of Stephen’s legend in the Moralized Bibles provides a greater visual context by which to evaluate the thirteenth-century French association of the proto-martyr with medieval ecclesiastical sees.

The Old Covenant and a New Vision: St. Stephen’s Narrative in the Bible moralisée

Few medieval manuscript types can boast the sheer volume of illumination as the seven extant Bibles moralisées, or Moralized Bibles, which were produced in Paris in the mid-thirteenth century. No expense was spared on these sumptuous, luxurious books where visual

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32 Literally speaking, the very first church in Berry had been the Church of St-Ursin. M. de Laugardièrè, 42-49.


34 Over the last few years many influential publications have appeared that have contributed greatly to our knowledge of the Bibles moralisées. Important to this chapter are the
imagery dominates and gold abounds. They are generally accepted as the picture bibles of French royalty. The pages of the Bibles moralisées are recognizable for their distinctive layout of eight roundels in two vertical columns. The top two roundels depict the biblical story, while the two images below illustrate moralized commentary on the biblical scenes. Each of the biblical compositions is paired with a brief, often abbreviated, and roughly paraphrased, biblical text. The accompanying images below are explained by a moralizing caption that elucidates the thirteenth-century Parisian and Christian understanding of the relevance of the chosen biblical imagery. The moralizing images and related texts have a seemingly limitless capacity to communicate the views of the patrons and/or producers of these manuscripts.

Of particular interest to this chapter are the comparisons and relationships that develop when considering the use of the story of St. Stephen in the moralizing roundels and texts. Imagery directly related to his life, martyrdom, or the discovery of his relics is carefully executed throughout the moralizing commentary of the Bibles moralisées. I argue here that the Stephen imagery in the Moralized Bibles reinforces the connection of the medieval ecclesiastical hierarchy with the apostles of Christ. It also provides an exemplar for “the good prelates,” while sometimes contrasting the righteousness of Christians with the perfidy of Jews, both apostolic and medieval. As such, the Stephen imagery in these sumptuous bibles supports the conclusions of the previous chapters discussing the proto-martyr’s narrative in the architectural sculpture of Gothic France.

The Oxford Bodleian 270b folios of the Oxford-Paris-London Bible, contain imagery of the proto-martyr that is employed as moralizing commentary within the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua. Folio 79v depicts Numbers 16: 44 through 17:9. Situated at the top

35Parts of four Moralized Bibles survive from the mid-thirteenth century in various states of division and completeness. They include Vienna, ONB 2554; Vienna, ONB 1179; and three volumes at Toledo Cathedral, a folio of which is at the Morgan Library, MS M 240. The fourth bible, Oxford–Paris–London, is divided between Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 270b, Paris, BN, MS lat. 11560, and London, British Library, Harley MSS 1526-27. The Oxford-Paris-London Bible, including Bodleian 270b, with Latin text, was probably produced 1235-1250. It is a copy of the Toledo Bible and its patronage is linked with Louis IX and his mother Blanche of Castile. It could also be associated with Louis IX’s wife, Marguerite of Provence. Later manuscripts were produced but do not appear here. For the production of the Moralized Bibles, see John Lowden, The Making of the Bibles moralisées. See also La Bible moralisée: conservée à Oxford, Paris et Londres, reproduction intégrale du manuscrit du XIIIe siècle accompagnée d’une notice par le
left of the page, Moses and Aaron kneel in supplication to God on the left side of the round frame. The right side of the composition is filled with a crowd of Israelites who seem to fall or flee as God appears in the top of the composition. Following Numbers 16: 44-46, “God, appearing out of a cloud, speaks with Moses and Aaron who are making supplications on behalf of their sinful people. In his anger God smites the murmurers with a plague.” In the roundel just below, Stephen is stoned. His tonsured head and medieval dalmatic set him apart from the other figures in the composition. Saul sits on the garments of the executioners and witnesses the martyrdom from the left side of the picture. Three persecutors, with stones gathered in their garments, surround the proto-martyr and barrage him with these stones. Christ, suggesting Stephen’s vision, appears above an arc of celestial clouds. His right hand is raised in benediction. His left hand supports an orb. The cruciform halo just overlaps the disk-like shape that anchors the biblical roundel to the moralizing roundel. Stephen, kneeling and at prayer, gazes up past his persecutors to his own private divine vision. The text acknowledges, “. . . we should pray for our persecutors as St. Stephen prayed for those who stoned him . . . .” This image presents Stephen as an ideal type for forgiveness, as is proposed in Chapter 3 above. However, his appearance beneath Moses and Aaron needs comment.

Moses and Aaron are considered ideal Old Testament types for the bishop and deacon in the early Middle Ages. “For now the deacon is to you Aaron, and the bishop Moses . . . For as Christ does nothing without his father, so neither does the deacon do anything without his bishop . . . .” Aaron and Moses are in effect named deacon and bishop. Moreover, their offices are linked to one another by likening them to two components of the Trinity, the Son and Father. The four vertical scenes on folio 79v of Bodleian 270b form a visual commentary on the examples set by the prophets and their followers. In the top illustration the brothers are set apart from the Israelites in their supplication to God. They kneel on his right and their charges scatter on God’s left. It seems that a judgment is taking place. Below, Stephen’s body divides the composition as he prays for his persecutors. He is the good deacon in the tradition of Aaron and he will be credited with the conversion of St. Paul. However, the persecutors beneath the fleeing Israelites will be blind to the martyr’s testimony. The observation can be continued in the next two miniatures.

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37 Ibid, 84.

38 Apostolic Constitution, II, xxx.
Below the Stephen roundel, the Old Testament continues with Numbers 16: 47-48.\textsuperscript{39} Again, there is a cloud from which God watches and actively engages the earthly figures, as he did in the two compositions above. Hassall’s description explains, “Aaron wearing all the garments of a chief priest is standing between the living and the dead. He swings a censer. Numbers explains that Moses commanded Aaron to take fire from the altar, place it in a censer, add incense to it and take it among the people; thus making atonement for them. The plague is stayed.”\textsuperscript{40} Like Stephen above him, Aaron, here the Old Testament priest, intercedes for the people. As Stephen prays for the immortal souls of his persecutors, Aaron saves the lives of his congregation. The figure of Aaron bisects the composition. The plague-ridden victims fall in a heap at the right, again God’s left. Those whose lives are spared stand in an orderly crowd behind the priest. The moralizing scene below is similarly configured.

A mitered bishop, dressed in his vestments, stands between two figural groups in the bottom left roundel. The just of society are represented on the left by a group of three clerics, tonsured, hooded, barefooted, and with pious down-cast eyes. On the right, two lovers grasp each other lecherously. The bishop’s position in the composition mirrors that of Aaron and Stephen above him. Moreover, like Aaron’s and Stephen’s, the bishop’s intervention stands between the saved and the damned, or salvation and damnation. Tellingly, the bishop’s hands mirror the gesture of prayer established by Stephen in the previous moralizing roundel. The head of the bishop, like Stephen’s, is almost centered in the composition and is turned to the right in three-quarter profile. He witnesses the same celestial vision awarded to Stephen. Here “Aaron is the good prelate or priest praying for the just lest they fall and for sinners that they may arise.”\textsuperscript{41} I believe these four vertically aligned roundels function together, presenting an exemplar for the ideal prelate that cuts through time and Christian history. They establish a link between medieval ecclesiastical authority—inferrered here visually through the depiction of medieval vestments—and the hierarchy of the apostolic era. They even connect the bishop to the just Jews of the Old Testament through St. Stephen, providing a new vision of the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39}The Oxford-Paris-London text first moves vertically all the way down the left column and then down the right column.

\textsuperscript{40}Hassall, \textit{Bible moralisée: Bodleian Library Mss 270b, SC 2937 c. 1250}. (Wakefield, UK: Microform Academic Publishers).
http://www.microform.co.uk/guides/C00536.pdf#search=%22hassall%20bible%20moralisee%20translation%20microform%22, pp. 84.

\textsuperscript{41}Hassall, \textit{Bible moralisée: Bodleian Library Mss 270b, SC 2937 c. 1250}. (Wakefield, UK: Microform Academic Publishers).
http://www.microform.co.uk/guides/C00536.pdf#search=%22hassall%20bible%20moralisee%20translation%20microform%22, pp. 84.

\textsuperscript{42}It is noteworthy that in the roundel to the right of the stoning of Stephen, a bishop lays a hand on one tonsured head, an overt reference to the very creation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the laying on of hands, first described in the Acts of the Apostles with the ordination of Stephen.
Images such as the laying on of hands at Bourges, while not unheard of in visual representations of Stephen’s story, are uncommon. However, the scene is represented in the Oxford-Paris-London Bible. Folio 63v of the book of Acts in the Harley 1527 has a roundel devoted entirely to Stephen’s ordination at the hands of the first bishop, St. Peter (Acts 6: 6). In the upper right image, St. Peter lays his right hand on Stephen’s head. Much as in the image of the ordination at Bourges, the bishop holds the Gospel book in his veiled hand and offers it to the proto-deacon. In the next set of biblical roundels, Stephen and Peter preach in similarly composed scenes. Each saint stands in three-quarter profile with a haloed, tonsured head. Their right hands are raised as they gesture to their audiences, and their left hands support their codices. The visual repetition of the composition, and the juxtaposition of the scenes, suggests the close connection that the first bishop and the first deacon share in medieval texts which explain, “as Peter is named the rock . . . Stephen is called the crown.” In their paired visual images, even their work in spreading the word of God is the same. Through the ordination the proto-deacon is bound to the first bishop. Their roles are then conflated in the imagery of the Moralized Bible.

On folio 92v of Bodleian 270b, antisemitic ideas associated with the narrative of St. Stephen are incorporated into the texts accompanying images of the proto-martyr beside the commentary on Deuteronomy 31: 26-27. Moses prepares to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land in the upper left roundel. He presents the Law to his followers in the third scene down on the left. Moses and the Levites, in the upper right, place the Law into the arc. In the final biblical roundel Moses warns the Levites of their “obstinacy, and . . . most stiff neck” and their rebellion against God which heaven will witness (Deuteronomy 31: 27-28). Moses gestures to God hidden in the heavens. In the bottom moralizing roundel Stephen is again shown in the throes of his martyrdom. Again, he kneels with his hands in a gesture of prayer. Saul lies on the robes at the edge of the composition. Two executioners stand menacingly, close to St. Stephen and lift their stones over their heads. The persecutors’ faces are now distorted; their mouths gape in wide grimacing expressions. Two Jews in pointed hats stand with their backs to the martyrdom. They seem to converse with God/Christ who interestingly shares the terrestrial space. However, there is no celestial vision and no interaction between Stephen and God. There is no divinity in the clouds to receive the intercessory prayer. Rather, Stephen’s vision becomes the literal presence of Christ, and yet his Jewish persecutors do not believe. Here Stephen’s role is not of clerical exemplar or ecclesiastical link, but of quintessential martyr. He is again the proto-martyr who, by word and example, highlights the perfidy of the Jews.

In conclusion, the Stephen imagery in the Moralized Bibles reinforces the relationship of the medieval ecclesiastical hierarchy with the apostles of Christ, especially St. Peter. Stephen is

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44The third images from the top of the page. Peter is in the left column and Stephen is in the right.

45Peter Chrysologus (d. 450), *Sermo CLIV, “In d. Stephanum protomartyrem,”* PL 52: 608B-608C.
shown at his ordination, kneeling before the first bishop. Then the proto-deacon is depicted mirroring St. Peter as they each spread the word of God. Moreover, Stephen is aligned with Aaron, the Old Testament figure who was considered a type for the Christian deacon. Aaron, serving at the altar with his brother Moses, a type for the bishop, is also presented in an intercessory role prefiguring Stephen’s prayer for his Jewish persecutors. St. Stephen provides an exemplar for “the good prelates” while sometimes contrasting the righteousness of Christians with the perfidy of Jews. Thus the imagery in the Moralized Bibles provides the opportunity to further explore the context of the unique ordination scene depicted on Bourges Cathedral.

When considered in conjunction with the life and ministry of St. Ursin, St. Stephen’s visual narrative at Bourges takes on a new interpretive dimension. Viewed together, the southern portals of the west façade of Bourges Cathedral provide the most extensive narrative of Stephen’s life still extant in the architectural sculpture programs of medieval France. The exclusion of Stephen’s disputation and preaching sequences provided the iconographers at Bourges the opportunity to expand the narrative in order to comment on the importance of Stephen’s connection to the archiepiscopal see of Berry. Not only is the proto-deacon’s link to the apostles presented on the public façade, but the translation of his relics is also recalled at the hands of Bourges’ own first bishop, St. Ursin. These unique compositional choices highlight the role of Bourges as one of the great centers for the veneration of St. Stephen.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

“And devout men took order for Stephen’s funeral, and made great mourning over him”: St. Stephen Concluded

The abundance of relics associated with St. Stephen—bones, dalmatic, blood, and stones—provides evidence of the ubiquitous nature of Stephen’s cult across France in the Middle Ages. When contemplating the prestige of these relics, their invention and veneration can be considered in several ways: through their biblical foundation, through their orthodox discovery and translation, and through their connection to ecclesiastical authority. In the Middle Ages, each tiny vestige of the proto-martyr was regarded as the spiritual and physical presence of the whole being, as was true of any saintly relic.

However, Stephen’s cult was founded on a more exclusive heritage than other Early Christian and medieval saints. His literary story was established in the New Testament. Thus his legend was well known and was reiterated in treatises and sermons long before his relics were discovered. The story of Stephen’s life and martyrdom would have been very familiar to the Christian faithful before his relics were introduced to any cult site. Stephen’s relics would have been translated into communities ready to receive them for veneration. As devotion to the proto-martyr and his relics spread, church officials used this illustrious heritage to bolster Stephen’s saintly popularity.

The invention, the constructed discovery of his remains, is an example of the ideal structure of a saintly cult in the Early Christian Church. Even after the proto-martyr’s sanctity was acknowledge by his inclusion in the Vulgate, his relics were discovered under the auspices of the orthodox Church. It was the priest Lucien, one of the Church’s own clerics, who received the divine vision, which was repeated three times, verifying the authenticity of his mission. The holy presence in the vision, Gamaliel, was not only a witness to Stephen’s stoning but was also a figure recalled in the New Testament. The priest, Lucien, then acted in conjunction with bishops from surrounding areas, and under the supervision of the Bishop John of Jerusalem, the fifth-century successor of St. Peter. Many Christians witnessed the excavation and were able to testify to the authenticity of the fragrant, miracle working relics. The discovery of the relics was immediately the subject of letters sent to all the churches of Christendom.

While most of Stephen’s relics were maintained in the Church of Sion in Jerusalem, a few important examples were transported into western Europe, where many ecclesiastical sees were established in ancient Gaul. Relics were needed to consecrate churches and altars. The timing of the discovery of Stephen’s relics can be considered fortuitous; however, I believe it was politically astute. It provided the orthodox Church in established Christian communities the opportunity to control the influx of the proto-martyr’s relics, and it placed both the pedigree and provenance of the cult in the control of the Church. The story of the bishop-saint, Ursin, ordained by St. Peter and sent from Jerusalem on his ministry to Bourges, testifies to the
satisfaction of the need to build metaphorically the ecclesiastical sees on the relics of saints provided by the episcopal hierarchy. In the case of Stephen’s blood, the saint’s vestiges reciprocally reinforced the connection to Christ’s original ministers and bishops, the apostles of Jerusalem who had also ordained Stephen. As St. Augustine relates, in the west, Stephen’s relics were always managed by the local leaders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the bishops. As they were moved across the Christian world, the relics also united the geographic space of Christianity, linking Jerusalem, Constantinople, and even medieval France.

The French medieval architectural narratives of St. Stephen, the proto-martyr, have been the primary focus of this study. In the introduction, three questions were posed. Why is a deacon-saint used by bishops to symbolize ecclesiastical power and mold and manipulate their public images? How do the changing concerns of the ecclesiastical hierarchy affect these narratives? And finally, how do the variations in the visual narratives reflect and impact changing social circumstances and audience expectation? The following synopsis reviews my evidence and conclusions on these questions.

The Proto-deacon and Episcopal Power

Even though the invention and translation of Stephen’s relics, as well as the establishment of his cult, were governed by the early episcopal sees in the west, it is to Stephen’s visual and literary legends that I turned to in Chapter 2 to prove the saint’s connection to the medieval bishop. St. Stephen’s designation as the proto-deacon is significant to the connection. The term itself is not a part of the account in the Acts of the Apostles. It was adopted by medieval theologians from its invention in Early Christian texts. The construction of the designation of the proto-deacon is intimately related to Stephen’s ordination at the hands of St. Peter and the apostles in Jerusalem. Because he receives the Holy Spirit directly from the apostles, Stephen can be considered a link to the first followers and bishops of Christ through his ecclesiastical office. It is because Peter and the apostles laid hands upon St. Stephen, while praying, that the ecclesiastical hierarchy was established. For this reason the office of the deacon would be permanently linked to the bishop.

Sculptural renditions of the ordination of Stephen are rare in medieval France. Chapter 7 argues that the prominent imagery at Bourges provided an outlet for the archiepiscopal see to expound its privileged historical connection to the apostles through St. Ursin and St. Stephen. Because this imagery is unique among the monumental sculptural programs of Gothic France, I consider ordination imagery in manuscript sources to provide further evidence of Stephen’s episcopal, apostolic link. In the Bible moralisée, St. Stephen, St. Peter, the apostles, and the deacons are also depicted in an ordination ceremony. The ordination imagery is complemented by images of the deacons assisting the bishop at the altar, and illuminations of the first bishop and the first martyr preaching in carefully mirrored compositions. These constructions provide visual evidence that the medieval iconographer and viewer drew meaning from the pairing of Peter and Stephen. Images of the stoning of Stephen are even more telling. Juxtaposed with Aaron and Moses, identified as types for the deacon and bishop, Stephen prays for his persecutors in a scene of his martyrdom. As Aaron intercedes for the sinful Old Testament Jews, so Stephen intercedes for his Jewish persecutors. By incorporating imagery of St. Stephen into public sculptural programs, the bishops of medieval France provided a link through their own
clerical hierarchy to the first bishop of Jerusalem, St. Peter. Simultaneously, they acknowledged their own privilege, inherited from St. Peter, of ordaining deacons that served as the “ears and eyes and mouth and heart” of the bishop.

**Ecclesiastical Concerns and Variations in the Visual Narrative**

As Stephen’s narrative is retold on medieval monuments, ecclesiastical officials use the story to express and elucidate their own changing concerns and agenda. In the twelfth-century renditions, variations in the retelling of Stephen’s story are most likely to occur in the conception of his vision. In Romanesque depictions iconographers often use Stephen’s vision to explicate non-visual concepts such as the Trinity, as at Cahors, and even God’s role in coronation, as at Arles. As creative and often complex as these interpretations can be, Stephen’s primary role as the first to imitate Christ’s life and Passion is never omitted.

Perhaps the most prevalent and relevant way Stephen imitated Christ was through his preaching to the Jews of Jerusalem and through his death at their hands. In the course of Chapter 3, I find that the role of the Jewish persecutors, religiously undefined in the Romanesque imagery, is manipulated by Church iconographers to communicate vilified religious Otherness. I demonstrate that there was a significant shift in the preoccupations of the iconographers from the Romanesque to the Gothic periods. In the thirteenth century, ecclesiastical officials use the life and death of the proto-martyr to focus contemporary antisemitic rhetoric and attitudes in a public, monumental space as at Rouen, which is the subject of Chapter 4. In the twelfth century Jews were presented as a tolerated part of the otherwise Christian community, to be protected and converted at the end of days. However, in the Gothic images they are vilified. Dressed in contemporary Jewish headgear, stoning a deacon in medieval liturgical dress, they are conflated with the persecuted Jews of thirteenth-century France.

**Social Circumstance and Audience Expectation**

At times the antisemitic ideologies presented through the narratives of St. Stephen were very pointed and specific. This imagery, such as that carved for Paris Cathedral, depended upon the knowledge of its exclusive audience. In Chapters 5 and 6, I suggest that the precarious place of the Jewish community in thirteenth-century Paris was reflected in the transept tympana, sculpted with the politically savvy canons and episcopal court in mind. Here, the trial of the Talmud inspired a new antisemitic agenda where texts—scrolls and codices—became a primary part of the imagery. On the tympanum a relatively rare rendition of Stephen disputing with the rabbis is carved which, I believe, alludes to the debate over the Talmud between a medieval cleric and French rabbi. The staged disputation was organized by the episcopal see at the behest of Louis IX. It is from his treasury in the Sainte Chapelle that I have identified a possible prototype for a figural group in the bishop’s tympanum, the Grande cameé de France.

The northern and southern transepts at Paris Cathedral were part of a unified building effort. Through close scrutiny of the Virgin portal, opposite the Stephen portal, I suggest in Chapter 6 that an iconographic connection can be deciphered through the display of texts on both portals. Moreover, a reference above the Virgin portal to the erroneous writings of the Jews was probable because accusations that the Talmud contained anti-Marian sentiments had been
leveled by the Christian polemicists. My interpretation links Stephen and Theophilus, an unlikely pair that has been juxtaposed on other French monuments. These observations suggest a politically charged interpretation of the Stephen tympanum based on social circumstance and audience expectation.

In conclusion, given the prestigious nature of the primary sources for the legend of St. Stephen, one might expect the visual images to be dependant on the Acts of the Apostles or even the writings of St. Augustine for their compositions. However, through the course of this study, I propose that the visual narratives vary significantly from the primary texts and from one another. Constant variations in the imagery are chosen for depiction by ecclesiastical iconographers. With modifications to gestures, attributes, clothing, and settings, St. Stephen’s story is retold on the churches of medieval France with great variation. Moreover, the narratives’ designers demonstrate ingenuity in the selection and rejection of specific scenes when composing their iconographic programs, and these subtleties relay meaning to the savvy viewer. These modifications reveal the social history and religious preoccupations of individual dioceses, as well as the agenda of the patrons and expectations of the viewer. Not only is this artifice apparent in the images examined in the primary chapters of this dissertation—Arles, Rouen, Paris and Bourges—it is visible when one reviews the survey of extant monuments presented in Appendix C. However, Stephen’s imitation of Christ and his association with the bishop is a constant element in the Christian imagery.

The notion that the great façade of the Gothic cathedral is only an encyclopedic visual text for the education of the illiterate or uninformed falls short in interpreting the innovation displayed in the sculpture of hagiographic narrative. The structural form of these programs must be considered in order to provide a contextual analysis of the meaning of the saint’s life and depiction.
Figure 1. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West Façade, Second Portal, Ordination and Martyrdom of Stephen, first half of thirteenth century.
Figure 2. Map of French Ecclesiastical Sees
Figure 3. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West Façade, Second Portal, Crowning of Stephen, first half of thirteenth century.
Figure 4. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Rouen, West Façade, Southern Portal Tympanum, The Stoning of Stephen, mid-thirteenth century.
Figure 5. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Rouen, West Façade, mid-thirteenth century.
Figure 6. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Rouen, West Façade, Southern Portal Tympanum beneath Saul, mid-thirteenth century.
Figure 7. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, South Transept Portal Tympanum, Story of St. Stephen, c. 1258.
Figure 8. Abbé Delagrive, Map of the Île de la Cité, Paris, eighteenth century.
Figure 9. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, South Transept Portal, Stephen disputes with Rabbi, c. 1258.
Figure 10. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, South Transept Portal, Stephen Preaches, c. 1258.
Figure 11. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, South Transept Portal, Seated Group, c. 1258.
Figure 12. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, South Transept Portal, Arrest of Stephen, c. 1258.
Figure 13. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, South Transept Portal, Stoning of Stephen, c. 1258.
Figure 14. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, South Transept Portal, Entombment of Stephen, c. 1258.
Figure 15. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, North Transept Portal, Virgin’s Portal Tympanum, late first half of the thirteenth century.
Figure 16. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, North Transept Portal, Theophilus taking Oath, late first half of the thirteenth century.
Figure 17. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, North Transept Portal, Theophilus giving Alms, late first half of the thirteenth century.
Figure 18. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, North Transept Portal, Theophilus praying to the Virgin, late first half of the thirteenth century.
Figure 19. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, North Transept Portal, The Virgin Smiting the Devil, late first half of the thirteenth century.
Figure 20. Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, North Transept Portal, Theophilus and the Bishop, late first half of the thirteenth century.
Figure 21. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West façade, Stephen Portal, The Ordination of St. Stephen, c. 1250.
Figure 22. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West façade, Last Judgment Portal, c. 1250.
Figure 23. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West façade, Virgin Portal, c. 1250.
Figure 24. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West façade, southern-most portals, c. 1250.
Figure 25. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West façade, St. Ursin Portal, c. 1250.
Figure 26. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West façade, St. Ursin Portal, St. Ursin at the Gates of Bourges, c. 1250.
Figure 27. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges, West façade, St. Ursin Portal, The Consecration of the Cathedral, c. 1250.
Figure 28. Cathedral of Notre Dame of Chartres, South Transept Portal, West Portal Tympanum, The Stoning of Stephen, c. 1215.
Figure 29. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Meaux, South Transept Portal Tympanum, second half of thirteenth century.
Figure 30. Cathedral of St. Stephen at Meaux, North Transept Portal Tympanum, second half of thirteenth century.
This appendix provides a list of primary citations on the legend of St. Stephen and his sermon that were influential to this dissertation. The sources are divided into three categories: Patristic Era Texts, Western Medieval Texts, and *Adversus judaeos* Texts. Beneath each rubric I list the authors of the texts, their dates, and finally the primary text citation. This list excludes references to the proto-martyr in the works of St. Augustine. Those citations appear below in Appendix B. Each of the categories is organized by the chronology of the authors. The Western Medieval Texts section is further divided according to the chronology of Stephen’s legend and the development of his cult. That section of the appendix includes a list of medieval sermons that incorporate the proto-martyr or aspects of his speech, and an acknowledgment of the secondary sources devoted to the study of these primary texts.

**Patristic Era Texts**


Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 120-200). *Contra haereses*, IV.xv.1. PG 7: 1012-1013.

Tertullian (c. 160-230). *De resurrectione carnis, caput LV*. PL 2: 877A.

Cyprian (early third century-258). “*De bono patientiae.*” PL 4: 632C.

Eusebius of Caesaria (c. 260-341). *Historia ecclesiastica, II.i* and *III.i.29*. PG 20: 134, 222 and 275.


Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397). “*In psalmum LXI enarratio. Titulus: in finem, pro idithum, psalmus ipsi David.*” PL 14: 1174C.

Western Medieval Texts

On the invention of the relics and their translation to Rome:

Avitus Presbyter (first half of 5th c.). “Epistola aviti ad palchonium, re reliquiis sancti Stephani, ed de Luciani epistola a se e graeco in latinum versa.” PL 41: 805-808 and BHL 7848-7851.

Lucian presbyter Caphamargala (second half of 6th c.). “Epistola Luciani ad omnem ecclesiam.” PL 41: 807-817 and BHL 7851-7856.

On the relics and the conversion of Jews:

Severus of Minorca (first half of 5th c.). Epistola, omnem ecclesiam, de virtutibus ad judaeorum conversionem in Minoricensi insula factis in praesentia reliquiarum sancti Stephani.” PL 41: 821-832 and BHL 7859.

Translation to Constantinople:


On the dissemination of the relics and their miracles:

Author uncertain (5th c.). De miraculis s. Stephani protomartyris I & II. PL 41: 831-853 and BHL 7859-7877.


Author uncertain (12th c.), BHL 7890-7895.

Stephen in Medieval Sermons:

Peter Chrysologus (d. 450). Sermo CLIV. “In d. Stephanum protomartyrem.” PL 52: 608B-608C.

Leo I (d. 461). “Natale sancti Stephani in coemeterio callisti appia.” PL 55: 90A.

Maximus of Turin (c. 380-465). Homilia LXIV. “In natali sancti Stephani levitae et protomartyris.” PL 57: 379C; and, Sermo LXXXV. “In natali s. Stephani protomartyris.” PL 57: 701C.
Fulgentius Ruspe (468-533). *Sermo III. “De sancto Stephano protomartyre, et conversione s. Pauli.”* PL 65: 729D.


Gelasius I (d. 496). *“In nat. sancti Stephani Martyr.”* PL 74: 1059D.

Paschasius Deacon (d. after 511). *De spiritu sancto II.x. “De actibus apostolorum assertio Trinitatis iteratur, ubi et Cristus con ovatianos ad dandum poenitentiammissus asseritur.”* PL 62: 20C.

Germain of Paris (c. 496-576). *“Sermo sancti ac beatissimi Augustini episcopi de natale sancti Stephani.”* PL 72: 175A.

Gregory the Great (c. 540-604). *Antiqui libri rituales sanctae romanae ecclesiae, ordo romanus, XI.* PL 78: 1035A-1035B; and, *Canticorum expositio, caput VII.* PL 79: 535C.


Agobard of Lyon (814-840), *Opera omnia, opusculum, XI.* CC 52: 191-195.


Jonas Aurelianus (first half of 9th c.). *Jona de cultu imaginum, III. “Quos, imperante Luaovico Caesare edidit adversus blasphemias Claudii Taurinensis ecclesiae episcopi.”* PL 106: 379A.

Peter Damian (1007-1072). *Liber dominus vobiscum, caput IX. “Quod officium membro cujuslibet speciale, toti corpori sit commune.”* PL 145: 238D.

Hildebert of Lavardin (c. 1056-1133). *Sermones de sanctis, LXXVIII*. “In festo sancti Stephani protomartyrvis sermo primus.” PL 171: 715C.


Carthuitus (11th c.). *Sancti pater, natales visionibus praeviis illustrati, baptismus, regni initia et cura religionis propagandae, victoria de rebellibus, et hinc monasterium s. Martini ex voto fundatum*. PL 151: 1211B.

Joannes Belethus (late 11th c.). *Rationale divinorum officiorum, caput LXIX*. “De nativitate Domini.” PL 202: 77A.


Peter Cantor (d. 1197). “De statu clericorum et inferiorum ordinum.” PL 205: 185A.

Nicolaus of Clairvaux (12th c.). “Sermo in festo beati Stephani protomartyris.” PL 184: 850C.

Adam of St-Victoire (12th c.). “De santo Stephano.” PL 196: 1423A-1424C.

Henri of Albano (second half of 12th c.). *De peregrinante civitate dei, tractatus V*. “De portis civitatis Dei.” PL 204: 293B-293C.

Adam Scot (late 12th c.). *Sermo XXIX*. “In die sancti Stephani protomartyris. De tribus festis quae diei nativitatis Dominicae proxime sucedunt: et virtute charitatis, atque patientiae.” PL 198: 265D-266C.

Nicholas of Clairvaux (12th c.), sometimes cited as Peter Damian (1007-1072). *Sermo LXII*. “De s. Stephano protomartyre.” PL 144: 855C.

Secondary sources on western primary texts on the various vitae of St. Stephen:


**Adversus judaeos Texts**

Tertullian (c. 160-230). Adversus judaeos. PL 2: 595-642B.

Cyprian (early 3rd c.-258). Testimoniorum III, Adversus judaeos. PL 4: 675-780B.

Maximus of Turin (c. 380-465). Contra judaeos, caput IV. PL 57: 793-806, esp. 797.


Agobard Lyon (814-840). Ad eundem imperatorem, de insolentia judaeorum. PL 104: 69B-76B.

Amulo of Lyon (mid-9th c.). Contra judaeos ad carolum regem. PL 116: 141-184D.

Guilbert of Nogent (d. 1124). Tractatus de incarnatione contra judaeos. PL 156: 489-527.

Peter Alphons (early 12th c.). Ex judaeo christiani dialogi in quibus impiae judaeorum opiniones evidentissimis cum naturalis, tum coelestis philosophiae argumentis confutantur, quaedamque prophetarum abstrusiara loca explicantur. PL 157: 535-672A.

Peter of Cluny (c. 1092-1156) also known as Peter of Montboissier and Peter the Venerable. Adversus judaeorum inveteratam duritiam. PL 189: 507-650B.

Peter of Blois (c. 1130-1203). Contra perfidiam judaeorum. PL 207: 825-870D.
APPENDIX B

STEPHEN IN WORD: THE AUGUSTINIAN TEXTS

This appendix provides a list of primary citations on the legend of St. Stephen and his speech in the sermons and *Adversus judeos* literature of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), which are influential for this dissertation. There are only two headings in this appendix: Sermons, and *Adversus judeos* Texts. For citations in the *City of God*, translations of individual phrases, or entire sermons, see the dissertation footnotes or the bibliography, respectively.

**Sermons**

*Sermones suppositii de Scripturis. Sermo LVI.* “De eo quod scriptum est in Evangelico Matthæ, caput V, 16. Sic luceat lumen vestrum coram hominibus, ut videant bona opera vestra, et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in coelis est: et contra, caput VI, 1, Attendite ne justitiam vestram faciatis coram homibus, ut videamini ab eis.” PL 38: 372-386.

*Sermones suppositii de Scripturis. Sermo LVI.* “De Evangelio Matthæi, caput VI, 7-13, de oratione Dominica, ad Competentes.” PL 38: 377-386.


*Sermones suppositii de Scripturis. Sermo CXLIX.* “In quo quæstiones propositæ ex Actibus Apostolorum, caput X, et ex Evangelio, solvuntur; seu de quatuor questionibus: prima, de visione Petri. Secunda, de verbis Evangelii, Luceat lumen vestrum coram hominibus, ut videant bona facta vestra, etc. Et paulo post, Cavete facere justitiam vestram coram hominibus, ut videamini ab eis, etc. Tertia, de verbis Evangelii, Nesciat sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua. Quarta, de dilectione inimici.” PL 38: 800-801.


*Sermones suppositii de Scripturis. Sermo CCIV.* “In Epiphania Domini, VI.” PL 38: 1037-1039.

*Sermones suppositii de Scripturis. Sermo CCXIII.* “In traditione Symboli, II.” PL 38:1060-1065.


Sermones suppositionis de Scripturis. Sermo CCCXV. “In solemnitate Stephani martyris, II.” PL 38: 1426-1431.


Sermones suppositionis de Scripturis. Sermo CCCXIXA. “De Stephano martyre, VI.” PL 38: 1440-1442.


De trinitate III.iii, and x.24 and 26. CC 50: 153-158.

Adversus judaeos Texts

Tractatus adversus judaeos. PL 42: 51-64.

Contra judaeos, paganos et prianos sermo de symbolo. PL 41: 1115-1130.
These visual narratives, much like the sermons and treatises on the same subject, while inspired by the primary texts are never slavish imitations of the biblical stories. Rather, each retelling of the life and martyrdom of Stephen functioned not only to activate the viewer’s memory of the saint’s legend, but also to reinvent the narrative in light of contemporary concerns and conditions. Stephen’s actions and martyrdom are always interpreted according to the patterns established in the life and death of Christ; however, imaginative interpretations that reveal the needs of specific patrons abound. Thus surviving Romanesque and Gothic visual narratives of St. Stephen in France demonstrate great ingenuity, innovation, and unique compositional choices, while maintaining the textual integrity of the story.

This survey of extant carved images of the proto-martyr’s narrative in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France is presented as a backdrop against which to consider the selection of images considered in detail in the primary chapters of this dissertation. Eleventh- and twelfth-century depictions provided a visual repertoire from which late medieval iconographers and artists could have gleaned inspiration for their narrative cycles. Often, Romanesque images seem to be inspired by, or possibly preoccupied with, complex theological texts. But, interestingly, they seem to stray from the literal interpretations of the saint’s written story. The designers of the elaborate interpretations that characterize the Gothic imagery are particularly aware of the written texts, but, ultimately, the compositions belie a self-conscious interjection of contemporary preoccupations.
Church of St. Stephen at Chambon-sur-Lac

One of the earliest architectural images identified as a scene of St. Stephen’s life is on the eleventh-century church of Chambon-sur-Lac, in the region of Auvergne in France. Located in proximity to the cathedrals of Auxerre and Bourges, both consecrated to St. Stephen, or S. Étienne in France, it is no wonder the small chapel supports imagery devoted to the proto-martyr. The long, roughly triangular relief has been reset in the reconstructed façade of the chapel’s main entrance, just over the portal. The image chosen for representation is the stoning of the saint. In the center, at the peak of the triangular frame, the hand of God extends into the picture plane in a manner suggesting blessing or benediction beside an asterisk shape indicating a star or the sun. The angel of God is depicted to the left of center, with a halo framing his head. His body is displayed frontally for the viewer. The angel’s arms extend conspicuously in each direction forming a cross, or orant’s posture. Although the angel provides a divine presence, this is not Stephen’s vision of “the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” This early interpretation links the martyr to the court of heaven with the presence of an angel. Five persecutors, religiously undifferentiated, follow one after the other across the right side of the pediment-like relief. The first executioner, awkwardly hunched so that his head is sculpted below the angel’s, holds a rock in his right hand. He seems to awkwardly reach for another stone from the ground with his left hand as he stares out toward the viewer. Behind him the remaining Jews appear in diminishing sizes to accommodate the narrowing frame. Each of the male persecutors, clad in short garments and coifed in closely cropped curls and full beards, holds a rock in his hand. On the opposite side of the composition Stephen is wedged into the edge of the picture field. Sculpted in profile, he sits on his knees, facing the angel. He leans dramatically toward his vision, his back following the subtle rise of the top of the frame. His hands are not just sculpted in a simple gesture of prayer; he actually reaches forward. Stephen’s fingers make contact with the angel’s. Beneath their hands rocks have come to rest after being flung by the persecutors across the composition. Stephen and the angel are in physical contact with one another and, together, hold what is possibly a stone passed from to the other, or even Stephen’s soul. If this is indeed the case in this rather coarsely carved image, Stephen, after praying for the forgiveness of his persecutors, very literally, corporeally, hands his soul to God’s representative, visually requesting the Lord receive his spirit.¹

¹The spelling varies in French sources “Étienne and “Etienne.”

²Porter, Romanesque Sculpture, 15 and 236.
Monastery Church of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire

The twelfth-century relief embedded in the second story of the porch façade of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire uses an entirely different conception of space than the same story at Chambon-sur-Lac. This roughly square relief depicts the lapidation of St. Stephen in two horizontal registers. On the lower right the proto-martyr kneels, almost suspended in space, proportionally larger than the surrounding figures. The heavens open just above his haloed head. One arm seems to be extended behind him in a defensive gesture, or in the antique attitude of devotion recognized in the orant figures. To his right a lone figure stands looking on, separated from the executioners. His short cropped hair, beard, and sword suggest that this is Saul. He holds a long object to his body; obscured by lichen, it could be a scroll. Or, if this is Saul, it could be the coat of one of the executioners. The persecutors, again religiously undifferentiated except for their short garments, fill the left two-thirds of the lower composition. Three stand in the center, looking in various directions, holding stones prominently above their heads. Reserves of rocks are cradled in their clothing. On the far left, three more slayers are poised with stones ready to hurl. One sits on the ground, with a stone ready to pass to the next man. The man farthest to the left grasps a stone in each hand, holds them over his head, and stares blankly out at the viewer. Above the entire scene, Stephen’s vision is carved. A standing figure, punctuated by a mandorla dominates the composition. With hands extended to either side, the viewer may initially interpret the figure as Christ standing at the right hand of God. Another divine figure looms with his right hand outstretched from the right corner of the frame. Upon closer inspection, one notices that the figure standing in the mandorla does not have Christ’s cruciform halo and he wears the liturgical dalmatic of the medieval deacon. This is Stephen, or his spirit, as it is assumed into heaven and assimilated into the Heavenly Court. The proto-deacon’s arms extend out to the edges of the mandorla. Angels flank the proto-martyr’s mandorla. The bust figure in the right corner is Christ with the cruciform halo, segregated from the rest of the composition by a radiant crescent and the angel’s wings which replicate and reinforce the shape. His outstretched hand gestures toward the proto-deacon as his hand reaches delicately over the celestial crescent. An astrological body, much like that seen at Chambon-sur-Lac, is depicted to the left of Christ’s head.3

Church of St. Stephen at Lubersac

As engaging as the façade reliefs of Chambon-sur-Lac and Saint Benoît-sur-Loire are, most depictions of St. Stephen the proto-martyr in the Romanesque period in France appear on capitals. Three twelfth-century examples of the Stephen narrative ornamenting decorative capitals appear on the exterior of the sacristy of the parish church of Lubersac in Corrèze. The ancient little church was rededicated to St. Stephen in the twelfth century at which time the narrative capitals were sculpted depicting the stoning of the martyr, the discovery of the body, and the translation of the relics. The focus of the discovery capital is the proto-martyr’s coffin, dramatically tilted off the horizontal plane to better display the shrouded body to the viewer below. On the left, back of the capital, a bishop holding a crozier peaks from around another figure. That figure, replete in a long liturgical robe, holds the lid to the casket and stares out boldly. Behind the lid a short figure holds a processional cross above the open box. Tree-like foliage forms a backdrop to the group. On the far side another man, also in vestments, supports the other side of the coffin’s lid.

The presence of the bishop with his staff, the cleric with the processional cross, and the churchmen in their vestments create a vision of the installation of the proto-martyr’s relics that is firmly ensconced in the Church’s ceremonial tradition. The three capital sculptural group at Lubersac chronicles the most integral points in St. Stephen’s life. The imagery enables the patrons to advocate for the power of St. Stephen, and the authenticity of his relics housed within.4

Church of St. Just of Valcabrère

Depictions of the stoning of St. Stephen abound in French, Romanesque capitals. Also on a church exterior, a capital of the stoning of Stephen overlooks a jamb figure of the saint on the north portal of the church of St. Just of Valcabrère, from the second half of the twelfth century. On the left side of the composition, Saul observes the martyrdom taking place on the far corner of the capital. He gestures with his right arm toward the execution. He consents to Stephen’s death, as per the primary text. The second scene is one of the martyr’s persecutors. He leans toward the doorway on a subtle diagonal, supporting himself on his right leg. The executioner’s right arm continues the line created by Saul’s arm, and terminates just in front of Stephen’s head. The proto-martyr kneels facing Saul and the persecutor. He is also facing toward the viewer, as he or she enters the church’s doorway. Stones fall around the martyr’s legs. A final figure looms behind Stephen on the back, right side of the capital.

At St. Just, the lapidation provides additional information on the jamb figure below it. The proto-deacon is depicted here with his attribute, the book of the Gospels. The codex and the narrative capital reciprocally reinforce one another. Stephen witnesses through his martyrdom above, and reveals the word of God by referencing/reading the scripture. The role of the medieval deacon as the reader of the Gospels is also relevant.5

Church of St. Pons at Hérault

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York holds a capital from St. Pons, Hérault, of the stoning of the proto-martyr. On the left, creating a corner of the capital, Stephen kneels on his right knee and clasps his hands in prayer. The long, unadorned dalmatic falls to Stephen’s ankles. The deacon’s closely cropped hair is discernable even though most of the head missing from the structure. In front of him, a single persecutor stands with his right hand extended above the proto-martyr’s head. The man’s long hair frames his face which, like Stephen’s, is now missing. His tunic supports intricately carved details suggesting a sumptuous garment. The neck is framed with a delicate piping that continues down the front of the garment, and is decorated with an interlaced, zig-zag tooling. The persecutor’s left hand secures the left side of his hanging, knee-length tunic which he gathers to hold his store of stones for the lapidation. His thigh is conspicuously exposed beneath the stones, presenting an invitation to compare the humility of the proto-deacon’s dalmatic clad leg with the executioner’s immodesty. The comparison can also be made when considering the third figure. On the right corner of the capital another persecutor stands with draping material falling from his right hand. He wears a more voluminous tunic, that while not as sumptuously decorated, still has a delicate border at the neck. His head, though also damaged, has the same long flowing hair seen on the first persecutor.⁶

Temple Church at Montsaunes

A late twelfth-century rendition of the same subject can be found in situ on the façade of the church at Montsaunes, in Haute-Garonne. On the north side of the doorway, two capitals crown two rather modern columns. On the northernmost face is a depiction of the beheading of St. Paul. Around the corner of the same capital is the up-side-down crucifixion of St. Peter. Finally, on the southern capital is an image of the stoning of St. Stephen. On the left of the proto-martyr’s narrative, an angel begins the composition, touching the shoulder of the kneeling saint with his right hand. In front of the angel, the martyr sits on his knees with bowed head. His hands are clasped in prayer and he looks out toward the spectator, rather than up toward a vision. Stones are balanced precariously along the center axis of his bent legs. Only large foliate leaves decorate the space above the scene. The first of three executioners stands menacingly close to the martyr. The persecutor’s body faces the viewer while his head is turned toward the kneeling saint. His hands clasp a large, brick-like rock over his head. Behind him, appearing on the corner of the composition, another executioner is squeezed into the scene. His sack of rocks is displayed for the viewer. He peers out from between the other figures, glimpsing the viewers in the doorway. Above his head, a large round, asterisk-shaped object hangs in the sky, probably a star as seen at Chambon-sur-Lac. On the next face of the capital, another persecutor occupies the central space. He grasps a stone in his right hand and holds it above his head. His left arm flows down across his body, over a large sling of rocks, which displays the instruments of Stephen’s passion. The final figure in the group is Saul. He sits with his legs crossed and his right arm raised, gesturing toward the martyrdom. He also looks out at the viewer from his throne of coats.\[176\]
Church of St. Serge at Angers

A uniquely placed, and abbreviated, image of the lapidation exists among the corbels of the chancel in the twelfth-century church of St. Serge in Angers. High above the viewer’s head one single executioner stands behind Stephen who kneels before him. The proto-martyr’s back is to the standing man. The persecutor holds a stone, with little menace, over his right shoulder. The saint, hardly flustered, sits peacefully. His hands, once held to his body in a gesture of prayer, are now missing. He looks peacefully out over the sacred space of the church. In this image, a single persecutor holding a stone and a kneeling man in liturgical robes, are sufficient to communicate the intended narrative.8

Cathedral of St. Lazare at Autun

The cathedral of St. Lazare, Autun, in Burgundy, has a much more complete rendition of the stoning of St. Stephen on a Romanesque capital (c. 1125). Located on the fifth pier, on the southern side of the nave, and facing west, the primary face of the capital shows Stephen in profile between three fantastic tendrils that grow up from the capital base. His knees are bent, but his body is still supported by his feet. His hands, again in an attitude of prayer, extend out before him. The martyr’s head is tilted upward toward his vision, but his eyes are half closed. Three round stones emphasize his head as if wearing a crown of stones. The rocks are prominently displayed in this composition and are closely associated with the proto-martyr’s body. Above Stephen, the head and arm of Christ descend from clouds, blessing the martyr. On the south face of the capital, a figure, possibly an angel, hovers wearing a long flowing cloak. He holds a broken staff. Elegantly poised on a vegetal spiral, he overlooks the main scene of martyrdom on the front face of the engaged capital. In front of him, an executioner forms the corner of the structure. Balanced on a smaller organic wave, this executioner holds a rock above his head in his right hand. Just in front of him another man also holds a stone over his head, and a bag, now depleted of rocks, in his left hand. He stares down at Stephen and the stones that cling to the saint’s head. In front of Stephen another man seems to be turning away from the scene. His legs and torso face away from the center of the capital. His left hand still supports the drapery of his tunic, and one lone rock peeks out of the right side. The man’s head is precariously twisted and tilted over his left shoulder so as to look back at the dying proto-martyr. Like the other executioners, he holds a stone over head, ready to launch it at the saint. Another stone-wielding man forms the left corner of the front face of the capital. Perched on one foot on a coiling tendril, he grasps his stone over his head with both hands and stares wide-eyed at Stephen. Stephen’s scale seems unusually small compared to his ill-intentioned companions. Not only is his pose strangely fetal, but his body is comparatively exposed. He is missing his typical voluminous dalmatic. On the north side of the capital Saul sits on a throne of fabric over a classically architectural base in a Pilate-like pose. He points to the central action with his right hand. His left hand crosses beneath his right, and wrapping around his body, points to the outside of the composition. If this capital is still settled in the same position as it was placed in the twelfth century, Saul’s left hand points toward the east end and high altar of the church, or possibly the death of Samson depicted on the opposite side of the nave pier. As such, his pointing hand can be seen as a compositional device, guiding the viewer’s eye to the next narrative, or to the ultimate visual destination in the church, the altar.⁹

Church of St. Stephen at Vaux-sur-Mer

The church of St. Stephen at Vaux-sur-Mer, in Poitou, also has a sculpted twelfth-century capital of the stoning of Stephen overlooking the nave. Stephen is depicted on the left corner of the shallow engaged capital. He is standing with his knees only slightly bent. His dalmatic clings tightly to his legs, revealing the structure of the martyr’s body underneath. Much like the image on the capital at Autun, Stephen seems exposed and vulnerable with his thin, attenuated legs. The position of his arms is obscured by the damage of the stone. But is clean-shaven face is turned up to the heavens; although, no image of his vision is depicted. Instead, Stephen stands beneath a rather awkwardly carved leaf and vine motif. Stones land on the martyr’s neck and chest. The first of four executioners stand right in front of Stephen. He faces the martyr and grasps a stone over his head. His face is dramatically tilted down as if looking at the stones striking Stephen’s body. A short, spare tunic reduces this body to a long cylindrical shape. The persecutor behind him stands with his left leg crossed over his right. The man’s torso is depicted frontally for the viewer. The material pulls tightly over his body, creating patterned bands across his chest. He supports a huge rectangular stone over his head and his elbows press into the space occupied by his brethren. Behind him another man is depicted frontally. His right arm is held close over his head. A bag of stones hangs indecorously open in front of his groin. His left hand hangs behind him clutching his cloak and overlapping the final figure in the composition. The last executioner is also depicted frontally. His right arm sticks out stiffly, unnaturally, into the air above the head of the man beside him. He looks out into the church, rather than at Stephen on the other side of the composition. He is almost completely covered by the cloak of the man in front of him. His arm extends behind him, around the corner of the capital. The foliate motif over his head reflects that seen over Stephen’s head.10

Monastery Church of St. Pierre at Moissac

Images from the legend of St. Stephen are also found among the Romanesque cloister capitals of medieval France. The monastery church of St. Pierre at Moissac has a capital on the north aisle of the cloister that includes images of the arrest, stoning, and translation of the proto-martyr, all on the same capital from the first half of the twelfth century. The narrative begins with an image of Stephen, in liturgical dress, flanked by two figures in short garments. Stephen appears in the center of the capital’s face. A halo frames his head, and liturgical vestments give his body a sense of grandeur compared to that of his persecutors. The executioners bracket the saint with arms held over their heads. Damage to the capital has removed any attributes that could have more closely identified the scene. It is possible that this scene could have been an interpretation of the beginning of the stoning where Stephen remains on his feet, or he could be preaching to the Jews. There is a subtle indication of movement in the saint’s stance that guides the viewer’s gaze counter clockwise around the capital where the scene of the arrest takes place. It should be noted that while this narrative capital does indeed progress around the structure in a counter-clock-wise direction—indicating that the viewer should walk around the column to “read” it—this mode of viewing is prohibited by the cloister structure. A low wall limits the viewer’s access to all faces of the capital. In the arrest scene Stephen is taken in hand by two persecutors. He seems to be lead into the next seen, the lapidation. Three executioners stand poised to cast their stones at the proto-martyr who kneels just right of center in the composition. Only the halo remains intact, but an indication of the position of the arms can still be seen on the stone. The rocks seem to puddle around Stephen’s legs. There is no suggestion that the saint’s divine vision was ever carved here. Another persecutor faces the saint, dividing the stoning from the image communicating the translation of the relics. It is difficult to identify Saul among the men. There is no figure seated on a mound of coats and the heads of most of the figures are missing.

In the translation scene, two clerics support a reliquary suspended from a horizontal post and possibly covered with a drapery. Beneath it, an altar, or sarcophagus, bears an inscription of the saint’s name along the top of the structure and the words “Blessed Stephen” on the front. A halo supporting a blessing hand hovers just above the casket. The translation scene, like the one at Lubersac, does not hint at the specific details of the translation story as it relates Stephen’s journey from Jerusalem, to Constantinople, and to Rome. Rather, the scene allows the viewer to include his surroundings as the ultimate destination of the proto-martyr’s relics.

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Cathedral of Saint-Trophîme at Arles

Among the twelfth-century cloister capitals at Saint-Trophîme at Arles, once a cathedral devoted to the proto-martyr, a capital of the Stephen narrative retells the story of the stoning of the martyr. The artist has sculpted the figures into a claustrophobic arrangement. From in between the two capitals of the double column construction, an executioner emerges with a rock grasped in his right hand and raised aloft. Each overlapping the one before, another persecutor appears just beneath him while a third, particularly menacing man, creates a transition from the long side of the capital to the narrow side. His body leans forward on a diagonal and each of his hands clasp stones. His right hand extends over his head, threatening St. Stephen who is directly in front of him. Here the saint, although kneeling, appears as large and dramatic as each of his persecutors. His face is turned up to the heavens as a blessing divine hand extends from a tiny celestial cloud in front of the martyr’s face. Stephen’s executioners continue around the capital behind the saint. The first persecutor behind Stephen stands in a frontal posture on the corner of the composition. His hands each grasp a stone and are raised to the height of his head. The next executioner bends down and collects more stones which he keeps in a bulging bag on his hip. Behind him, another figure is tucked in the back of the capital with a stone gripped in his right fist and his left pulled into his torso. Both of these figures look out at the viewer.

The most dramatic imagery from the story of the proto-martyr in Saint-Trophîme’s cloister is on the northeast pier. Its drama is created in part by its larger scale compared to the cloister capitals. Stephen kneels, roughly in profile, on the shallow shelf of the relief. His hands, placed palm to palm point to the pinnacle of the composition, a position reinforced by the direction of his glance. A rock is firmly seated on the martyr’s upturned forehead. Two standing men flank the saint on either side of the symmetrical composition. Dressed in short tunics and leggings, their clothing creates a striking contrast to the kneeling martyr’s long robe, and the long flowing vestments of the column statues of Paul and Stephen on the left and right of the relief, respectively. The executioners encircle the saint like parentheses. Their bearded faces contrast with the youthfulness of the clean shaven martyr. Both of the men hold, or held, rocks high above their heads. However, their proximity to Stephen and their poses suggest that they will not hurl their stones, but will bring them down directly upon the young martyr’s head. Well above, the focus of Stephen’s gaze is displayed for all viewers. A bust of Christ—in the tradition of the imago clipeatus—appears breaking the upper frame of the composition and offering his blessing.

As provocative as this large scale version of the lapidation of Stephen is in the cloister of S. Trophîme at Arles, the much more public and monumental rendition of the same subject on the façade of the church is even more impressive. The central widest register of the façade supports relief portraits of the apostles and saints; however, one saintly narrative was inserted. The first panel to the right of the doorway, on the primary plane of the façade, supports an image of the lapidation of Stephen. The lower level of the composition is not unlike the image in the cloister. Stephen, depicted in profile, is turned to the right and kneels in prayer. His hands extend dramatically into the space before him. The executioners with their full, shapeless, bearded faces wear short tunics, leggings, and shapeless caps. They stand apart from the proto-martyr. Each man stands with both hands extended over his head, gripping a stone. Their attention is absorbed by the figure of Stephen at their feet. They seem oblivious to the intricate
celestial scene occurring just at their heads. In the center of the composition a small, nude figure, Stephen’s soul, issues forth from the martyr’s mouth. The little figure is framed by a cloth and an enigmatic radiating shape held by two angels. The little metaphoric body is pulled from the earthly realm by the angels who take it by the hands and lift it upward to the open hand of Christ overlooking the action below. Christ’s head with a prominent cruciform halo peaks out from a radiating series of clouds, punctuated by the round sweep of the angel’s wings. Christ’s right hand forms the gesture of benediction and his left hand breaks the frame as it opens, palm out, both gesturing to the scene below and reaching to receive Stephen’s spirit.  

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Cathedral of St. Stephen at Cahors

Not far from Arles, the early twelfth-century cathedral of S. Étienne at Cahors incorporates a rather extensive and detailed cycle of the proto-martyr’s narrative into the north portal’s tympanum. The central focus of the composition is Christ in Majesty, flanked and surmounted by angels. Across the bottom of the construction, the apostles appear in an arced space, surmounted by various cityscapes. The Stephen legend is inserted on either side of the angels that surround and present Christ, and above the line of apostles.

On the left on the tympanum, on the lower register above the apostles, Stephen is the first figure the viewer encounters. Wearing his dalmatic, he holds an small open book in his left hand, partially concealed by the flowing sleeve of the vestment. Unlike his medieval counterparts, he is not just reading the Gospel book, he is preaching. The saint wags a finger at a man standing in front of him in a gesture of correction and reproach. The man, in a shortened tunic, moves away from the saint. His right hand falls down his side, but his palm is turned toward the cleric as if to push the holy man, or the book, away. The man’s left hand is placed in a self referential gesture, touching his own chest lightly. The man to the right is emphatically marked as a Jew. Covering his head is a pointed hat, the peak of which is crammed beneath the frame of the composition. His arms cross his torso defensively and his hands are clasped above his hip. Another figure stares in the saint’s direction and covers his ears with his hands, creating a physical barrier to the words of the proto-martyr. The next man turns away, his hands raised in a gesture of exasperation. The final figure in the register again stops his ears and glances outside of the composition.

Above, the narrative continues. A man seems to rush into the composition from beyond the left frame with his right hand raised and his palm facing out. His left hand is conspicuously propped on his thigh. Two more figures continue the compositional movement with animated gestures. The first raises his right hand displaying his palm in front of his chest. His left arm crosses his body and rests on his right hip. The next figure also raises his right hand, but his left crosses behind a column, conspicuously placed in the center of the composition. These are the false witnesses, who are testifying against Stephen.

Crossing behind the column in the Cahors composition, a Jewish man in a Phrygian cap seizes Stephen by the arm. His left hand is placed on the saint’s hip so as to push the cleric toward a doorway represented on the edge of the narrative frame. Stephen is presented frontally with his left hand extending from his body at a right angle over a capital that composes the narrative frame, guiding the viewer’s eye across the tympanum. His palm is facing down and his thumb is missing. The flat structure over his hand is the impost of the capital, surmounting another column which reinforces the presence of the open door of the city gate of Jerusalem that the saint is to be pushed through. In his right hand he holds a small book of the Gospels.

On the opposite side of the tympanum, Stephen is stoned in the lower register and his vision is depicted in the upper zone. In the bottom composition, Saul again sits enthroned in Pilate-like fashion. However, while the Roman governor turned away from Christ’s torture, the Roman tax collector witnesses the martyrdom with wide eyes. Here Saul sits in an architectural façade with his hand extended referencing the martyrdom in front of him. Two men, each holding a store of stones in their tunics, step menacingly with rocks in hand. A third executioner
occupies the vegetal interlace that frames the entire tympanum. With his right arm and legs twisted and entangled in the foliage, his left hand holds a stone intended for Stephen. His left hands grasps a long, narrow stone. The saint kneels on one knee among a barrage of stones. One stone strikes his forehead; another makes contact with his ribs. Still another falls inside his right leg while a fourth hovers in the space behind the martyr. Stephen’s hands, again are clasped in prayer and extend dramatically before him. Both of his hands and his line of sight point to his vision in the upper register.

Here, the artist sculpted a unique interpretation of Stephen’s heavenly vision. Directly above Stephen, the hand of God descends from celestial clouds and breaks the boundary between the heavenly and earthly realms. The composition is dominated by Christ as God the Father enthroned. Presented frontally, his arms extend to either side in reference to the crucifixion. The seated figure holds a tiny book in his left hand. To heighten the inference, personifications of the sun and moon, each with veiled hands appear above. As per Matthew 27: 45, “From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.” Such images were popular in architectural imagery of the crucifixion in southern and southwestern France. A contemporary manuscript from Saint-Germain-des-Prés has eloquent personifications of the sun and moon above the crucifixion that have very similar headgear as those seen on the tympanum at Cahors. On the left side of the register Christ is represented again, according to Stephen’s testimony, standing at the right hand of God. His attention is directed at the enthroned figure. Christ holds a book against his body with his left hand. His right hand gestures to the astrological personifications above him.¹³

Cathedral of Notre Dame at Chartres

As the application of portal sculpture expanded in subject matter in the late twelfth century, hagiographic narratives became more extensive and intricate as they were envisioned as part of monumental sculptural programs. An early Gothic example of the Stephen narrative appears on the left, or western-most, portal of the southern transept arm of Chartres Cathedral (figure 28). Sculpted c. 1215, this porch is devoted to the martyrs and balances the right porch committed to the confessors. The central portal is dedicated to the Second Coming of Christ. As such the Stephen story is part of a larger façade program reflecting the world after the coming of Christ.

The story begins on the lower left archivolts. A seated Jewish elder begins the composition on the outer archivolt niche. The bearded man wears a long robe and a Phrygian cap. His seated posture is emphasized by his crossed legs. The attribute he once held in his hands is now missing, but was probably a scroll. In the next scene St. Stephen, also seated, holds a badly broken but easily recognizable codex. A halo stands out from behind his shoulders. The deacon’s dalmatic and clean shaven face differentiate him from the men on either side of him. To the right, another Jewish elder occupies the innermost niche. This man is standing. In his left hand, he holds an unrolled scroll that extends from his shoulder to this hip. His missing right hand must have gestured at the text. Behind the bearded, capped man, his cape falls onto a bench. He has stood up to provide testimony to the seated man. This is Stephen’s trial. The scroll is referenced by the false witness, which is presented as a foil to the codex displayed in front of the martyr’s body.

The tympanum is dominated spatially by Stephen’s vision. At the peak of the tympanum Christ stands with his right hand lifted in benediction. His left hand is buried beneath the voluminous drapery of his robes. He is framed by kneeling angels that create a symmetrical composition. The bottom zone of the composition shows Stephen being led from the city gates of Jerusalem. An older, bearded man with a cap stands in the doorway touching his chin with his right hand. In front of the bearded man Stephen is lead across the composition. One man pushes the saint along from behind, while another leads the deacon by the hand, looking over his shoulder as they walk. Stephen, being pulled along by his right hand, is dressed in liturgical robes that dust the ground. The storytelling device of continuous narrative is employed across the space. Stephen and his persecutors are shown again in the stoning. The martyr rests on his knees and clasps his hands in prayer. He looks to the figure of Christ looming above. Three executioners dressed in both short and long tunics, and poised with stones, accompany the proto-martyr. The man directly in front of the kneeling Stephen faces forward and holds a bundle of stones in his left arm. His right arm, now missing, was once raised and probably held a rock. He has a similarly clean shaven face compared to Stephen’s in front of him, but his short knee-length tunic creates a striking dichotomy with the deacon’s dalmatic. Behind Stephen, another persecutor stands with a stone poised to launch from his right hand. This man has longer, fuller hair and a garment that falls three-quarters of the way to the ground. The final executioner in the scene is an older man. His beard is full and he wears a garment that reaches the ground. Much like the man in front of him, he faces the direction of Stephen and holds a rock overhead in his right hand while grasping another in his left held at his hip.
The drama spills onto the archivolts. Another executioner stands in the first archivolt with his arm raised over his now missing head. The figure in the second tier is now completely missing but was most probably another persecutor. In the third register a man stands with stones gathered in his tunic, supported by his right hand. He has removed his cloak, and holds it out to Saul, sitting in the next archivolt. Saul sits perched upon the high stack of garments, overlooking the scene of martyrdom. Even though he is resigned to the fourth tier of archivolts, his authority over the scene is unmistakable. Behind him a final executioner stands looking out at the viewer with a sling of stones hanging from his figure.\textsuperscript{14}

Church of Notre Dame at Vermenton

Chartres Cathedral does not have the only portal where the archivolts are used to retell the story of the proto-martyr. The west portal of Notre Dame of Vermenton from the late twelfth century, in northern Burgundy, also injects the upper tier of its entrance with a scene from Stephen’s story. The first archivolt on the left, on the outside tier, is an image of a single executioner barraging the proto-martyr with stones.  

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15 Anne Claire Doherty, “Burgundian Sculpture in the Middle of the Twelfth Century” (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1980); and Porter, Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads.
The Cathedral at Reims also has a small sculptural acknowledgment of the proto-martyr.
The arrest of Stephen, while part of the portal system, is placed on the interior of the west façade
over the right portal. Greatly damaged during World War I, the mid-thirteenth-century image can
only be studied through pre-war photographs. On the doorway buttress, the narrative begins with
Stephen distributing bread to two women. The deacon is the first figure in the scene and stands
roughly in profile, holding a loaf of bread. In front of him a large basket full of bread sits on the
ground. The reference to bread in this context would not only reference the Early Christian
agape, but also the consecrated host symbolizing the martyred body of Christ as it was
disseminated within the church by medieval deacons. Quite a distance beyond the bread basket, a
woman stands with her right hand raised as if speaking to the servant. Behind her another figure
seems to be walking into the picture plane. He wears a short garment and carries in his left hand
his own container that mirrors the deacon’s loaves. Could this be more bread, or stones,
prematurely collected for the saint’s martyrdom?

The main scene takes place on the lintel over the portal proper. On the left side of the
lintel an enthroned figure, depicted in profile, converses with another man standing before him
and holding a staff (or sword?) diagonally across his body. The enthroned man wears long robes
and his head is covered with a rounded, fitted cap with a small round shape at the crown. His left
hand seems to hold something, but the shadow is too deep to see clearly. The man before him
wears a long robe, belted at the waist. He gestures with his right hand and his left sits on the long
object that crosses his body. Several figures appear in shallow relief in the background and are
easier to decipher in an oblique view of the relief. A Roman soldier in a field uniform looks over
his shoulder at the two men in conversation. He holds Stephen by the wrist and by the neck of
his vestment. The deacon, in a voluminous dalmatic and obviously tonsured, stands patiently
with his hands demurely crossed in front of him, a reference to the cross of Christ. Behind him
another Roman soldier stands with a staff which he leans on gracefully with his right hand; his
left hand rests on the hilt of a long sword. Behind him several bearded men watch from a
distance. The first of the four wears a beard and long robes. His right arm disappears into the
background. In his left hand he holds what appears to be a small scroll against his body. He
seems to be turning away from the main action, the trial of Stephen, to interact with his
companions. The next figure emerges from the background of the relief. He looks to the
previous figure and clasps his robe with his left hand in front of his body. Both he and the next
figure wear Phrygian hats. This man, also in long garments, is depicted frontally. His raised
right hand seems to point to the main action on the left half of the composition. He gathers a bit
of his outer garment with his left hand which also grasps a rolled-up scroll. Finally, a beardless
man holds a staff in his left hand with which he reaches up to scratch his forehead in a pensive
gesture.

Around the interior corner on the doorway buttress two figures look onto the trial of
Stephen. Their scale, the continuous ground plane and their appearance as Jewish elders suggest
that they were meant as part of the narrative. A third, enigmatic image of the bust of a man with
a hand held to the figure’s cheek occupies the window of what could be interpreted as the city
gate, where Stephen will soon be lead for execution. The isolation of the arrest of Stephen seems
contextually strange without visual mention of the pending stoning of the martyr. Most Gothic portal programs, even when badly dilapidated, highlight the stoning as the preferred, iconic representation of the martyr’s story. The placement of the proto-martyr’s narrative on the interior of the primary exit of the cathedral may provide a hint at the expansion of the narrative to include a reference to Stephen’s service at tables. This image occupies the interior space where mass is celebrated. The depiction of bread, as distributed by Stephen, the proto-deacon, would have been understood as the forerunner of the host, circulated by the medieval deacons.16

Church of St. Stephen at Beauvais

The west façade portal of the church of S. Étienne at Beauvais, c. 1230, supports a badly damaged image of the lapidation of the proto-martyr. The left side of the bottom register is devoted, tellingly, to the Nativity of Christ. The Virgin lies beneath a draped canopy, pulled back and secured for the privileged witness of the Nativity. The Christ child lies above her and Joseph sits on the edge of the picture field facing the mother and child. Above the bed, a celestial space is open to the scene. Behind Joseph, a column, now missing, divides the Nativity from the lapidation. Stephen’s vision, tied into the dividing column’s capital, is almost undecipherable. Nevertheless, it mirrors the celestial space over the left side of Mary’s bed. The figure in front of Stephen (a persecutor?) is completely lost. While Stephen’s head is missing, his halo is still prominent and his body, in its medieval dalmatic, is clearly visible. Behind him three persecutors lift their hands over their heads to hurl their stones. The final figure in the scene appears to be Saul, witnessing the execution from his throne of cloth. The scene at the top of the tympanum is the coronation of the Virgin. The juxtaposition of the Nativity with the lapidation of Stephen is particularly appropriate and reflects the arrangement of the liturgical calendar, as explained in *The Golden Legend*. On the portal in Beauvais each parishioner can witness for him or herself that Yesterday Christ was born on earth, in order that today Stephen might be born in heaven.”

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Cathedral of Notre Dame at Bayeux

At the thirteenth-century cathedral of Notre Dame at Bayeux, Stephen’s sermon, arrest, and stoning are depicted on the lowest level of the south transept portal’s tympanum. Among a crowd of Jewish listeners, Stephen stands out in his dalmatic, the ninth figure from the left. His congregation sits before him; interaction among the listeners is obvious. He faces a standing figure who props a foot up on a stone between himself and the deacon, visually foreshadowing the lapidation at the end of the register. Stephen leans in attentively. The end of the first and the beginning of the second scenes are articulated by two figures that stand with their backs to one another. In the center zone of the narrative, Stephen is brought before the council leaders, one of whom is seated looking toward the viewer. Stephen stands facing his judges to the right of the seated man, among a crowd of onlookers and witnesses. In the final length of the composition, Stephen falls on one knee as three executioners cast their stones. The martyr’s left hand is propped on his right knee as his left leg is extended behind him. His right hand is now missing; whether his gesture was one of prayer or defense is impossible to discern. The proto-martyr’s head is likewise no longer extant. To the left of the saint an executioner in a short tunic, steps back on his left foot. His right leg extends elegantly into space toward the martyr. They are literally toe to toe. The Jew’s right arm was once extended above and behind him and his left arm supports a collection of rocks. A trace of the stone that once hung in the air between the Jew and the deacon is still visible. A second persecutor stands close to the first, but with head, arms and legs missing, his exact actions are indiscernible. Behind Stephen another figure throws a stone from his right hand while stepping forward the kneeling man with his right foot. Saul ends the narrative scene perched upon the garments of the executioners. His legs are crossed and his left hand rests on his right knee in a striking gesture that parallels that displayed by Stephen whom he watches. The top registers of the tympanum are devoted to the story of Thomas à Becket.18

Cathedral of Notre Dame at Rouen

The cathedral of Notre Dame at Rouen, devotes an entire tympanum to one scene from the Stephen legend, the stoning (figure 4). Sculpted c. 1240 over the south door of the west façade, the figures in the composition are large compared to the scale of similarly conceived Gothic images. The monumentality of the figures creates a particularly poignant retelling of the proto-martyr’s death.

The open door to the city of Jerusalem stands ajar on the right side of the composition. The open void provides the viewer with a geographic reminder of the walled city of Jerusalem where Stephen was martyred. One executioner stands between Stephen, in the center of the composition, and the gateway. Even though they are now depicted only from the hips up, the figures appear grand compared to the images of the lapidation of Stephen on portal tympana considered thus far in this thesis. The first executioner, crowned with a dramatically pointed hat, stands with his right arm raised and stretched dramatically behind him. The proto-martyr, with a large round halo, kneels with arms that once extended in front of him. His face is turned to his vision directly above his head. The clouds open over Stephen’s head to reveal an image of Christ enthroned, surrounded by a mandorla and flanked by six angels of diminishing sizes tucked into the narrowing spaces of the pointed arch.

Three more persecutors can be discerned standing behind Stephen on the left side of the composition. Their heads, like the martyr’s, have been destroyed. But the remainder of their torsos convey that there were originally two men and a boy throwing stones at Stephen. Their badly damaged garments still hold the rocks.

Behind the trio, on the far left of the composition, Saul half sits, half stands over the garments of the executioners in front of him. He looms over the scene, the privileged witness of the martyrdom. The gesture his arms once made can only be imagined. Like his arms, his face has been so badly damaged that its features are no longer discernable. His head, however, is uncovered, unlike the men standing below him. They are emphatically marked as Jews by their towering, pointed hats.

The extreme lower left corner of the tympanum provides an excellent clue to the powerful impact the tympanum must have made on the viewer in the mid-thirteenth century, when it was constructed (figure 6). Behind Saul and beneath the garments, a thin section of stone connects the tympanum to a small wedge of the relief that is all that is left of the lowest part of the composition. The foliate frieze that forms the lowest part of the tympanum does not reach all the way to the left side of the portal. The lowest register of the tympanum was once a full third taller than it appears today and must have been truly monumental with the inclusion of the figures’ legs.19

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Cathedral of St. Stephen at Bourges

Very few cathedrals in central France in the late medieval period did not participate in Stephen’s cult and the thirteenth-century portal constructions boast some of the most unique, and intricately detailed visual retellings of the proto-martyr’s story. The cathedral of St. Étienne of Bourges has a five portal west façade; the second portal from the south is devoted to the establishment’s patron saint (figure 1). The tympanum of the Stephen portal presents a chronological progression of events that begins in the lower left register, moving all the way to the right and then continuing on the left of the next level up. There are three horizontal zones to the entire narrative which begins, uniquely, with the ordination of the seven deacons. Stephen kneels before two apostles in the first scene. The right hands of the two undifferentiated elders bless the younger man. The left apostle touches the deacon’s hands with is left hand. The apostle behind Stephen holds a book in his left hand. Both the book and his hand rest on the kneeling deacon’s shoulder. The other six men wait in line behind the ordination. While their faces are subtly differentiated, their dalmatics are virtually identical and they each hold a book in front of their bodies. Behind the final deacon, a tower rises through the composition, dividing the ordination from the arrest of Stephen. Stephen is led by the hand by one man who already seems to have gathered his stones. Another man urges Stephen forward from behind with his hands on the deacon’s shoulders. Through the method of continuous narrative, two different men escort Stephen again in the same scene, pulling him along by his left hand.

The second register is devoted entirely to the saint’s martyrdom. Saul sits on the garments of the persecutors beneath a tree. One of the men removes his cloak and hands it to Saul. Stephen kneels on his knees toward the center of the composition. His hands are held out in front of him and his head is turned up to his vision. An angel descends from the blessing hand of Christ with a crown for the martyr. Here, the executioners across the horizontal register seem to see the angel descending with the crown. They stand poised with their rocks over head, but they do not look to take aim. The executioner on the far right seems to be rather disinterested in the unfolding martyrdom. He cradles his stones and gazes out toward the viewer. Overhead, Stephen’s vision is interpreted as a standing figure of Christ holding an orb in his left hand and blessing with his right. Angels swinging sensors project from the relief background and praying angels emerge from clouds on the outside of the composition.20

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20Brugger, Bourges: la cathédrale; Branner, The Cathedral of Bourges; Tania Bayard, Bourges Cathedral, and “Thirteenth-century Modifications in the West Portals of Bourges Cathedral.”

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Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris

Similarly detailed, but demonstrating significantly varied compositional choices, the southern transept portal at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris (c. 1258) is fitted with a three-tiered tympanum of the Stephen legend (figure 7). Like the structure at Bourges, the narrative begins at the bottom left. Here, Stephen is seated among the bearded, capped Jewish elders. He holds a book in his lap and he converses directly with the mature men. Another deacon stands behind him. The Jews before the deacon are listening to Stephen’s interaction with the man before him, and consulting their own text in the form of a scroll. Here, like in the Reims cycle, it is evident that the deacon’s head is tonsured. In the center scene, Stephen, with his book under his arm, continues to address the Jewish congregation, but their gestures communicate defensiveness. One man holds his hand up to his chest and the other lays his hand on the first man’s arm as if to lead him away. Below them, three figures—two bearded men in Phrygian caps, and a nursing woman—listen. A fifth man turns from the scene, taking notes on a tablet, and introduces the viewer to the final scene on the lowest level. Here Stephen is arrested. A Roman soldier with stereotyped African features, holds the proto-martyr by the hair. A Jewish man stands in front of Stephen and holds him by the collar of his dalmatic, not unlike the Reims narrative, as if the saint needed to be restrained. Stephen stands passively with his hands folded over one another at the wrist. He is being presented for judgment before the Sanhedrin. Above, in the middle register, returning to the far left, Saul sits on the clothing of the executioners and twists around to face toward and gesture at the stoning. Four men form an arch over the martyr. The first man is depicted with Africanized features much like the Roman soldier’s below. The second and the fourth hold stones in their garments. Stephen no longer simply kneels in an attitude of prayer. He is stretched across the composition with his right hand raised in a defensive gesture. He looks back at his executioners. In the final scene, Stephen’s body is lowered into a casket by two bearded men in a liturgical burial. A woman mourns over his body at the head of the casket. A deacon stands behind the tomb holding a book. Another man stands behind him and holds a processional cross—missing its left arm—in his right hand and a situla in his left. Above the entire narrative, Christ appears in half length, flanked by angels above heavenly clouds.21

21Erlande-Brandenburg, Notre-Dame de Paris; and Aubert, Notre-Dame de Paris: sa place dans l’histoire de l’architecture du XIIe au XIVe siècle.
Cathedral of St. Stephen at Meaux

Not far from Paris, the thirteenth-century southern transept of S. Étienne at Meaux houses a tympanum with a very similar composition to that found in Paris (figure 29). Badly damaged, the viewer today can still decipher the seated proto-martyr in the lower left of the cathedral’s composition. Another figure stands behind him. Two figures sit in front of Stephen as he gestures to a text in his lap. Three standing figures frame the seated group. The deacon appears standing at the beginning of the central scene and speaks to three more standing figures. Two people sit on the top of the portal’s trumeau, back to back. The female figure is still present but rather separate from the males in the grouping. She holds a child, but does not seem to nurse. Again, Stephen is presented for judgment by a Roman soldier whose now missing arm once held him by the hair. The figure in front of the deacon also holds him at the torso. Stephen’s hands are crossed before the seated judge. In the middle register Saul sits on the garments of the executioners. The four men frame the martyr, stretched across the composition, maintaining the same defensive posture as seen in Paris. Finally the saint’s body is lowered into the tomb. The men supporting the body, the mourner, and the two clerics are still present, but so badly damaged that their attributes are undistinguishable. In the peak of the arch, Christ sits on an altar-like throne and offers a blessing with his right hand. He is flanked by angels creating a symmetrical composition.

The north transept portal at Meaux was retrofitted with another relief of the Stephen narrative (figure 30). The figure of what was probably the saint is cut off in the first scene of the narrative. His legs and gesticulating arm protrude from the molding. Three men sit listening with their scrolls prominently displayed over long flowing garments. A tower with an open door articulates the beginning of the next scene. Two men escort the deacon from the city. One holds two slings of rocks. Just to the right of center, the stoning takes place. Stephen is sculpted in an awkward lunging position among three persecutors. Finally two men lower the body into a coffin and an angel descends from the clouds swinging a censor.22

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Cathedral of St. Stephen at Auxerre

Also consecrated to the proto-martyr, the cathedral of S. Étienne at Auxerre has one of the most complete late thirteenth-century Gothic visual narratives of St. Stephen. Divided into four registers the narrative begins at the left of the second register from the bottom. The entire tympanum is strictly organized by an architectural framework of stone tracery. The first niche is occupied by a figure in long voluminous garments. Without his head and hands, an exact identification is difficult. The next two niches are devoted to the ordination of the first deacon. Two standing apostles reach forward to a kneeling figure between them, depicted in profile, and lay hands upon him. One reaches forward to clasp the new cleric’s hands and the other places his hands upon his shoulder. In the next scene the young deacon is still kneeling but faces forward and the standing figures withdraw their hands. To the right, Stephen preaches to the Jews. Two men stand, and a man and a woman are seated below. In the last two segments of the register two men seize Stephen, and a third man walks away guiding the eye of the viewer and indicating the next scene. Above and back to the left, a heap of material lays in the edge of the first division of space. Saul sits beside it and receives the tunic of the man in front of him who strips off his outer garment. Another man turns from the scene and looks into the next niche where Stephen kneels between two executioners. Their arms extend into the air, casting their stones. In the next space a man strides toward the proto-martyr and looks out into the space in front of the portal. The adjacent figure seems posed and still, facing forward with his bag of rocks. They form a marked contrast to the man beside them who holds a stone aggressively above his head, and looks at the saint. The final executioner is a diminutive figure crammed into the edge of the arch’s molding. Above, Christ sits in Majesty; the attributes once held in his hands are now missing. Angels fill the niches beside him.  

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Another cathedral dedicated to St. Stephen is the archepiscopal see of Sens. The central portal of the western façade of S. Étienne at Sens was built as a late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century replacement for the twelfth-century early Gothic façade destroyed by fire. Like the Auxerre portal, the Sens tympanum is organized by a network of architectural tracery. However, at Sens the tracery reflects the organization of a Gothic window rather than a blind tracery arcade. Stephen is the first figure to appear in the composition on the bottom far left. The standing deacon addresses a group of Jews. One figure seems to move aggressively toward him. Another stands with his back to the viewer, creating a realistic compositional space in the shallow relief. Beneath the next trefoil, two figures follow Stephen. One figure seems to have been depicted with his arms raised demonstratively above his head which are now missing. The next scene, particularly badly damaged, is a rendition of the stoning with Stephen on his knees in the foreground. Finally Saul sits on the coats of the executioners in the far right of the composition, and even helps one man to discard his garment as he bends across the space. In the quatrefoil above them, two angels ascend with the tiny, nude soul of the proto-martyr. Opposite, on the left, the saint’s earthly remains are left exposed to the birds and wild beasts. Stephen’s body lies in its dalmatic among the stones that were the instruments of his torture and death, awaiting his invention and dissemination. A huge bird is perched over the body’s shoulder and a lion lays at his feet. Instead of devouring the saintly relics, the animals stand guard testifying to the relics’ miraculous nature. At the peak of the composition Christ sits on an altar-like throne, flanked by angels.**\(^{24}\)**

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In conclusion, through this brief survey of the extant, Romanesque and Gothic narratives inspired by the legend of St. Stephen, the unique compositional choices made at each church become apparent. The injection of creative interpretive details, and the rejection of integral events suggest a need to reconsider the construction of these visual narratives. In addition to the existing ancient texts and the popularized *Golden Legend*, the Romanesque imagery provided a visual source book for the construction of Gothic imagery, but each of the tympana prove unique. Even with such variety, the defining structure of the martyr’s story is never abandoned. Stephen’s likeness to Christ is emphasized, creating the pattern by which all martyrs’ sacrifices would be patterned and measured.
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