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## ST. PIERRE-DE-MOISSAC'S PORTAL AND ITS SOLOMONIC GUARDIANS\*

May Oppenheim Talbot

The Romanesque church of St. Pierre-de-Moissac, located in south-central France on the pilgrimage road called the *Via Podiensis*, has attracted continuous art-historical attention.<sup>1</sup> Two areas of this Cluniac abbey have been studied extensively: the famous cloister, dated by inscription to A.D. 1100, with its wealth of historiated and simply decorated capitals; and the grand portal on the south side of the abbey church (c. A.D. 1120–30), set into a thick, crenelated tower near the western end.<sup>2</sup> There within a deeply recessed entrance porch, the visitor faces a tripartite representation of vigorously sculpted reliefs, which display an elaborate program of religious iconography.

Above the portal's heavy lintel sits an imposing figure of a bearded, crowned Christ, reigning in eternal majesty in heaven; the four living creatures surround him, two seraphim stand, one to either side of him, and the twenty-four elders, each one crowned as well, look up at him with adoration (figs. 1, 2).<sup>3</sup> Supporting the massive

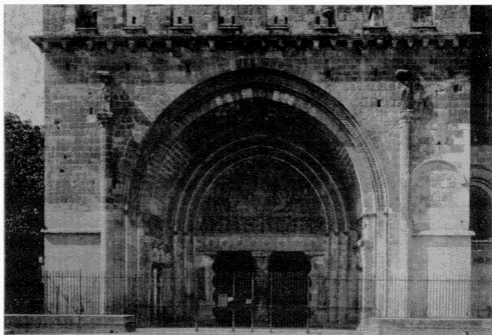
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\*I would like to thank Professor Peter K. Klein; his help and encouragement while I researched this topic were invaluable.

<sup>1</sup> L'Abbé Camille Daux, *Pèlerinage et confrérie de Saint-Jacque de Compostelle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1898), 100; M. Vidal, *Moissac et le chemin de Compostelle* (Moissac, France: Musées de Moissac, 1976), v.

<sup>2</sup> An inscribed pillar in the cloister firmly ascribes the construction there to Ansquitol, abbot from A.D. 1085–1105 as well as confirming the date of A.D. 1100, for which, see Jean Dufour, *La bibliothèque et le scriptorium de Moissac* (Genève-Paris: Librairie Droz, 1972), 153 and pl. 78. The dating of the south tower wall and the porch are generally determined by the years of abbot Roger's abbacy, A.D. 1115–31, during which time he directed the completion of the porch. See Dufour, *La bibliothèque*, 7; and A. Lagrèze-Fossat, *Études historiques sur Moissac*, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie Ancienne et Moderne de J.-B. Dumoulin, 1874), 3:35–8, 113–67.

<sup>3</sup> For the iconography of the eternal majesty of Christ in this tympanum, based upon Apocalypse 4 and 5, and Isaiah 6, see Peter K. Klein, "Programmes eschatologiques, fonction et réception historiques des portails du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Moissac-Beaulieu-Saint-



1. Main Portal, south side of church, St. Pierre-de-Moissac. Repr. from Schapiro, p. 465, fig. 92.

tympanum is a central trumeau that separates the two doors. This post is an artfully interwoven design of six lions in vertical succession, each one crossed over its partner, outer female over inner male. On the left and right side of the trumeau, unseen by the approaching visitor, are relief figures of St. Paul on our left, and on our right, a prophet, perhaps Jeremiah. The strangely cusped door posts at the extreme left and right contain two more relief figures: St. Peter on our left, and on the right, Isaiah holding the scroll bearing the prophecy of the virgin birth.

Scenes of Christ's infancy and the flight into Egypt decorate the right lateral wall while on the left one, terrifying reminders of what awaits the sinner predominate. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man appears here, undoubtedly to underscore the message (figs. 3, 4).

Of the areas just described, the tympanum usually receives the lion's share of attention; the lateral wall reliefs have also been consid-

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Denis," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 33 (Oct.-Dec. 1990): 320-2. For the style of the sculptures, see Meyer Schapiro, "The Romanesque Sculpture of Moissac," *Art Bulletin* 13, nos. 3-4 (September 1931 and December 1931): 249-352 and 464-531, respectively.



2. Moissac's St. Pierre tympanum. Reprinted from E. Rupin, *L'Abbaye et les cloîtres de Moissac* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1897), pl. 4, fig. 220.

ered from an iconographical viewpoint.<sup>4</sup> There is another area, however, which has not, to my knowledge, been given due consideration. In this paper, the two columns flanking the portal, each supporting a distinctive figure, are examined closely, for the first time. I propose that, once their iconography is understood, these architectural features help to identify this portal as Solomonian.

### Saint Benedict and Abbot Roger

On approaching the church, while still about thirty feet away from the porch, the visitor's view includes the impressive tympanum with its awe-inspiring central personage and the lower supports; the lateral wall scenes are hardly visible. At this distance, the two columns flanking the portal are seen as part of the composition (fig. 1). They are built into the tower wall and, apparently, are made of the same brick. Although the capital of the column on our right is severely worn, the one on our left still shows its full Corinthian character. Each one stands around nine meters high (29.5') and supports a

<sup>4</sup> For a recent full discussion, see P. Klein, "Programmes," his treatment of the subject in his section on Moissac.

commemorative figure somewhat less than life-size; a flat stone slab, set into the wall above them, provides some limited shelter (figs. 5, 6). On our right stands a sturdy-looking figure wearing the garment of an abbot; he holds a staff in his left hand and holds his right in a gesture of blessing. An inscription near his left side identifies him as the late abbot Roger whose abbacy lasted from 1115 to 1131, giving us a *terminus ante quem* for his emplacement on the column.<sup>5</sup> Nothing like this identifies the figure on the column opposite; slimmer and taller than the abbot, he wears a simple monk's robe of the Benedictine order, the Rule under which the members of the abbey lived. In his two hands he holds a book or a scroll. Lack of any identifying inscription may have been due to his easy recognition as St. Benedict, founder of the order or, since he is not nimbed, perhaps he stands as a personification of it.

Both figures stand almost free of the slabs that were set into the wall behind them at the time of construction.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the sculpted figures in the porch below, these two stand firmly on the platform provided for them, in a spatial setting created by the individuality of their separate forms. Their more naturalistic qualities were noted by Meyer Schapiro, who saw evidence for this in the simplified contours of the figures and the softer folds of the garments which begin to suggest a more solid body beneath.<sup>7</sup> The later style was also observed by Schapiro in the letters of the inscription.<sup>8</sup> According to Schapiro, the two figures are "so different in expression that it is difficult at first to see their common authorship," attesting to a stylistic development that could "conceive such personal interpretations of a historical and an almost contemporary figure."<sup>9</sup>

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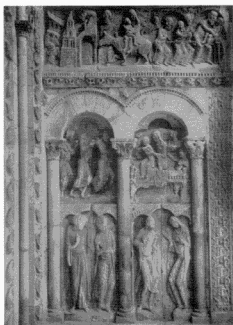
<sup>5</sup> The archaeological information given here comes primarily from the careful examination of the site and the documents made by Lagrèze-Fossat, *Études*, 3:127-31.

<sup>6</sup> Schapiro, 529-30; Lagrèze-Fossat, 3:127.

<sup>7</sup> Schapiro, 530.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 531. From the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale* (Paris, 1982), 8:135-36, we learn that the paleography of this inscription does not allow us to go beyond the mid-12th century for its dating, and the death of the abbot Roger in 1131 confines the actual date to those years in between.

<sup>9</sup> Schapiro, 530-1.



3. (above left) Moissac, St. Pierre, lateral wall reliefs, right (east) side. Repr. from Schapiro, p. 497, fig. 107.

4. (above right) Moissac, St. Pierre, lateral wall reliefs, left (west) side. Repr. from Schapiro, p. 497, fig. 108.

5. (left) Moissac, St. Pierre, tower wall, south side of the church, column-supported figure of "St. Benedict." Repr. from Schapiro, p. 527, fig. 135.

6. (right) Moissac, St. Pierre, tower wall, south side of church, column-supported figure of the abbot Roger. Repr. from Schapiro, p. 527, fig. 137.



Seen altogether, the central portal and the flanking columns supporting figures that turn slightly towards the center may be perceived as a unified expression. Eleanor Scheifele interpreted that expression as one that "abstractly reflects the key events in the abbey's history which engendered the greatest growth and prestige...a monumental emblem for the Cluniac Order and for Moissac's active role and

prominence within it."<sup>10</sup> At best, this is a sweeping statement but reflects a new awareness of the portal on broader terms.

### Towards a New Conception of the Moissac Portal

L. Seidel has recently put forth a theory supporting a wider interpretation of St. Pierre-de-Moissac's portal in which it is given a new conception as a "metaphor," that is, a Romanesque expression of a Roman triumphal arch, the arch of Titus (A.D. 81), "no other."<sup>11</sup> Crusaders or church dignitaries would have seen it in Rome.<sup>12</sup> Both structures have deep, single entrances in which the lateral walls carry reliefs referring to triumph and punishment: the triumphal entry of Titus into Rome is equated with the triumphal approach of the Holy Family to Egypt, which causes the idols to fall; the Jewish humiliation on the opposing wall showing triumphant Roman soldiers carrying the spoils from the destroyed temple is equated with the punishment of the sinful on the opposing wall of St. Pierre-de-Moissac's portal (figs. 3, 4).<sup>13</sup>

This paper proposes a rather different theory, one that takes into account the two flanking columns of the Moissac St. Pierre portal and their crowning components, "St. Benedict" and the abbot Roger. Slim though the possibility may be, there is just enough evidence to suggest that a special significance was invested in these columns, as illustrated by the choice of these two figures. For, as they stand, they fit an old, time-worn iconography of guardians of the portal. We find it well established in the Old Testament. Solomon, upon completing the First Temple for the Lord of the Jews, "set up the [two] pillars at the vestibule of the Temple; he set up the pillar on the south and called its name Jachin; and he set up the pillar on the north and called its name Boaz" (1 Kings 7:21, 2 Chronicles 3:17).<sup>14</sup> Before suggesting that parallels between Solomon's Temple and the St. Pierre-de-

<sup>10</sup> Eleanor Lorraine Scheifele, "Path to Salvation: The Iconography of the South Porch of St. Pierre-de-Moissac," (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1985), 33.

<sup>11</sup> Linda Seidel, "Images of the Crusades in Western Art: Models as Metaphors," *The Meeting of Two Worlds*, ed. Vladimir P. Goss (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), 377-91.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, as we know from Moissac's records for St. Pierre, not only did Ansqutil visit Rome (Dufour, *La bibliothèque*, 8), but during the height of its prosperity, St. Pierre enjoyed frequent exchange visits with Rome, the Holy Land and, especially with Spain as Dufour reports (9, 79, 86).

<sup>13</sup> Seidel, 382.

<sup>14</sup> All biblical references are taken from the Revised Standard Version, 1946.

Moissac portal were deliberately established by the planners, the subject needs to be considered in the light of (a) other examples bearing the same form and (b) literary support for the Solomonic ideal.

### Related Romanesque Portals

Commemorative figures flanking the main portal of Romanesque churches are hardly unknown, as seen, for example, in St. Sernin's Porte Miègeville in Toulouse. There we find St. Peter on the viewer's right and St. James on the left; briefly, St. Peter's presence here signifies (among other things) the strength of papal protection and authority; St. James is a reminder of the final stop on this pilgrimage road to Compostela and that St. Sernin is an important pilgrimage church. A very similar portal is also found in Spain at San Isidoro in León, where Peter and Paul flank the portal. Neither of these examples compares usefully with St. Pierre-de-Moissac's column-supported figures.

Only one example of the required type can be brought forward at this time. In Italy, true Corinthian columns flank the central portal of Fidenza's cathedral (formerly, Borgo San Donnino). Created by Benedetto Antelami (c. 1150-1230) and his workshop, the sculptures are dated to the early thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The central portal alone is enclosed by two Old Testament figures set within niches that include some from the New Testament. To our left, David stands beneath a vision, as it were, of the Presentation in the Temple, a clear allusion to the fulfillment of a prophecy that the Savior would issue from the Davidic line. Less clear is the combination of Ezekiel below the Virgin and child in the niche on our right, unless Ezekiel's vision of the new Temple was interpreted as the Christianized new Temple of Solomon.

In comparing the Moissac portal with this Italian example, we find that in both cases, the tall columns are attached to the wall; the fact that only one figure stands atop the Italian column to our left does not weaken the clear indication that there was once a complementary figure planned for the column to our right. The figure left standing wears a monk's loose, simple garment; not unlike Moissac's "St. Benedict," he also holds a scroll. Arthur Porter has identified him as the apostle Simon, whose "smooth face and long hair" make

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur Kingsley Porter, *Lombard Architecture*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1916), 2:164-95; see also, G. H. Chrichton, *Romanesque Sculpture in Italy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 77-8.



him "analogous iconographically with the statue of the same apostle in the cloister of Moissac."<sup>16</sup> There is a tantalizing possibility that Antelami might have taken his inspiration from Moissac's St. Pierre's facade. The style of his work has been generally recognized as showing the influence of French sculpture,<sup>17</sup> while the similarity of the Italian column's figure to Moissac's "St. Benedict" suggests that a unique idea was borrowed.

It begins to appear that the scheme used at St. Pierre-de-Moissac may have been designed with a distinct idea in mind, but what was that idea? Since these columns are so tall as to dwarf the figures that they hold aloft (fig. 1), they suggest a theme of iconographical importance. If that is so, then the figures that they support must somehow share in that iconography and must in certain respects be part of the scheme.

### Flanking Columns: Guardians of the Portal

Columns that bear living qualities are known from very ancient times in the Near East.<sup>18</sup> The most accessible reference is in the Old Testament in the passage already mentioned; Solomon, in the tenth century B.C., was simply following a custom well known among the Semites, of placing guardian figures or posts at the entrance of a sanctuary or dwelling. Cuneiform records attest to this custom when they report that in the seventh century B.C., King Esar-Haddon placed before his own newly completed sanctuary-palace two man-headed bulls whom he invested with separate but complementary spiritual powers by giving them different names, *Sedu* and *Lamassu*. The king's injunction to them was to guard his portal from evil forces.<sup>19</sup> When in A.D. 70, the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, it was not the First Temple built by Solomon but the Second Temple rebuilt by Herod in c. 20 B.C. There is no indication that this second structure was furnished with similar guardians of the portal. Yet the Jews who carried memories of the Temple into the

<sup>16</sup> Porter, *Lombard Architecture*, 2:188-89. Chrichton adds: "The two great pillars that frame the central porch were left incomplete and not brought to the summit as was originally intended" (75). But he gives no basis for this comment.

<sup>17</sup> George Zarnecki, *Art of the Medieval World* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J./N. Y.: Prentice Hall, Inc./Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975).

<sup>18</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh/N.Y.: T. and T. Clark/Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), s.v. Posts and Poles, 10:91-98, especially 94-95.

<sup>19</sup> Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez, *A History of Art in Chaldea and Assyria*, 2 vols., trans. and ed. Walter Armstrong (N. Y.: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1884), 1:266 and n.

synagogues of their exile included references to these guardian pillars that could only have been known from biblical sources.<sup>20</sup>

In post-Temple art, Solomon's portal guardians were remembered by the careful distinction accorded each one so as to ensure their identification. This was well established at an early date. In the third century A.D. synagogue of Dura-Europos, the central section of the sacred west wall was provided with the earliest known permanent niche for the scrolls of the Law, the Torah Shrine. The entablature painting over the niche features a centrally placed image of a temple entrance (fig. 7). An early scholar on the site, R. du Mesnil du Buisson, quickly identified the small painted entrance as belonging to Solomon's Temple; he recognized that the painter had gone to some pains to show a distinction between the door-post on the right and that on the left. This was done by carefully but distinctly differentiating their capitals (fig. 8). The one on our right looks like a conical element between two orbs, while the one on our left simply bears a horizontal display of four equal-sized orbs.<sup>21</sup> There appears, then, to have been an intention to relate the portal to Solomon's sanctuary by including the iconography of Jachin and Boaz.<sup>22</sup>

A gold glass from a fourth-century Jewish catacomb shows another way in which the Temple guardians were identified. A small temple is shown flanked by two free-standing columns, each one carefully distinguished by position; one stands farther back and close to the building while the other stands closer to the viewer and farther away from the little temple (fig. 9). Clear identification of Jachin and Boaz was of first importance to the artist. And in that early post-Temple period, perhaps just the idea of the Temple guardians made every Jewish house of worship Solomon's Temple in spirit—a *pars pro toto* gesture.

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<sup>20</sup> R. B. Y. Scott, "The Pillars of Jachin and Boaz," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58 (June 1939): 143-9.

<sup>21</sup> Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, *Les peintures de la synagogue de Doura-Europos, 245-256 après J.-C.* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1939), 16-20.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.



7. (above left) Torah Shrine painting from the Dura-Europos synagogue. Repr. from du Buisson, pl. 13, fig. 2.

8. (right) Drawings of the two dissimilar capitals from the Dura-Europos synagogue Torah Shrine entablature painting, made by du Buisson, fig. 15.

9. (above right) Gold glass, 4th c. A.D., from Roman catacomb of the Jews. Repr. from A. B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1914), vol. 2, fig. 33.



### Solomon: the Imperial Son of David

This short excursion into customs held anciently by Near Eastern Semites (primarily) should not be viewed as a digression in a paper dealing with medieval subjects, for these semitic traditions often provided the source of early medieval practices. And while it is reasonable to look to the New Testament for confirmation of most of Christian theology, it is also useful to keep in mind that the church and its affiliates maintained a continued reliance on Old Testament personalities for their contributions to sermonic content. As one example close at hand, on the west lateral wall of the porch of St. Pierre-de-Moissac, on the top level of the relief sculptures, Abraham and Moses sit side by side as symbols of right behavior (faith and adherence to the Law) and reward in the afterlife in the bosom of Abraham.

Central to the discussion here is one outstanding example of Christian reliance on the Old Testament: Christ himself was legitimized, so to speak, through the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6-7: "For to us a child is born...Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...upon the throne of David." According to

majesty of Christ as the son of God," a realization of messianic prophecy. For Odilo, "descent from the royal house of David is equated in the figure of Christ with descent from God...giving prophetic witness for his righteousness to rule the celestial kingdom...."<sup>23</sup>

The importance of the Davidic line in establishing Christ's lineage cannot be overestimated and indeed was not as witness his frequent appearance in Romanesque sculptural programs.<sup>24</sup> David's earlier appearance in Carolingian manuscripts brings us to what may be the source of another use of the Davidic line.

The need to "legitimize" appears also to have been part of the political thinking of Pepin when he regarded his own consecration as king in the mid-eighth century. Drawing upon Adolph Katzenellenbogen, we learn only that,

From Carolingian times the fervent hope was expressed in coronation rites that the Lord would bestow the virtues of Old Testament kings and of early leaders of the Jewish people on those who were regarded as their spiritual successors.<sup>25</sup>

The Ordo for Louis II, the Stammerer, in A.D. 877 reads:

Almighty eternal God..., who hast raised the humble David thy child to the height of the kingdom...and hast enriched Solomon with the ineffable gift of wisdom and peace...adorn through manifold benediction of honor this thy servant with the virtues...[of] the aforementioned faithful.<sup>26</sup>

In A.D. 1059, the same prayer was spoken during the coronation of the French king, Philip I.<sup>27</sup>

Ernst Kantorowicz, in his masterful study of the origins of the royal laudations, brings us closer to the birth of the custom:

What Pepin created and Charles continued was...the revival of the biblical kingship of David....This ritual of the Old Testament and

<sup>23</sup> Scheifele, 201.

<sup>24</sup> In the cloister at Moissac's St. Pierre, Davidic themes are shown on capitals 9, 78, and 87; on the Fidenza cathedral's west facade, as we have seen, he fills an important niche below a vision of the Presentation in the Temple; at St. Sernin's Porte Miègeville, he is shown again in relation to Christ's infancy.

<sup>25</sup> Adolph Katzenellenbogen, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral* (N. Y.: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1959), 28

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

its revival were in full agreement with the drift of the age towards "liturgyfying" the secular sphere and towards theocratic solutions of political problems....The Franks, ever since their victory over the Arabs [in Spain], had begun to think of themselves as the new people chosen by God, the "new sacred people of promise," as they were styled by the Holy See....<sup>28</sup>

This, Kantorowicz tells us, is the meaning of the idea of the Frankish "Regnum Davidicum." The king now was shown as the new David.<sup>29</sup> Nothing shows this more clearly than a painting from the First Bible of Charles the Bald (Tours, A.D. 843-851), where David is shown playing the harp in the company of musicians, imperial guards, and the personifications of the imperial virtues. Any comparison with another leaf depicting Charles the Bald receiving the Bible from Count Vivian (Tours, A.D. 843-851) leaves little doubt that the idealized portrait of the king in the second case is also present in the face of David in the first case.<sup>30</sup> As Kantorowicz asserts, "Pepin's anointment after the pattern of Israel's kings is the keystone...and at the same time the cornerstone of Medieval divine right."<sup>31</sup>

In all this, it should not be forgotten that while David had gained a kingdom for the Jews, it was Solomon in his God-given wisdom who ruled and it was Solomon who had finally given God his first true Temple. David had not been allowed to provide a House for the Lord because he was a warrior who had shed blood (1 Chronicles 28:2-3). God, however, promised that Solomon "your son who shall build my house...for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father" (1 Chronicles 28:6-7).

Thus, we see that the royal nature of David and Solomon carried a special significance and particular value for Pepin and his heirs as a way of legitimizing their traditional right to rule. Churchmen such as Odilo of Cluny saw a similar need to legitimize Christ through Old Testament prophecy (although this was already present in the New Testament). And so we find that the church as the new Temple of Solomon was brought within the bounds of current theological conceptions.

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<sup>28</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 56

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> John Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art* (N. Y.-Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 56.

<sup>31</sup> Kantorowicz, 57.

### Solomon Takes a Wife: Christ and Mary Ecclesia

One need not look for a tendency towards Judaizing; on the contrary, drawing upon the Old Testament's Solomonic material was a familiar practice.<sup>32</sup> Solomon's Song of Songs had first undergone such an interpretation by the early fathers of the church; it was, however, in the twelfth century that "Solomon's nuptial song" was reinterpreted as taking place between Mary (the bride who was also equated with the church) and Christ (who was equated with Solomon).<sup>33</sup> Artistic evidence for this perception is seen clearly in the apse mosaic in Santa Maria in Trastevere, where a dominating, central Christ has his arm around his mother's shoulders in a gesture of "unusual tenderness, which is an exception to the usual solemn representations in Romanesque art."<sup>34</sup> Dating to A.D. 1140, these mosaics are an impressive example of the church's use of the Solomonic foundation for this pictorial presentation, for included are verses from the Song of Songs, suggesting to Zarnecki that,

It is clear that this scene has a double meaning: It is not only Christ and his mother who are represented here, but also Christ and the Church, for according to Christian interpretations of the Song of Songs—St. Bernard alone left 86 homilies on the subject—Solomon and his beloved are Christ and the Church.<sup>35</sup>

Underscoring doctrinal support for this interpretation is the presence within the scene itself of Pope Innocent II (A.D. 1130–43), who commissioned the work.<sup>36</sup> It may be useful to note that five years before the Trastevere mosaics, St. Bernard (A.D. 1096–1153), an inordinately powerful churchman, had begun to write his sermons on the Song of Songs. In these, he took the original intent and recreated the verses on love, putting them within a Christian setting.<sup>37</sup>

Be that as it may, as the Trastevere mosaic apse scene shows, Solomon and his beloved now resided in a Christianized Temple as

<sup>32</sup> For instance, Theodulph's oratory at Germigny-des-Près (early ninth century) persuaded Zarnecki that the mosaic representation of the Ark of the Covenant was "an attempt to make of his chapel an imitation of the Temple of Solomon." *Art of the Medieval World*, p. 118, fig. 123.

<sup>33</sup> Katzenellenbogen, 60, 69.

<sup>34</sup> George Zarnecki, *Romanesque Art* (N. Y.: Universe Books, 1971), 156.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eleade, s.v. Bernard of Clairvaux by Jean Leclercq, 2:114-5; William Watkins, *St. Bernard, the Man and His Message* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1944), 27, 53-57.

Christ and Mary Ecclesia. In that world, Christ and Solomon, the son of David, had merged on the level of the royal nature of the new ruler-God. In some churches, even the furniture of the First Temple of the Jews was adopted in imitation of Solomon. The seven-branched candelabrum, featured so prominently on the arch of Titus, found a place in the eleventh century in Winchester and Munster at Essen.<sup>38</sup>

### St. Pierre-de-Moissac's Portal and Its Solomonic Guardians

Having established a basis for a broad medieval consciousness of the Solomonic aesthetic, it should not seem too unreasonable to suggest at this point that the portal of St. Pierre-de-Moissac, when it was elaborated with flanking columns of a certain type, might have been perceived by the planners as sharing in that aesthetic. These two flanking columns, each bearing a figure of significance for the abbey, must bear the weight of the argument of this paper: they are the identifying marks that suggest that at some point in this portal's history of construction, the idea of a Solomonic Temple entrance was considered (fig. 1). Therefore, the column-supported figures of "St. Benedict" and the abbot Roger need to be brought within the required terms of Solomon's Temple guardians if this idea is to carry conviction.

To briefly recapitulate, Solomon placed two pillars, one on either side of the entrance to his newly completed Temple for the Lord; the one to his left, he called Boaz, the one to his right, he called Jachin (1 Kings 7:21, 2 Chronicles 3:17). Nothing distinguished those two pillars but their names which signified separate but complementary qualities. Boaz means "in him there is strength" and Jachin means "the establisher."<sup>39</sup> These names have been shown to reflect divine virtues.<sup>40</sup> Giving each pillar its special name seems to have been an act that invested those inanimate objects with an animating quality and, as shown above, placing such guardians of the door on either side of the main entrance implied the central importance of the occupant-owner. At Moissac's St. Pierre, that "owner" sits in royal

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<sup>38</sup> George Zarnecki, *The Monastic Achievement* (N. Y.: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1972), 134-5. Especially notable is the one at St. Remi at Rheims, fig. 124, A.D. 1150, which is three times the height of a man: "The popularity of these candlesticks during the Middle Ages was due [in part] to the fact that they imitated the furniture in the Temple of Solomon to which Christian churches were compared."

<sup>39</sup> Scott, 148-9.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

majesty in the center of the tympanum, directly over the entrance to his house (fig. 2).

Facing outwards from a fixed center, the crowned Christ provides the core identification for the iconography of the Solomonic guardians of the portal. This is his Temple. On his left, where Solomon placed Boaz ("in him there is strength"), stands the column supporting the figure of the abbot Roger. On his right, where Solomon placed Jachin ("the establisher"), the column supports the figure of St. Benedict, or the personification of the order. It may be assumed that the Hebrew meaning of these names was known; there was a sufficient amount of traffic between Moissac (an important stop on the pilgrimage road) and Spain to ensure that Hebrew translations were not unknown.

The figures themselves must now be dealt with in such ways as to elucidate their possible parallels to Solomon's portal guardians, at least as these may have been suggested to the planners. Some of Schapiro's sensitive observations are useful here:

By their religious office and significance they are bound to a frontal position...but the abbot Roger looks up to the [viewer's] left and the head and shoulders of St. Benedict are turned to the [viewer's] right, although their glance has no perceptible object...Benedict stands humbly with an ascetic quietude and detachment, and...Roger, in his massive pyramidal costume, has an air of energy and assertion. They are portraits of the...contemplative and active life.<sup>41</sup>

Distinctions such as these set the scene for the rest of the thematic development proposed. Accepting the Benedictine figure in the position of "the establisher," we can connect him with the important monastic rule which was broadly established and specifically so at St. Pierre-de-Moissac.

Roger presents a more complicated picture as he should if he is to fit within the terms "in him there is strength." He was a churchman of great distinction and piety but one who found himself often acting against great odds. That he did so with unusual courage and determination earned him this position, high on the protective wall of the abbey for which he worked so tirelessly.<sup>42</sup> Although the rec-

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<sup>41</sup> Schapiro, 530.

<sup>42</sup> Ernest Rupin, *L'Abbaye et les cloîtres de Moissac* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1897), 70-5; Lagrèze-Fossat, 3:35-8. Some very concise comments are also made by Marcel Durliat,



ords are somewhat confused, it is generally accepted that under his abbacy, the program of the portal was completed.<sup>43</sup> But this must have ranked with his more pleasant duties; decidedly unpleasant was his decision to cover the fountain in the cloister whose reputation for healing powers had drawn a large number of lepers. When disease and death struck down large numbers of the abbey's members, Roger recognized that he was left with no choice but to close the source of the pestilence, the fountain, and drive the lepers away.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps to find forgiveness for an act that may have seemed lacking in Christian charity, Roger acquired for the abbey church a number of important relics among which were "the head and the body" of the Carthaginian bishop, St. Cyprian; for him also a feast-day with processions was declared.<sup>45</sup>

Another quite memorable quality was his courage to hold his ground against those who would deprive the abbey of its rights of self-determination and property. It was during Roger's abbacy that he was forced to take a stand against the local nobles ("abbés chevaliers") who tried to force the abbey into a demeaning position of subservience (c. A.D. 1125). Again, Roger's strength of character led to a judgment in favor of the abbey's continued integrity.<sup>46</sup> Given just these examples of his acts as abbot, no one would question Roger's right to stand in the place of Boaz ("in him there is strength"), at Christ's left hand as St. Paul was often shown. While St. Peter was the first head of the church on earth, it was St. Paul, in Antioch, who first identified the followers of Christ as Christians (Acts 11:26), separating them from their Jewish source. Paul was a relentless worker for Christ, a description that suits Roger in his smaller sphere of activity.

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"Les crénelages du clocher-porche de Moissac et leur restauration par Viollet-le-Duc," *Annales du Midi* 78 (1966): 435-6.

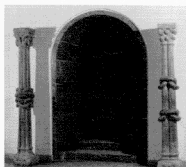
<sup>43</sup> Dufour, *La bibliothèque*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Lagrèze-Fossat, 3:37.

<sup>45</sup> Daux, 307-8.

<sup>46</sup> For recent discussion of the background to this problem, see Elizabeth Magnou, "Abbés séculiers ou avoués à Moissac au XIe siècle," in *Moissac et l'Occident au XIe siècle: Actes du colloque international de Moissac, 3-5 Mai, 1963* (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1964), 127-8. Durliat in "Les crénelages," 435-6, again presents a concise description of the events which found Roger in the thick of the struggle. For a detailed account of the large problem, see Lagrèze-Fossat, 1:113-203 and for Roger's involvement, 3:36-7.

Taken together, the two columns and their crowning figures which flank the portal of this fear-inspiring God, contribute to an aspect of this facade that goes far beyond that of other Romanesque churches in France. As P. Klein noted, the two columns represent public symbols, reflecting the power and authority of Christ, who sits imperiously displayed.<sup>47</sup> There is but a short distance from that description to my proposal that the two columns may have been conceived as guardians of this portal, quite in the style of King Solomon's Jachin and Boaz.



10. The two columns "Jachin" and "Booz." Repr. from Walter Cahn's "Solomonic Elements in Romanesque Art," in *The Temple of Solomon*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Montana: Scholars Press, 1976), fig. 17.

In this study, an attempt was made to adjust current perceptions regarding the aesthetic function of the south portal of St. Pierre-de-Moissac. Suggested by the presence at the entrance of two flanking, attached columns, each one supporting a significant figure, different but complementary to each other, a new idea is offered which regards the St. Pierre-de-Moissac portal as Solomonic, so defined by these added architectural elements.<sup>48</sup> The iconography discussed above suits the type of guardians of the portal flanking the entrance to Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem as described in the Old Testament. The presence of such columns flanking another medieval church entrance provides unusual support for the foregoing argument. For, at approximately the same time (early thirteenth century) that the Fidenza Cathedral portal was given its own tall columns crowned by figures (though only one stands in evidence), a more specific reference to Solomon's Temple was applied to Wurzburg Cathedral (c. A.D. 1225) in the form of two columns with dissimilar capitals (Fig. 10). As Walter Cahn tells us, "The inscriptions leave no doubt of their intended identity: they read 'Jachin' and 'Booz.'"<sup>49</sup> The creators

<sup>47</sup> Klein, 346.

<sup>48</sup> This does in no way set aside the more scholarly theories regarding the iconography of the tympanum and side walls; nor does anything said in this paper overlook the fact that this was a public portal, meant primarily for the lay public, locals, or pilgrims. If my theory holds any truth, a Solomonic portal could only have impressed the hierarchy of any of the powerful groups of the time, whether of the church or of the nobles.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Cahn, "Solomonic Elements in Romanesque Art," in *The Temple of Solomon*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Montana: Scholars Press, 1976), 50-1. Cahn adds further material

of St. Pierre-de-Moissac's facade columns may have been the earliest to add Solomon's guardian pillars as symbolic qualifiers, but it was just one more indication of the already quite popular conviction that the Christian church was the new Temple of Solomon, as the supporting textual testimony confirms.

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evidence in note 14 regarding the conscious use of the guardian columns: in a medieval church in Auvergne, two such columns were found which are inscribed "Ciachin" and "Bootz."