

Varia



JEWISH-CHRISTIAN CONVERSION IN THE GOTHIC STAINED GLASS OF BÉZIERS CATHEDRAL

CONVERSIÓN JUDEO-CRISTIANA EN LAS VIDRIERAS GÓTICAS DE LA CATEDRAL DE BÉZIERS

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ABSTRACT

A unique and previously unidentified image in the Gothic stained-glass fragments of the Genesis window in Béziers cathedral (Languedoc) is here proposed to commemorate the Jewish-to-Christian conversion of a youthful member of the ruling *Nasi* (*Roi juif*) family of the Jewish community of the nearby city of Narbonne. Represented as beardless, crowned, and holding a dove and a black angel, the youth may have been converted by the Dominican friar Paul Chrétien (himself a convert) during his Languedocian tour in the early 1260s, preceding his famous 1263 Barcelona debate. The fragment was part of a Genesis cycle and the dove and black angel, it is argued, represent the Languedocian youth's struggle to understand/accept the concept of the Trinity at Creation.

KEYWORDS: Béziers cathedral, Gothic stained glass; *Nasi* (*roi juif*) of Narbonne; Friar Paul Chrétien; Matfre Ermengaud's *Breviari d'amor*; Maimonidean Controversy

RESUMEN: Una imagen única y no identificada anteriormente en los fragmentos de vidrieras góticas del ventanal del Génesis en la catedral de Béziers (Languedoc) se interpreta en este artículo como una conmemoración de la conversión judeo-cristiana de un miembro joven de la ponderosa familia *Nasi* (*Roi juif*) de la comunidad judía de la cercana ciudad de Narbona. Representado sin barba, coronado y con una paloma y un ángel negro en la mano, el joven puede haber sido convertido por el fraile dominico Paul Chrétien (converso él a su vez) durante su gira por el Languedoc a principios de la década de 1260, antes de su famoso debate de Barcelona de 1263. El fragmento era parte de un ciclo del Génesis y la paloma y el ángel

negro, se argumenta en estas páginas, representan la lucha de la juventud de Languedoc para entender/aceptar en la Creación el concepto de la Trinidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Catedral de Béziers, vitrales góticos; *Nasi (roi juif)* de Narbona; Fray Paul Chrétien; Breviari d'amor de Matfre Ermengaud; Maimonidean Controversia

This study proposes an identification of a series of stained-glass medallions in Béziers cathedral (*dépt.* Hérault, Languedoc) as the story of a Jewish-to-Christian conversion, in the years between the end of the Albigensian crusade (1229) and the expulsion of the Jews by Philippe le Bel (1306). The Gothic glass of the Béziers apse – narrative medallions and grisailles of naturalistic foliage – survives only as a crazy-quilt patchwork of confused fragments. In a refurbishing in 1734-1739, the nine tall, slender lancets of the medieval apse were rebuilt: blocked at the bottom, their central mullions eliminated, and the Gothic tracery at the top replaced by a series of oval, oeil-de-boeuf apertures.¹ The original architectural appearance of the Béziers lancets is reflected nearby in the apses of Lodève cathedral (where the lancets are 15 m. tall) and the collegiate church of Sérignan (where the plan is reduced from nine to seven bays).² Neither Lodève nor Sérignan retains any Gothic glazing.

To glaze Béziers' reconstructed lancets, the Baroque authorities adopted a totally new design composed of reused Gothic/Renaissance fragments, recycled as bits of color and light with no concern for meaning (Fig. 1). The fragments range from identifiable figural groups from Christ's life (though in no sequence and sometimes upside down) to single heads, hands, and unpainted bits of colored ornament. These precious bits, however, are totally unmarred by the excesses of nineteenth-century restoration, as is often the case with Gothic glazing.

The date traditionally associated with the Béziers apse (around 1300) was first disputed by Christian Freigang, who placed it in the 1270s, following completion of the transept (by 1252) and the start of nave construction (around 1294). More recently Andreas Curtius would place construction of the Béziers apse even earlier, in the 1260s.³ That date corresponds well with the style of the Gothic glass, both the fragments of medallions and of grisaille, and will be adopted here.

¹ O. POISSON, "La transformation des vitraux gothiques du chœur de la cathédrale Saint-Nazaire de Béziers au XVIII^e siècle", in *Les vitraux de Narbonne: L'essor du vitrail gothique dans le sud de l'Europe*, M. DEMORE, J. NOUGARET, and O. POISSON (eds.), Narbonne, 1992, pp. 79-88. On the 1980s restorations see p. 88, notes 12 and 14.

² Lodève and Béziers cathedrals, 42 km. apart, were in the medieval archdiocese of Narbonne. The Lodève apse has simplified tracery that has been attributed to Franciscan influence, following Bonaventura's 1260 Constitutions of Narbonne: A. CURTIUS, "La cathédrale de Saint-Fulcran de Lodève: Ses sources d'inspiration et sa place dans l'histoire de l'architecture européenne", in *Autour des maîtres d'oeuvre de la cathédrale de Narbonne: Les grands églises gothique du Midi, sources d'inspiration et construction*, M. DEMORE, J. NOUGARET, and O. POISSON (eds.), Narbonne, 1994, pp. 71-80; CURTIUS, *Die Kathedrale von Lodève und die Entstehung der languedokischen Gotik*, Hildesheim, 2002, pp. 231-50 passim (Section III, A). For Sérignan, 9 km. from Béziers, see CURTIUS, *Die Kathedrale von Lodève*, pp. 233-35, Abb. 410-13, 417; F. ROBIN, *Midi gothique: De Béziers à Avignon*, Paris, 1999, pp. 352-56.

³ C. FREIGANG, *Imitare Ecclesias Nobiles: Die Kathedralen von Narbonne, Toulouse und Rodez und die nordfranzösische Rayonnantgotik im Languedoc*, Worms, 1992, pp. 223-25, 233-35; CURTIUS, *Die Kathedrale von Lodève*, p. 152. Curtius dates the Lodève apse around 1268-70: pp. 149-56, 172, 175. French literature on Béziers repeats the traditional dating of around 1300: ROBIN, *Midi gothique*, pp. 260-74; *Languedoc-Roussillon: Le guide du patrimoine*, J.-M. PÉROUSE DE MONTCLOS (ed.), Paris, 1996, pp. 159-66.



Fig. 1. Béziers cathedral, the Baroque reglazing of the choir. Gothic fragments reused for color, below and above a central band of (mostly) Renaissance standing figures, completely without program. (Photo: Painton Cowen)

A short excursus will be useful here to justify the dating of the Béziers glass fragments to ca. 1265-1275. Dating of medieval stained glass is most secure by an analysis of the ornament. In 1974, Jean-Pierre Suau correctly identified the ornamental elements in the Béziers medallions as originating in the elongated lancet glazing of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris (ca. 1243-1248), particularly Bay L.⁴ Suau further noted their adoption, among the parisian

⁴ J.-P. SUAU, "Les débuts du vitrail gothique dans le Languedoc", in *La naissance et l'essor du gothique méridional au XIII^e siècle, Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, 9, (1974), pp. 331-71, here 346-47; see also p. 356, fig. 20. On the Sainte-Chapelle glazing: L. GRODECKI in M. AUBERT *et alii*, *Les vitraux de Notre-Dame et de la Sainte-Chapelle de Paris*, (Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi - France vol. I), Paris, 1959: p. 89, pl. III (bay A); p. 155, pl. IV (bay L). The narrow medallion-borders at Béziers, composed of two thin fillets, occur throughout the Sainte-Chapelle. For the outer borders of the Béziers medallions, see Sainte-Chapelle bay B (p. 277).

vocabulary, at the cathedrals of Tours and Clermont-Ferrand. For Tours, I would suggest bays 200 and 201 (ca. 1255-1265). For Clermont, bays 9 and 13 (ca. 1265-70)⁵. The medieval glazing program proposed by Suau, composed of colored lancets of storied medallions at the axis of the chevet, flanked by grisailles to north and south, is well established by the 1260s. I have referred to it as “summer-and-winter”. Also appearing in the 1260s are details of the grisaille painting, among them naturalistic foliage (here ivy and strawberry), maintenance of a crosshatched ground, and the overall network of red and blue fillets⁶. In short, every aspect of the Béziers glazing fragments supports a date of ca. 1265-1275. And if the Béziers chevet was constructed in the 1260s, as is now believed, the glazing would probably have followed without much delay.

Each of the colored, axial, bays would have had its own repeated medallion design as well as its own unique border pattern. Hence those fragments that still retain bits of their medallion and/or border ornament can be assumed to have originated in the same Gothic bay with others containing the same designs. Based on such ornament, the painstaking work of Suau identified fragments from three medallion cycles that undoubtedly glazed the three central bays of the Béziers apse⁷. Christ’s Infancy and Passion, surely located in the axial window (Bay 0, in the numbering of the French Corpus Vitrearum); the lives of the cathedral patrons, saints Nazaire and Celse, most likely immediately to the south (Bay 2); and scenes of Genesis, the Old Testament theme appropriately placed to the north (Bay 1)⁸. Suau’s identifications were aided by the ornament particular to each lancet. Thus he was able to recreate, for each of the three apsidal cycles: its unique medallion shape and pattern of fillets framing the scenes; the corner designs enclosing each of its medallion panels; and the border used only in that bay.

⁵ For Tours: *Les vitraux du Centre et des pays de la Loire*, (Corpus Vitrearum - France, Recensement vol. II), Paris, 1989, pp. 121, 126, 128. For Clermont: F. GATOUILLET, M. HÉROLD, *Les vitraux d’Auvergne et du Limousin*, (Corpus Vitrearum - France, Recensement vol. IX), Rennes, 2011, pp. 29, 133-36; figs 6, 108, 110. For illustrations see also Tours and Clermont-Ferrand cathedrals in www.therosewindow.com.

⁶ See M. P. LILICH, “French Grisaille Glass”, in B. KURMANN-SCHWARZ and E. C. PASTAN (eds.), *Investigations in Medieval Stained Glass: Materials, Methods, and Expressions*, Leiden, 2019, pp. 282-294, here from p. 288 (bottom of column a) to p. 289 (top of column b), where comparative monuments are identified with documentation and references to images. For illustrations of the Béziers grisailles see www.therosewindow.com under Béziers cathedral, Bay 0, Top section (row 8); Bay 5, Bottom section (row 2, right).

⁷ Minimal corrections can be made to his identifications (see note 10 below). See J.-P. SUAU, “Les débuts”, pp. 339-44, 356, 358; SUAU, “Les cycles démembrés de l’enfance et de la passion du Christ dans les vitraux de Saint-Nazaire de Béziers (fin XIII^e siècle)”, in *Hommage à Robert Saint-Jean: Art et histoire dans le Midi languedocien et rhodanien (X^e-XIX^e.)*, Guy ROMESTAN (ed.), (Mémoires de la Société archéologique de Montpellier 21), Montpellier, 1993, pp. 139-54; and SUAU, “Vies de saints au début du XIV^e siècle dans les verrières démembrées de la cathédrale Saint-Nazaire de Béziers”, in *Hagiographie et culte des saints en France méridionale (XIII^e-XV^e siècle)*, *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, 37 (2002), pp. 320-21, 325-77. In addition to the fragments of the apse medallions that he identified, Suau also found scenes of saints Etienne and Eloi from chapels in the north nave, and four grisaille designs from the choir. For the locations of the latter see POISSON, “La transformation”, p. 83 (chart). Note that Suau and Poisson did not employ the Corpus Vitrearum bay-numbering system (see the following note).

⁸ The French Corpus Vitrearum’s Recensement series assigns “Bay 0” to the axial window, successive odd numbers to the north bays (i.e., Bay 1, Bay 3, etc.), and even numbers to those on the south (Bay 2, Bay 4, etc.). The Recensement volume that will include Languedoc has not yet appeared.

See his drawing (my Fig. 2) for the panel design of the Genesis lancet. The fragments in that group (Figs. 3-10) are the basis for this study⁹.

The Baroque reconstruction preserved many more scenes from the familiar christological subjects originally glazing the axial bay (Bay 0), for which Suau was able to reconstruct a program of twelve Infancy and twelve Passion medallions.¹⁰ Since each bay originally had a central mullion, he is undoubtedly correct in hypothesizing the Infancy cycle on the left side of Bay 0 and the Passion on the right. Whether a similar distribution served the two flanking axial bays, however, is less certain¹¹. The gaze and gestures of some figures in the Genesis fragments studied here suggest that some scenes read horizontally, left/right, across the row.

REMAINS OF THE GENESIS WINDOW OF BÉZIER'S CATHEDRAL

Based on the medallion design identified by Suau (Fig. 2), fragments of eight scenes survive from the medieval glazing of Bay 1, the window to the north of the axial one.¹² They are listed below in what can be only an approximate order:

- A youthful king, standing between two trees, gazes to the upper right. He holds a dove and a small black angel.¹³ This medallion is partially obscured by the Baroque blockage at the bottom of Bay 5, its current location (Fig. 3).

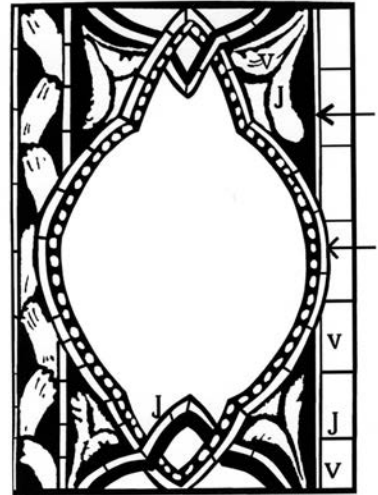


Fig. 2. Béziers cathedral, the medallion and border ornament of the Gothic Genesis window, Bay 1. (after Suau, 1974, fig. 20A)

⁹ In this study, "Bay" is capitalized only for windows in Béziers cathedral, and present locations of fragments are identified in the text and captions by the French Corpus Vitrearum system. The Baroque glazing used colored medieval fragments in the bottom two rows of each lancet (rows 1 and 2) and in the uppermost two rows (rows 8 and 9). Each row usually contains two fragments, listed here as left or right. Thus, for example, the scene of "Adam delving and Eve spinning" (Fig. 9) is now located in Bay 2, row 9, right.

¹⁰ SUAU, "Les cycles", p. 153. New photographs make several corrections possible. Suau's "Christ among the Doctors" (p. 145) is "The Denial of Peter", the cock above and the keys in Peter's hand; <http://www.therosewindow.com/pilot/Beziers/w3A-Frame.htm> (Bay 3, row 1, left). Suau's "Noli me tangere" (p. 151) is "The Temptation of Christ at the Temple", Christ seated on the temple roof, the devil pointing up and down: <http://www.therosewindow.com/pilot/Beziers/w1C-Frame.htm> (Bay 1, row 9, left). Suau's "Apparition of Christ before the Ascension" (p. 151) is "The Doubting of Thomas": <http://www.therosewindow.com/pilot/Beziers/w2C-Frame.htm> (Bay 2, row 9, left). (All accessed 12/4/17).

¹¹ For Bay 2 on the south (saints Nazaire and Celse), Suau found a total of fifteen scenes: SUAU, "Vies de saints", pp. 345-46. Since these saints usually appear together, their scenes may have run horizontally across each row, and probably that was the case in the Genesis bay as well.

¹² Suau listed three scenes from this series: God creating the animals, God creating either Adam or Eve, and God creating (something lacking). See SUAU, "Le débuts", p. 367, n. 43, also pl. X, left (between pp. 320-21).

¹³ Medieval glaziers did not have black glass. For the robes of Benedictine monks, for example, they used dark blue. In any case, areas of black in the light-based art of stained glass would be disruptive and unreadable. When a black element was absolutely necessary, as here, the glazier painted a clear glass with the brownish-black vitreous paint



Fig. 3. A king stands holding a dove and a black angel. Béziers cathedral, now in Bay 5, row 1, left. (Photo: Painton Cowen)

- The king, at the left, gestures with the back of his left hand to God, appearing in a vision. God, beardless with a cruciferous halo and holding a book, stands within a nebulous mandorla (Fig. 4). An example of such a mandorla is in the coeval Saint Louis Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat 10525, fol. 85v).¹⁴
- The king, at the right, gestures with the open palm of his right hand to God, standing in a nebulous mandorla. God points upward to the sun (Fig. 5).
- God, standing to the left, creates the moon (?) and stars: Genesis, 1:14-19 (Fig. 6). This fragmentary image can be compared to a similar medallion, dating around 1310, in Narbonne cathedral.¹⁵
- God, standing to the left, creates the animals: Genesis, 1:24-25 (Fig. 7). A medallion in the same Narbonne window (bay 5, row 1, left) has a similar arrangement. God holds a book in his left hand and blesses the animals with his right. This scene is the best preserved of all the Béziers fragments containing bits of this medallion and border design, and establishes that the subject of the Béziers lancet containing this ornament was Genesis (Creation).

used for the drawing of detail. Then, with a pointed tool (probably the end of his brush), he scratched off details or highlights before firing, to produce his design. The process in glasspainting is called stickwork.

¹⁴ See H. STAHL, *Picturing Kingship: History and Painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis*, University Park PA, 2007, fol. 85v (between pp. 212-13); M. CAMILLE, *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions*, New York, 1996, p. 16, fig. 1; <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8447877n/f184.image> (accessed 12/4/17).

¹⁵ Narbonne, bay 5, row 1, b (central scene). See J.-P. SUAU, "Les verrières de la cathédrale Saint-Just et Saint-Pasteur de Narbonne", in *Les vitraux de Narbonne: L'essor du vitrail gothique dans le sud de l'Europe*, M. DEMORE, J. NOUGARET, and O. POISSON (eds.), Narbonne, 1992, pp. 31-48, at 41-42, fig. 8. See also <http://www.therosewindow.com/pilot/Narbonne/w5-Frame.htm> (accessed 12/4/17).

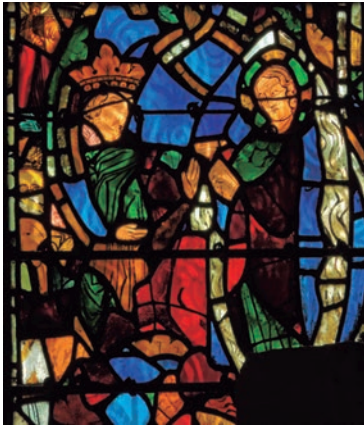


Fig. 4. The king gestures at God appearing to him in a vision. Béziers cathedral, now in Bay 4, row 1, right. (Photo: Painton Cowen)



Fig. 5. The king gestures toward God, appearing in a vision and pointing to the sun. Béziers cathedral, now in Bay 5, row 1, right. (Photo: Painton Cowen)

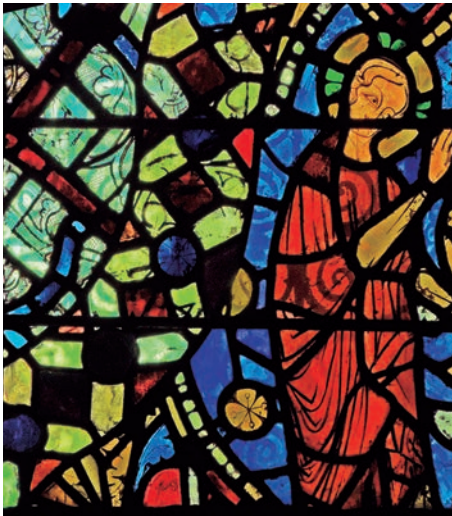


Fig. 6. God creates the moon(?) and stars. Béziers cathedral, now in Bay 1, row 2, left. (Photo: Painton Cowen)

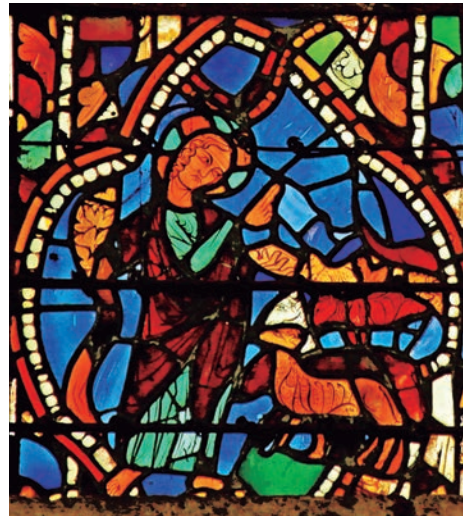


Fig. 7. God creates the animals. Béziers cathedral, now in Bay 8, row 1, left. (Photo: Painton Cowen)

- God creating Adam: Genesis, 1:26 (Fig. 8). The two sections of the scene were reused in different locations; the fragment containing God is now upside-down. God's head (though not the halo) is a later insertion. Adam's folded body is similar to the scene at Narbonne (bay 5, row 2, right) but other details there are now altered by restoration.

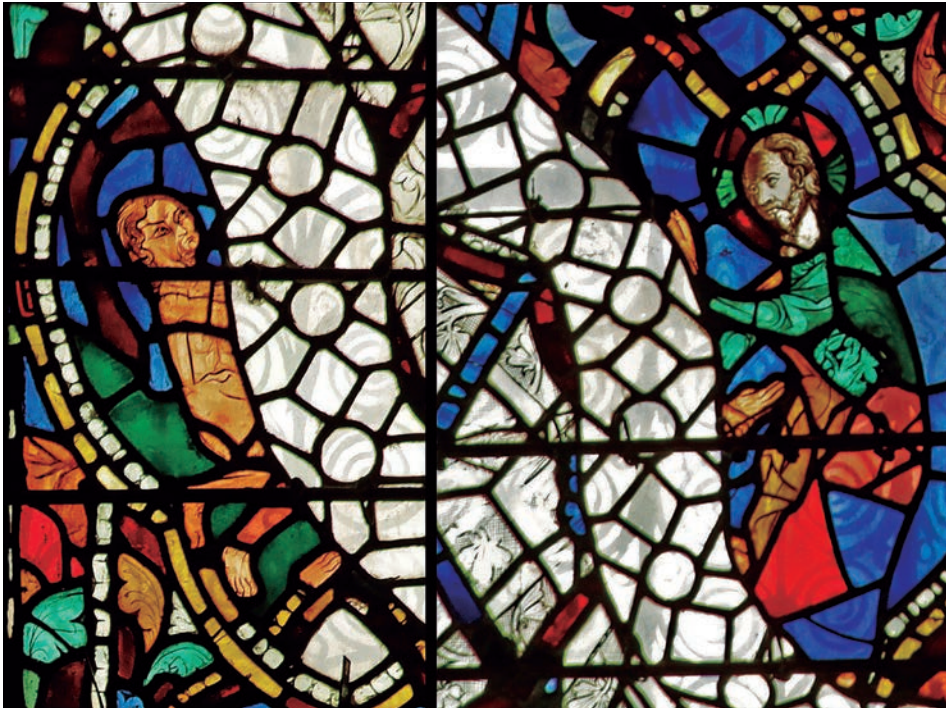


Fig. 8. The creation of Adam. Béziers cathedral: Adam now in Bay 4, row 2, right; God now in Bay 6, row 2, right. (Photo: Painton Cowen)

- “Adam delving and Eve spinning”: Genesis, 3:17-19, 23 (Fig. 9). Adam’s toil is mentioned in Genesis and in medieval art it is commonly paired with Eve spinning, as here.¹⁶ Both figures stare up and to the right, probably at a lost figure of God in a medallion originally located to the right, as at Chartres (bay 44, panels 21 and 22).¹⁷
- Three standing figures at the left, apparently witnessing the departure of a barelegged figure, clinging to a bareback horse moving off to the right. The upper half of this mysterious scene is lost (Fig. 10). It will be revisited at the end of this study.

These Genesis scenes establish that at Béziers, the God of Creation appears with a cruciferous halo and youthful, beardless face, indicative of the Trinity.¹⁸ This is the norm for

¹⁶ Examples in stained glass include the cathedrals of Chartres (bay 44), Auxerre (bay 11), Le Mans (bay 106), etc. See discussion in M. P. LILICH, *The Gothic Stained Glass of Reims Cathedral*, University Park PA, 2011, pp. 119-20.

¹⁷ See C. MANHES-DEREMBLE, *Les vitraux narratifs de la cathédrale de Chartres: Étude iconographique*, Corpus Vitrearum France - Études 2, Paris, 1993, pp. 364-65; <http://www.therosewindow.com/pilot/Chartres/w44-whole.htm> (accessed 12/4/17).

¹⁸ The classic discussion is by A. HEIMANN, “Trinitas creator mundi”, *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2 (1938-1939), pp. 42-52; see esp. p. 45 note 4. In French Gothic glass it is the norm.



Fig. 9. "Adam delving and Eve spinning". Béziers cathedral, now in Bay 2, row 9, right. (Photo: Painton Cowen)



Fig. 10. Three figures witness the departure of a barelegged figure on an unsaddled horse. Béziers cathedral, now in Bay 0, row 9, right. (Photo: Painton Cowen)

Gothic France, for example in windows at the cathedrals of Chartres (bay 44), Bourges (bay 13), Auxerre (bay 21), Le Mans (bay 106), Tours (bays 30 and 207), Narbonne (bay 5), and elsewhere. The Béziers series of eight fragmentary scenes is obviously incomplete. It probably contained twenty-four medallions in its original form, as Suaufound for the neighboring christological bay (Bay 0). The Genesis scenes were probably extended, and those of the young king's conversion (completed by his final departure on pilgrimage, Fig. 10?) more certainly were. Clues to this loss: the Triune God appears in a vision to a young, unbearded king, and points out elements of his creation to him (Fig. 5). Another fragment shows the young king holding the dove of the Holy Spirit and a black, presumably fallen, angel (Fig. 3). Who is this king?

THE *ROI JUIF* OF NARBONNE

Before the thirteenth-century Capetians took control of Languedoc, the region around Béziers and Narbonne had known no royal ruler since Charlemagne. And there is no reference in the history or legend surrounding that Carolingian monarch to include a visionary dialogue between him and the God of creation. There is, however, a legend of Charlemagne's fictitious conquest of Spain which provides a clue. It appears in texts known to literary scholars as the *Pseudo-Philomena*, a story that exists in both Occitan and Latin. Scholars dispute whether they date to the twelfth or thirteenth century, and which came first.¹⁹

Like the *Pseudo-Turpin*, a work more familiar to most medievalists, the *Pseudo-Philomena* is a medieval forgery concerning Charlemagne's Spanish campaigns.²⁰ Later editors

¹⁹ Philomena is identified in both texts as Charlemagne's secretary, asked by the emperor to record the events. For a clear discussion of the two texts see É. SIMONNET, "Le roman Notre Dame de Lagrasse", *La France latine*, new series 116 (1993), pp. 238-57, online at <http://emile.simonnet.free.fr/siften/lagrasse.htm> (accessed 8/8/2017). The Lagrasse texts have been discussed and published since the early nineteenth century.

²⁰ B. SHOLOD, *Charlemagne in Spain: The Cultural Legacy of Roncesvalles*, Geneva, 1966, pp. 202-3.

entitled the Latin text: “Here begins the tale of Charlemagne concerning the destruction of Carcassonne and Narbonne and the building of the Lagrasse monastery”. It relates the fictional construction by the emperor of the actual Benedictine monastery of Notre-Dame de Lagrasse, located 40 km. south of Narbonne. The abbey was rich in lands in Catalonia and Aragon. The section of the story of interest to this study concerns an imagined siege by Charlemagne of Narbonne, then supposedly ruled by a Saracen named Matran (or Matrand). A Jewish committee from within the city approaches the emperor, offering silver, informing him that they had – and had always had – a Jewish king “of the line of David”, and requesting that, when Charlemagne conquers the city, that he allow the Narbonne Jews to keep their king. The emperor agrees. And when after many adventures the city falls, he allots one-third to his knight Aymeri de Narbonne, one-third to Narbonne’s archbishop, and one-third to the *roi juif*.²¹ In the story, the *roi juif* (*nasi*, prince in Hebrew) is supposedly named Makhir. Of course the historian Bernard Bachrach’s account of the Carolingian conquest of the region – “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” – easily dismantles this myth of a Jewish king at Narbonne around 800.²²

While the ninth-century Makhir is absent from archival documents, by the late eleventh and through the twelfth centuries and beyond, historical evidence of the dynasty of the *rex judeorum Narbonne* is certain and can be traced in all generations until the expulsion of the Jews by Philippe le Bel in 1306²³ (Fig. 11). Around 1145, Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, mentioned derisively the *roi juif* of Narbonne in a letter to Louis VII; in 1166, the Jewish traveler Benjamin Tudela visited Narbonne and mentioned several of the family by name. They were considered to be of Davidic descent. While in Jewish documents of Narbonne the term used is *nasi* (prince), in Christian archives it is *rex Judaeus*, *rex judeorum*, *roi juif*.²⁴

During the long thirteenth century – for the Jews, extending to the Expulsion of 1306 – the Narbonne dynasty remained prominent, not only as leaders and judges but particularly as religious

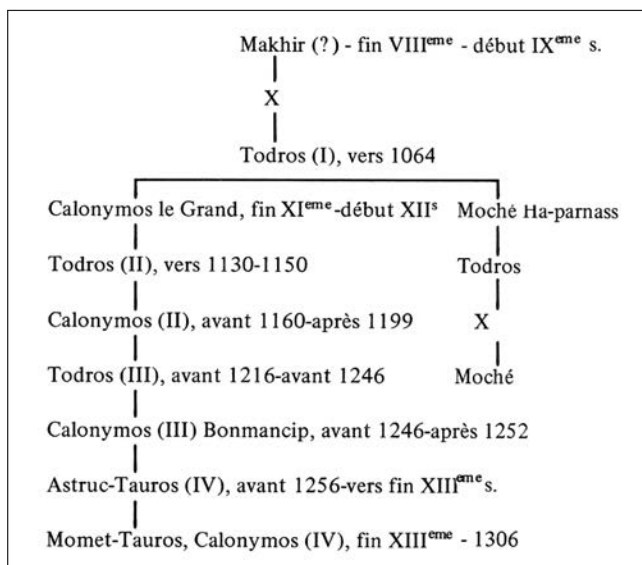
²¹ For the Latin text see I. LÉVI, “Le roi juif de Narbonne et le Philomène”, *Revue des études juives*, 48 (1904), pp. 197-207, here 199-200. The Occitan text: A. GRABOIS, “Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans les textes hébraïques médiévaux”, *Le moyen âge*, 4th series, 21 (1966), pp. 5-41, at 17-18.

²² B. S. BACHRACH, “On the Role of the Jews in the Establishment of the Spanish March (768-814)”, in *Hispania Judaica: Studies on the History, Language, and Literature of the Jews in the Hispanic World*, J. M. SOLA-SOLÉ, S. G. ARMISTEAD, and J. H. SILVERMAN, (eds.), 3 vols., Barcelona, 1980, vol. 1, pp. 11-19. Bachrach (p. 19) allows that “the Jewish element in the armies of the Carolingian reconquest ... was not insignificant.”

²³ A. GRABOIS, “La dynastie des ‘rois juifs’ de Narbonne (IX^e-XIII^e siècles)”, in *Narbonne: archéologie et histoire*, 3 vols., Montpellier, 1973, vol. 2, pp. 49-54, at 52 (vol. 2 is entitled *Narbonne au moyen âge*). See also J. RÉGNÉ, *Étude sur la condition des juifs de Narbonne du V^e au XIV^e siècle*, Narbonne, 1912; rpt. Marseille, 1989. Grabois’s data come largely from A. NEUBAUER, ed., *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes*, 2 vols., (Anecdota Oxoniensia, Semitic Series parts. 4, 6), Oxford, 1887-1895, vol. 1, pp. 82-83. The text is an anonymous 12th century appendix to Abraham ben David’s *Sepher Hakabalah* (The Book of Tradition); see GRABOIS, p. 50 note 5.

²⁴ Extensive literature on the *rois juifs* of Narbonne can be found in the recently updated edition of H. GROSS, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionnaire géographique de la France d’après les sources rabbiniques*, D. IANCU-AGOU, G. NAHON, and S. SCHWARZFUCHS (eds.), 1897; rev. ed. Paris, 2011, pp. 401-8 and Supplément bibliographique, pp. LVI-LVII. See also: S. H. PICK, “Jewish Aristocracy in Southern France”, *Revue des études juives*, 16 1/1-2 (2002), pp. 97-121; A. GRABOIS, “Le ‘roi juif’ de Narbonne”, *Annales du Midi: Revue archéologique, historique et philologique de la France méridionale*, 109 no. 218 (1997), pp. 165-88; J. COHEN, “The Nasi of Narbonne: A Problem in Medieval Historiography”, *AJS Review*, 2 (1977), pp. 45-76. For Peter the Venerable’s letter and other 12th-century documents, see RÉGNÉ, *Étude*, pp. 179-82.

Fig. 11. Genealogy (highly simplified) of the rois juifs of Narbonne.
(after Graboïs, 1973, p. 52)



thinkers and scholars.²⁵ The last *roi juif* before the Expulsion, Momet-Tauros (Kalonymos IV ben Todros), employed an armorial seal charged with the lion of Judah on obverse and reverse.²⁶ But the thirteenth century had brought increasingly trying times. William Chester Jordan has sketched the tensions in Narbonne following the Albigensian crusade: the increasing Capetian oppression of the Jews, wearing of badges, restrictions on livelihood, taxation, forced sermons and disputations with friars, pressure to convert. As it has been said, for the Jews Louis IX was not a saint.²⁷

COMPULSORY DISPUTATIONS, FORCED SERMONS – AND CONVERSION?

The immense surge in anti-Jewish sentiment and literature in the twelfth century targeted chiefly the Ashkenazi Jews of the Rhineland cities, and featured polemics.²⁸ By the thirteenth

²⁵ A. GRABOÏS, "Les écoles de Narbonne au XIII^e siècle", *Juifs et judaïsme de Languedoc, XIII^e siècle – début XIV^e siècle*, M.-H. VICAIRE and B. Blumenkranz (eds.), *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, 12, (1977), pp. 141-57, at 148 and passim.

²⁶ For this and other seals of Narbonne Jews of the late thirteenth century see G. SAIGE, "De la condition des juifs du comté de Toulouse avant le XIV^e siècle", *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 39 (1878), pp. 255-322, at 299-301; G. SAIGE, *Les juifs du Languedoc antérieurement au XIV^e siècle*, Paris, 1881, pp. 59-60. On Momet-Tauros: RÉGNÉ, *Étude*, pp. 80, 85, 185-87.

²⁷ W. C. JORDAN, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians*, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. 142-54 passim, 162-68, 179-99 passim. See also P. BOBICHON, "Juifs et convertis engagés dans les controverses médiévales", in *Les Juifs méditerranéens au moyen âge: culture et prosopographie*, (Nouvelle Gallia Judaica 5), D. IANCU-AGOU and E. NICOLAS (eds.), Paris, 2010, pp. 83-125, with bibliography.

²⁸ See J.-C. SCHMITT, *The Conversion of Hermann the Jew: Autobiography, History, and Fiction in the Twelfth Century*, trans. A. J. NOVIKOFF, Philadelphia, 2010; A. SAPIR ABULAFIA, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, London, 1995.

century, the Church increasingly forbade casual or private Jewish-Christian ‘dialogue’ in favor of compulsory public disputations. These were often staged between rabbis and Dominican friars – particularly friars who were themselves converted Jews. The most well-researched of these events occurred in Paris in 1240, resulting in the burning of the Talmuds, and in Barcelona in 1263. A papal letter of 1245 establishes the practice of the forced sermon, usually by friars and in synagogues²⁹. There is clear evidence of both in Narbonne. The source is a lengthy Hebrew manuscript by a rabbi of that city, Meir ben Simon, entitled *Milhemet Mitzvah* (The Obligatory War)³⁰. Compiled between ca. 1245 and ca. 1270, the rabbi’s manuscript describes a number of his disputations as well as his replies to forced sermons in the synagogue. Among them:

- disputation with the archbishop of Narbonne, Guillaume I de Broue (reigned 1245-1257)³¹.
- disputation with the archbishop of Narbonne, Gui Foucois (reigned 1259-1261), who became a cardinal in 1261 and was elected pope as Clement IV in 1265³².
- his response to a forced sermon by the Dominican friar Paul Chrétien, who has been called by Robert Chazan “the thirteenth century’s most gifted and forceful missionizer to the Jews”.³³

Paul Chrétien, named Saul at his birth in Montpellier to an established Jewish family, converted to Christianity while a relatively young man, and died in Sicily around 1274. He is known chiefly for his participation in the well-known Disputation of Barcelona in 1263³⁴. By 1269 he was active in Paris, sponsored by Louis IX. His forced sermon in the Narbonne synagogue took place in the early 1260s, preceding the famous 1263 event in Barcelona. Thus the heavy pressure

²⁹ For the history and development of compulsory disputations see A. J. NOVIKOFF, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance*, Philadelphia, 2013, pp. 172-221. For forced sermons see R. CHAZAN, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response*, Berkeley, 1989, pp. 38-48.

³⁰ Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS 2749. See H. TRAUTNER-KROMANN, *Shield and Sword: Jewish Polemics against Christianity and the Christians in France and Spain from 1100-1500*, Tübingen, 1993, pp. 73-84; NOVIKOFF, *The Medieval Culture*, pp. 199-200; R. CHAZAN, *Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom*, Cambridge, UK, 2004, pp. 105-14; S. STEIN, *Jewish-Christian Disputations in Thirteenth-Century Narbonne*, London, 1969. On Meir ben Simon, see also GROSS, *Gallia Judaica*, pp. 423-25 and Supplement bibliographique, pp. LX*-LXI**.

³¹ STEIN, *Jewish-Christian Disputations*, pp. 10, 12-16, 25 note 31; R. CHAZAN, “Anti-Usury Efforts in Thirteenth-Century Narbonne and the Jewish Response”, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 41-42 (1973-74), pp. 45-67 passim.

³² STEIN, *Jewish-Christian Disputations*, pp. 10-11, 16-21, 25 notes 32-33, 27 note 55; CHAZAN, “Anti-Usury”, pp. 49, 54-57, 63-67 passim; R. CHAZAN, “Archbishop Guy Fulcodi of Narbonne and his Jews”, *Revue des études juives*, 132/4 (1973), p. 587-94.

³³ R. CHAZAN, “Confrontation in the Synagogue of Narbonne: A Christian Sermon and a Jewish Reply”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 67 (1974), pp. 437-57, here 457.

³⁴ NOVIKOFF, *The Medieval Culture*, pp. 204-5; BOBICHON, “Juifs et convertis”, p. 112, with bibliography; R. CHAZAN, *Barcelona and Beyond: the Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath*, Berkeley, 1992, pp. 24-27; CHAZAN, “The Letter of R. Jacob ben Elijah to Friar Paul”, *Jewish History*, 6/1-2 (1992), pp. 51-63; CHAZAN, *The Friars and the Jews: the Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca NY, 1982, pp. 108-22. On Paul Chrétien’s activities in Paris ca. 1269, see R. CHAZAN, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: A Political and Social History*, Baltimore, 1973, pp. 149-53.

³⁵ RÉGNÉ, *Étude*, pp. 183-85.

on the Narbonne Jews to convert can be dated from after 1245 to before 1263. The *roi juif* of Narbonne who appears in documents of these years is Kalonymos Bonmancip, followed by his son Astruc-Tauros (Fig. 11).³⁵ There is nothing remotely to suggest that either one converted to Christianity. However, the Hebrew term *nasi* (prince), corresponding to *roi juif* in Christian documents, was applied to all male members of the family: “All family members, whether they held the office or belonged to collateral branches, used the title *Nasi* as a kind of family name”.³⁶

William Chester Jordan has collected evidence that the most typical converts to Christianity were young Jewish males, often even teenagers.³⁷ Jordan’s proposition returns us to the stained glass images of the crowned king in the Béziers cathedral windows (Figs. 3-5). He is young, fresh-faced, and beardless.

MEDIEVAL BÉZIERS

Béziers is 24 km. from Narbonne, and Béziers cathedral was in the archdiocese of Narbonne. Like Narbonne, Béziers was a city with a large, active Jewish population.³⁸ The city and its Jewish citizens suffered more real hardship, however, throughout the thirteenth century: in 1209, the infamous massacre at the start of the Albigensian Crusade; in the 1240s, the privations of an active war zone during the revolts by its viscount Raymond Trencavel and the count of Toulouse against the northerners; and after 1247, when Béziers, unlike Narbonne, came under the direct control and attention of Louis IX.³⁹ Like Narbonne, moreover, Béziers was probably the scene of a compulsory disputation between the Dominican friar Paul Chrétien, mentioned above, and a local rabbi, Isaac ben Yedaiah. The rabbi describes it in his “Commentary on the Aggadot of the Talmud”, dated by Marc Saperstein ca. 1260 – that is, after 1253 and before Paul Chrétien’s Barcelona Disputation of 1263.⁴⁰ In a later work by Isaac ben Yedaiah, “Commentary on the Midrash Rabbah” (ca. 1265-1275), he provides a discussion of the Hebrew title of *nasi* (prince), including “an exhortation of those who use the title *nasi* for men unworthy of honor or responsibility, whose only claim is that their father or grandfather bore the title before them”.⁴¹ A reference to recent scandal or dishonor?

³⁶ GRABOIS, “La dynastie”, p. 51.

³⁷ W. C. JORDAN, “Adolescence and Conversion in the Middle Ages: A Research Agenda”, in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, M. A. SIGNER and J. VAN ENGEN (eds.), Notre Dame IN, 2001, pp. 77-93.

³⁸ See C. P. HERSHON, *Faith and Controversy: The Jews of Mediaeval Languedoc*, Birmingham, UK, 1999, pp. 142-91 (ch. 5, “Béziers”).

³⁹ JORDAN, *The French Monarchy*, pp. 122-27 passim; M. SAPERSTEIN, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah*, Cambridge MA, 1980, pp. 163-67 passim, 198-200; TRAUTNER-KROMANN, *Shield and Sword*, pp. 43-45 passim, 194. For the massacre of 1209: H. GRAETZ, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart*, 11 vols., Leipzig, 1897-1911, vol. 6, p. 403; GROSS, *Gallia Judaica*, p. 98; J. SAGNES, *Histoire de Béziers*, Toulouse, 1986, pp. 95-113. For the 1240s: W. C. JORDAN, “Problems of the Meat Market of Béziers 1240-1247: A Question of Anti-Semitism”, *Revue des études juives* 135 (1976), pp. 31-49. For the Trencavels: A. LUYSTER, “The Conversion of Kalila and Dimna: Raymond de Béziers, Religious Experience, and Translation at the Fourteenth-Century French Court”, *Gesta*, 56/1 (2017), pp. 81-104, at 100-1 with bibliography.

⁴⁰ The manuscript is El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Hebrew MS g IV 3. See SAPERSTEIN, *Decoding*, pp. 21, 198-202.

⁴¹ M. SAPERSTEIN, “The Earliest Commentary on the Midrash Rabbah”, in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, I. TWERSKY (ed.), (Harvard Judaica Monographs 2), Cambridge MA, 1979, pp. 283-306, at 284. The manuscript is Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Hebrew MS 5028; SAPERSTEIN, *Decoding*, pp. 21-22, 167-74.

There is clear evidence that the Jews of Béziers continued throughout the late thirteenth century to be subject to intense christianizing efforts by the friars. It appears in the encyclopedic work by the Béziers poet-troubadour Matfre Ermengaud, entitled *Breviari d'amor*, begun in 1288 and completed around 1293. Matfre was a Franciscan by the end of his life, though whether before or after composing his massive work is not established⁴². *Breviari d'amor* was written in Occitan and survives in whole or in fragments, in that language and in Catalan and Castilian translations, in nearly three dozen manuscripts⁴³. A substantial segment of the text is thought to stage a Jewish-Christian debate with the purpose of the Christian converting representative Jews of Béziers⁴⁴. In discussing Christ as the Messiah, Matfre draws arguments from the Old Testament and, moreover, "he affirms (verses 12015-26) that he will present them in the language of the Jews, that of the clergy, and that of the laity, that is, in Hebrew, Latin, and Romans (Occitan)".⁴⁵ Only a few of the surviving manuscripts do contain the Hebrew texts, no doubt the work of scribes who were themselves converted Jews. Hershon and Ricketts list five, one of them with the Hebrew written in gold leaf (Paris, BnF, MS fr 9219).⁴⁶ Another can be added to their list.⁴⁷

By 1288, when Matfre began writing his encyclopedia in Béziers, the windows in the apse of the cathedral were in place, and the incident recorded therein was a local memory. To return to the Dominican Paul Chrétien and his activities in Narbonne and Béziers a quarter century earlier, the friar's own Hebrew tutor, Jacob ben Elijah, had upbraided him "for proselytizing, especially among Jewish children".⁴⁸ The youthful *nasī* who appears in the Béziers medallions would have been a particular target of his zeal. I suggest that the rumor of

⁴² On Matfre Ermengaud see P. T. RICKETTS, *Matfre Ermengaud, 1246-1322, et le Breviari d'Amor*, Perpignan, 2012. Matfre seems to have been in sympathy with the Spiritual Franciscans, who were being investigated for orthodoxy in Béziers when he wrote *Breviari d'amor*. See M. BOLDUE, "The *Breviari d'Amor*: Rhetoric and Preaching in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc", *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 24/4 (Autumn 2006), pp. 403-25, at 423-25.

⁴³ See <http://occitanica.eu/omeka/items/show/12177> which lists the manuscripts and indicates the websites for many of them (accessed 6/3/2018).

⁴⁴ This section of the work is published in *Le Breviari d'amor de Matfre Ermengaud*, P. T. RICKETTS and C. P. HERSHON (eds.), vol. 3 (London, 1998). Of 6 volumes projected, vols. 1 and 6 have not yet been published. For the Hebrew texts, see pp. 175-88, 468-73.

⁴⁵ C. P. HERSHON and P. T. RICKETTS, "Les textes hébraïques du Breviari d'Amor de Matfre Ermengaud", *Revue des langues romanes*, 103/1 (1999), pp. 55-99, here 55.

⁴⁶ HERSHON and RICKETTS, "Les textes hébraïques", pp. 64-71, 94-95. The Hebrew texts in Paris, BnF, MS fr 9219 are on fols. 86v through 88v. See for ex. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000961g/f147> (fol. 87r). The earliest manuscript of the group with Hebrew texts is a Catalan translation, late 13th century: Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, MS Prov F v XIV 1. See M. ESCOLÀ LONCÀ, "Un manuscrit miniat a la Lleida del segle XIV", Universitat de Lleida, Facultat de Lletres, 2014, Image 32: <http://hdl.handle.net/10459.1/48067> (both accessed 6/10/2019).

⁴⁷ See London, British Library, MS Royal 19 C I, fol. 54r. On this manuscript: A. STONES, *Gothic Manuscripts 1260-1320*, 2 vols. in 4, London, 2013-2014, Part 2 vol. 1, pp. 199-202 (Cat. VII-22).

⁴⁸ See J. COHEN, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca NY, 1982, pp. 127-28; R. CHAZAN, "The Letter of R. Jacob ben Elijah to Friar Paul", in *The Frank Memorial Volume*, B. WALFISH (ed.), 2 vols., Hanover NH, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 51-63. Chazan dates the letter to the late 1250s or early 1260s and believes it was written in Spain (p. 59).

a conversion by Friar Paul Chrétien of a young member of the *nasī* household of Narbonne may have reached the Jewish community of nearby Béziers ca.1260 – and that the news also reached the bishop and canons of Béziers cathedral where a new apse was being planned for construction and prepared for glazing.

ICONOGRAPHY OF CREATION, ICONOGRAPHY OF CONVERSION

The glazing planned and executed for Béziers' new apse, described at the beginning of this study, was standard for Gothic cathedrals: Christ's Infancy and Passion scenes in the axial bay rising behind the high altar, flanked by the lives of the cathedral's name-saints Nazaire and Celse immediately to the south, and the Old Testament story of creation in the "darker" window to the north. The creation fragments (identified from their medallion ornament by Suau), while now far from complete, are immediately recognizable. Indeed, a number of the Béziers compositions reappear in the choir glazing, somewhat later, in the cathedral of Narbonne. Gothic cathedral windows illustrating the creation also survive in the cathedrals of Bourges (bay 13, ca. 1210-1215), Auxerre (bay 21, ca. 1233-1244), Reims (the north rose, ca. 1241), Le Mans (bay 106, ca. 1255), and Tours (bay 207, ca. 1260). As at Béziers, all but Le Mans are on the north.⁴⁹

Those Béziers fragments in which a youthful crowned figure appears – within the same medallion frame and border and thus part of the same creation window – are on the other hand unique and obscure. Isolated studies have proposed identifications of images as Jewish-Christian disputation in various medieval arts, with uncertain results.⁵⁰ While the literature on conversion is vast, there is no standard iconography of conversion and almost no investigation of the subject.⁵¹ In a pioneer effort, D. Apostolos-Cappadona has proposed three visual approaches: "first, the presentation of the religious pedagogy that has led ... to conversion (iconography as theology of conversion); second, the illustration of the ... conversion experience (an iconography of conversion); and finally, art that is in and of itself elemental to the conversion experience (conversion iconography)".⁵²

Her first category – religious pedagogy – is unhelpful for our purposes since it would include at least the familiar subjects of Christian art such as the Crucifixion, the Virgin and Child, Adam and Eve toiling, and so on. Her second group – an iconography of conversion – comprises visual narratives. She offers three examples: the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the conversion

⁴⁹ For illustrations see <http://therosewindow.com> (accessed 12/4/17).

⁵⁰ On a stained-glass scene in Troyes cathedral, bay 3: H. KRAUS, "Christian-Jewish Disputation in a 13th-Century Lancel at the Cathedral of Troyes", *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 6th per., vol. 72 (1968), pp. 151-58; but see E. C. PASTAN, "Tam haereticos quam Judaeos: Shifting Symbols in the Glazing of Troyes Cathedral", *Word & Image*, 10/1 (1994), pp. 66-83. Another example: K. A. MORROW, "Disputation in Stone: Jews Imagined on the St. Stephen Portal of Paris Cathedral", in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, M. B. MERBACK (ed.), Leiden, 2008, pp. 63-86, 443-51. See discussion by NOVIKOFF, *The Medieval Culture*, pp. 172-321 passim.

⁵¹ LUYSTER, "The Conversion of Kalila", pp. 84 note 8 and 95 note 61.

⁵² D. APOSTOLOS-CAPPADONA, "Seeing Religious Conversion through the Arts", in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, L. R. RAMBO and C. E. FARHADIAN (eds.), Oxford, 2014, pp. 327-42, at 335, 339.

of the Emperor Constantine, and the conversion of Francis of Assisi. These narratives are identifiable in art because they have textual sources. For the conversion that I propose at Béziers, no specific verbal reference has been discovered. Circumstantial evidence, I believe, allows the identification of the narrative of a conversion, probably by the Dominican friar Paul Chrétien himself, of a young member of the princely *nasí* household of Narbonne around 1260. The surviving medallions illustrating this narrative show the crowned youth and his vision of Christ (or to be precise, the trinitarian Godhead, indicated by the figure's cruciferous halo) (Figs. 4, 5). Her third category, if interpreted broadly, might help explain the most puzzling Béziers image of the series (Fig. 3), to which we will return.

The scenes that fall in her second category, Figs. 4-5, provide the most accessible path to understanding their narrative. The young king is having a vision; Christ appears to him in a mandorla of cloud, typical of such visions in Christian art. A contemporary example in the *Beatus vir* initial of the Saint Louis Psalter shows a kneeling, praying King David before a vision of God seated within such a mandorla.⁵³ The theme of disputation is subtly introduced at Béziers, where hand gestures suggest that the young king first questions his vision (Fig. 4), and then Christ lectures him (Fig. 5).

Another Parisian manuscript illumination that includes such a cloud-framed vision (Fig. 12) may actually bear a relationship to the Béziers medallions. It appears in the animal fables of Kalila and Dimna, translated (from Castilian to Latin) by the physician and Sorbonne scholar Raymond de Béziers. The translation was commissioned by Queen Jeanne de Navarre before her death in 1305, and eventually adapted for presentation at court during the Pentecost knighting celebrations of 1313.⁵⁴ The text of the queen's manuscript had been translated into Spanish from an Arabic version of the fables made for Alfonso X el Sabio (reigned 1252-1284). After Queen Jeanne's death Raymond's translation lagged, until he discovered the Latin translation made by the Italian Johannes de Capua (flourished 1262-1269). The latter, a Jewish convert to Christianity, based his translation on a twelfth-century Hebrew version of the fables. Raymond, however, added a totally new twist. In his version presented to the French court in 1313, the Persian narrator of the tales – a traveling physician/scholar named Burzuya – himself undergoes conversion to Christianity. Burzuya's conversion is illustrated in five miniatures, one of which shows his vision of God enthroned in heaven, in an aureole of cloud (Fig. 12). Raymond knew Spanish, came from Béziers, and Amanda Luyster has suggested that he himself may have been a Jewish convert to Christianity.⁵⁵ It is even possible that he knew of the conversion of the young *nasí* of Narbonne, and/or that he had seen the Béziers windows.

⁵³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat 10525, fol. 85v. See note 14 above. On this image see STAHL, *Picturing Kingship*, pp. 184-201 passim. For a similar depiction see p. 194, fig. 92: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 300, fol. 13v; also <http://www.fitzwilliam.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-psalter-hours-of-isabelle-of-france/folio/folio-xiiv/section/panel> (accessed 6/13/2018). On these two manuscripts: STONES, *Gothic Manuscripts*, Part 1 vol. 2, pp. 20-23 (Cat. I-2) and 25-27 (Cat. I-13).

⁵⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat 8504, fol. 20v. See LUYSTER, "The Conversion of Kalila", p. 97, fig. 10; STONES, *Gothic Manuscripts*, Part 1 vol. 2, pp. 126-28 (Cat. I-60).

⁵⁵ This paragraph relies on LUYSTER, "The Conversion of Kalila", pp. 84-102 passim.

Fig. 12. Burzuya has a vision of heaven. Translation of Kalila and Dimna by Raymond de Béziers, ca. 1313. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat 8504, fol. 20v, detail. (Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France, with permission)



Burzuya's conversion, as illustrated in two more miniatures of Raymond's manuscript, centers around the Virgin and Child and Christ's dual nature, the Incarnation.⁵⁶ The series of stained glass images at Béziers establishes that the conversion of the youthful king focuses on the role of Christ in creation – that is, the concept of the Trinity. The God of creation at Béziers, as commonly depicted in Gothic art, is youthful, beardless, and nimbed with a cruciferous halo (Figs. 4-8). The puzzling scene of the young *nasī* holding a dove and a black angel (Fig. 3) might be categorized as an example of Apostolos-Cappadona's third type of conversion image: art elemental to the conversion experience.⁵⁷ It seems clear that the dove and black angel represent the young king's mental struggle to understand. The dove, as is standard in Christian art, represents the Holy Spirit and underlines the trinitarian theme. More obscure and complex is the significance of the black angel to creation.

TRINITY AND CREATION IN LANGUEDOC

The Trinity, like the Incarnation, was a fundamental dogma of Christianity that the Jews found unreasonable and illogical, and both were major topics of forced disputation and sermonizing. Friar Paul Chrétien had debated and Friar Ramon de Penyafort had sermonized on the Trinity at the time of the famous Barcelona disputation of 1263, and Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) responded with an extensive and detailed rebuttal, concluding "the term 'Trinity'

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 98, figs. 11-12.

⁵⁷ See text at note 52 above.

is thoroughly wrong”.⁵⁸ In the Narbonne area, evidence for such polemics is extensive. Joseph Kimhi, a twelfth-century teacher there, attacked the irrationality of the concept of the Trinity in his polemic work *Sefer ha-Berit* (The Book of the Covenant), composed in the 1160s.⁵⁹

For the years when the young king shown in the Béziers windows would have attended debates, there is the evidence of Rabbi Meir ben Simon of Narbonne. His lengthy work of ca. 1245-1270, *Milhemet Mitzvah* (The Obligatory War), attacks the Trinity a number of times. In recounting his disputation with Guillaume I de la Broue, archbishop of Narbonne from 1245-1257, he writes (fol. 30v): “My conclusion is that I cannot explain their words and their belief in the foundation of their faith as regards the Trinity; for this is the basis and dogma of their faith, and there is neither head nor tail to it...”.⁶⁰ On fol. 50r, the rabbi concludes an account of his debate with another priest on the Trinity: “Behold, your words are far removed from the common sense of every intelligent man”.⁶¹ In his account of a disputation between “a learned Christian and a learned Jew”, he states (fols. 107v-108r): “Every Jew and every true intelligent person in the world admits that the Creator is wise, powerful, and willing without doubt. Still, we do not go so far as to say that He has three bodies”.⁶² Finally, the rabbi’s manuscript concludes at fol. 252r with comments on The Thirteen Attributes of God (Exodus, 34: 6-7), where he emphasizes the unity of God against Christian belief in a Trinity.⁶³

The dogma of the Trinity was clearly in the wind in mid thirteenth-century Narbonne. It is a reasonable assumption that a highly educated and well-born Jewish youth of the city would be puzzling over it. The dove that he holds in the creation window of Béziers (Fig. 3) is an immediately recognizable Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit and a shorthand reference to his puzzlement. The significance of the black angel shown in his arms points in a different direction – or perhaps several.

One such direction is the dualist heresy entrenched in Languedoc during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁶⁴ These southern French heretics had been involved, earlier on, in public debates and discussions, but came increasingly under attack by the end of the Albigensian war (1229). Through 1254, regional church councils including several at Narbonne (1227, 1243) and Béziers (1232, 1246), established anti-heretical canon law for inquisitors’ use in persecuting the heretics.⁶⁵ Although the heresy was not extinguished until well into the fourteenth

⁵⁸ CHAZAN, *Fashioning Jewish Identity*, p. 261.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 94-98 passim, 120.

⁶⁰ On the manuscript see note 30 above. See TRAUTNER-KROMANN, *Shield and Sword*, p. 82; D. J. LASKER, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics against Christianity in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1977, pp. 66, 86. The passage is identified with Archbishop Guillaume I de la Broue by STEIN, *Jewish-Christian Disputations*, pp. 10 and 25 note 31.

⁶¹ STEIN, *Jewish-Christian Disputations*, pp. 10, 11. See also TRAUTNER-KROMANN, *Shield and Sword*, p. 74; LASKER, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, p. 86.

⁶² LASKER, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, p. 86; STEIN, *Jewish-Christian Disputations*, p. 11.

⁶³ STEIN, *Jewish-Christian Disputations*, p. 25 note 34.

⁶⁴ These heretics have been studied in an enormous scholarly literature under the terms “Cathar” and “Albigensian”. See numerous examples in the following notes. These terms will be avoided in this study following their criticism by J.-L. BIGET, *Hérésie et inquisition dans le Midi de la France*, Paris, 2007.

⁶⁵ L. J. SACKVILLE, *Heresy and Heretics in the Thirteenth Century: The Textual Representations*, Woodbridge, UK, 2011, pp. 93-94.

century, the 1250s and 1260s – exactly the years of importance to this study – were the period when the attacks and resistance were fiercest and the outcome increasingly predictable.⁶⁶ In the archdiocese of Narbonne, the Dominican inquisitors at Carcassonne, about 53 km. distant, were the most active and severe.

One heretical text, now lost but known from several copies to have been in the archives of the Carcassonne inquisition, is the *Interrogatio Johannis* (The Questions of John, also called The Secret Supper of John the Evangelist).⁶⁷ Written in Latin, the Carcassonne text relates closely to another Latin text now in Vienna; the two versions may be two different translations of the same heretical work brought west from Bulgaria.⁶⁸ The *Interrogatio Johannis* arrived in southern France in the 1190s and was known to the inquisition there by 1220-1223.⁶⁹ Unlike the absolute dualism (belief in two creators, one good and one evil) that was dominant in Languedoc from the last quarter of the twelfth century, this text is a work of mitigated, or moderate, dualism. God inhabited the heavens, where Satan was in charge of the angels, and the world (earth, air, fire and water) was in a chaotic, unformed state. Following Satan's banishment from heaven for his pride, he was allowed by God to do the acts of creation on this earth (as listed in Genesis). However, upon Satan's fall, God withdrew from him the light of his glory.

At this point in the text, Christ answers John's question as follows: "Because of his self-exaltation, my Father decreed his transformation, withdrawing from him the light of His glory. The face of Satan was like an iron glowing from the fire, and the whole aspect of his countenance was like that of a man ... [lacuna in text]".⁷⁰ The Vienna text has a marginal gloss here, also mutilated, possibly reading: "... his face changed color ... (like that of a man caught?) by his lord in some evil deed. His countenance was altered, like that of a man who had lost the light that was in him, and was darkened (*tenebrosus*) because of the evil which he was planning".⁷¹

⁶⁶ M. BARBER, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., Harlow, UK, 2013, pp. 110, 191-200 passim; M. LAMBERT, *The Cathars*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 224-25.

⁶⁷ The Carcassonne text is known from three copies, all probably made from it before it disappeared: Dole, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 109, fols. 44r-46r (paper, dated 1455); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Collection Doat, vol. 36, fols. 26v-35r (1665-1670); and J. BENOIST, *Histoire des Albigeois et des Vaudois ou Barbets*, 2 vols., Paris, 1691, vol. 1, pp. 283-96. See BARBER, *The Cathars*, p. 96; W. L. WAKEFIELD and A. P. EVANS, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated*, 2nd ed., New York, 1991, pp. 448-49, 769 notes 11-15; W. L. WAKEFIELD, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France 1100-1250*, Berkeley, 1974, pp. 35-36, 48 note 5; E. BOZÓKY, *Le livre secret des cathares, Interrogatio Iohannis: apocryph d'origine bogomile*, Paris, 1980, pp. 17-22, 27. The Carcassonne text is translated (into French) from the Dole MS in BOZÓKY, pp. 42-87; it is translated (into French) from the Doat collection by R. NELLI, *Écritures cathares*, Paris, 1968, pp. 31-48.

⁶⁸ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS lat 1137, fols. 158v-160r (northern Italy, early 13th century.). See BOZÓKY, *Le livre*, pp. 17-19, 22-25. The Vienna text is translated in WAKEFIELD and EVANS, *Heresies*, pp. 458-65; it is translated (into French) in BOZÓKY, *Le livre*, pp. 42-87, and in NELLI, *Écritures*, pp. 49-60.

⁶⁹ C. THOUZELLIER, *Un traité cathare inédit du début du xiii^e siècle d'après le Liber contra manicheos de Durand de Huesca*, (Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 37), Louvain, 1961, p. 66 and note 1.

⁷⁰ WAKEFIELD and EVANS, *Heresies*, p. 459. BOZÓKY, *Le livre*, p. 52, gives the Latin of both the Vienna and Carcassonne texts.

⁷¹ WAKEFIELD and EVANS, *Heresies*, p. 773 note 17. BOZÓKY, *Le livre*, p. 8, reads the Latin of the marginal gloss thus: Lines 60-61: "...; in aliquo malo opera a domino suo et facies eius mutatur in alium colorem. Lines 61-62: *Mutata est facies eius sicut hominis qui amisit lumen quod habebat et fuit tenebrosus propter malum cognitaverat.*

This is not a straightforward argument – nothing about the southern French heretics seems straightforward – but it seems clear that Christians, for example the canons of Béziers cathedral who were responsible for its stained-glass program, would comprehend a small black angel as that of Satan after the fall. For that image also appears in the *Elucidarius* of Honorius Augustodunensis.⁷²

THE *ELUCIDIARIUS*

Honorius's *Elucidarius*, written ca. 1096, was a medieval Christian bestseller for three centuries. Well over three hundred Latin manuscripts or fragments survive. Sixty of them are from within the borders of modern-day France, and since these include no examples of one copying the other, the original number was vast indeed. The *Elucidarius* was translated into all the languages of medieval Christianity, among them Old Icelandic, Old Norse, Middle Dutch, Anglo-Saxon, etc. There are five separate French translations.⁷³ The *Elucidarius* has long been recognized by art historians as a source for medieval images.⁷⁴ While no Latin manuscript of the work survives from southern France, there is a version in Provençal: Carpentras, Bibliothèque Inguibert, MS 157 (15th century, paper, probably from Aix-en-Provence). Its translation of the *Elucidarius* is close to the Latin original, with additions.⁷⁵

In the Latin *Elucidarius*, Satan's blackened face (*nigerrimus*) after the Fall is mentioned in Q34: "... sicut prius pulcherrimus, ita post factus est nigerrimus; qui prius splendidissimus, postea tenebrosissimus. ...".⁷⁶ In the Provençal manuscript in Carpentras, fol. 10r, his face is *negre*: "... ensins como de premier era plus bel que los autres, apres fom plus negre e plus vil de tos; E ensins, coma era plus resplendent que los autres, apres fom plus tenebros ...".⁷⁷

⁷² BOZÓKY, *Le livre*, p. 115. She also mentions Greek texts by saints Gregory of Naziansus (died 389) and Pantaleon (died 305).

⁷³ V. I. J. FLINT, *Honorius Augustodunensis of Regensburg*, (Authors of the Middle Ages 2/6), Aldershot, UK, 1995, pp. 131, 162; Y. LEFÈVRE, *L'Elucidarium et les lucidaires*, (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 180), Paris, 1954, pp. 48-49, 94, 271, 284, 289.

⁷⁴ See J. SAUER, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Auffassung des Mittelalters*, 1902; repr. Münster, 1964, pp. 12-22 and see index. See also the indices of the volumes of É. MALE edited by H. BOBER: *Religious Art in France: The Twelfth Century*, 1922; ed. and trans. Princeton, 1978; *Religious Art in France: The Thirteenth Century*, 1898; ed. and trans., Princeton, 1984.

⁷⁵ The only material in the manuscript besides the *Elucidarius* translation is an added Latin table of feast days for Aix. See LEFÈVRE, *L'Elucidarium*, pp. 289-92; M. DANDO, "L'adaptation provençale de l'*Elucidarium* d'Honoré d'Autun et le catharisme", *Cahiers d'études cathares*, 28 (1977), pp. 3-34. Editions: G. RAYNAUD, "Elucidarium sive dialogus summam totius christianae theologiae breviter complectens", *Revue des langues romanes*, 33 (1889), pp. 217-50, 309-57; A. SILVAGGI, "Lucidari: edizione critica del volgarizzamento provençale dell' *Elucidarium* di Onorio d'Autun (ms. Carpentras 157)", PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Trento, 2010, pp. 2-65; <http://eprints-phd.biblio.unitn.it/502/1/LUCIDARI.pdf> (accessed 11/17/17). There is also an incunabulum fragment in Occitan, published in Toulouse, 1501, and preserved in the Bibliothèque de la Société archéologique de Montpellier. It is a shortened adaptation which omits the *Elucidarius* passage of interest to this study (Q34). See F. PIC, "L'*Elucidarium* d'Honoré d'Autun traduit et imprimé en occitan", *Revue des langues romanes*, 89/1 (1985), pp. 29-54; <http://www.jfbrun.eu/lengadoc/elucidari.htm> (accessed 11/17/17).

⁷⁶ LEFÈVRE, *L'Elucidarium*, p. 367.

⁷⁷ SILVAGGI, "Lucidari", p. 6.

Satan's black face (Fig. 3) would have been a very clearly understood image in Béziers cathedral, whether derived from a heretical or Christian source.

THE MAIMONIDEAN CONTROVERSY

Given the time and place associated with the conversion of the young king depicted in the Béziers window, and the Genesis subject of Bay 1 in which his image appeared, additional stresses no doubt added to his mental turmoil. The time of his conversion was probably ca. 1260, the place the archdiocese of Narbonne. His soul-searching, in so far as we can reconstruct it, focused on the nature of the creation. His *nasí* family, princes of Narbonne's Jewish community, were not only a "véritable dynastie royale, issue de la race du roi David", but in fact its leaders both temporal and spiritual – rabbis highly educated in both law and theology, associated with Narbonne's famous "école talmudique supérieure".⁷⁸ Judaic thought was in considerable turbulence in southern France and Spain at this time, and the nature of God and of his creation were among the divisive issues.

One conflict that intimately involved the Jewish leadership of both Béziers and Narbonne was the attack on the works of Maimonides that began with the translation into Hebrew of his *A Guide for the Perplexed* around the time of his death in 1204. The traditionalist Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham of Montpellier and two disciples began publicly debating and circulating pamphlets seeking to ban Maimonides' works from public instruction. To gain support they sought and received a ban from the northern Jewry; it was met with a counterban supported by southern French leaders from Béziers, Narbonne and elsewhere in Languedoc. The conflict came to a shocking climax around 1233-1234 when an informer from the Montpellier group denounced Maimonides' works to a Christian authority, possibly the Dominicans, and copies were publicly burned there. The scandal of this denunciation and event brought both sides to step back from public quarrels by 1240.⁷⁹ By way of explanation of the conflict, Daniel Silver has stated:

Given conditions as they were [in Languedoc in the 1230s], questions were asked and the very asking of these questions caused fear to shiver down the communal spine. Today's youthful questioner might be tomorrow's convert and the day after tomorrow's informer. The Maimonidean Controversy was a statement of fear.⁸⁰

To bring the young king depicted in the Béziers Genesis window into the orbit of this regional religious struggle is not difficult. Creation was one of the specific topics stressed by the Montpellier rabbi Samuel ben Abraham, in explanation of his attack on Maimonides:

It grew out of our zeal for the Torah of our Creator, for we heard of a minority of both young and old, publicly insisting on non-traditional teachings, following a path which was not good after

⁷⁸ GRABOIS, "Les écoles de Narbonne", pp. 144, 151.

⁷⁹ This paragraph relies on D. J. SILVER, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy 1180-1240*, Leiden, 1965, ch. 9 (see esp. pp. 148-83). See also H. H. BEN-SASSON et alii, "Maimonidean Controversy – The Second Climax: 1230-1235 in Europe", in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, F. SKOLNIK and M. BERENBAUM (eds.), 2nd ed., 22 vols., Detroit, 2007, vol. 13, pp. 374-77; COHEN, *The Friars and the Jews*, pp. 52-60.

⁸⁰ SILVER, *Maimonidean Criticism*, p. 3.

their thoughts, to tear down the tradition, and to spin allegories out of the narrative of the Written and Oral Law which reduced to pedagogic example and flight of literary fancy the description of creation and the chronicle of Cain and Abel and other similar narratives.⁸¹

And among the Narbonne scholars who contributed letters supporting the Maimonidean cause was one of the young king's own family, the *nasi* Meshullam ben Kalonymos ben Todros.⁸²

EARLY KABBALAH

Another area of conflict among Jewish scholars of southern France – including Narbonne rabbis – was the development there, from the end of the twelfth century on, of early Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). Whether or not it had any reciprocal relationship with the mitigated heretical beliefs developing at the same time and place has not been settled in modern scholarship,⁸³ but is largely irrelevant to this study. Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham, called “the Blind” (ca. 1160-ca. 1235/40), was the son and grandson of leading teachers in Pouquières and Narbonne. The earliest Kabbalist scholar known to us by name, he “surpasses all his contemporaries in authority and in the lasting influence he exercised upon the earliest kabbalists”.⁸⁴ For purposes of the argument here, his writings on the creation are the most significant. Joseph Dan has stated:

A large part of Rabbi Isaac's teachings revolves around the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. ... (T)here is a vast division between the Kabbalists who read the story as a theosophy and the rabbinic traditionalists who read this chapter as a literary history of the creation of heaven and earth. For Rabbi Isaac, the creation of the physical world is a later stage in the process of creation.... The Kabbalists in general did not accept the literal meaning of the Bible as sufficient, but concerning this specific chapter symbolical reading was imperative...⁸⁵

Rabbi Isaac also wrote about Sammael (Satan), his place in creation, and the timing and circumstances of his fall.⁸⁶

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 151, translating J. I. KOBAC, ed., *Ginse Nistaroth: Handschriftliche Editionen aus der jüdischen Literatur*, 4 vols., Bamberg, 1868-1878, vol. 4, p. 11.

⁸² SILVER, *Maimonidean Criticism*, p. 179, translating KOBAC, *Ginse Nistaroth*, vol. 4, p. 4.

⁸³ A. BALASTEGUI i MEDINA and E. PONTE PELLICER, “Càbala i Catarisme: Estat de la recerca a l'entorn de les possibles influències del Catarisme en la Càbala del segle XIII en territori de llengua catalana”, in *Actes del I Congrés per a l'estudi dels jueus en territori de llengua catalana: Barcelona-Girona, del 15 al 17 d'octubre de 2001*, Barcelona, 2004, pp. 173-84. Works investigating connections: D. BERGER, “Christian Heresy and Jewish Polemic in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 68 (1975), pp. 287-303; S. SHAHAR, “The Relationship between Kabbalism and Catharism in the South of France”, in *Les Juifs dans l'histoire de France*, M. YARDENI (ed.), Leiden, 1980, pp. 55-62; SHAHAR, “Écrits cathares et commentaire d'Abraham Abulafia sur le ‘Livre de la Création’: Images et idées communes”, *Juifs et judaïsme de Languedoc, Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, 12, (1977), pp. 345-62; SHAHAR, “Le catharisme et le début de la cabale”, *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 29/5 (1974), pp. 1185-1210. Critics: J. DAN, *Kabbalah: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 13-14; DAN (ed. and intro.), *The Early Kabbalah*, New York, 1986, pp. 5-7. See also G. SCHOLEM, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, R. J. ZWI WERBLOWSKY (ed.), A. ARKUSH (trans.), German ed., 1962; trans., Princeton, 1990, pp. 12-18 passim, 197, 234-38.

⁸⁴ SCHOLEM, *Origins*, pp. 253, also 37, 248-61, 393, 397; DAN, *The Early Kabbalah*, pp. 31-34. It is believed that Rabbi Isaac was probably not born blind.

⁸⁵ DAN, *The Early Kabbalah*, pp. 32-33. See also pp. 71-86, two of Rabbi Isaac's texts, R. C. KIENER (trans.).

⁸⁶ SCHOLEM, *Origins*, pp. 297-98.

The traditionalist rabbi Meir ben Simon of Narbonne circulated a letter attacking the early Kabbalists, in which he accused them of blasphemy, heresy, and even polytheism. The epistle, included in his work *Milhemet Mitzvah*, dates ca. 1230-1235⁸⁷. Ashar ben David, nephew and disciple of Rabbi Isaac the Blind, composed a response in their defense. In it he admits that the Kabbalists should have chosen their words and their audiences more carefully, and should have been more secretive “in the presence of the fool Their readers or listeners did not comprehend their opinion and misunderstood their way of thinking. Thus they arrived at the idea that they [the Kabbalists] believed in two supreme principles and hence appeared as deniers of the true religion...”⁸⁸ Gershom Scholem suggests that Meir ben Simon’s attack letter may have been provoked by a case of apostasy – conversion! – in the group of the early Kabbalists⁸⁹. Could that have been the young *nasí* pictured in the Béziers window?

Only a hint appears among the surviving fragments of the Béziers creation bay to suggest the denouement of that apostasy. To return to a consideration of the so-called mystery-medallion (Fig. 10): it contains bits of the Genesis window’s distinctive medallion pattern (Fig. 2) but unfortunately it retains only the lower half of the figural scene (Fig. 10). Three imposing figures stand to the left, in colorful robes and fine shoes. To the right, a bare-legged figure clings to an unsaddled horse carrying him away. The lost upper half of the image might have identified the three standing figures, or not, but what remains is clearly not part of any identifiable Genesis scene and these three figures are not apostles, friars, clerics, etc. Perhaps they are kinsmen, neighbors, observers – that is, *witnesses*. The barelegged traveler is leaving them – on horseback but hardly in triumph! On pilgrimage? To Compostela? To Rome? Or even to the Christian lands still held by the crusaders in the Holy Land? If so, this mysterious panel would provide a fitting denouement to the narrative – in the Genesis window of Béziers cathedral – relating and “documenting” the contemporary success story of a high-born Jewish youth of the *nasí* family in the archdiocese of Narbonne and of his conversion to Christianity.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 42, 54-55, 397-401. On the *Milhemet Mitzvah* see above, note 30.

⁸⁸ SCHOLEM, *Origins*, pp. 401-2. Ashar ben David lived with his uncle Rabbi Isaac for many years, and following the rabbi’s death in the late 1230s, resided in Béziers (p. 393).

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 398 note 81.

