A Delightful Inheritance: Female Agency and the Disputatio Tradition in the *Hortus deliciarum*

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The *Hortus deliciarum* (*Garden of Delights*) was designed for the spiritual and intellectual edification of the Augustinian canonesses of the Alsatian convent of St. Odile at Hohenbourg by their abbess Herrad. Although there is no evidence providing a secure dating, scholars generally agree that the *Hortus* was begun around 1171, and that it ceased to be modified after 1194. Regrettably, the original manuscript was burned in the 1870 Siege of Strasbourg and, although a number of its sections were copied in the nineteenth century prior to its loss, a full copy was never produced. The disparate copies as well as the notes taken during the copying processes guided a reconstruction of the *Hortus* undertaken in 1979 by the Warburg Institute under the direction of Rosalie Green. Unfortunately, some portions of the manuscript were never copied. Therefore, though the copyists likely stayed true to the original illuminations, no statement can be made about the visual and textual compositions in the *Hortus* with absolute certainty. Yet perhaps even more saddening is that, given the incineration of its numerous colorful and gold-laden pages, we can only imagine how glorious the *Hortus* once was.

While the *Hortus deliciarum* is typically summed up as an encyclopedic history of salvation, this does not begin to describe the incredible breadth and sophistication of its contents. Ethics, cosmology, biblical history, and church history are just a few of the topics that the Hohenbourg canonesses would have absorbed from its pages. Yet an overwhelming portion of the manuscript seems to have been devoted to contemporary sources, thereby offering the canonesses an entrée to the developing theological arguments and movements of their own time.
Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* (ca. 1150), Honorius of Autun’s *Elucidarium* (*Light-Bringing Compendium*) and *Gemma animae* (*Gem of the Soul*, both of twelfth-century vintage), Rupert of Deutz’s *De divinis officiis* (*On Divine Services*; 1112), and Peter Comestor’s *Historia scholastica* (*Scholastic History*; ca. 1169–1173) comprise just a small sampling of the current and topical texts found in the *Hortus*.

The first critical book-length examination of the *Hortus* appeared in 2007, with Fiona Griffiths’s comprehensive study. Until Griffiths’s pioneering work, there was no major attempt to suggest how the *Hortus* may have factored into the larger scheme of the canonesses’ lives, or how the artistic merits of the *Hortus* augmented the manuscript’s overall impact. Griffiths convincingly demonstrates how Relinde, Herrad’s predecessor, initiated a trend of spiritual and intellectual renewal at Hohenbourg through the institution of the Augustinian Rule. The Augustinian tradition was particularly concerned with intellectual edification and, as Caroline Bynum suggests, their emphasis on education is what set Augustinians apart from their Benedictine contemporaries. Herrad continued Relinde’s spirit of intellectual curiosity and learning via the *Hortus*, thereby fostering a rich scholarly community at Hohenbourg. The *Hortus* familiarized the women of Hohenbourg with foundational texts while also exposing them to the newest theological topics debated by their male counterparts. Griffiths also demonstrates how, in addition to providing her canonesses with an impressive and wide-ranging education, Herrad designed the *Hortus* with contemporary reform issues in mind. Throughout the *Hortus*, Griffiths finds a vigorous censure of avarice and notes that this vice is depicted as a categorically male transgression. Her examination of some of the *Hortus* images such as Hell, the Psychomachia cycle, and the Ladder of Virtues suggests that Herrad provided her condemnations visually as well as textually. Thus, the *Hortus* put Herrad’s canonesses on par intellectually with their male contemporaries and endowed them with the knowledge necessary to exert greater agency over their spiritual lives.

I believe that an additional interpretation of these images is possible, one that enhances Griffiths’s portrait of the intellectual setting at Hohenbourg and suggests that the *Hortus* greatly affected the canonesses’ articulation of their own authority. I will suggest that Herrad
addressed the twelfth-century *disputatio* [disputation] tradition to demonstrate to her canonesses that dissenting voices, including their own, were essential to the body Christian. At various points, the canonesses seem encouraged not just to read and contemplate the manuscript’s texts and images silently within their library and their own minds, but vocally, even antagonistically. However, whereas twelfth-century disputation tracts often encapsulate a sense of Christian anxiety in the face of threats to Latin orthodoxy, Herrad presents disputation as an inheritance of the rabbinic tradition of Christianity’s Jewish predecessors. Not only does debate appear as having always been part of Christianity, it is essential to the continued life and prosperity of the Church. It appears that Herrad intended to establish in her charges not only the theological knowledge with which they could debate their faith, but also the intellectual confidence to actually do so. Under the Augustinian rule, the Hohenbourg canonesses had no obligation to remain at the convent, and Herrad knew that some of her canonesses would one day leave Hohenbourg to become wives of the nobility. Yet it seems that she did not intend for them to “dwindle into marriage.”

My study will examine two images in which debate is an apparent subject: the Tree of Abraham (fol. 80v) [Fig. 1], and the Structure of the Church (fol. 225v) [Fig. 2]. Like many of the *Hortus* images, the Tree of Abraham and the Structure of the Church have been examined primarily through an iconographical lens. Indeed, Judith Collard notes that scholars have tended to consider the *Hortus* illuminations in isolation rather than discussing how they might have contributed to the promotion of larger ideas. The Tree has been discussed mostly as an illustration of the “spiritual children” of Abraham or in terms of Marian exegesis. I have not encountered a thorough discussion of the Structure of the Church. Gérard Cames describes this image as the heavenly Jerusalem wherein contrite Jews and Gentiles join the triumphant Christian Church at the Last Judgment, an interpretation with which I disagree, as I shall later explain.

In the Tree of Abraham, the canonesses witnessed a Church founded on a debate that stemmed from Old and New Testament Jews, that was then passed on to the Church, and that came to include the canonesses themselves. Likewise, in the Structure of the Church, the Church was
portrayed as an entity surrounded by and infused with conflict between Old and New Testament, always recalling Christianity’s Jewish origins. Here, the canonesses participate even more strongly. In both images, the Hohenbourg women would understand that debate was not practiced only when the Church was ideologically attacked; dissent and conflict had always been part of the Church, as part of the Christian inheritance.

Fig. 1: *HD* Tree of Abraham (fol. 8ov).  
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from Jews. As such, it was every Christian’s responsibility to engage their faith. The active role of women, including the Hohenbourg canonesses themselves, is quite apparent in both the Tree of Abraham and the Structure of the Church. These images can therefore also be considered behavioral models for the canonesses, showing them that the duty to disagree fell to each of them. At a time when churchmen were scrambling to assert doctrinal supremacy in the face of theological opponents and to quell even their own doubts, Herrad welcomes the challenge of Jewish skepticism and urges her canonesses to join the fray.
Images in the *Hortus* were put onto the parchment before either the texts or the inscriptions, and thus guided the very placement of the text. Major illuminations mark pivotal moments in the salvation narrative, thereby shaping the canonesses’ reception of the entire manuscript. Therefore as much—if not more—effort as has been given to the study of the texts in the *Hortus* must be devoted to drawing out the complex, multi-layered qualities of its images. In the Tree of Abraham, Herrad plays upon and breaks from Tree of Jesse iconography in significant ways. As I shall show, she employs familiar elements of this image type in order to present the Church as a robust community rooted in debate, first exemplified by a series of arguing Old and New Testament Jews, and culminating in the medieval Christian community engaging in intense discussion. Whereas Jews are typically pushed outside of the communal body in contemporary Jesse images, in the Tree of Abraham we will see them as active participants rather than static signifiers. Jews inspire, promote, and participate in discussion.

Herrad’s seemingly inclusive portrayal of Jews is surprising. In the wake of the Crusades and the Gregorian Reform, opposition to Christian orthodoxy was met with hostility and defensiveness. The violent attacks on Jewish communities in 1096 are but one example. Yet I do not intend to build a case for finding religious tolerance in the *Hortus*. Rather, I suggest that Herrad values theological attacks on the Church only as catalysts for Christian intellectual activity. The Tree of Abraham and the Structure of the Church demonstrate the extent to which she valued discussion and, more importantly, disagreement regarding theological matters. Jews are ultimately enemies of the faith, and upon Christ’s Second Coming and the nullification of the earthly Church, they would cease to be useful and would number among the damned at the Last Judgment.

Christians had long employed Jews as negative didactic figures and religious scapegoats, as demonstrated in the Gospel of John and in the epistles of St. Paul, who notes in Romans 9:6 that “all are not Israelites that are of Israel.” A simultaneous effacement and absorption of Jewish identity occurred as early Christians came to classify themselves as the *Verus Israel* (True Israel). The Old Testament covenant of the Hebrews had passed. The Jews were no longer God’s chosen people, since their
inability to recognize Christ as the Messiah prevented them from shar-
ing in the new covenant. Thus, paradoxically, Christians were the new
chosen people, i.e. the new Jews, while Jews were considered the new
Gentiles because they maintained their faith.

Augustine would later command that the Jews be allowed to live
in peace, albeit also in abjection, claiming them as witnesses to the
fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and denying that they inten-
tionally killed Christ. Early Christian supersessionist beliefs persisted
into the Middle Ages, and by the second half of the eleventh century
Augustine’s position on Jewish guilt had been contested a number of
times. Indeed, the twelfth century produced more anti-Jewish polemic
than all the preceding centuries combined. Specifically, there was a
rise in recorded debates about questions of faith. Jewish opposition
to Christian theology occasionally swayed other Christians regard-
ing doctrinal matters such as the Incarnation, although in many cases
Christians came to question their faith on their own. In northwestern
Europe particularly, scholars grappled with Jews and Christians who
shared many of the same doubts regarding Christ’s divine humanity
and other foundational beliefs.

“Pro Utilitate Fidei” [For the Strengthening of the Faith]:

Disputatio to Alleviate Christian Doubt

Disputation tracts such as Gilbert Crispin’s Disputatio Iudei et Christiani
(Disputation of a Jew and a Christian; ca. 1092–1093) and its companion
piece, Disputatio Christiani cum Gentili (Disputation of a Christian with a
Gentile), as well as Peter Abelard’s Dialogus inter philosophum, iudaeum,
et christianum (Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian;
c.a.1136–1139) sought to resolve Christian doubt and confound all other
opposition. Christian witnesses to Crispin’s debate with a Jew asked
that he put the discussion in writing pro utilitate fidei, for the strength-
ening of the faith. While live debates with Jews sometimes provided
the inspiration for such written material, disputation tracts were, if
not entirely fictitious, quite often altered in their journey to the page.
Rather than an accurate recording, these tracts are intellectual exercises
written by a Christian, to be read by other Christians for theological fortification. To prove to the reader that Christians and Jews were entirely different, the Jewish debater is often typecast as the stereotypically carnal Jew who exhibits hostility towards Christianity and holds a literal, and therefore faulty, understanding of Scripture.  

The twelfth-century *disputatio* tradition thus attempts to invent or underscore differences between Christians and Jews. Ironically, Christians carried this out via traditional Jewish argumentation methods. In order to spar with their Jewish opponents, Christian writers devoted themselves to studying the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud, and thereby became acquainted with the rabbinic tradition, which is characterized by rational reflection and debate. Robert Chazan laments that “what might have been illuminating and liberating turned out to arouse Christian sensitivities [...].” The Talmud in particular threatened Christians because it indicated Jewish intellectual activity that did not rely on Scripture, and its contents were later condemned in the thirteenth century. Since Christians and Jews shared a common religious origin and thus some traditions as well, additional efforts were required to separate the two in society, and in ways immediately recognizable to the Christian psyche.

**Visual Conceptions of Jews in Twelfth-Century Europe**

To further distance themselves from their detractors and to deny their own doubt, medieval Christians also developed visual differences between themselves and their theological foes. Although there were visual conventions to depict a wide variety of enemies to the faith, the *Hortus* is particularly focused on negative portrayals of Jews. By the twelfth century, Jews were typically identified by various types of hats. The *pileus cornutus* (conical—literally, “horned”—hat) became a common iconographical element in the eleventh century. It was soon joined by the Phrygian cap, a common marker for biblical Jews by the twelfth century that also sometimes appears on Christian figures of bad repute. Yet the Phrygian cap also appears on the three Magi, and both the *pileus cornutus* and the Phrygian cap appear on venerable Old
Testament figures such as Moses and biblical prophets, thus frustrating attempts to ascertain whether or not this headgear always carried negative connotations.²⁹

The pileus cornutus appears at various moments throughout the Hortus and also carries conflicting connotations. For example, Queen Esther’s uncle, Mordechai, typically considered an admirable Old Testament figure, wears the conical hat (fol. 60v). Nevertheless, among the Hortus illuminations that have been copied, the conical hat more often features in negative depictions of medieval Jews. Jews in conical hats accompany Antichrist (fol. 241v), appear among the damned at the Last Judgment (fol. 253v) [Fig. 3], and are thrown into a cauldron in Hell (fol. 255r) [Fig. 4]. Given this negative treatment of Jewish figures in the Hortus, the Tree of Abraham and the Structure of the Church must be taken as a comment on the importance of education and dissent for an ideal Christian community, rather than as an open interfaith dialogue. However, at the same time as Herrad employs a visual divide between Christians and Jews, she also acknowledges and highlights continuities

Fig. 3: HD Last Judgment (fol. 253r).
Detail: Jews and Pagans.
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between the Jewish and Christian faiths, and Christianity’s intellectual debt to Judaism.

**The *Hortus* Tree of Abraham**

The Tree of Abraham is planted by God the Father and begins with Abraham, enclosed within its trunk, who responds to an angel directing his gaze toward a number of red stars symbolizing the innumerable progeny promised to him (Genesis 22:17). Above Abraham in a larger compartment are his descendants, the men who connect him to Christ. Above these figures is a full-length figure of the Virgin from which a bust of Christ sprouts in a small bud. In the top-most register of the Tree are figures typically not included in the Tree of Jesse: Peter (to the left) and Paul (to the right). Each stands with five additional Apostles and holds a codex. Behind them and their respective Apostles are groups of ecclesiastics, ordered according to Church hierarchy. Behind Paul and his Apostles are a pope and bishops, followed by martyrs and finally
by a virgin. Peter and his Apostles head a group of bishops and a partially obscured pope, martyrs, male monastics and two naked hermits, and another virgin. Interestingly, a Hohenbourg canoness also appears here, pushed to the left margin of the image. She is identified by her headdress, which is similar to those worn in the *Hortus* illumination presenting the Hohenbourg community (fol. 323r) [Fig. 5].

The Tree of Abraham bears similarities to the Tree of Jesse, but breaks from this tradition in interesting ways. The Jesse window at the Abbey Church of Saint Denis [Fig. 6], the earliest known depiction of this motif (ca. 1140–1144) presents the Tree sprouting from Jesse’s sleeping body while Old Testament figures stand outside of the Tree proper. Many point to their scrolls and look up to Christ, indicating his fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. This is also characteristic of later Jesse Trees, such as a Bamberg ivory from the Louvre [Fig. 7]. Again, Old Testament figures act as signposts for Christ. Green notes that the recently invented Tree of Christ, seen in a copy of the *Speculum virginum* now in Berlin, might have also served as a source for Herrad, yet even here Old Testament figures do not exhibit any agency of their own and are meant to direct the viewer’s gaze to Christ.30 Indeed, locating the Tree’s origins in Jesse emphasizes the Old Testament’s prophetic relation to the New. It is merely an arrow pointing to Christianity.

Rather than placing Old Testament figures outside of the organic body Christian, Herrad absorbs them into it. To either side of the Tree, groups of figures in a series of convolutions interact with their corresponding group on the opposite side. Starting at the bottom we see a disputation between Old Testament prophets and the Temple doctors, then between Old Testament kings, and finally between patriarchs and
Fig. 6: Abbey Church, St. Denis, France, Tree of Jesse Window. Detail: Old Testament figures. Photo Credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.

Fig. 7: Ivory Tree of Jesse (Bamberg?, ca. 1200). Louvre, Paris, France (Inv.: OA 10428). Photo: Daniel Arnaudet. Photo Credit: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.
New Testament Jewish officials in conical hats, perhaps the Sanhedrin. The Tree is thus a single entity, yet one side serves as a foil for the other. Peter and his followers crown the side of the tree that displays the prophets, kings, and patriarchs, while Paul’s group sits atop the side that contains the Temple doctors, kings, and New Testament Jews. These figures appear to be speaking, for many of them hold up their hands, a traditional signifier of speech. Rather than witnessing prophecies fulfilled, each group actively communicates with the figures in the opposite corresponding convolution. The prophets and Temple doctors gesture similarly to the patriarchs and Chief Priests, respectively, suggesting a recurring argument throughout the history of the Church.

The theme of continuity is compounded by the prose and poetic texts on the facing page. No author is identified, and it is tempting to conclude that Herrad composed these texts herself. The poem begins, Interpretatur Abraham/Pater multarum gentium,/Qui sunt omnes Christiani/Vel Judei vel pagani [Abraham is understood as the father of many peoples, who are all Christians or Jews or pagans] (fol. 8tr). The Tree of Abraham both corroborates and expands upon this idea. Rather than originating in Jesse’s sleeping body, the Tree is planted in the earth by God the Father, who watches it grow to fruition. Rather than sprouting from Abraham’s body, the Hortus is instituted by God himself, yet focusing on Abraham as the first figure in the Tree emphasizes the common Old Testament origins of Christians and Jews, and therefore, to some extent, a bodily commonality.

The Tree of Abraham demonstrated that God had literally rooted his Church in argument. Indeed, it is the debating figures that make the survival and promotion of the current Church possible. The top-most level, Herrad’s present-day Church, would not be able to stand were it not for the groups in the convolutions. They not only serve to support Christianity, but also to be surpassed by it. Interestingly, one scholar reads everything beneath Peter and Paul as existing underground. If this is correct, then Mary, the Christ-bud, and Peter and Paul’s groups represent the tree’s contemporary fruits, the present-day Church continuing the tradition of robust discussion.

The idea of commonality despite difference also pertains to Peter and Paul and their respective groups on either side of the Christ-bud. Paul
was the apostle to the Gentiles. Accounts of his interactions with them are found in Romans 11:13, Ephesians 3:8, and Acts 21:17. Peter, being one of Christ’s followers during his time on earth, was a representative of the foundational Church. In short, Paul was the apostle to non-Jews and therefore outsiders, while Peter was the apostle to the Jews, who were God’s chosen people. Thus, although both men are major figures in Christianity, there is a perceivable difference, albeit a minor one, between them. A late twelfth-century Westphalian ivory plaque depicting Christ’s presentation of the keys to Peter and the law to Paul [Fig. 8], an iconographical theme originating in early Christian art, emphasizes the different roles these two biblical figures played. Paul receives the law as a scroll from Christ, while Peter receives the keys of the Church. While Peter and Paul are presented as interdependent founders of the Church, the fact that Paul receives a scroll rather than a codex may imply

Fig. 8: Christ Presenting the Keys to Peter and the Law to Paul. German (Westphalia), second half of twelfth century. Elephant ivory, 5 15/16 x 3 3/8 in. (15.1 x 9.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection (1979.399). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
the permanence of his Jewish identity despite his conversion, for scrolls were often attributes of Old Testament prophets. Here Paul evokes images of Moses receiving the Law in the form of a scroll rather than tablets, a visual tradition since the Early Christian period.

In the upper register of the Hortus Tree of Abraham, Peter’s side appears to argue more convincingly than does Paul’s. In comparison to the virgin on the left, who is in the midst of debating, the virgin on the right appears stymied and does not gesture at all [Fig. 9]. The angel pointing to the stars further bolsters this interpretation. While the red objects are primarily intended as stars, their location in the image also implies spilled seed from a bloom on the Tree. The Tree is vertically symmetrical, so one would expect the full blossom to Abraham’s left to be mirrored on his right. Instead of coming to fruition, it has exploded, spilling its seed everywhere. Quite likely, the biblical account of Onan “spilling his seed” on the ground (Genesis 38:9) was familiar to the educated women at Hohenbourg. Therefore, despite the collaborative nature of the two sides of the tree, perhaps Herrad intends to show Peter’s side in a slightly more positive light than Paul’s.

On the left side one sees that the prophets and patriarchs all feature physical contact; in each group, one figure lays a hand on another. This recurs in the highest register on the left side of the Tree, as one of the Apostles places a hand on Peter’s shoulder. This does not occur at all on the right side of the Tree, perhaps indicating that the left side is more unified; it may also refer to the practice of laying on of hands to ordain figures into the Church. The kings on the left side bear a greater number of scepters than those on the right, perhaps implying greater legitimacy. It is worth noting that Christ’s right side was often considered the favored side. Herrad may be implying that Peter’s side is more rightfully ordained than is Paul’s. Taken in conjunction with the
debating virgin on the left versus the dumbfounded one on the right, this is not wholly unlikely.

Interestingly, the virgin on the left is one of the only figures aside from Peter to gesture, and, therefore, to speak. In this top-most register, among male clerics and monastics, a woman (along with Peter) debates Paul. It is significant that she is accompanied by a Hohenbourg canoness who, though she herself does not gesture, drinks in the actions of this assertive and confident figure. As Herrad’s canonesses studied this image, they not only observed a woman exercising strong intellectual activity within the body of the Church; they also saw themselves on the stronger side of the argument. Herrad presented *disputatio* as part of Christianity’s inheritance from Jews and therefore, as an unshakeable duty of all Christians, including women. Yet in the Structure of the Church we see that she did not intend her canonesses to be merely spectators.

**The Structure of the Church**

In the Structure of the Church, the canonesses again witnessed women exerting a strong role in a Church-wide discussion. Here women appear in greater numbers than in the Tree, and the canonesses specifically are more prevalent here. As in the Tree, Peter and Paul sit with popes, bishops, monks, and Hohenbourg canonesses. Yet this time, rather than flanking Mary as the humble mother of God, these two figural groups sit on either side of the Virgin Mary/Ecclesia [the Church] as an enthroned queen. The lower level of the Structure contains the laici [laity] on the left and the spiritales [religious] on the right flanking the adolescentulae [young women], symbolizing the daughters of Jerusalem. Here, even more so than in the Tree, women are active participants; they feature in every area of the Structure except for that of the spiritales, and all speak, except for Ecclesia, who listens. To the left, the prophet Isaiah emerges from a door and King David welcomingly gestures from a door. Angels and demons battle on the roof, indicating that the Structure cannot represent the heavenly Jerusalem, contrary to what Cames argues, for the heavenly Jerusalem is marked by internal harmony and homogeneity. The Structure, however, thrives on conflict, and the ongoing struggle
indicates that this is Herrad’s conception of the earthly Church.

Like the Tree of Abraham, the Structure highlights Christianity’s inheritance of the rabbinic tradition. Green’s commentary notes that there was once an inscription next to the figures on Ecclesia’s left that read: “Frigium est opus textorium preciosum ex albo serico. Papa portat frigium, ceteri episcopi infulas” [The frigium is a costly woven work of white silk. The pope wears the frigium, other bishops wear miters]. The frigium, or “Phrygian cap,” has an interesting place in the history of ecclesiastical vestments, for in addition to identifying Jews or exotic figures, as demonstrated above, its conical pattern seems to have provided the inspiration for both the peaked episcopal miter and the conical papal tiara (the classic form for this headgear). Ruth Mellinkoff suggests that this was intended to establish a typological relationship between the Old Testament priesthood and the contemporary hierarchy, but notes that there is no evidence for miters among the Jewish high priests. It appears that medieval ecclesiastics only thought they were assuming the sartorial traditions of their Jewish predecessors. Indeed, the patriarchs in the Tree of Abraham are shown wearing headgear nearly identical to the medieval episcopal miter, and a figure wearing an episcopal miter accompanies the Israelites carrying the Ark of the Covenant through the Desert of Paran (fol. 51r).

Herrad’s description of the papal tiara as a frigium carries a number of interesting implications. While frigium had referred to the pope’s headgear from the eighth century, by the mid-twelfth century this term had been replaced by regnum. Furthermore, and as mentioned above, by the twelfth century the Phrygian cap was more often associated with various types of outsiders. Interestingly, a figure among the laici, sitting behind a king holding a scepter, wears just this sort of hat. Thus, instead of regnum, which had been in use before the creation of the Hortus, Herrad employs archaic terminology to emphasize the assumed typological relationship between the Old Testament priesthood and the medieval Church, subtly affirming that the pope represented God’s true chosen people and Christians the true covenant. To make this even clearer to the canonesses, she juxtaposes the pope’s frigium with the Phrygian cap of the figure among the laity.

The antagonistic-yet-inextricable relationship between the Old and
New Testaments is further addressed in the roundels at each corner of the Structure. Each contains an Old Testament prophet and an Evangelist symbol. In the two upper roundels the angel of Matthew offers his gospel to Isaiah and the eagle of John speaks to Jeremiah. Meanwhile, in the lower roundels Ezekiel raises his hands in speech to the lion of Mark and Daniel to the calf of Luke. This entire image resounds with lively discussion between Old and New Testaments, yet Christianity will always set the framework for such discussions. The inscriptions accompanying the figures of Isaiah and David at either side of the building command the viewer: “lavamini mundi estoti” [wash yourselves, be clean] (Isaiah 1:16), and “introite portas eius in confessione” [enter his gates in praise] (Psalm 99:4). Although non-Christians might enter into conversation with the Church, they must ultimately submit to the Church.

When considering images such as the Tree of Abraham and the Structure of the Church, it is important to remember that medieval portrayals of Jews and other non-Christians were often symbolic and intended to magnify Christianity’s greatness. While the Tree and Structure imply an intellectual kinship among Christians and Jews, Jews are clearly damned in other areas of the Hortus. It appears that Herrad valued Christianity’s theological rivals solely for the discussion they fostered among members of the Church. Her canonesses would look and read and understand that so long as the Church was an earthly representation of God’s kingdom, any assistance at better understanding its mysteries and sacraments was for the good. Disagreement was essential to the continued existence of the Church because it led to the intellectual activity that produced a stronger and more knowledgeable Christian community. Although Jews contribute to the intellectual prosperity of the Church, their final place is outside of it. Herrad illustrates this quite clearly in the scenes of the Last Judgment and Hell.

A clear understanding of how the Hortus was used remains elusive. The manuscript’s destruction precludes examining it for wear or other signs of use, and there is no solid record of how often or under what circumstances the Hortus was consulted, although some educated guesses can be made after considering its content and size. The size of the majority of the leaves, documented as approximately 50–53 x 36–37
centimeters, implies that viewing the manuscript was a group activity rather than an individual venture. Due to its lack of finding tools, such as tabs or chapter divisions, Griffiths concludes that the Hortus was not intended as a reference tool. Furthermore, the layout of biblical accounts breaks the traditional narrative sequence. These two factors imply that, rather than prioritizing speed and searchability, Herrad crafted her manuscript with the intention that the canonesses spend time ruminating over its texts and images. Indeed, Christine Bischoff suggests that the canonesses would have chanted together the poetic compositions that often accompany the images. Thus, their education was frequently obtained through meditative means akin to lectio divina [spiritual reading].

Furthermore, the Hortus was never bound, allowing additions to be made as ideas at Hohenbourg developed. Indeed, a number of half leaves, quarter leaves, and stubs were inserted throughout the manuscript over time, and their distribution is only partially documented. The unbound quality of the Hortus suggests an organic object that grew and changed along with ideas at Hohenbourg, and also suggests that the canonesses could study individual folios, perhaps according to specific instructions or lesson plans. Perhaps disparate folios were placed together for comparison and discussion. If so, a comparison of the Tree of Abraham and the Structure of the Church, two images that echo each other compositionally, would have yielded a rich discussion among Herrad and her canonesses, and perhaps additional folio combinations existed as well.

It seems apparent that Herrad was not content only to provide her canonesses with contemporary theological works written by men. While she clearly saw the importance of imparting the latest educational resources to her charges, she also intended for the Hohenbourg women to thoughtfully consider these recent theological developments and to do so vocally. In designing the Tree of Abraham and the Structure of the Church within the frame of debate, Herrad harnessed the disputatio tradition and shaped it to her needs, portraying dissent as endemic to the Church and thereby encouraging the canonesses to exercise their own intellectual talents. In modeling themselves on the engaged and arguing figures in their manuscript, the Hohenbourg canonesses entered into
the life of the mind that was so important to the Augustinian tradition and to Abbess Herrad.

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**END NOTES**


2. See the comparison of a still extant illumination with its copy by the copyist for the Comte de Bastard, whose copies of the images from the *Hortus* are “utterly trustworthy re-creations” (Rosalie Green, “The Miniatures,” in Green, et al., eds., *Hortus deliciarum* vol. 1, pp. 18–19; HD plates 167–68).


8. I have limited my discussion here to these two illuminations, although I intend to discuss a broader range of images in a larger study of the *Hortus*.


12. Cames, Allégories et symboles, p. 93.


22. Abulafia, Christians and Jews, p. 73.


29. Strickland, Saracens, Demons, and Jews, p. 106; Lipton, Images of Intolerance, p. 16; Mellinkoff, Outcasts, pp. 73–74.


31. I have identified all figures in the Tree of Abraham and Structure of the Church according to their resemblance to other figures in the Hortus that are clearly labeled. For example, the figures I identify as the Temple doctors appear to wear tunics and head coverings similar to those of the figures surrounding Christ in the Temple and accompanied by the inscription doctores (HD fol. 98r).

32. HD fol. 81r. This sentence is ambiguous, and could also be translated to claim that Abraham “is the father of many peoples, who are all Christians whether Jews or pagans,” which would provide even more interesting theological implications.


39. “There shall not enter into it any thing defiled, or that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb” (Apocalypse 21:27). For Cames, see above n. 11.


41. Mellinkoff, Outcasts, p. 89; Walter Lowrie, Monuments of the Early Church (New York: Macmillan, 1901), p. 387. The tiara and miter were visually differentiated only as of the twelfth century (Levillain, “Tiara,” p. 1490).


43. The last documented use of frigium is found in the writings of a pontifical historiographer from 1185 (Levillain, “Tiara,” pp. 1489, 1491).

44. Mellinkoff, Outcasts, p. 90.


