

## INTRODUCTION

A façade, by definition, is meant to address a viewer and to be a showpiece for an audience.<sup>1</sup> A façade speaks for the entire building and for its community, and it can project onto that community a striking self-image. Covered with an excess of over two hundred gabled niches for statues, no façade was so clearly designed as spectacle as was the west façade of the church of St. Andrew at Wells (Figs. 1 and 2).<sup>2</sup> Located in England, where façades were previously nearly bare of sculpture, this façade was an anomaly when designed in the 1220s. It would also have been highly anomalous on the Continent where the paragon was the French system of three huge portals, each with its concentration of statues and specialized theme. Although the Coronation of the Virgin, a sculptural theme common in French portals, is the focus of the façade's program at Wells, it appears in an entirely new context, paired neither with the Assumption of the Virgin nor with the Last Judgement but framed instead with an array of saints without reference to retribution.

Long before the sculptural message can be read, however, this array of saints in gabled niches creates an immediate effect of spectacle. To maximize display the façade has been made twice the width of the nave and aisles (Figs. 2 and 3). It is almost as wide as the façade of Notre-Dame in Paris, although the church of Wells itself is about half the

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<sup>1</sup> English medieval documents usually refer to the west front of the church as *frons ecclesiae*. See O. Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales, und Schottland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307* (München, 1955), vol. 5, p. 183 for references to *frons*, and vol. 1, p. 445, no. 1639 for an early thirteenth-century reference at Evesham Abbey to *frons occidentalis ecclesiae*. The term façade, although not found in medieval documents, describes best the west front conceived as a screen at Wells since for architectural historians, such as S. Murray, *Notre-Dame Cathedral of Amiens* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 87, the modern term façade 'conveys the meaning of an exterior veneer, not necessarily integrated with the interior structure.'

<sup>2</sup> A. Andersson, *English Influence in Norwegian and Swedish Figure sculpture in Wood, 1220–1270* (Stockholm, 1950), p. 16. The façade of Wells is the largest preserved concentration of sculpture from the Middle Ages in England. See Chapter 3, p. 94 n. 29 for the number of gabled niches.

width while the height of the façade of Wells is approximately half the height of Notre-Dame.<sup>3</sup> Originally the low, horizontal expanse of the façade would have had greater emphasis, as it was probably designed with low spires (Fig. 4). The present towers date from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Since the statues of saints are distributed evenly across this wide front at Wells with Christ at its apex, the viewer is asked to regard the entire field of the façade, instead of focusing on the portals as in France. In stark contrast to the engulfing portals of contemporaneous French façades, the west portals at Wells are tiny openings in the foundation plinth: the lateral doorways are one-fifth and the central portal two-fifths the height of those of Notre-Dame in Paris.<sup>4</sup> The diminutive entrance at Wells, defined by rows of quatrefoils as in choir screens, evokes intimate access to a holy place of ritual. This unusual entrance and the façade's other architectural and sculptural anomalies are central to understanding the façade's meaning at the moment of its production. What did its anomalies and spectacular display communicate, and how was this façade part of the discourse of the 1220s?

Because the façade, in a certain sense, projects the self-image that the church shows to the world, it would have been the chapter of secular canons or their bishop at Wells who determined the program to be presented.<sup>5</sup> We are lucky to be able to name the patron and designer of the façade of Wells, almost certainly in the case of Bishop Jocelin and in all likelihood for his master mason, Adam Lock (Figs. 6 and 7). Jocelin was not 'bishop of Wells,' but, as a native of Wells and bishop of Bath between 1206 and 1242, he wanted the church of Wells in his diocese to

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 87 n. 5 for the measurements of Wells. For Notre-Dame in Paris, see Bony, *French Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 239, 500–501 n. 31, p. 505 n. 23; and M. Aubert, *Notre-Dame de Paris, sa place dans l'histoire de l'architecture* (Paris, 1929), p. 122 and fold-out plan. The width of the façade in Paris is 135 feet and that of Wells 144 feet; the width of the church between the walls of the aisles of Notre-Dame in Paris is about 133 feet while that of Wells is about 70 feet. The total height of the façade of Notre-Dame is 207 feet (to the top of the upper gallery 141 feet) while the top of the central gable at Wells is only 99–100 feet, high. The height of the nave of Notre-Dame is 102 feet while that of Wells is 67 feet, which is about the height of the aisles at Amiens 62 feet 4 inches.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 123 n. 134; and Bony, *French Gothic*, p. 239 who gives the height of the doorways of Notre-Dame in Paris as 50 feet.

<sup>5</sup> The canons at Wells were labeled 'secular' to distinguish them from 'regular canons,' i.e. Augustinians, since they were not monks and did not live under a common rule. Instead, they lived within their own households, usually within the cathedral close, but were not always in residence. See Chapter 1, p. 30 n. 46, p. 38 n. 91 and p. 39 n. 95.

regain the cathedral status that it had before the Conquest. As a result the secular canons at Wells were caught up in a power struggle with the monks at Bath Abbey, living about thirty miles away, in their effort to make Wells the seat of the diocese. These social pressures in relation to the program of the façade indicate clerics—whether regional, national, or international—as one of the audiences for the façade.

A look at the way in which the façade functioned, however, defines a broader audience. Although the west portals open directly into the nave and aisles, they do not seem to have served for usual access. The canons, vicars, and their families entered through a porch on the north side of the church.<sup>6</sup> The small doors of the façade were used during processions and funerals, not of the canons, who were buried in the cloister, but of the privileged laity whose cemetery was located directly in front of the façade; only on special feast days, such as Palm Sunday and Easter, would all those living in the vicinity have celebrated in the cathedral.<sup>7</sup> The façade, then, was used as a *scaenae frons* for processions and, like the bishop's sermon, addressed the popular audience of bourgeoisie, peasants, women, and children.<sup>8</sup>

The ideal audience that Bishop Jocelin considered for the façade might have been those anticipated for the consecration ceremony of his church. During such dedications the bishop usually explained the con-

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<sup>6</sup> C.M. Church, *Chapters in the Early History of the Church of Wells A.D. 1136–1333* (London, 1894), pp. 140, 154; and J. Harvey, 'The Building of Wells Cathedral, I: 1175–1307,' in *Wells Cathedral A History*, ed. L.S. Colchester (Shepton Mallet, England, 1982), p. 64. For the use of side porches in England see, F. Bond, *An Introduction to English Church Architecture* (London, 1913), vol. 1 pp. 40–48. See also Chapter 1, p. 39 n. 92.

<sup>7</sup> For documentation of the graveyard for the laity see Chapter 1, p. 25 n. 29. The laity probably entered the nave from an elaborate doorway on the south side of the southwest tower, although it also had processional uses. See R.D. Reid, *Wells Cathedral* (Leighton Buzzard, England, 1963), p. 106. A statute of 1297, regulating the times of closing the church doors to ensure quiet, states that the '*magnum hostium ecclesie sub campanile versus claustrum*' was always to be closed, except on special occasions, as for processions. See Church, *Chapters*, p. 325; J. Sampson, *Wells Cathedral West Front: Construction, Sculpture and Conservation* (Phoenix Mill, 1998), pp. 60–72; and W. Rodwell, *Wells Cathedral Excavations and Structural Studies, 1978–1993* (London, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 256–332. The present west cloister walk was built between 1460 and 1480, but it replaces a cloister with similar dimensions of ca. 1230 and incorporates its outer wall. During the construction of the façade several changes in plan, especially in building the north walk, altered the relation of this portal to the cloister. The decision not to complete the sculpture on the south tower seems related to these changes. In fact, the thirteenth-century roof of the cloister cuts through the lower row of niches.

<sup>8</sup> P.B. Roberts, *Studies in the Sermons of Stephen Langton* (Toronto, 1968) p. 50; and A. Lecoy de la Marche, *La Chaire Française au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1886), p. 211. Both attempt to identify typical medieval audiences.

secration rites of the church, a custom that familiarized the faithful with liturgical practices. Unfortunately, nothing but the date is known about the consecration at Wells in 1239.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the audience is documented for the foundation ceremony at nearby Salisbury Cathedral in 1220 and for the consecration of its choir in 1225. The participants of these ceremonies were recorded by William Wanda, the dean of the chapter at Salisbury, who gave the following eye witness account of the 1220 foundation at which Jocelin's colleague at court, Bishop Richard Poore presided:

the bishop expected, that our lord the king would have come thither on that day with the legate and archbishop of Canterbury, and many of the nobility of England ... but by reason of a treaty ... at Shrewsbury ... the bishop's expectation was frustrated: however, he could not put off that business to any farther time, because there had been publick notice given thereof throughout the whole bishoprick. On the day appointed for this purpose, the bishop came with great devotion, few earls or barons of the county, but a very great multitude of the common people coming in from all parts ... The bishop, bare-headed and bare-footed, walked slowly, accompanied by the canons of his church, singing the litany, to the place of foundation to address the assembled people ... amidst the acclamations of the multitude of the people weeping for joy.<sup>10</sup>

For the consecration at Wells, Jocelin probably envisioned a similar procession reciting the Litany of saints, but here in front of their images on the façade. For the consecration of the choir at Salisbury in 1225, Jocelin's attendance is documented, along with five other bishops—Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, the archbishop of Dublin, the cardinal Otho—and many of the king's court.<sup>11</sup> The day after the consecration Stephen Langton preached to the people outside and celebrated divine services in the presence of many nobles and bishops of the realm.<sup>12</sup> King Henry III made a belated appearance, and Bishop Richard Poore 'nobly and splendidly entertained the whole numerous

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<sup>9</sup> C.M. Church, 'Jocelin, bishop of Bath, 1206–1242,' *Archaeologia* 51, pt. 2(1888):294. See also Chapter 1, p. 25 n. 26.

<sup>10</sup> W.H. Richard Jones, ed. *Vetus Registrum Sarisberniense alias dictum registrum S Osmundi Episcopi. The Register of S. Osmund* (Rolls Series London 1883–1884), vol. 2, pp. cxx, 12–13; P. Blum, 'The Salisbury Chapter House and its old testament cycle: an archaeological and iconographical study,' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Yale University, 1978), pp. 10, 267; and F. Price, *A Series of particular and useful Observations Made with great Diligence and Care, upon that Admirable Structure, the Cathedral-Church of Salisbury* (London, 1753), pp. 8–9.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, *Vetus Registrum*, vol. 2, p. 37; and Price, *Observations*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Church, *Chapters*, p. 209; Jones, *Vetus Registrum*, vol. 2, pp. cxx, 38–40; and Price,

company of nobility that came there for the whole week at his own charges.<sup>13</sup> In the years between these ceremonies at Salisbury, Jocelin seems to have begun the façade at Wells. For the construction at Wells Henry III ordered, in addition to support in money, trees to be supplied from his woods, as on August 4, 1220, which was a month before the foundation at Salisbury, and, as on December 30, 1225, three months after the consecration of Salisbury's choir.<sup>14</sup>

Public events of liturgical pomp and display, such as the consecration of a church, can be considered spectacles, according to the medieval use of the term *spectaculum*. Likewise, an unusually impressive sculptural display on a medieval church façade, such as that of Wells, can be interpreted as a public and more permanent spectacle. In medieval texts *spectaculum* is, in fact, used to describe monumental ecclesiastical architectural arrangements meant to impress an audience.<sup>15</sup> The medieval word, *spectaculum* is most often used to characterize awesome fires and natural cosmic wonders.<sup>16</sup> It is even applied to weekly horse sales watched by many.<sup>17</sup> And it also describes theatrical presentations and sacred convocations, such as public gatherings at shrines that can be related to the façade's shrine-like display and to its use during liturgical

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*Observations*, p. 12. On September 28, 1225 the bishop dedicated three altars, and on September 29 the archbishop preached to the people outside.

<sup>13</sup> Blum, *Salisbury*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> For proof that these bequests were for construction of the façade consult, Church, 'Jocelin,' p. 294 and Chapter 1, p. 20 n. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Although I have not found the term used to describe a façade, the following large constructions attracted spectators: Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, vol. 2: p. 74, no. 2533 (*Willelmi monachi Malmesbiriensis de gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque*, p. 375): an arrangement on beams within a church 'which gave those watching from afar something to look at (Ferebanturque tigna cum trabibus per inane, spectaculo a longe visentibus)'; vol. 2, p. 559, no. 4351 (*Willelm Malmesbiriensis monachi de gestis pontificum Anglorum libri quinque*, lib. 2, p. 203): 'a huge mausoleum which attracts spectators (*spectaculoque ducitur enormitas mausolei filii eius*).'

<sup>16</sup> Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, vol. 1, pp. 218 no. 800 (*Chronica Gervasii monachi Cantuariensis*, pp. 3–4): 'There was to see in this wonderful but wretched fire a spectacle (*Erat in hoc incendio mirabile, immo miserabile, videre spectaculum*)'; vol. 3, p. 200 no. 5876 (*Chronica sive flores historiarum, auct. Rogero de Wendover*, vol. 4, p. 266): 'These suns appeared to more than one thousand trustworthy men and provided them with a terrible sight ... (*Hi soles plusquam mille viris fide dignis apparentes terribile illis spectaculum praeberunt* ...).'

<sup>17</sup> Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, vol. 2, p. 99 no. 2630 (*Vita s. Thomae Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et martyris, auct. Willelmo filio Stephani*, p. 5): 'a well-known spectacle involving the sale of well-bred horses (*est ibidem celebre spectaculum nobilium equorum venalium*).'

processions.<sup>18</sup> Many of these contemporaneous medieval texts emphasize an emotional response to the spectacle described.<sup>19</sup> The façade of Wells too would have evoked in the viewer emotional reactions, especially when used as a *scaenae frons* on occasions, such as Palm Sunday when singers concealed behind busts of angels sang from the heavenly framework of the façade. Because of this performative function the term spectacle, commonly used in medieval studies as a synonym for medieval plays, is appropriate for the façade's description, although the broader definition of the term also pertains.

Accordingly, characterization of the façade of Wells as spectacle in this book conforms to the medieval use of *spectaculum* to describe a specially prepared event or arrangement on a large scale that is displayed for the public's admiration. Although this is the primary sense here intended, aspects of the message carried by the façade's array of sculpture could also be interpreted as sharing similarities with Guy Debord's twentieth-century concept of the spectacle. As with Debord's spectacle, the façade is more than propaganda. The façade materialized the after-life in the Heavenly Jerusalem as though its sculptural representation were reality, just as the modern spectacle stimulates a satisfying illusion of unlimited future consumption.<sup>20</sup> In fact, elaboration of the west front at Wells into an architectural spectacle may have resulted from an attempt to simulate the Heavenly Jerusalem, as well as to promote Bishop Jocelin's ambitions for making Wells the seat of his diocese. As spectacle, the façade could address multiple ends and different audiences.

If Jocelin's intended audience for the façade of Wells was as varied as that attending the foundation ceremony of the choir at Salisbury

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<sup>18</sup> Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, vol. 2, p. 99, no. 2631 (*Vita s. Thomae Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et martyris*, auct. Willelmo filio Stephani, pp. 9–10): 'theatrical shows' (pro spectaculis theatralibus); vol. 1, p. 476, no. 1732 (*Giralid Cambrensis gemma ecclesiastica, distincto*, 2, cap. 10, 1170 cap. 170, p. 327): 'in order that adequate provision for the wishes and prayers of the people might appear to have been made by the sweetness of this sight [the burial place] (*quatenus huius spectaculi dulcedine populi votis ac precibus satis factum fuisse monstraretur*).'

<sup>19</sup> Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, vol. 2, p. 88, no. 2598 (*Speculum historiale de gestis regum Angliae*, auct. Ricardo de Cirencestria, vol. 2, p. 323): 'a longed-for sight before an altar, (*qui in oratione ante altare remanserant et ad tam desiderabile spectaculum admissis*)'; vol. 2 p. 584, no. 4453 (Tynemouth [Northumberland], *Vita Oswini Regis*, pp. 58–59): '(When) Baldwin had heard the voices of the players he ran joyously up to the spectacle (*Baldewinus voces ludantium et tumultus audisset, ad spectaculum festinanter accurrat*).'

<sup>20</sup> G. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, 1977), paragraph 20, 25, and 47.

in 1220, a range of responses can be imagined to the display of the façade and to its leitmotifs, the gabled niche and the quatrefoil. Both motifs were unusual in architectural decoration during the 1220s but were common on shrines, tombs, and choir screens. This study posits that when Jocelin and his master mason, Adam Lock, transposed these sacred motifs from choir furnishings to the façade, the motifs would have conjured up, as signs for viewers, a cluster of associations related to these choir furnishings and to the façade's sculptural program. During the 1220s recognition of signs to evoke concepts beyond the form of the sign, itself, would have been common among the clergy and the nobility who were accustomed to symbolic codes and gestures.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the Middle Ages sermons and the liturgy made the interpretation of certain signs accessible also to a larger lay audience. Still current for twelfth- and thirteenth-century clerics was Augustine's (d. 430) doctrine of signs. Augustine had proposed a 'general semiotic' that is, a general 'science' of signs in which he defined a sign as, 'a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses ... Nor is there any other reason for signifying, or for giving signs, except for bringing forth and transferring to another mind the action of the mind in the person who makes the sign ... Among the signs by means of which men express their meanings to one another, some pertain to the sense of sight ...'<sup>22</sup> For Augustine a *signa data* stood for either a determinate meaning or range of meanings to somebody who knew the convention of its use.<sup>23</sup> During the twelfth century Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) used an Augustinian approach to decoding signs, and for him—to take an example which is particularly relevant to study of the façade at Wells—the 'sacrament was a sign, at once a similitude and a truth.'<sup>24</sup> According to Rubin, 'the

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<sup>21</sup> H. Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century, Mentalities and Social Orders*, trans. P. Geary, (Chicago, 1991), pp. 32–34. Fichtenau describes gestures, in the widest sense, as words, objects, and physical actions. He stresses that hidden meaning and symbols were used not only by theologians but also by their secular contemporaries: 'in the political sphere, any detail could become a vehicle for transmitting a meaning since contemporaries controlled and expanded the symbolic language with an ease that is foreign to us.'

<sup>22</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (New York, 1958), pp. 34–35 translates *De Doctrina Christiana*, II. 1.1, 2.3, and 3.4.

<sup>23</sup> R.A. Markus, 'Augustine on Signs,' *Phronesis*, II, 1957, pp. 73, 75, 78, 86. Pierce's terminology coincides with Augustine's's definition of 'sign'.

<sup>24</sup> M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi, The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 23; and Hugh of St. Victor, 'De sacramentis libri duo,' in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, (Paris, 1880), vol. 176, col. 466. (hereafter cited as *PL*.)

culture was suffused in eucharistic symbolism as one image conjured up another ...; a symbol can serve as a focus for a variety of different positions and approaches, differences which are thus inscribed and celebrated in the symbol itself: lamb, child, man, tray, chalice, host ...<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, a range of connotations for the gabled niche, the quatrefoil, and their combination on the façade at Wells can be sought not only in their conventional use but also within the social relations that formed the conditions of their production during the 1220s when the façade's meaning was inscribed into its historic context and into the social reality that it in turn negotiated. The world of its patron and its architectural designer can be used to frame the circumstances in which this highly unusual façade was produced; their intentions can be suggested by comparing the façade's anomalies with previous designs and related texts.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, as observers and interpreters, we, of course, interact with the façade, and our investigation of it and its context is accordingly selective; thus our perceptions color even a self-critical explanation of signs and intentions.<sup>27</sup> Yet we may speculate on both in our curiosity to better understand the façade's production and meaning.

Recorded facts about its patron, Bishop Jocelin, provides irresistible evidence for reflecting on the significance of the façade during the 1220s since, as is rarely the case in the Middle Ages, much information is known about him. He appears marginally in most English political narratives of the thirteenth century, often mentioned as one of the bishops accompanying Archbishop Stephen Langton, but closer investigation reveals that he was a more influential player nationally than previously considered. Conjecture about his intentions focuses attention on the specific cultural moment when the façade was produced and thereby helps to recover the discursive context in which it was viewed since patron, designer, audience, and façade all interacted as part of the same cultural matrix.

We will never know the reaction of the façade's audience anymore than the intention of its patron or designer, but, like reflection on intention, speculation on audience response helps, if only as a rhetorical device, to negotiate between interpretations which may have been sug-

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<sup>25</sup> Rubin, *Corpus*, p. 141.

<sup>26</sup> M. Baxendall, *The Patterns of Intention* (New Haven, 1985), pp. vii, 14, 67, 72, 109, 131.

<sup>27</sup> U. Eco, *Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington, 1990), pp. 214–215.

gested by the façade during the Middle Ages and those constituted in writing this book. Research has focused on medieval audiences different from the ideal, compliant audiences constructed for us in clerical descriptions, such as that of the foundation ceremony at Salisbury, and it has also revealed how medieval clerics controlled their audience.<sup>28</sup> In the small village of Wells, isolated from any major town, the church of St. Andrew did not have the problems associated with urban audiences. Bishop Jocelin seems to have lived in harmony with the town and with his canons, freely offering them many benefits, if only to strengthen the church of St. Andrew in its contest for power in the diocese with Bath Abbey.<sup>29</sup> His life at court testifies to his diplomacy, and his relations with the canons and town suggests a well-controlled local audience made up of the chapter and laity at Wells. Jocelin's conflicts were elsewhere, particularly with the Benedictine monks of Glastonbury Abbey and Bath Abbey who did constitute antagonistic audiences to be overcome and subjugated.<sup>30</sup> The church of St. Andrew at Wells had no major relics, as did the abbey of Glastonbury six miles away, a situation for which Jocelin may have compensated by glorifying the remains of Anglo-Saxon bishops in the choir, as well as by displaying a multitude of saints across the façade. In addition to Jocelin's diocesan politics, consideration of the façade in relation to contemporaneous discourse about Magna Carta and Lateran IV suggests the façade's greater audience.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> B. Abou-El-Haj, 'The Audiences for the Medieval Cult of Saints,' *Gesta* 30/1 (1991):3-16.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 38-40 and 38 n. 91. Church, *Chapters*, pp. 125, 386-390. Wells, located in the county of Somerset, is the smallest cathedral city in England. The boundaries of the municipal borough of Wells in 1894 were the same as those in the charter of Savaric (ca. 1201). The boundary on the south was a watercourse from the bishop's mill to Helesmead, up the stream-course to Keward bridge on the Glastonbury road and up the Wells stream from St. Andrew's well to the bridge by the chapel of St. Thomas the Martyr at the entrance of the town, also on the Glastonbury road. The boundary on the west was by the cross on the road to Axbridge, at the point of divergence of the road to Wookey. On the north it was by the cross on the road to Bristol. On the east it was by the road from a quarry under Stobery to the hill towards Tidesput through the bishop's ground i.e. the Tor hill.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 6, pp. 193-199 for these conflicts which involved authority and possessions.

<sup>31</sup> G. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,' *Speculum* 65(1990):77, 83, 85 discusses the methodological problems of cause and effect when considering the significance of an artifact in relation to historical conditions.

Consideration of motifs as signs on the façade of Wells and how they resonated in the discursive context of the 1220s allowed explication beyond that of an iconographic or social approach.<sup>32</sup> Because most of the statues in the lower zone are missing, explanation of certain aspects of the sculptural program in Part I had to await interpretation until Part II since their identification depended on investigation of the significance of motifs, such as the gable and quatrefoil. Since these motifs testify as signs to meanings otherwise lost, the architecture of the façade, itself, helps to explicate the sculptural program and speaks, in conjunction with other cultural artifacts, about early thirteenth-century England. The synecdochic complexity of the façade's meaning, typical of medieval representation, necessitated a multilayered approach to its decoding; the façade's layers of meaning, articulated in separate chapters, progressively interrelate to clarify in what ways its signifying system was part of the bishops' rhetoric of ritual and ideology of power during the 1220s.<sup>33</sup>

The façade of Wells offers an unusual case in the study of architectural meaning in the Middle Ages (which is often concerned with continuity and revival) to examine within a specific cultural context the use of newly-coined architectural motifs as signs conveying meaning in conjunction with an unusual sculptural program. In part because the façade makes both a representational and an architectural statement, it offers the opportunity of following the collaboration of patron and architectural designer at a deeper level than is usually the case, as for instance in the case of Suger and the *chevet* of Saint-Denis.<sup>34</sup> At Wells the designer seems to have been asked to invent a specific architectural semiotic of meaning by a patron who, himself, was positioned to suggest certain formal solutions, such as the transfer of shrine motifs and their

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<sup>32</sup> Helpful in the practice of semiotic architectural history and discussion of the meaning of a sign at a particular moment in time are: R. Innis 'Introduction,' in his *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology* (Bloomington, 1985), pp. vii–xvi; M. Bal and N. Bryson, 'Semiotics and Art History,' *The Art Bulletin* 73(1991):173ff.; and Eco, *Limits*, pp. 38–41. To mitigate unlimited semiosis necessary for historical analysis Eco suggests 'the process of semiosis produces in the long run a socially shared notion of the thing that the community is engaged to take as if it were in itself true.'

<sup>33</sup> I use the term ideology in its broadest sense as the belief system of a group, either held implicitly or used to justify actions.

<sup>34</sup> P. Kidson, 'Panofsky, Suger and St Denis,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50(1987):11–15; and P. Skubiszewski, *L'intellectuel et l'artiste face à l'oeuvre à l'époque romane*, in *Le travail au Moyen Age*. Actes du Colloque international de Louvain-la-neuve 21–23 mai 1987, (Louvain-la-neuve), 1990, pp. 300–321.

meanings to architecture. Perhaps because of this unusual collaboration, the façade constitutes one of those exceptional artifacts that can testify to a historical moment of great intensity, a moment in the 1220s when a number of major events—the reissue of Magna Carta, Lateran IV, and Jocelin’s ambitions for the church of Wells—coincided. It can be suggested that the façade, as an ideological construct produced as part of the Church’s self-empowering ritual during this critical period in English history, marks how Bishop Jocelin and his fellow bishops, all powerful advisors to Henry III, visualized the situation of Church and State.

Although this study focuses on the cultural meaning of the façade at one significant moment, traditions and practices of longer duration should be kept in mind when interpreting the specific message formulated at Wells during the 1220s. To begin with, its sculptural program was part of a theological approach to the presentation of Christianity going back to the Church Fathers in which everything was interpreted as part of analogous systems: Old vs. New Testament; secular vs. spiritual power; earthly vs. heavenly hierarchies; this world vs. eternity. Following the Church Fathers, Hugh of St. Victor and Stephen Langton, among others, sought a model in heaven for social order based on the coherence between heaven and earth.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it was believed that the earthly Church, *Ecclesia*, was a part of heaven and hence belonged to the eternal, invisible world, as well as to the present, visible world.<sup>36</sup>

As intercessor between earth and heaven the bishop, as priest of the highest order, sustained the faithful by delivering sermons, administering penance, and distributing the Eucharist.<sup>37</sup> Because the bishop anointed and advised the king, he held an important intermediary position between the secular and spiritual worlds and thus bore a special obligation to maintain harmony between them, especially in early thirteenth-century England. As advisor to the king and spokesman for the Church, the bishop was the producer of ideology, and he often looked to the Church Fathers for effective discourse, particularly to

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<sup>35</sup> G. Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago 1980), pp. 49, 57, 32, 110, 113, 245, 319. Duby also cites Augustine (d. 430), Dionysius the Areopagite (6th c.), and Gregory the Great (d. 604).

<sup>36</sup> Chapter 2, p. 75; and Chapter 5, p. 168.

<sup>37</sup> R.J. Deferrari, trans. *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), pp. 267–269; and W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants* (Princeton, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 50–51.

Augustine who as a bishop, himself, had established the *ordo* to be followed in the Church.<sup>38</sup> In Augustine's model for liturgical processions, the bishop was the leader along with Christ, who as the invisible head of the procession immediately preceded him.<sup>39</sup> The Church had early established medieval ritual and architecture as forms of the glorification of God.<sup>40</sup> Glorification was a truly essential function of the Church within society, as important as the defense of the kingdom since it supported and brought prosperity to the whole social body. Belief in the triumph of God's law further tied the social order to the Church, represented by the bishop, who had been viewed as the *Defensor Civitatis* since the sixth century.<sup>41</sup> Social order rested on a sense of corporate salvation: the whole city will be saved thanks to its protectors, the patron saints. These concepts prevailed throughout the medieval world and constituted the ground on which Jocelin built his artifice at Wells. The façade at Wells, however, with its frozen procession of saints and dramatic role during the ritual drama of Palm Sunday, constitutes a new version of triumphal glorification.

England of the 1220s was quite different from its neighbor, France, and the triumphant tone of the façade was related to its specific situation. The English Church seems to have taken an ideological stance different from the French Church during the 1220s and a different response to the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, partly because England had no Albigensian crusade but instead a past crisis of its own, with the lifting of the Interdict and Magna Carta as its conclusion.<sup>42</sup> Yet the two Churches were different not only because of their current crises but also because of their past relationship with the monarchy. During the twelfth and early thirteenth century in Capetian France the two powers, Church and State, were united, and both were seen as undisputable administrators of justice; together they represented rightful social order.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, in England the monarchy and Church had

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<sup>38</sup> Duby, *Orders*, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 106.

<sup>42</sup> Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History*, trans. J.A. Giles, (London, 1849), vol. 2, p. 278. Roger of Wendover (d. 1236) implicitly noted this difference in juxtaposing the barons' revolt with the Albigensian crusade for the year 1214 in the *St. Albans Chronicle*.

<sup>43</sup> R.W. Southern, *Mediaeval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 145, 148–150, 178. Southern compares the prosperity of the Ile-de-France, the spirit of cooperation on which government in France depended, the easy relations of the pope

been caught up in a sustained conflict.<sup>44</sup> The bishops preserved social justice by controlling the excesses of royal power. The English Church with its ancient relics and unchanging rites stood for continuity with the mythical golden past of the Anglo-Saxons and Henry I.<sup>45</sup>

As the production of one of the most powerful bishops in the English Church, the façade at Wells makes a statement in a new way about authority and ritual, ambitions and claims during the 1220s. For the discourse of the powerful, architecture is one of the most effective media at their disposal, and a façade, as frontispiece for a community, can make a particularly grand gesture, instantly transmitted and carrying a number of messages simultaneously. Then, as now, the façade of Wells interacted in a particularly dramatic way with its viewer, and its leitmotifs, which previously decorated choir furnishings, in their new architectural context aided the viewer's interpretation.<sup>46</sup>

Considered along with other cultural artifacts produced in the 1220s, it can be suggested that the façade, as an ideologically motivated material statement, helped to produce the historical situation, especially that of the church of Wells. The following explanation, of course, does not claim to be the only possible reading but aims at plausibility and attempts to find a new and a more explicative interpretation of this façade, and, in doing so, it recovers the façade's cultural and discursive context and thereby offers a new perspective on the strategies of the English Church and State during the early thirteenth century.

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and French king, and the adulation which the French king inspired with the opposite situation in England.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150; and C.A. Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: the Second Generation* (Philadelphia, Penn., 1973), p. 15. Gerald of Wales, among others, in the early thirteenth century contrasts the Angevins and Capetians in this way. See R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146–1223* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 91–95.

<sup>45</sup> On nostalgia for the Anglo-Saxon past, see Southern, *Humanism*, pp. 147, 154–155, 161, 172; C.W. Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World* (London, 1986), pp. 83, 303; and A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1973), pp. 256, 286, 393, and 398; and *idem*, 'Realistic Observation in Twelfth-Century England,' *Speculum* 47(1972):30, 33, 39. For Henry I see, Newman, *Henry I*, p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Bal and Bryson, 'Semiotics,' p. 229; and Eco, *Limits*, pp. 58–61. According to Eco, 'How to prove a conjecture about the *intentio operis*? The only way is to check it against the text as a coherent whole.' He points out that this idea goes back to Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* stating that 'the internal coherence of a text must be taken as the parameter for its interpretations.'