Fig. 16.1. Chalice of the Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis. Sardonyx cup with heavily gilded silver mounting, adorned with filigrees set with stones, pearls, glass insets, and opaque white glass pearls. Height 7¼″; diameter at top 4⅞″; diameter at base 4⅜″. Cup of Alexandrian origins, 2nd–1st century B.C.; mounting 1137–1140. National Gallery of Art, Washington

16

French Gothic Art

Many factors contributed to the emergence of Gothic art. One major aspect was the dramatic rise of urban communities. Cities replaced older monastic colonies as centers of education and the arts. Political unification also played an important role. During the late tenth century, the Count of Paris, Hugh Capet (987–96), was elected king of France. His descendents, the Capetian Dynasty, would rule France for nearly three hundred and fifty years. Through diplomacy and the brokering of noble marriages, Louis VI (1108–37) and his son Louis VII (1137–80) asserted the authority of the Capetians over numerous lords and barons. Louis VII married Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, holder of the largest estates in western Europe, further increasing Capetian control. Aligning themselves with the Church, these French monarchs produced a powerful kingdom centered at Paris, and that is where our story begins. The construction of most of the French Gothic cathedrals coincides with the Capetians' ability to consolidate their power.

Saint Denis and the Beginnings of French Gothic

One of the major leaders of political and cultural change in early twelfth-century France was a Benedictine monk. Abbot Suger of Saint Denis (1122–51), born of humble parents, helped to initiate what is today called the Gothic style. Under his supervision, the first great monument of the Gothic, the Abbey Church of Saint Denis, was constructed. Suger was friend and councilor to both Louis VI and Louis VII; he served as regent of France during the latter's involvement in the Second Crusade (1146), and was instrumental in keeping Louis's marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine from disintegrating (they were divorced the year after Suger's death).

Since the sixth century, Suger's monastery-church had served as the burial site of the French kings. The church housed the *oriflamme*, a forked crimson banner, which was said to have belonged to Charlemagne, as well as the relics of Saint Denis (Dionysius of Gaul), a missionary martyr who converted the Franks to Christianity. In the ninth century, Hilduin, the monastery's abbot, confused Saint Denis with two other figures: Dionysius the Areopagite, an Athenian philosopher who became a Christian upon listening to the remarks of Saint Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17:19–34), and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a fifth- or sixth-century mystic and author of *The Celestial Hierarchy*. As there was a copy in the abbey's library, Suger was quite familiar with this text. For him the work tied the history of his monastery to the early Church and heightened the significance of the prized remains of the saint's body interred there. In addition, he welcomed the author's call for mystical ascent through contemplation of the sacred.

The Church of Saint Denis was situated just north of the city gates of Paris, the thriving capital of the realm (today it lies well within an industrial quarter of the city). With the assertion of political power on the part of the Capetians in Paris, Suger similarly dreamed of aggrandizing the ecclesiastical position of Saint Denis in Latin Christendom. Suger of Saint Denis was a very different cleric from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. The pious spokesman of the austere Cistercian Order vehemently criticized Suger's actions at first. He called

Saint Denis a "synagogue of Satan," and accused Suger of ostentation and flaunting. Suger did not promote Bernard's asceticism. For Suger, art and splendor were all part of the worship of God, and these interests are announced in three treatises that he composed concerning the reform and rebuilding of Saint Denis under his abbacy.[1] His chalice (**fig. 16.1**), although altered by a series of minor restorations, reveals Suger's deep appreciation for precious sacred objects. The sardonyx cup was probably produced in Ptolemaic Egypt (200–100 B.C.). Remodeled for liturgical use at Saint Denis, the vessel was adorned with filigrees and costly gems. The chalice is so highly decorated that there are no smooth areas on the cup's brim. Consequently, priests used liturgical straws to drink consecrated wine.

The old Carolingian church was described by Suger as being in a deplorable condition and much too small. In the treatise entitled *De Administratione*, 1144–49, Suger relates how the rebuilding progressed. First of all, the old church was so narrow that during feast days, he tells us, "the narrowness of the place forced the women to run toward the altar upon the heads of the men as upon a pavement with much anguish and noisy confusion." Suger then implores:

Fig. 16.2. Abbey Church of Saint Denis. Interior of the ambulatory. 1140–44

> Divine mercy that He Who is the One, the beginning and the ending, Alpha and Omega, might join a good end to a good beginning by a safe middle . . . Thus we began work at the former entrance with the doors. We tore down a certain addition asserted to have been made by Charlemagne on a very honorable occasion (for his father, the Emperor Pepin, had commanded that he be buried, for the sins of his father Charles Martel, outside at the entrance with the doors, face downward and not recumbent); and we set our hand to this part . . . with the enlargement of the body of the church [the narthex?] as well as with the trebling of the entrance and the doors, and with the erection of high and noble towers.

The subsequent activity involved the rebuilding of the choir of the church. Thus, the refashioning of the imperial westwork and the holy sanctuary—evoking the presence of the monarchy and the Church—were Suger's first goals.[2]

The facade of Suger's new church was a monumental restatement of the two-towered westwork of earlier times.[3] It resembled, in fact, the great towering facade of Saint Étienne in Caen, in its high towers and massive walls, with heavy pilaster strips dividing the block into three zones corresponding to the nave and side aisles. A tripartite division also marks the vertical organization. The plain mural surface and solidity of the walls, however, were interrupted by a number of penetrations in the form of deep-set portals and ranges of trebled arcades above them in each division. Secondly, the upper part of the central division was punctured by a huge round window—the rose window—perhaps as a conscious aggrandizement of the traditional Carolingian "window of appearances" to symbolize the presence, not of the emperor, but of the "God of Light" in Suger's church. Finally, an amazing transformation of the portals has taken place. To relieve the austerity of the Normanesque entranceways, Suger added an elaborate screen of sculptures across them. Little survives of Suger's sculptures. The entire facade was crudely restored in 1839–40, following the French Revolution. Fortunately, drawings made by Antoine Benoist for Bernard de Montfaucon, a French antiquary, who published *Les Monuments de la monarchie française* in 1729, reproduce the tall, column-like figures that originally decorated the doorjambs.

Suger's new choir added in the second building campaign (1143–44) is a glorious presentation of the new principles of Gothic architecture (**fig. 16.2**). An elevated stage for exhibiting the relics was raised over the old annular crypt built in the ninth century (which Suger wished to preserve) with staircases on either side giving access to the upper choir. This in itself is not new, but the elaborate construction that encases the area around the altar is a striking departure from the Romanesque.

Two rows of slender columnar supports resting on square bases form a double-aisled ambulatory terminating radially in nine chapels that circle the apse. The chapels are no longer the isolated architectural units that we find in Romanesque pilgrimage choirs, however; they are integrated and merge with the aisles of the ambulatory along axes that radiate out from the central keystone of the apse like an intricate spider's web. The inner aisle has sections with irregularly shaped quadripartite vaults; the outer aisle with the apsidioles has five-part ribbed vaults that rest on the outer columns and the splayed piers in the wall.

Viewing the ambulatory from the side, we can see how the architect accomplished this unique solution to vaulting disparate areas. He employed pointed arches that can be easily adjusted to the desired heights (an impossibility with round arches) and added sturdy ribs along the structural lines, which were then filled in with a light webbing of stone. Unlike the more ponderous elevations of Romanesque choirs, the weight of the chevet or eastern end (apse, ambulatory, and radiating side chapels) of Suger's church is thus appreciably lessened, and the entire structure takes on the appearance of a diaphanous cage of skeletal construction. The supporting role of the outer walls is much reduced, too, so much so that they are nearly eliminated, allowing for large openings for high windows. A spaciousness and lightness result whereby the tubular delineations of ribs rising from slim columns describe a hollow volume covered with a skin of stone.

Suger's architect reintroduced one of the major features that distinguishes Gothic from Romanesque architecture: the use of pointed arches in a ribbed vault that is not only flexible but lessens the need for heavy wall supports (**fig. 16.3**). The role of the rib in Gothic vaulting has long been an issue of

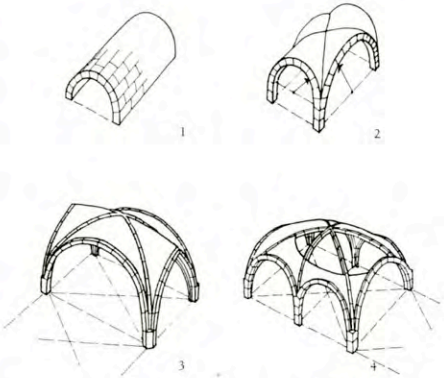


Fig. 16.3. Types of vaulting: (1) barrel or tunnel vault; (2) groin vault over a rectangular bay; (3) Gothic vault with pointed arches and ribs over a rectangular bay; (4) sexpartite vault over two rectangular bays (after Swaan)

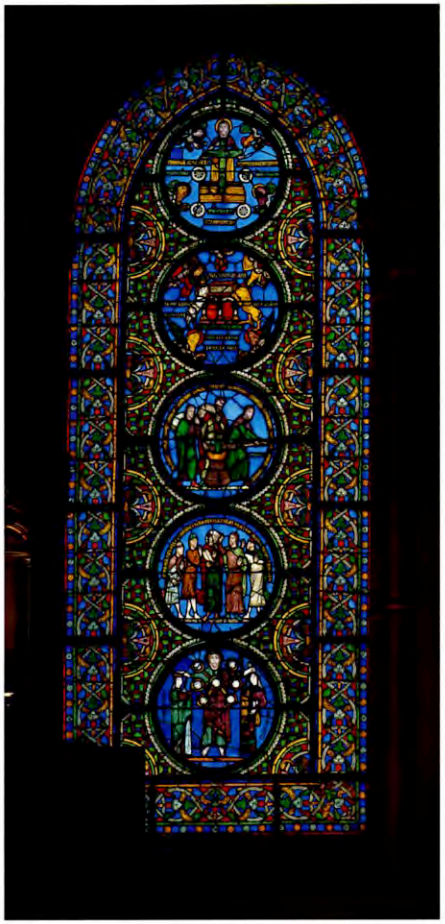


Fig. 16.4. "Anagogical" Window. Saint Denis Abbey Church. Stained glass. 1140–44

debate among art historians. Do the ribs serve a structural role once the vaulting is in place? Do they form a permanent frame that supports the weight of the stone vaults? Or are they simply decorative, serving an esthetic role in guiding the eye into the summit of the vault while, at the same time, concealing the abrupt junctures of the groins? Should they be considered structural members of engineering or expressive elements of a work of art? These issues are not easily resolved. Examples can be cited in which the ribs have collapsed and the vaults remain intact, implying that ribbing was not structurally important. Conversely, there are instances where the stone webbing has fallen and the ribs remain. The ribs are essential elements in articulating the vast spaces of Gothic vaults, dividing the space into discrete sections. At the same time, they are also necessary in forming the vault in the first place, providing the centering to shape the structure.[4]

The harmonious integration of the complex elements in Gothic architecture required someone trained in mathematics and the techniques of building, an architect. Just when the architect emerged in history as an independent designer of buildings is difficult to determine. As we have seen, trained mathematicians were summoned to Constantinople in the sixth century to oversee the building of Hagia Sophia, and a number of churchmen in the Romanesque period are recorded as designers of buildings.

The commission or rebuilding of ecclesiastical structures within the city depended on the actions of the cathedral chapter (the administrative organization of the canons of a cathedral). The chapter, in turn, would appoint a *magister operis* (*maître des ouvrages*, or master of works) to oversee the entire project, the "fabric" (*fabrica*), including the administration and maintenance of the building. The master of the masons (*maître maçon*, or *magister lathomorum*) was, in effect, the builder who had the specialized skills for planning the physical building, and his prestige grew rapidly during the thirteenth century. The epitaph of one Parisian architect suggests the elevated status of the master of the masons: "Here lies Pierre de Montreuil, a perfect flower of good manners in his life as a doctor of stones [*doctor lathomorum*]."[5]

Saint Denis was an abbey church and not a cathedral governed by a chapter, and yet it was in this monastic setting that the new principles of building were introduced on a grand scale. We know from Suger's writings that he personally sought out a quarry with proper stones and that he summoned excellent artisans from all over Europe. While Suger was no architect, he called in a master mason who was thoroughly familiar with the latest style in architecture. Ribbed vaults were common earlier; they are found in Norman churches (Durham Cathedral, Saint Étienne at Caen) and in Lombard structures that date from before Saint Denis. Pointed arches were used earlier in Burgundian churches, such as Cluny III. However, the lightness, the transparency, and the thinness of parts are new and allow the structure to open up as well as reduce its heavy walls.

Space and light are important factors. Suger vividly records the way the centering and vaults swayed precariously in a heavy storm that hit the church in January of 1143: his church must be as sturdy and stable as any other. Yet in his treatise on the consecration of the church, he tells us that he wanted the choir built with a "circular string of chapels, by virtue of which the whole [church] would shine with the wonderful and uninterrupted light [*lux continua*] of most luminous windows." In another passage, he states, "Once the new rear part [the choir] is joined to the part in front [the facade], the church shines with its middle part brightened. For bright is that which is brightly coupled with the bright, and bright is the noble edifice which is pervaded by the new light [*lux nova*]."[6]

The *lux nova*, or "new light," filtering in through the lofty stained-glass windows was an important feature of Suger's new chevet, and while there is some evidence for much earlier use of stained glass in windows, his concern for *lux continua*, or a continuous wall of such lights, in the chevet is new. Fragmentary remains of some of Suger's windows are preserved in the choir of Saint Denis.[7] In the chapel of the Virgin, directly behind the main altar on the central axis, were two tall windows appropriately decorated with scenes from the life of the Virgin (northern bay) and a resplendent Tree of Jesse (southern). Directly next to this chapel was that of Saint Peregrinus (now Saint Philip) with two windows, one dedicated to the story of Moses, the other, known as the "Anagogical" window (**fig. 16.4**), with typological mysteries shown in roundels, including the "Mystic Mill," with Moses and Paul grinding grain into flour. This window does not provide a set of illustrated ideas for the illiterate. On the contrary, it offers a complex iconography, one not readily interpreted without sufficient theological education, suggesting that it was produced to stimulate mediation and study among those trained to read Scripture and the Church Fathers. The primary function of the window, for Suger, is to promote heavenly ascent, "urging us onward from the material to the spiritual."[8]

South of Paris, the Archbishop of Sens, Henri Sanglier, promoted the construction of a new cathedral. The Cathedral of Sens (**figs. 16.5, 16.6**), built between about 1145 and 1164, has a simplified ground plan with single side aisles continuing into the semicircular ambulatory of the choir without projecting apsidioles (secondary apses) as at Saint Denis. Only a single rectangular chapel extends from the east end. The nave is broad and spacious with a definite Norman appearance in the sexpartite vaults that rise from alternating pier supports.[9]

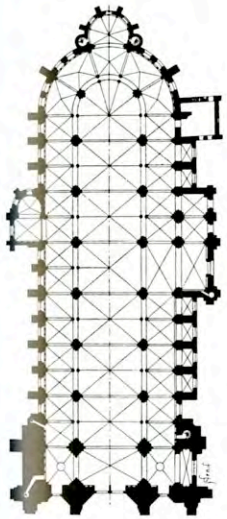


Fig. 16.5. Sens Cathedral. Plan (after Dehio)

Fig. 16.6. Sens Cathedral. Interior. c. 1145–64

The elevation displays a subtle rhythm as it moves up through the three stages of nave arcade, triforium, and clerestory. Double columns alternate with huge compound piers, the latter carrying shafts that form the heavier transverse arches and diagonal ribs marking out the great hollows of the sexpartite vaults. The double columns carry shafts that form the intermediary transverse arches. In a shallow triforium, directly above the nave arcade, arches are quadrupled, while in the clerestory they are doubled. For each double bay, the tripartite division was marked with a cadence in consonance with the relative heights of each part. Although the Cathedral of Sens articulates a fine vertical thrust, it is the vast width of the nave that is striking.

North of Paris, the Cathedral of Laon (**figs. 16.7, 16.8**) presents another solution to the nave elevation.[10] Here the nave is also covered by great sexpartite vaults resting on an alternating system of columnar supports in the nave arcade. Five, then three, clustered shafts rise from the capitals of the columns through the elevation to culminate in the transverse and diagonal ribs in the sexpartite vaults. The elevation of Laon has four stories, however, with a much more sculptural appearance in the dramatic sequence of arched members for each double bay. Directly above the nave arcade, a deep tribune gallery is introduced with vaults that serve to buttress the high nave. A triforium of blind arches runs between the open tribune and the clerestory windows above.

The facade of Laon Cathedral (**fig. 16.9**), about 1190–1205, is a daring experiment in architectural design, with its dramatic buildup of cavernous, scooped-out, arched projections with deep galleries, open niches, telescoping turrets and pinnacles. Staggered upward, these parts create a harmonious movement of architectural forms, projecting and receding as they rise in a crescendo of great towers culminating in octagonal belfries.

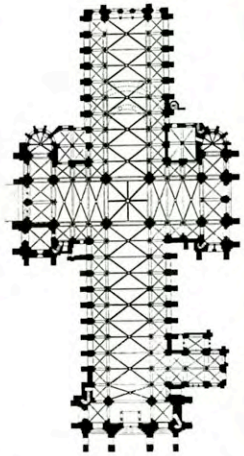


Fig. 16.8. Laon Cathedral. Plan (after Dehio)

Fig. 16.7. Laon Cathedral. Interior. 1165–1205

Fig. **16.9.** Laon Cathedral. West facade. 1190–1205

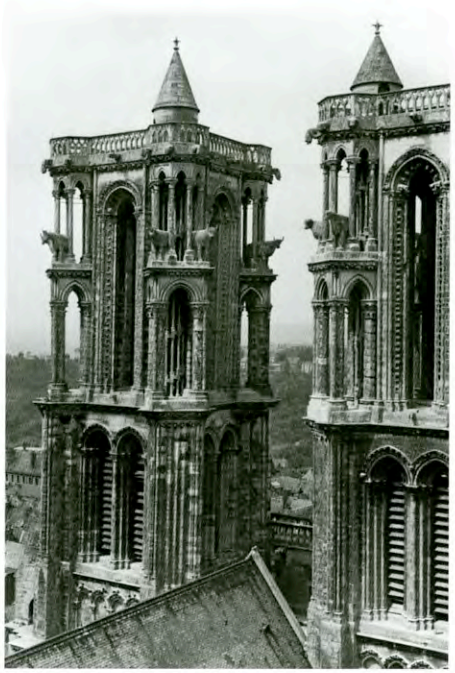


Fig. 16.10. Laon Cathedral. Towers of the west facade

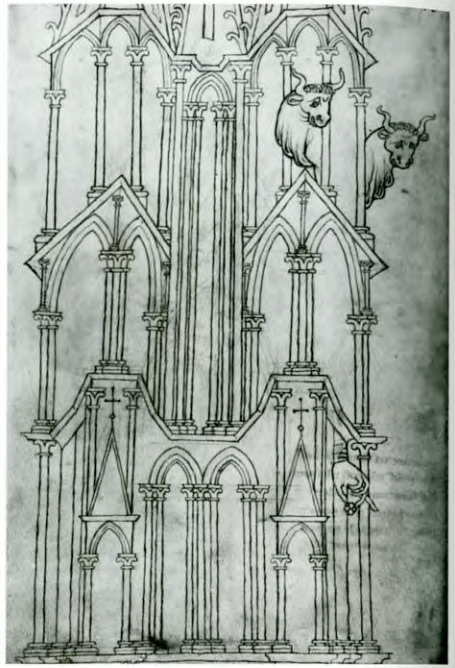


Fig. 16.11. Villard de Honnecourt. *The Tower of Laon.* Sketchbook, 9¼ × 6″. 1220–35. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (MS fr. 19093)

Enhancing the rich sculptural effects of the architecture, huge sculptured bulls appear in the openings of the towers, affectionate mementoes of the beasts of burden who carted the heavy stones to the site (**fig. 16.10**). The traveling draughtsman Villard de Honnecourt left a notebook of drawings, including one of the facade towers (**fig. 16.11**). Other towers were planned for the Cathedral of Laon, including paired towers for the large, aisled transept porches (they form two more facades, actually) and one over the crossing of the nave and transept. One unusual feature of Laon is the great rectangular choir that was added in the thirteenth century to replace an earlier round apse and ambulatory construction.

Although it would seem that the emphatic four-story elevation of Laon would accent the longitudinal or horizontal sense of space, the higher proportions of Laon (it is fifteen feet narrower than Sens, although both rise to approximately eighty feet) reinforce the illusion of vertical lift. As at Sens, great hollows of space are diagrammed with shafts, ribs, and rhythmic arches rising upward with a stately cadence, but at Laon space moves in many directions, especially when one approaches the lantern over the crossing of the giant projecting transepts before the choir.

Neither Sens nor Laon employ flying buttresses—usually considered hallmarks of Gothic cathedrals—although the progressive thickening of the exterior wall buttresses of the transepts and the concealment of quadrant arches under the tribune roofs on the interior at Laon anticipate this innovation. The introduction of true flying buttresses appears in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris (**fig. 16.12**) around 1175–1200 (remodeled after 1225), where a series of free stone supports rise high above the triforium roof on the exterior of the nave and choir, resembling so many struts or fingers reaching up to support the thin walls of the nave carrying the high vaults (**fig. 16.13**).[11] In some respects, this innovation can be seen as a development necessitated by the new vaulting

Fig. **16.12.** Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris. View of flying buttresses

schemes. The diminished wall supports of the high nave proved to be insufficient to counteract the stronger forces of the wind at the higher elevations of the galleries and clerestory.

Notre Dame, Paris, one of the largest and highest (108 feet) of the Early Gothic cathedrals, has a fascinating history. Sexpartite vaults, like those of Sens and Laon, cover the nave of Paris (**fig. 16.14**). Like Sens, Paris has a simplified, continuous hairpin ground plan (**fig. 16.15**), but the aisles are doubled and continue in that fashion around the chevet, as they do at Saint Denis. With Laon, it shares a four-part elevation with a huge open tribune gallery directly over the nave arcade. Originally an additional wall punctured by oculi, rather than the continuous arcading of a triforium, was introduced below the clerestory with its simple lancet windows.

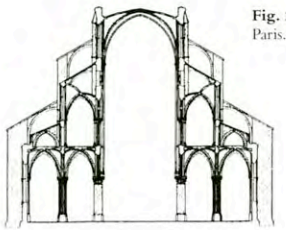


Fig. 16.13. Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris. Cross section of the nave (after Mark)

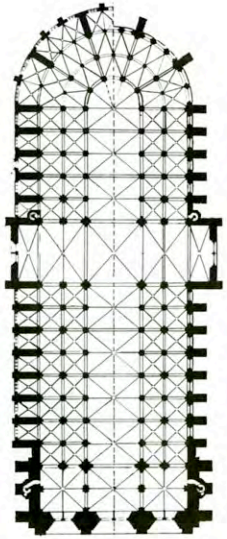


Fig. 16.14. Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris. Plan

Fig. 16.15. Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris. Interior toward the choir. Begun 1163; c. 1180–1200

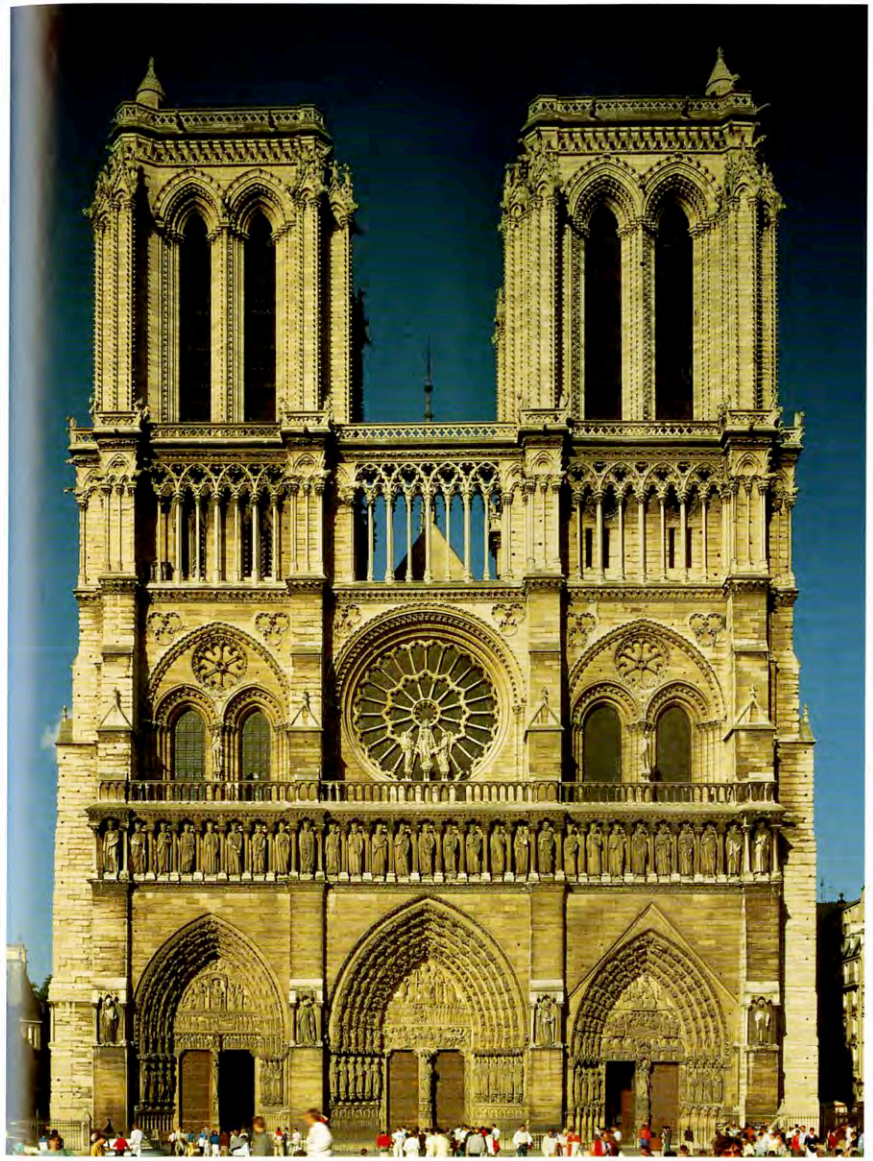


Fig. 16.16. Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris. West facade. Begun 1163; lower story c. 1200; window 1220; towers 1225–50

Fig. 16.17. Virgin and Child (detail). Trumeau, north transept portal, Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris c. 1250

This four-part elevation was altered in the thirteenth century by eliminating the band with the oculi and absorbing it into the clerestory with taller double-lancet windows with a rose, opening the upper third of the elevation for light (Viollet-le-Duc partially restored the four-part elevation in the first two bays of the nave). Later architects added another feature to the last bays on the western extension of the nave. Here colonnettes were added to the columnar piers (not visible in the illustration), enhancing the verticality of the elevation even more. Rather than presenting a modulated elevation of sculptural parts and cavities as at Laon, the nave of Paris preserves a distinctive mural character on the interior, particularly striking in its smooth, thin walls that rise so gracefully from the nave arcade.

The immense facade of Notre Dame in Paris, about 1210–15, is also Early Gothic in the retention of the massive wall surfaces and the relatively shallow penetrations of the austere facade by the portals, galleries, rose window, and arcades, making use of simple geometric shapes—square, triangles, and circle (**fig. 16.16**). In many respects, whether considered Romanesque or Gothic, the two-towered facade represents a majestic culmination of earlier traditions in Northern architecture.

On the trumeau from the church's north transept, the Virgin Mary (**fig. 16.17**) looks like an elegant queen. She gently

Fig. 16.18. Two gargoyles from the balustrade of the Grande Galerie of the west facade of Notre Dame, Paris. Stone. Replica of a 12th-century original. Photograph by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc

holds her garment under her left hand, producing simple folds as it affirms the dignity of her pose. The Virgin once held the Christ child in her arms. The missing figure fell victim to an iconoclastic attack during the French Revolution.

Jutting out from the cathedral's lead roof, waterspouts called gargoyles (**fig. 16.18**) provide an efficient means of drainage. Shaped as fantastic creatures, the gargoyles project rain and filth out of their orifices. In addition, chimeras, such as the grotesque griffin often associated with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (**fig. 16.19**), also reside on the rooftop. Strictly speaking, these works are not gargoyles, for they do not release wastewater. However, they do preserve the assumed purity of the church by encouraging demons to seek alternative sites to contaminate.[12]

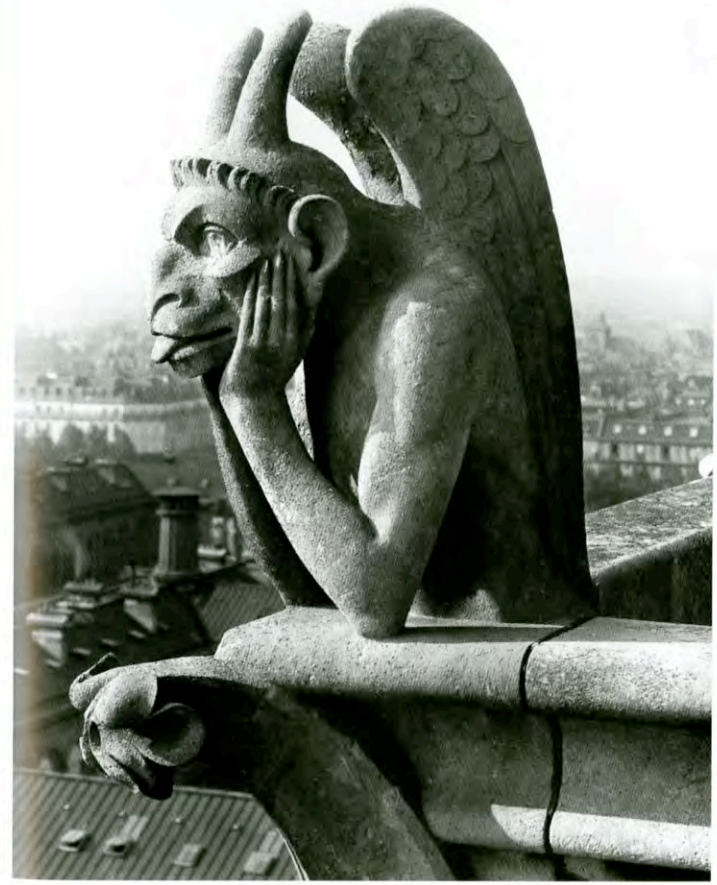


Fig. 16.19. Demon gargoyle from the balustrade of the Grande Galerie of the west facade of Notre Dame, Paris. Stone. Replica of a 12th-century original. Photograph by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc

CHARTRES

The Cathedral of Notre Dame at Chartres, the first of the so-called High Gothic cathedrals in the Île-de-France, is one of the most beloved monuments in Europe.[13] After a fire in 1020, the learned bishop Fulbert (1007–29) rebuilt the old Carolingian basilica with monumental proportions that included a modified westwork, a long nave with transept covered by a wooden roof, and a large pilgrimage choir with three projecting apses. Below the old church, in a huge vaulted crypt, a precious relic—the tunic of the Virgin—was displayed for pilgrims to see and venerate.

In 1134, fire devastated the city again, causing serious damage to the west front of Fulbert's cathedral. A new entranceway was immediately raised. Two great towers were set out before the western doors—apparently freestanding at first—that are still notable attractions of the great church because of the disparity of their spires (**fig. 16.20**). The north tower was begun in 1134 and raised to the base of the present spire, which was added in 1507 in a later style known as Flamboyant Gothic. The foundations of the magnificent south tower were laid in 1145; the elegant spire was completed by 1170.

Another conflagration in 1194 destroyed all of Fulbert's church except the twelfth-century facade and the crypt. The miraculous survival of the Virgin's tunic spurred the bishop and the chapter to rebuild their church again with even greater glory to Notre Dame. Work began immediately, and within a quarter of a century the new cathedral was raised, so that in 1220 the poet Guillaume le Breton could write, "Springing up anew, now finished in its entirety of cut stone beneath elegant vaults, it fears harm from no fire 'til Judgment Day."[14]

The old facade remained, but the architect designed huge projecting transepts, as at Laon, to serve as major facades on the north and south sides of the church. Nine towers were originally conceived: the two remaining of the west facade, two flanking each transept facade, one over the crossing, and two more abutting the beginnings of the semicircle of the choir. These latter towers were never finished, however.

The much-expanded choir or chevet (**fig. 16.21**) constitutes a third of the entire building and expands in width beyond the nave and side aisles with its double ambulatory and rings of apsidioles with ribbed vaults. The slightly irregular spacing of the columnar supports in the choir was due to the architect's desire to incorporate the crypt and apse foundations of Fulbert's basilica over which the new cathedral was raised. But it was the recent innovation of the flying buttress that enabled the builders of Chartres to eliminate the tiered walls in the nave (as well as in the choir) and still raise lofty vaults (fig. 16.21). The huge open walls filled with stained glass constitute nearly half of the elevation, and the vast spaces spread and rise with compelling verticality.

One's first impression of the interior of Chartres is that of a marvelous unity in the vertical flow of space from the nave floor to the vaults (**fig. 16.22**). A closer look reveals a

Fig. 16.20. Chartres Cathedral. West facade. 1134–1220; portals c. 1145; rose window c. 1216; north spire 1507

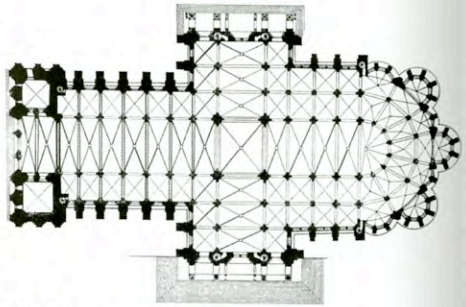


Fig. 16.21. Chartres Cathedral. Plan

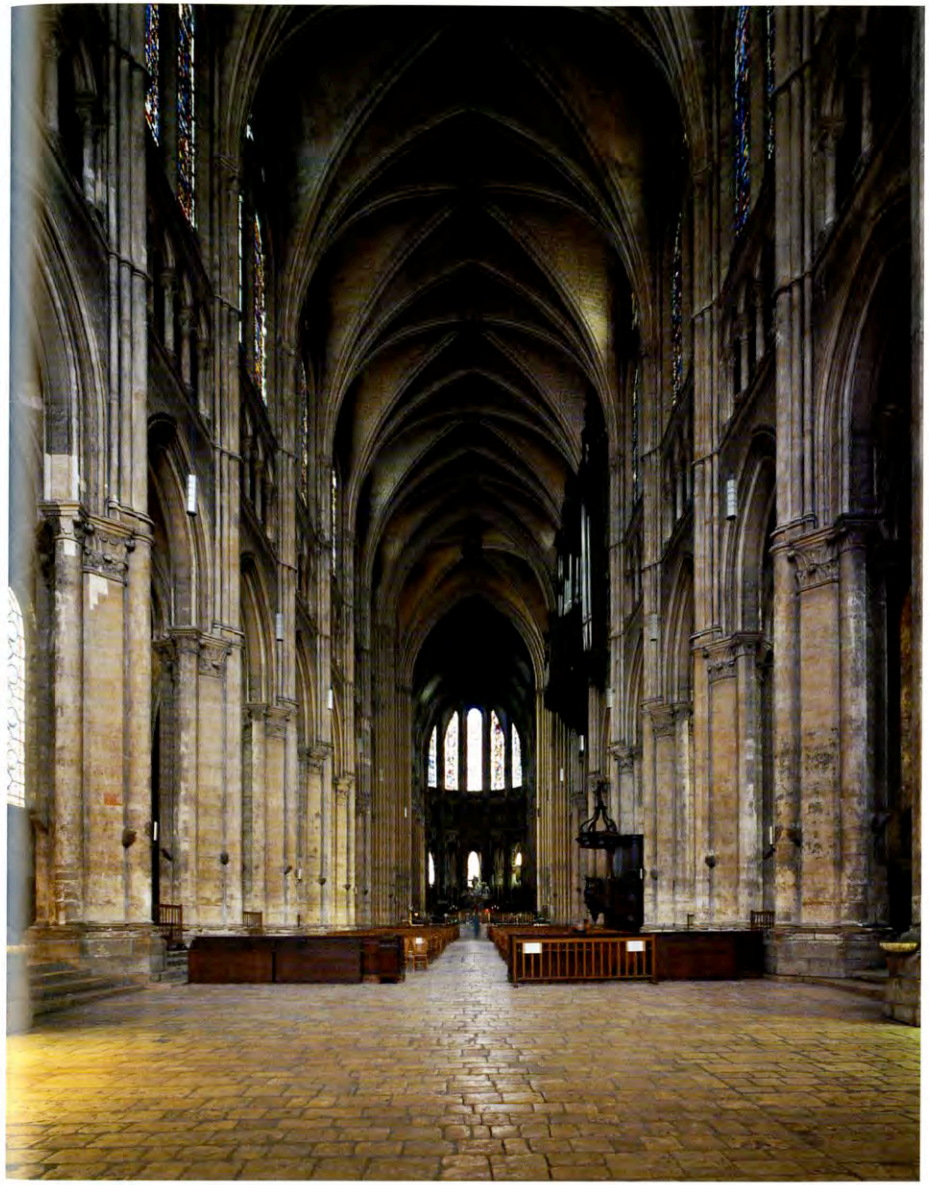


Fig. **16.22.** Chartres Cathedral. Interior toward the choir. 1194–1220

number of changes and departures from the elevations in Early Gothic. The tribune galleries have been eliminated entirely (this also is true of Sens); the nave piers are not columns but colossal *colonnes cantonnées* or *piliers cantonnés* (sectioned columnar or pier supports) with alternating octagonal and circular cores from which large engaged shafts (responds) project. The clerestory is enlarged to command nearly half of the elevation, with each bay between the piers (corresponding to the flying buttresses on the exterior) filled with two tall lancet windows surmounted by a rose, all glazed with colored glass. Five clustered shafts rise uninterrupted from the capitals of the giant piers in the nave arcade through the shallow triforium to merge with the ribs of the vaults.

The alternating system has been nearly abandoned, with only vestigial forms of the system retained in the alternating circular and octagonal cores and shafts of the *piliers cantonnés*, as mentioned. Simpler quadripartite vaults that cover rectangular, not square, bay units replace the sexpartite vaults so familiar in Early Gothic churches. Hence, the integrity of the individual bay is strongly marked throughout the longitudinal axis; the side aisles with quadripartite vaults over smaller square bays repeat the scheme, and this simplicity and unity are reflected on the exterior, where the sets of clerestory windows (two lancets and a rose) are framed by double flying buttresses in each unit. The double flying buttresses, one arcing above the other, are massive, powerful struts that are tied together by round arches carried on columns like spokes between two wheel rims (the third, topmost, tier was added later), repeating a handsome architectural motif established by the great rose window added to the upper level of the western facade about 1205–10.

The transept facades are of a new design, too. A great rose window is placed over five lancets, filling the entire width of the wall between the flanking tower bases (fig. 16.33). Added about 1220–30, these windows introduce a fundamental change in the structure of the upper facade by conceiving the rose not as a punctured wall surface but as a giant circular opening in which a network of mullions or bars describe the petals of the rose outside the inner circle of columnar spokes.

The three major building campaigns presented to us at Chartres—the earlier facade, about 1135–60; the nave and choir, about 1194–1220; and the outer transept porches, added about 1235—linking the transitional or Early Gothic with the mature or High Gothic, offer us a valuable sequence for studying the development of Gothic sculpture. The early sculptures of the west facade have frequently been linked to those at Saint Denis, and, in fact, it has been argued that the sculptor-masons moved to Chartres after completing their work on Abbot Suger's church.[15] This is evident in the close relationships between the column statues of Chartres and those of Saint Denis preserved in the drawings for Montfaucon. Twenty-two solemn figures of Old Testament precursors of Christ—kings, queens, patriarchs, and prophets, to judge by their dress—stand in regimentation across the jamb areas of the three portals (**fig. 16.23**).

The links to Romanesque style can be recognized in the linear conventions employed to describe the shallow, fluted draperies and the mask-like faces with tight ringlets of hair. Scale seems arbitrary, too. But more striking are the departures. Like the column statues at Saint Denis, those at Chartres are three-dimensional by virtue of the fact that they are carved on a round shaft and not a flat wall. While the geometric conventions delineating the abdomen, the breasts, the elbows, and so forth are reduced to simple circles, loops, and shallow fret-folds, these figures no longer appear as simple linear diagrams of energy; they are solid, static, and architectonic, and a sense of repose replaces the agitation associated with Romanesque jamb figures. They stand rigidly in a frontal posture and are described by simple, closed contours with little movement of body parts. A new articulation does appear, however, in some of the figures where the straight vertical folds of the under tunic, falling like so many plumb lines, are interrupted in the upper torso by diagonals of the

Fig. 16.23. *Old Testament Precursors of Christ*, Jamb statues from the central portal of the west facade, Chartres Cathedral. c. 1145–70

Fig. 16.24. *Maiestas Domini*, Tympanum of the central portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral. c. 1145–55

outer mantle that lead upward and to the side. Furthermore, the higher one lifts one's eyes up the column, the more the shaft-like body is transformed into a recognizable human form. In the staring faces, the eye sockets are more deeply carved; eyelids are more naturally formed; and the mouths seem articulated with lips that open slightly.

Different hands have been discerned in these sculptures. The most talented, usually identified as the "head master," carved most of the column statues and the tympanum of the central portal with its splendid *Maiestas Domini* composition (**fig. 16.24**). One need only compare this masterful design with that of the same theme at Moissac (fig. 13.20) to see the dramatic changes that were sweeping into architectural sculpture in the Île-de-France at mid-century. The composition of the head master is balanced and controlled, with large triangular and arcing lines in the bodies of the four beasts complementing the simple ovate mandorla about the enthroned Christ. The gentle linear arcs and conventions of his ample mantle elegantly convey the serenity of his pose and noble bearing.[16]

The sculptures of the west facade present a clear and direct iconography (**fig. 16.25**). The *Maiestas Domini* appears in the central tympanum over a lintel-frieze with the twelve apostles and is framed by the twenty-four elders in the archivolts. In the right tympanum appears an iconic Virgin enthroned between angels above a double register of reliefs illustrating episodes of the Infancy of Christ, proclaiming Christ's first coming "in the flesh" with the Incarnation (**fig. 16.26**). The Virgin is portrayed as the *sedes sapientiae*, or Throne of Holy Wisdom. This is made explicit. The narratives below her assure us that the divine god was born "in the

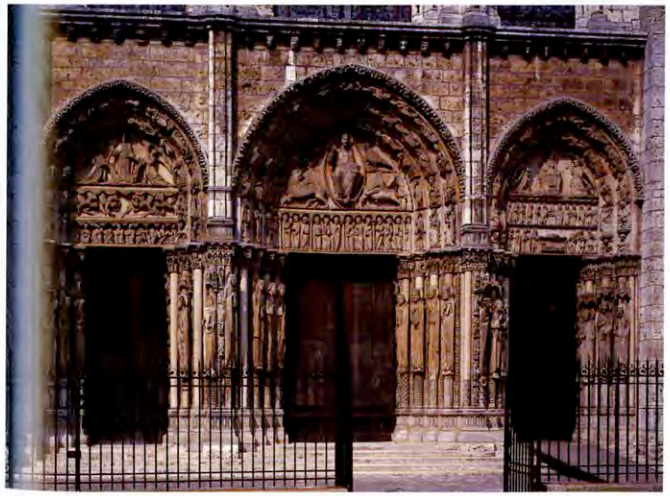


Fig. 16.25. Chartres Cathedral. West portals. c. 1145–70

Fig. 16.26. Virgin and Child Enthroned with Scenes of the Infancy. Tympanum of the right portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral. 1145–55

Fig. 16.27. *The Liberal Arts.* Archivolt detail of Fig. 16.26

flesh" as a man. The shepherds in the lower register appear at the Nativity to recognize his humble human nature at birth, while in the Presentation scene above, his divinity is recognized by the priest Simeon and the prophetess Hannah. Along the central axis appear the frontal Madonna, the altar of the temple in the Presentation, and the mensa-crib of the Nativity with the Child placed atop it as if he were an offering at an altar, all explicit allusions to the sacramental significance of the Incarnation.

The image of Mary as the *sedes sapientiae* is augmented by the archivolt sculptures with personifications of the Liberal Arts—the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic) and the quadrivium (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music)—and the authorities of these disciplines portrayed as seated scholars busy at work at their lap desks (**fig. 16.27**).[17] The moralizing polemics of Romanesque themes thus give way to statements of doctrine; dynamic composition is replaced by diagrammatic clarity; and distortion of figures is rejected for composure.

The subject matter of the left tympanum, in accord with the idea of Christ's First and Second Coming in the flesh presented in the other two, is the Ascension, a theme closely related to that of the Second Coming, but here it alludes to Christ's resurrection "in the flesh." The capitals above the column statues of the Old Testament precursors narrate details in the lives of Mary and Christ in the fashion of an unwinding scroll of sculptures.

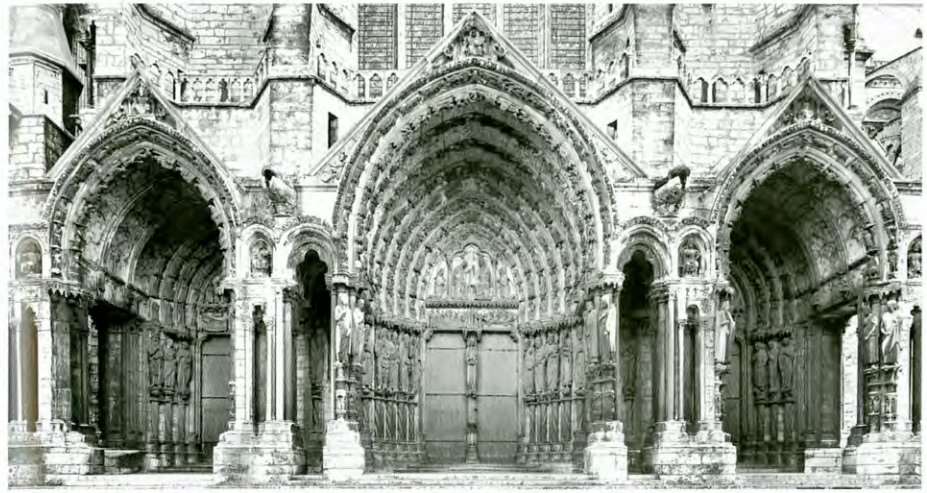


Fig. **16.28.** Chartres Cathedral. North transept portals. 1194–1220 with later additions

The fire of 1194 destroyed all but the west facade, and it is to the north transept that we move for the next sequence of sculptures at Chartres (**fig. 16.28**). Two dates are important.[18] The decorations of the north transept were planned and executed after 1204, when a precious relic was acquired, the head of Saint Anne, the Virgin's mother (brought back from Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade), because the program for the central portal is dedicated to the Virgin, with Saint Anne on the trumeau carrying the infant Mary in her arms. The transept entrances were apparently finished by 1220, as we learn from the verses of Guillaume le Breton that the church was complete under stone vaults by that year, and, furthermore, documents of 1221 inform us that the canons of the church were occupying the choir stalls by then. Hence, the first sculptures should date between 1204 and 1220.[19] Work progressed rapidly, and the outer porches were

Fig. 16.29. *Coronation of the Virgin* (tympanum of the central portal, north transept); *Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin* (lintel). Chartres Cathedral. c. 1205–15

completed by about 1230. The sculptures on the three portals of the southern transept were begun shortly after those on the north, about 1210–15, with additions to the jambs as late as 1235–40. The entire campaign, therefore, was uniformly carried out over a period of some thirty years, and the iconographic scheme seems intact.

The north transept is devoted to the Virgin and her role as the link between the Old and New Testaments. This is emphatically announced in the central portal. The monumental Coronation of the Virgin as queen of heaven is presented in the tympanum, the genealogy of Mary and Christ in the Tree of Jesse appears in the four ranges of the archivolts, and, finally, important precursors of Christ from the Old Testament are lined along the jambs.

The Coronation of the Virgin was a relatively new theme, but it was destined to become one of the most important Marian subjects in Gothic art (**fig. 16.29**).[20] In a superbly balanced composition, Mary and Christ are enthroned under a trefoil church facade and flanked by angels. Another row of angels appears in the first range of archivolts. Below, on the divided lintel block, are representations of the death and assumption of the Virgin. These three episodes—Dormition, Assumption, Coronation—were usually presented together as major events celebrated in the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin (15 August), the principal devotion to Mary in the Church calendar.

The statues on the jambs are especially fascinating (**figs. 16.30, 16.31**). They can all be identified, as they carry specific attributes and stand atop figured consoles that allude to events in their lives. In addition, they can be differentiated as types by facial features and costumes, and can be linked iconographically across the portals. On the far left stands the priest Melchizedek, who is the archetypal figure of Christ-priest in the Old Testament. He wears a miter and carries a censer. Directly opposite Melchizedek, on the far right, appears Saint Peter (identified by the keys and papal vestments), the first successor to Christ-priest in the New Testament. The second on the left is Abraham, about to sacrifice his son Isaac, another Old Testament figure for the sacrifice of Christ in the Mass, while opposite him stands Saint John the Baptist holding a disk with the sacrificial lamb—"Behold the Lamb of God"—another allusion to Christ's sacrificial role. These are followed on the left by Moses with the tablets of the Law, Samuel, and King David, while opposite them appear Simeon the high priest, and the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah (from whom the Tree of Jesse, his prophecy, in the archivolts, derives). Thus the jamb figures serve as Old Testament types of Christ as priest (Melchizedek and the others) and king (David and the royal lineage in the Tree of Jesse). It suggests that a learned theologian probably devised this comprehensive program of sculptures.

The jamb figures, dating from about 1204–10, offer us an excellent opportunity to study the development of style from the earlier statues on the west facade, which date from about 1145–55. Similarities are at once apparent. The rigid frontality of the tall figures persists, as does the shallow carving of the draperies, reminiscent of fluted columns. The statues are tightly contained within closed contours, and their feet are turned downward into the consoles to further accentuate their function as columnar supports subordinated to the architecture. But the differences are striking. There is uniformity in scale and more naturalistic proportions in the north transept figures no matter how tall and thin they may seem.

Fig. 16.30. *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Simeon, John the Baptist, and Peter.* Jamb figures from the central portal of the north transept, Chartres Cathedral. c. 1205–15

Fig. 16.31. *Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and David.* Jamb figures from the central portal of the north transept, Chartres Cathedral. c. 1205–15

Their bodies can move slightly now. Abraham stops and looks up across his space into the canopy over the head of Melchizedek, where the angel appears. Samuel turns to look directly across the portal at his counterpart on the right. And the drapery falls in long sweeping arcs and softly modeled grooves that are varied in the depth of carving.

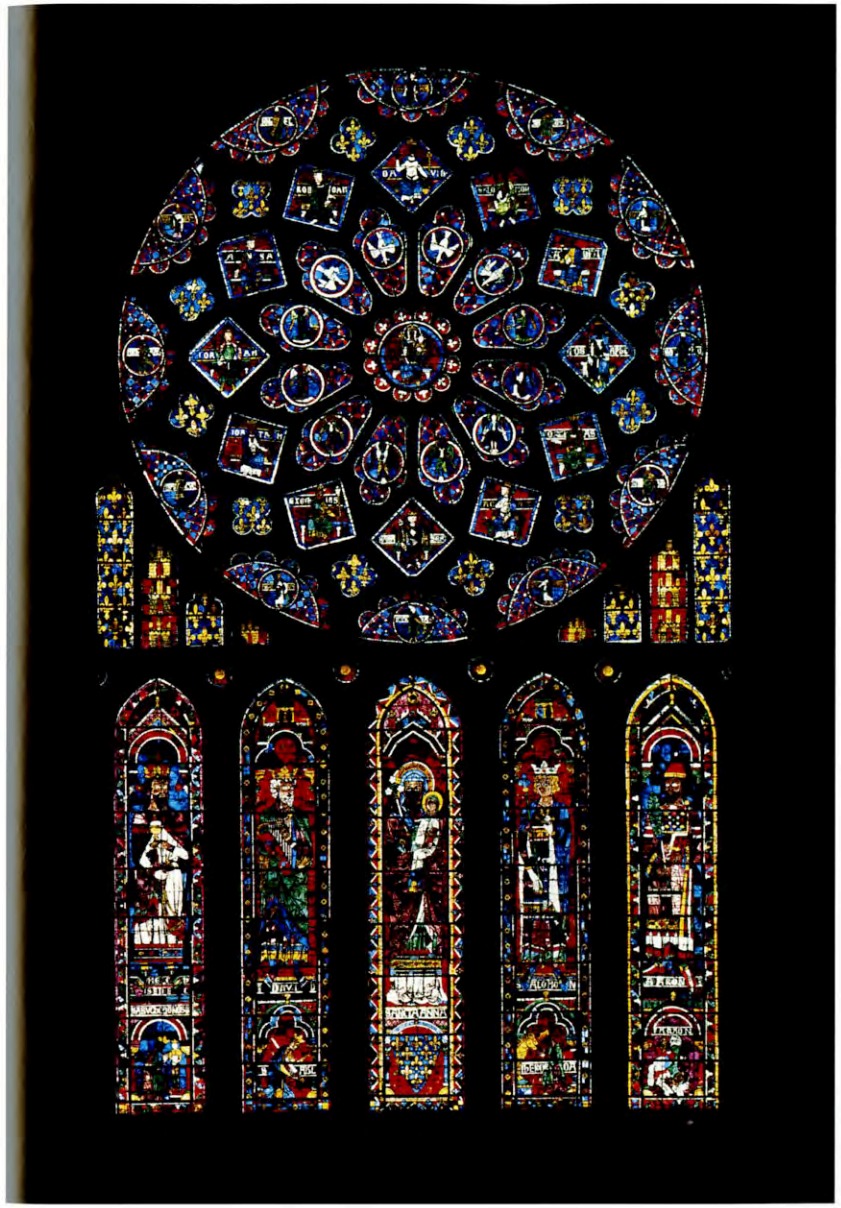
The south transept sculptures show a greater uniformity in style. The atelier responsible for the central portal sculptures on the north apparently moved to the south side, where a series of New Testament saints were carved for the three portals there about 1210–20. The four outer jamb statues on the side portals were obviously added later by another shop about 1230–35. The side porches were dedicated to the martyrs (left) and the confessor saints (right) with appropriate themes in the tympana (the martyrdom of Stephen, the stories of Saint Martin and Saint Nicholas). The central portal presents Christ on the trumeau, the apostles on the jambs, and an impressive Last Judgment in the tympanum. The handsome warrior martyr, Saint Theodore (**fig. 16.32**), is a marvelous idealization of a knight, as he stands in a relaxed pose on the flat console. He wears the chain-mail armor of contemporary crusaders. Beside him stands Saint Stephen, a work of the earlier carvers, 1210–20.

Complementing the iconography of the sculptures are the themes presented in the stained-glass windows of the clerestory and the side aisles.[21] The three lancets of the west facade are the earliest, about 1150–60, and give us some idea of the splendor of Suger's famous windows, known only in restorations at Saint Denis. In most Gothic churches, much of the stained glass has been destroyed, and those windows that have escaped the ravages of time are usually so inaccessible that their rare stylistic qualities are difficult to study. Chartres, however, is the one cathedral where the stained glass has survived nearly in its entirety.

The nave becomes a diaphanous, shimmering, structural web wrapped in veils of intense color that seem to float in layers with a "delirium of coloured light," as Henry Adams so described the windows of Chartres. Scholars have often pondered the relationships between the metaphysics of light in Christian philosophy (compare Saint Augustine) and mysticism (Pseudo- Dionysius the Areopagite), and that of the visual sensations of stained glass.[22]

LEFT **Fig. 16.32.** *Saint Theodore* (1230–35), *Saint Stephen* (c. 1220), *Saint Clement* (c. 1220), and *Saint Lawrence* (c. 1220). Left jamb, left portal, south transept, Chartres Cathedral

OPPOSITE **Fig. 16.33.** Rose and lancet windows. North transept, Chartres Cathedral. c. 1220–30

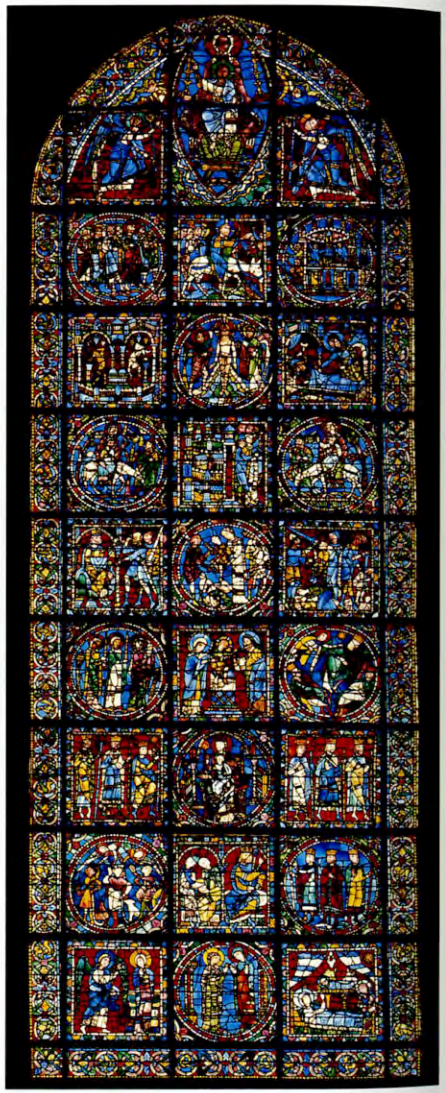


The windows in the nave were added as the building progressed, and the greater part of the interior would have been filled with stained glass by the time of its final consecration in 1260. The Chartres glass workshops were especially renowned. The later windows in the nave and choir have a marvelous reddish-violet tonality for the most part, although in a number of them, especially in the chevet, the depth of the blue forms an astonishing contrast to the brighter reds, yellows, and greens that seem to float atop it. One actually experiences color in three dimensions, with the more intense colors emerging from a sea of blue tonalities.

Of the 186 stained-glass windows in Chartres, 152 are still in place. The overall scheme for the iconographic program generally conforms to that of the sculptures on the exterior, although the Virgin receives far greater attention in the windows. The north transept rose window, over forty-two feet in diameter, has Mary and Christ surrounded by the Tree of Jesse, while the lancets carry standing figures of Saint Anne and Old Testament saints (**fig. 16.33**); the southern rose has a Last Judgment with portraits of the Evangelists carried on the shoulders of prophets in the lancets flanking the Virgin. The tall windows that fill the clerestory are glazed with single standing saints, analogous to the jamb sculptures.

The addition of minerals to molten silica in molds of round or square "tables" makes the colored glass. The individual sections are then shaped or cut from the "tables" by hot rods and are pieced together with lead into armatures of geometric forms—squares, circles, semicircles, rhomboids, quatrefoils, and so on—that, in turn, are clamped to a rigid grid of horizontal and vertical bars embedded in the walls (**figs. 16.34, 16.35**). In these earlier windows, only the heavy leaden outlines describe forms and figures. Shading and modeling are minimal. Flat shapes of color, defined by dark outlines, create a transparent world for the narratives. With some of the larger figures, such as that of the Notre Dame de la Belle Verrière (**fig. 16.36**), the stunning sensation of pure form in color resides between the spectator and the dark wall.

One window (**fig. 16.37**) combines the story of Adam and Eve's original sin and expulsion from Eden (Gen. 3:1–24) with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 11:30–37). The juxtaposition of these two narratives, one above the other, openly links leaving the Garden of Eden with living in a fallen world. In addition, it reinforces the notion that Christ is the New Adam who can bring weary travelers salvation. In the bottom right corner of the window, shoemakers are represented, implicitly linking the local trade with Christian charity.



ABOVE **Fig. 16.34.** *Scenes from the Life of Christ.* Stained-glass windows from the west facade, Chartres Cathedral. c. 1150–70

LEFT **Fig. 16.35.** *The Three Magi.* Detail of Fig. 16.34

Fig. 16.36. *Notre Dame de la Belle Verrière.* Stained-glass window from the choir of Chartres Cathedral. c. 1170; side angels added in the 13th century

Fig. 16.37. *The Good Samaritan and Adam and Eve Window.* Stained-glass window from south aisle of the nave of Chartres Cathedral. c. 1210

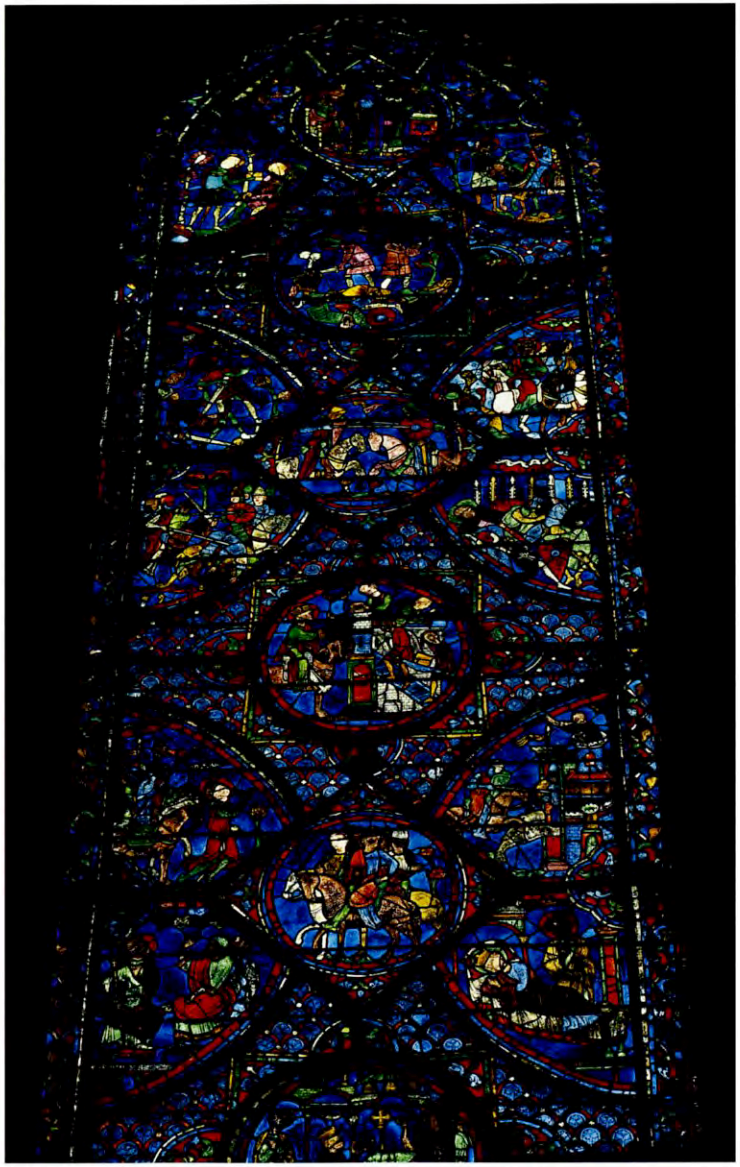


Fig. 16.38. *The Charlemagne Window.* Stained-glass window from the ambulatory of Chartres Cathedral c. 1210–1236

Fig. 16.39. *Furriers at Work.* Detail of stained-glass window. Nave, Chartres Cathedral. 13th century

Another window at Chartres is dedicated to Charlemagne (**fig. 16.38**). At the request of Frederick Barbarossa, the anti-pope Pascal II canonized Charlemagne in 1165 (it should be noted, however, that Rome never accepted Charlemagne as a saint). In promotion of Charlemagne's sainthood throughout Christendom, the window represents the emperor's legendary crusades to Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela, as well as scenes from the Song of Roland. At the bottom of the window, furriers perform their craft. Their presence suggests a close affinity between the guild and the privileged nobility able to hunt.

The expense of producing stained-glass windows must have been astronomical, and it is interesting to note that royalty provided the finances for the huge rose windows; lesser nobles and members of the clergy donated funds for a number of the lancets. Although bakers, wheelwrights, weavers, furriers, goldsmiths, carpenters, and others (**fig. 16.39**) are represented performing their crafts in the margins of some of Chartres windows, there is no evidence that their guilds contributed to the church's decoration. Wealthy patrons may have commissioned the marginal depiction of craftsmen to suggest greater communal solidarity than actually existed, concealing social conflicts between the city's various guilds, between the guilds and members of the aristocracy, as well as those between the guilds and Church authorities.[23]

Fig. 16.40. Amiens Cathedral. Interior of the nave. 1220–88

Fig. 16.41. Amiens Cathedral. View into the vaults of the nave and choir

AMIENS

The architectural developments after Chartres were consistent but subtle. The tripartite elevation of the nave (nave arcade, triforium, and clerestory), the quadripartite vaults, the elaborate chevet, the flying buttresses, and the enrichment of the portal sculptures were the basic features of High Gothic in northern France (**figs. 16.40–42**).[24] The soaring arcade of slender articulated piers rising some seventy feet creates a pronounced lightness in the interior of Amiens Cathedral. The shafts have no heavy capitals to break their rise, and the sensation of ponderous supports and weighty walls is lessened. In the clerestory a new form of window in bar tracery appears, a borrowing from the architect of Reims Cathedral. The clerestory is three-eighths of the elevation and actually merges with the narrow triforium with its stained glass.

With each step the Gothic builders reached higher (**fig. 16.43**). Paris and Laon are approximately 78 feet from the floor to the summit of the vaults; Chartres rises 118 feet; Reims reaches 123 feet; and Amiens, 139 feet. But this dramatic sense of verticality is partly illusion. The width of the nave of Amiens is 49 feet, which means that the ratio of the width to the height is about 1:3, an unprecedented narrowing of the vast space that greatly accentuates the upward thrust. At Paris the ratio is 1:2.2; at Chartres and Reims approximately 1:2.4. Thus Amiens presents the ultimate in Gothic verticality.

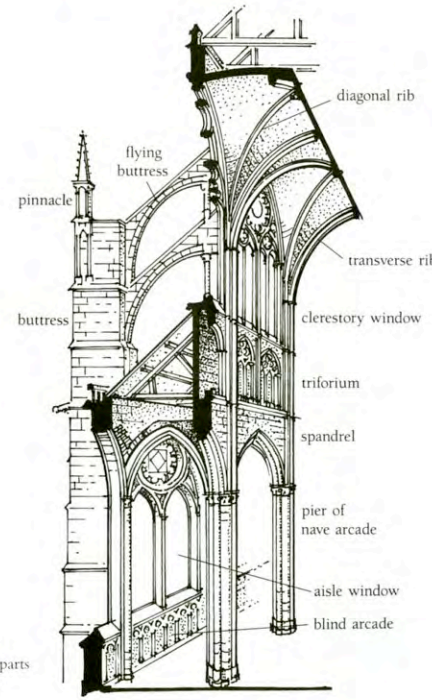


Fig. 16.42. Diagrammatic section of Amiens Cathedral with names of the parts in the elevation (after Viollet-le-Duc)

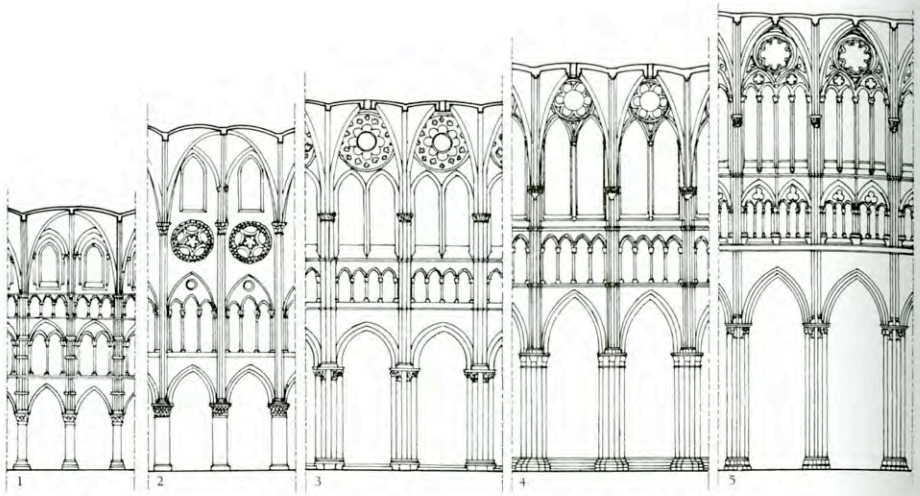


Fig. 16.43. Comparison of nave elevations in the same scale: 1. Laon; 2. Paris; 3. Chartres; 4. Reims; 5. Amiens (after Grodecki)

The earlier cathedral at Amiens had been destroyed by fire in 1218, and two years later Bishop Evrard de Fouilloy laid the foundations for the new building. Inlaid in the pavement of the nave was a giant octagonal labyrinth (destroyed in 1825), an attribute and symbol of the architect—it was derived from the plan of the legendary labyrinth at Minos designed by the mythical ancestor of all architects, Daedalus. In the center of the labyrinth was a stone inscribed with the names of the three architects who directed the building to the year 1288: Robert de Luzarches, Thomas de Cormont, and the latter's son, Renaud de Cormont (Chartres has a similar labyrinth, but unfortunately no traces of the signatures are visible). The nave was raised and vaulted by 1236; the second architect, Thomas de Cormont, completed the superb choir by 1270.[25]

Although harmoniously integrated in plan with the nave and aisles of the transept, the seven chapels of the choir display a new type of elevation with three sets of paired lancets and a rose in each that rise to the ambulatory vaults from the lower floor arcade uninterrupted by a triforium. This introduces even more transparency and lightness in the choir elevation.[26]

The facade of Amiens (**fig. 16.44**) rises over the viewer like a staggered cliff of porches, galleries, and towers. Three galleries are stacked over the huge portals. Deep arches puncture the lowest gallery with stained glass opening on the side aisles; the middle gallery is open; and the uppermost forms a setting for sculpture. The great rose window was then lifted to the top of the center block (its tracery is later), and the two towers were added only in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The three deep porches, reminiscent of those at Laon, are filled with sculptures, and it is the stately procession of tall jamb figures that brings unity to the base of the facade at eye level. A continuous row of statue columns undulates in and out of the portals and around the projecting buttresses between them. Decorative quatrefoil reliefs stretch like a carpeted runner across the podia beneath the statues (**figs. 16.45, 16.46**), and above them the deep vaults of the porches are lined with countless archivolt sculptures.

The sculptures of Amiens display a unity of style and iconography. The iconographic program is, in many ways, a compendium of what we have seen before at Chartres. The central portal, like that of the south transept of Chartres (c. 1210–20) and the (restored) west facade of Paris (c. 1220–30), features an elaborate scheme with Christ on the trumeau, the apostles on the jambs, and a Last Judgment in the tympanum.

The most impressive assembly of sculptures at Amiens is that of Christ on the trumeau of the central portal and the apostles that flank him on the jambs. A double row of quatrefoil relief sculptures on the podia beneath the apostles illustrate the Virtues and Vices; the doorposts flanking the trumeau repeat another familiar subject that appears with the

Fig. **16.44.** Amiens Cathedral. West facade. c. 1220–36, with later additions

Fig. 16.45. *Zodiac and Labors of the Month* (June, July, August, September). West facade, left doorway, socle of the left jamb, Amiens Cathedral. 1225–35

Fig. 16.46. *Virtues and Vices* (Fortitude: Cowardice; Patience: Anger; Sweetness: Harshness?). West facade, central doorway, socle of the left jamb, Amiens Cathedral. 1220–35

Fig. 16.47. *Le Beau Dieu*. Trumeau, central portal, west facade, Amiens Cathedral. 1220–35

Fig. 16.48. *Apostles* and *Virtues and Vices*. Left jamb, central portal, west facade, Amiens Cathedral. 1220–35

Last Judgment, the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins. On the left side of the left portal, a double row of reliefs represents the zodiac signs, with the labors of the months directly below. The column statues in the outer extensions of the jambs, actually the projecting wall buttresses, are Old Testament prophets beneath whom are quatrefoil reliefs with unusual narratives pertaining to their missions and prophecies.[27]

The sculptures on the jambs and trumeau represent a concept that we first saw on the south portal of Chartres—the ideal Christian community. The handsome Christ on the trumeau (**fig. 16.47**) is known as Le Beau Dieu. The beauty of the head of Christ resides in the symmetry of his features and the smooth, broad planes in the modeling of the cheeks and forehead. His piercing eyes stare out from deeper sockets, and his lips and chin are firmly set. Le Beau Dieu of Amiens is a stern yet benevolent leader of his community. The apostles have suffered from restoration, but their integration into the portal is masterfully realized. They turn more naturally on their pedestals as individuals, and yet they all share a common goal as they attend their leader reverently (**fig. 16.48**). However, the cathedral was not always the site of communal harmony, it was also a major target at moments of civic unrest. In 1258, for instance, citizens set fire to the church in protest at the bishop's financial demands.

The charming *Vierge dorée* (**fig. 16.49**), completed around 1260–70, on the south transept portal, so named because of the gilt that originally covered the figure, sways gracefully, with the upper torso twisted off axis and her left hip raised to support the playful child. This contortion also allows the drapery to cascade in deep pockets beneath her right arm. The *Vierge dorée* is no longer conceived as a jamb or trumeau figure at all, but as an independent statue placed on the cathedral in a position that breaks across the trumeau and the lintel of the tympanum. She is characterized as a young, dimple-cheeked mother who is intimately involved with her infant, playing with him in fact, as she looks downward and smiles happily.

Throughout the thirteenth century, patrons, motivated in part by civic pride, tried to build taller churches with more spacious interiors. Their preoccupation with verticality affected the manner of devotion. Slender proportion ratios emphasizing height encouraged the pious to look upwards and internally examine their relationship with the transcendent. In 1225, Bishop Miles of Nanteuil sponsored the construction of a new cathedral at Beauvais (**fig. 16.50**). As a blatant snubbing of the French queen Blanche of Castile, the bishop dedicated the church to Saint Peter, a gesture that likely suggested his ultimate allegiance to the pope rather than the monarchy. With an elevation of 158 feet, the interior of the Beauvais Cathedral soars forty feet above than Chartres and nearly twenty more than Amiens. Beauvais is also the steepest Gothic church, with a ratio of 1:3.5. The vertical thrust of the structure, however, was not without its problems. In 1284, its choir vaults could not sustain tensions brought on by high winds and they collapsed. In the fourteenth century, large piers and sexpartite vaulting were added to support the rebuilt choir.[28]

Fig. 16.49. *Virgin and Child (Vierge dorée)*. Trumeau, south transept portal, Amiens Cathedral. c. 1260–70

Fig. 16.50. Beauvais Cathedral. Exterior of the choir. Begun c. 1235

REIMS

Few dates can be pinpointed with regard to the construction of Reims Cathedral (**fig. 16.51**).[29] As the seat of the largest archdiocese in France, Reims was the coronation church for the French monarchy. It, like Chartres, had been the home of an important school, especially famous for the sciences, and from Carolingian times Reims had flourished as a center of the arts. The old cathedral burned down in 1211, and the foundation stone of the new church was laid in that same year by the archbishop, Aubri de Humbert. A seventeenth-century drawing preserves the labyrinth in the pavement of the nave and the names of the "masters of the works" in the thirteenth century, apparently in the chronological order of their activity: Jean d'Orbais, Jean le Loup, Gaucher de Reims,

Fig. 16.51. Reims Cathedral. West facade. c. 1225–1311

and Bernard de Soissons. Between 1233 and 1236, civil strife in Reims disrupted the building activities, and this interlude perhaps marks an important shift in the planning of the sculptured portals and the designing of the transepts and choir. Major restorations were carried out in 1611–12, and considerable damage was done to parts of the cathedral during World War I.

In plan (**fig. 16.52**), Reims displays a condensation and stricter alignment of the spatial divisions found at Chartres. The long nave with its single aisles has nine rectangular bays with quadripartite vaults. The transept now becomes part of a huge chevet by simply doubling the side aisles and continuing them into the choir, where the outer aisle is transformed into five radiating chapels in the semicircle of the apse. Porches were planned for the north and south sides. The choir and transept must have been completed by Jean d'Orbais's successor in 1241, when the canons of Reims are recorded as occupying the choir.

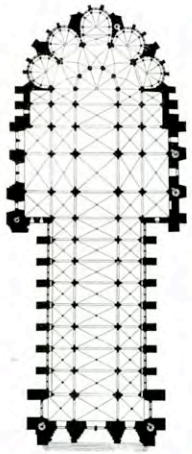


Fig. 16.52. Reims Cathedral. Plan (after Frankl)

Fig. 16.53. Reims Cathedral. Nave

The interior (**fig. 16.53**) is a taller, narrower version of Chartres. The arches of the nave arcade are pitched higher, the divisions in the triforium are light and slender, and the clerestory is enlarged to three-eighths of the elevation. While not as lofty as Amiens or Beauvais, Reims (123 feet high) nevertheless demonstrates the development toward taller, higher, and lighter elevations. A major innovation, perhaps by the architect Jean d'Orbais, appears in the design of the clerestory window. Whereas at Chartres the window complex of two lancets surmounted by a rose is an independent unit imposed on a wall, that at Reims is designed as an open space in the bay with the divisions of the window constructed of stone mullions (bar tracery). The lancet and rose punctures of Chartres become a lattice-like construct of arches and petals filled with stained glass at Reims. The bar tracery of the Reims windows became the final solution for fenestration in Gothic architecture.

In French Gothic art and architecture, basic geometric forms seem to underlie ideal structures. The *Sketchbook* of Villard de Honnecourt reveals such a preoccupation (**fig. 16.54**). Simple geometric shapes, implicitly referring to the perfect order of God's creation, provide organizational principles for a variety of visual representations, including the depiction of buildings, animals, and human faces. An inscription at the bottom right of the page reads, "you will also find strong help in drawing figures according to the lessons taught by the art of geometry."[30] Gothic architects and masons followed analogous schemes for elevations termed *ad quadratum* and *ad triangulorum* (according to the square, according to the triangle) whereby their ideal structures could be raised according to symbolic measure and number, reflecting the geometry of the New Jerusalem and its prototype, the Temple of Solomon.[31]

The world of nature was similarly transformed. The leaves that virtually encompass the capitals of Reims Cathedral (**fig. 16.55**) are species that we can now easily identify as distinct plants when compared to the conventionalized floral motifs that adorn the moldings and capitals of Romanesque churches. The naturalistic scene of grapevines and the harvesting of its grapes is more than a decorative element. It may have evoked Eucharistic associations, elicited pride in local vinyards, and may have even conveyed notions of spiritual growth.[32]

Fig. 16.54. Villard de Honnecourt. *Geometric Figures and Ornaments*. Sketchbook, 9¼ × 6". 1220–35. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (MS fr. 19093, fol. 18v)

Fig. 16.55. Floral capital in the nave of Reims Cathedral c. 1230–45

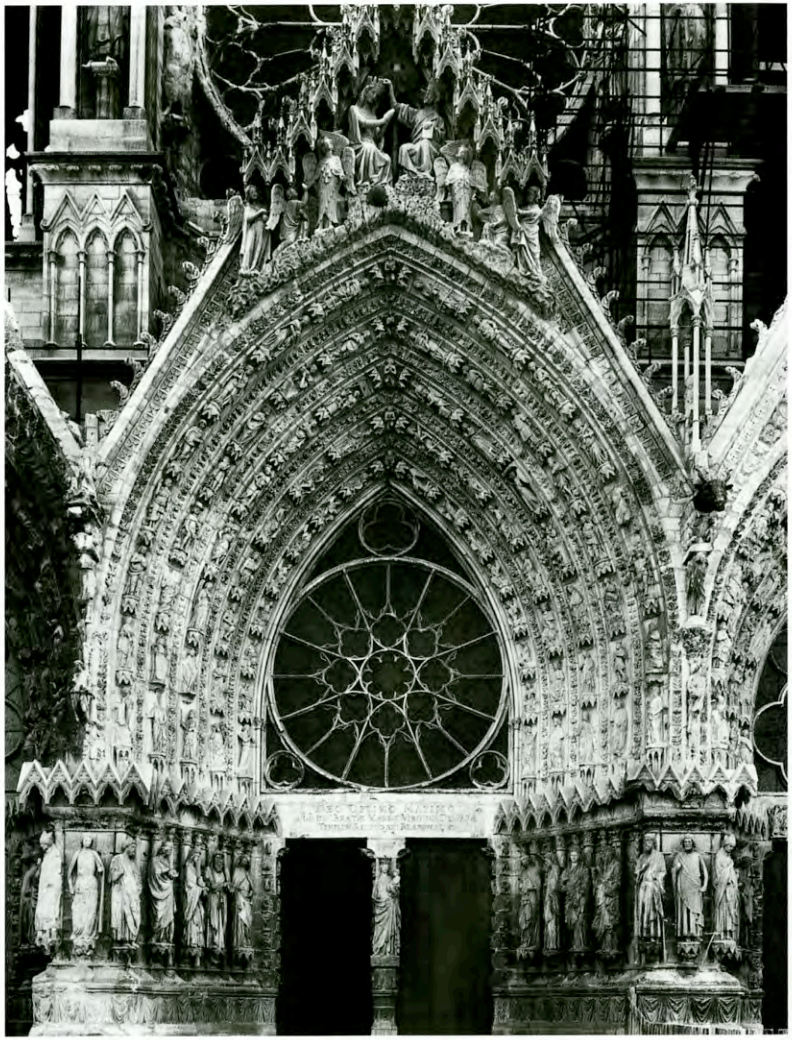


Fig. 16.56. Central portal, west facade, Reims Cathedral (sculptures installed c. 1245–55)

The facade of Reims (**fig. 16.56**) is a glorious and, in some ways, an ultimate statement of the grand tradition of regal, two-towered structures in northern Europe. Reims resembles a huge open shrine rising majestically with pointed arches repeated and multiplied at every stage. The deep porches are carved away, and diverse figures appear everywhere; the tympana are now openings into which stained-glass windows are set to complement the great rose above. Sculptures that usually fill the tympana are moved to the gables above. Except for the high king's gallery at the base of the towers, no horizontal lines are maintained, and yet the harmony of the architectural divisions between the facade and the interior elevation is beautifully shown.[33]

The diversity of sculptures at Reims is astonishing, but there are thorny problems for the art historian who wishes to study their programming and stylistic developments. It seems that a number of the jamb figures have been moved from one portal to another, indeed, from the west facade to the north transept porch. For instance, a tympanum sculpture of the Virgin and Child enthroned in the right doorway of the north transept must be a remnant from the earlier cathedral, dating about 1180, but it is not certain whether it formerly adorned an exterior portal or, more likely, the top of a wall tomb within the church.[34]

The west facade program at an early stage in planning had focused on the veneration of the Virgin. In place of the *Maiestas Domini*, or Christ as judge, we find the Coronation of the Virgin filling the gable with the jambs devoted to the role of Mary in the Infancy cycle (as on Chartres north, left portal, and Amiens west, right portal): the Annunciation and Visitation groups to the right, the Presentation in the Temple with four figures on the left. Mary appears on the trumeau as

Fig. 16.57. *Annunciation and Visitation.* Right jamb, central portal, west facade, Reims Cathedral (Annunciation Angel, c. 1245–55; Virgin of Annunciation, c. 1230; Visitation group, c. 1230–33)

the "New Eve" standing atop reliefs of the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve (a frequent allusion in statues of the Virgin at this time).

The two side porches present highly original compositions and iconographies. To the left, the gable is decorated with a Crucifixion; the archivolts of the deep porch display one of the earliest known Passion narratives in architectural sculpture; and the jambs have statues of martyrs, some of whom are impossible to identify. The right porch has an abridged Last Judgment in the gable and a most unusual sequence of sculptured archivolts that narrate apocalyptic events described in the Book of Revelation.

In the Visitation (**figs. 16.57, 16.58**), two female figures recall the Greco-Roman past, so much so that some early accounts have described them as ancient statues reused. Although they display remarkable Classicism, they remain Gothic in style, as is apparent in the draperies that cascade from their wrists and elbows and in the rich folds that pile up about their feet. The complex, fussy draperies that break across their torsos in short, broken grooves and the sharp horizontal folds that wrap tightly about their bodies resemble the diaphanous drapery of the ancients, but this dramatic style had already been introduced previously in the metalwork of Nicolas of Verdun (compare figs. 14.31, 14.32).

The Annunciate Angel Gabriel is the most striking representative of the new style. According to installation marks carved on the back of this statue, it can be determined that it was moved from its original position on the left portal as one of a pair of angelic escorts (one there now is in this same style) for Saint Dionysius to its present position beside the Annunciate Virgin.

The smiling angel is posed gracefully as if swaying on the pedestal. With this pivotal stance the figure assumes a slight S-curve as if dancing, while turning the shoulders, cocking the head downward, and leaning outward from the niche. The drapery is rendered in rich, voluminous folds that fall downward in long arcs, deeply undercut, with graceful undulations and overlaps terminating in gently curling edges. The overmantle is now a fashionable cape that fits snugly about the shoulders and is fastened by a brooch at the breasts, thus enveloping the upper arms like a cocoon. The elbows move slightly within it, and on the one side deep arcing pockets descend rhythmically, breaking the closed contour of the statue, while from the left hand of the angel an end piece of the mantle unfurls downward in elegant overlaps. At the feet, the soft draperies pile up in abstract patterns anchoring the swaying figure gently to the pedestal.

Fig. 16.58. *Virgin of the Visitation.* Detail of Fig. 16.57

The ideal for an angel has changed (and for most other figure types as well). Gabriel is a feminine type elegantly posed to reveal the splendid draperies. An enchanting sweetness pervades the face with its irresistible smile and sharply delineated features. A radiant smile is conveyed by the dimpled cheeks, the feline eyes with a slight puffing under the sockets, and the full but softly tapering chin. The naturalistic depiction of the holy figures is enchanting; they seem so lifelike and approachable. Joseph (**fig. 16.59**), in the Presentation group on the left side, is winsome with his coy, cocky expression and smile, his curly mustache and short-cropped beard.[35]

Fig. 16.59. *Joseph.* Detail of jamb figure, left jamb, central portal, Reims Cathedral. c. 1245–55