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OF THE WEST FACADE OF REIMS CATHEDRAL

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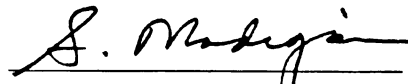
Angela Marie Proudfit

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THE SCULPTURAL PROGRAM OF THE VERSO
OF THE WEST FAÇADE OF REIMS CATHEDRAL

By

Angela Marie Proudfit

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

THE SCULPTURAL PROGRAM OF THE VERSO OF THE WEST FAÇADE OF REIMS CATHEDRAL

By

Angela Marie Proudfit

The sculptural program of the verso of the west façade of Reims Cathedral has yet to be satisfactorily explained. Though some study has been done as to its style and content, little has been accomplished in regards to its intent or existence. However, there are documentable influences that give insight into this program. The work of Abbot Suger and contemporary theologies had a great impact on the verso. Much of these ideas were carried via the minor arts, specifically that of the Meuse River Valley. Additionally, specific instances of civil unrest created an environment in which changes were made to the west end of Reims which ultimately took on political connotations. The result was this sculptural program at France's coronation cathedral that serves as a theological vehicle for political statements about the alliance between the monarchy and the Remois community.

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Chapter One

Introduction

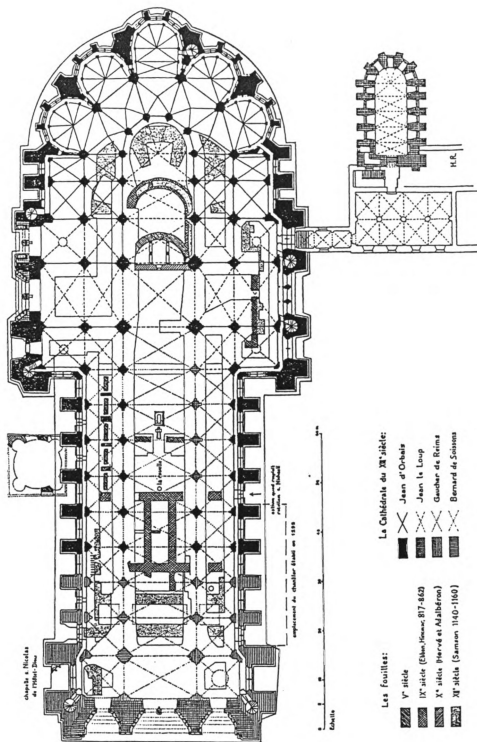
Notre Dame de Reims Cathédrale (1210-1290) is innovative and experimental architecturally and sculpturally. The successor of the Chartrain style of Gothic, it is not surprising that Reims combines new elements or that it modifies old ones, resulting in entirely new phenomena.¹ In order to examine such phenomena successfully some of Reims's history must be reviewed.

The first of the two canonized individuals honored at Reims, St. Nicasius, whose cranium is the chief relic, was tenth in its list of bishops there and founded the Carolingian cathedral in 816. When the Vandals overtook the city, Nicasius stood at the door of his cathedral in defense of those who sought refuge inside and on the threshold he was decapitated. With him died his sister, a deacon and a lector.² Due to his sense of Christian responsibility toward his congregation and the callous nature of his demise, St. Nicasius became a martyr and an important symbol in the history of Reims.

In 481, Bishop Remigius baptized Clovis I, King of the Franks, an act for which Remi was sainted. The pagan king

¹Whitney S. Stoddard, "The Cathedral of Reims," chap. in Art and Architecture in Medieval France (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 197.

²David Hugh Farmer, The Oxford Dictionary of Saints (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 315.



was converted after a military victory and the recovery of his infant son from a daunting illness, both of which he attributed to the power of the God to which his queen, Clothilda, prayed. The baptism of Clovis was followed by that of his family and followers said to number over three thousand.³

This baptism of royalty at Reims is pivotal to the See's original claim to the coronation ceremony in the Romanesque era when there was constant struggle to establish the rites of coronation for France. A sculptural relief at Reims in the Calixtus portal of the north transept depicting Clovis's baptism goes so far as to include a crown in the scene, as if to indicate that the coronation occurred at the hand of St. Remi after the baptism (Figure 2). Such thought was eventually accepted, but as Hinkle indicates, it is based on speculation and propaganda which was primarily put forth by Reims's own Archbishop Hincmar in his ninth century Life of St. Remi which attempted to solidify Reims as a royal monument.⁴ The Life of St. Remi was written in direct response to Hincmar's being spurned at the coronation of Charles the Bald as King of Lorraine which instead was performed by Archbishop Ansegise of Sens in 876.⁵

³Ibid., 341.

⁴William Hinkle, The Portal of Saints of Reims Cathedral: A Study in Medieval Iconography (New York: College Art Association of America, 1965), 23-26.

⁵Cornelius Adrianus Bouman, Sacring and Crowning: The Development of the Latin Ritual for the Anointing of Kings and the Coronation of an



Figure 2 Baptism of Clovis, Calixtus Portal, North Transept

After the death of Charles the Bald in 877 and the publication of the Life of St. Remi, Hincmar regained the coronation rite for Reims when he crowned Louis the Stammerer, Charles's son and successor, as the King of the Western Franks.⁶ But the double coronation of the Stammerer's sons was presided over by the Archbishop of Sens and for the next century the competing churches evenly continued their volley of authority over this ceremony.⁷

Emperor before the Eleventh Century (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1957), 109. Pope John VIII had indicated in 869 that the primacy was to be Hincmar's to carry out at Reims.

⁶Hinkle, The Portal of Saints, 27.

⁷Percy Ernest Schramm, Der König von Frankreich (Weimar: H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1960), 114-116.

Sens's role in the coronation rituals ended almost entirely with its association with the opponents of the Capetain dynasty, under which all royalty officially became so at Reims.⁸ In addition, action taken by Pope Urban II in a papal bull of 1089, which granted Reims "full rights and privileges, as regarded not only to the coronations but also all festival occasions in which the king wore the crown," seemed to solidify the Remois claim beyond question.⁹ But the rivalry between the churches not only continued but gained another competitor after the marriage of Philip Augustus to Elizabeth, the daughter of the count of Hainault. It was at Elizabeth's coronation that her husband insisted upon repeating his own ceremony.¹⁰ Not only did the archbishop of Sens preside, but the ceremony took place at a third site, the abbey church of St. Denis.¹¹

St. Denis's basis for its claim to the rites of coronation relied on several pieces of evidence. The first of these was a forged document produced by the abbey which stated that in the ninth century Charlemagne had placed his crown on the altar at the monastery, thereby giving his empire to Saint Denis who returned it to him in an act of

⁸Théodore Godefroy, Le cérémonial françois (Paris: S. Cramoisy et G. Cramoisy, 1649), 117.

⁹Hinkle, The Portal of Saints, 27.

¹⁰Philip Augustus had been intially crowned at Reims in 1179 by his archbishop uncle, Guillaume.

¹¹Godefroy, Le cérémonial françois, 138.

bestowal similar to that of the feudal relationship between lord and vassal.¹²

Added to this was the action of early Capetain royalty who bequeathed items of regalia to the monastery. Philip I was the first to leave an actual crown, but he was quickly followed by Louis VI who did so witnessed by the papal legate and subsequently declared that, in accordance with law and custom, the regalia of the king at his death were to become property of the abbey church of St. Denis.¹³ Based on these claims, St. Denis, already the royal burial place, declared itself the keeper of the crown of France and thus the only legitimate site for the coronation ceremony.¹⁴

With the contention for the sacre blossoming as an integral part of Remois history, the few precise dates that are indisputable regarding the Gothic structure at Reims provide some clarification through which to examine pertinent issues. On May 6, 1210 the Carolingian cathedral burned due to carelessness, according to chronicler Albéric des Trois-Fontaines.¹⁵ Building of the new cathedral was subsequently undertaken and in 1213 the primary relic, the cranium of St.

¹²Schramm, Der König von Frankreich, 132.

¹³Ibid., 132.

¹⁴Schramm, Der König von Frankreich, 132-138. Most significant examples given to outline the competition for general purposes. For more specific information see also Hinkle, The Portal of Saints, chapter 6.

¹⁵Robert Branner, "Historical Aspects of the Reconstruction of Reims Cathedral 1210-1240," Speculum 36 (1961): 23.

Nicasius, was translated to a new shrine.¹⁶ The first half of the construction of the new cathedral was sporadic due primarily to financial and political difficulties: specifically, in 1221 there were papal indulgences requesting monies for twenty-one days and in 1222 this was extended to a full year.¹⁷ The quests became so aggressive on suffragan dioceses that neighboring Laon sued Reims in the papal court in 1223 and a satisfactory decision was not reached until 1265.¹⁸ The continuing financial pressures necessitated the chapter's use of their interest in the local cloth industry. This was rather counterproductive as the burghers of Reims revolted almost constantly from 1233 to 1236, bringing the construction of the cathedral to a dead stop.¹⁹ The final evidence that aids in the chronological history of Reims is its famous labyrinth which recorded the order of the five architects who worked on the construction of the Gothic cathedral during the following campaigns: Jean d'Orbais, 1210 to 1220; Jean de Loup, 1220-1236; Maître Gaucher, 1236 to 1254, and Bernard de Soissons, 1254 to 1289 (Figure 3).²⁰

¹⁶Ibid., 29.

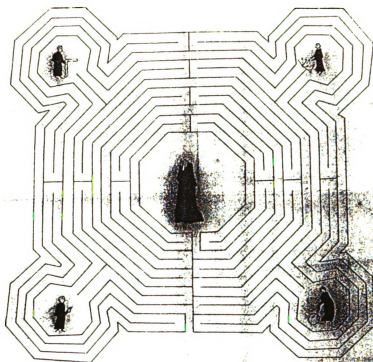
¹⁷Barbara Abou-El-Haj, "The Urban Setting for Late Medieval Church Building: Reims and Its Cathedral Between 1210 and 1240," Art History 11 (March 1988): 21.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 22-24 and Branner, "Historical Aspects," 32. Significantly enough, a change in the design of the cathedral has been noted precisely at this level which will be discussed more later.

²⁰The dates given are estimates since no two scholars agree on a time frame given to any one of the campaigns. These dates span the

LE LABYRINTHE
DE L'EGLISE DE REIMS



C'est le Dédale qui fit d'ailleurs, ref. et les personnages en relief
de cette représentation des architectes qui ont construit l'église
l'édifice de la Vierge Reims.

L. M. Boudier & Compagnie, Paris

Donné à la Bibliothèque de la Ville de Reims en l'année 1882
par Monsieur François Henri Lefebvre, ci' a Reims en
1828. Soussigné

Henri Lefebvre

Figure 3 Labyrinth

longest possible period of time that any given architect could have supervised a campaign.

Through all of the documentation, very little is said about the verso of the west façade. In an area which is traditionally blank or at best decorated with blind tracery in foliate patterns, the verso at Reims introduced a full and complex sculptural program. Its appearance is surely not one of chance. The complex environment from which it emerged most certainly shaped its existence ideologically, politically, and artistically. This program meant something and it evolved from somewhere. It cannot be a chance decoration, for its complexity, scale and placement deny such a possibility. In order to understand the verso's presence and uniqueness, a search for influences and meaning is necessary.

Chapter Two

Description of the Verso

The newly sculptural space of the verso of the west façade of Reims Cathedral is firstly divided into three sections by the architectural partitioning of the narthex by the nave walls. The resultant sub-programs stand physically separated.

The north and south portals are flanked on each side by two columns of niche figures which terminate at the apex of their Gothic pointed arches much in the manner of exterior archivolt sculpture (Figures 4 and 5). The central program, however, does not echo its architectural portal as its flanking three columns of figures continue upwards in a strictly perpendicular fashion culminating in a full band across the portal at the base of the glazed triforium (Figure 6). A spatial description of the verso would not be complete without mention of the other glazing innovations present in the tympana of each portal.

Each figure of the verso is carved from an individual masonry block, the full-sized niche figures, which constitute the majority of the program, being four feet, six inches tall. All of the niche figures were carved prior to placement as they literally provide the structural building blocks of the portals.²¹ Therefore, it can be stated that the

²¹Willibald Sauerländer, Gothic Sculpture in France, 1140-1270 trans. by Janet Sondheimer (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1972), 479. Several figures of the south portal were damaged in 1914 due to the war.

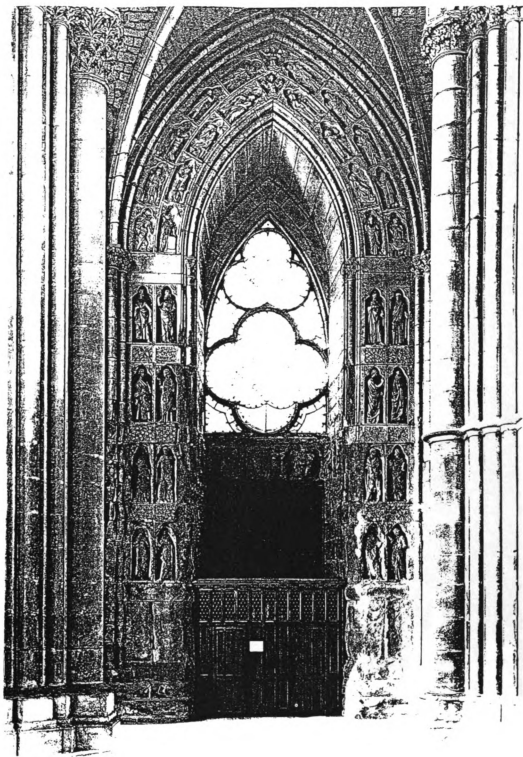


Figure 4 North Portal

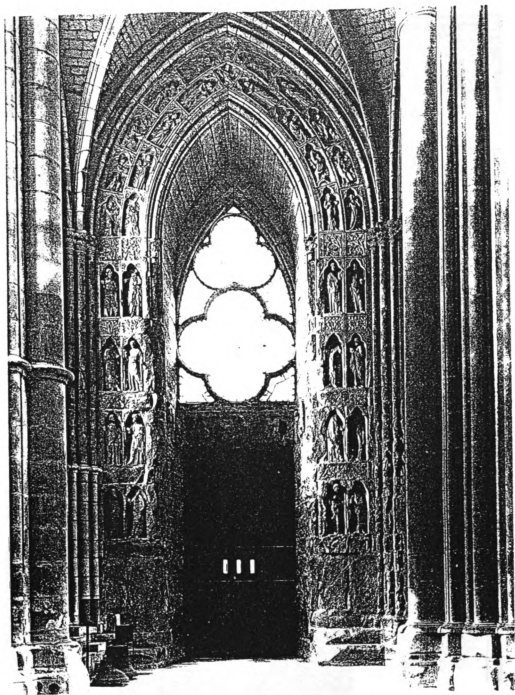


Figure 5 South Portal

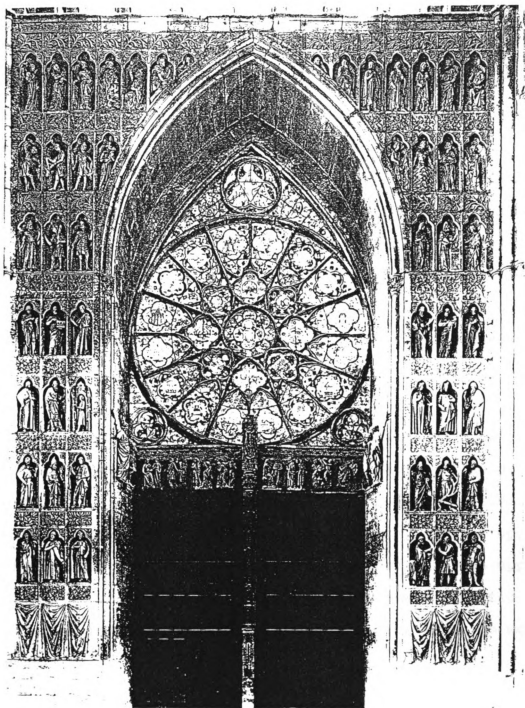


Figure 6 Central Portal

program was not decoration subsequent to the cathedral's construction but rather an integral part of the conception of the west end prior to its erection.

In order to analyze the sculptural program of the verso it is necessary to understand its contents. Previously, the verso, in its entirety, had been dismissed as a compilation of prophets or, in rare instances, a selected scene would be removed from its context for discussion. A hypothesis has also been put forth that the verso is a depiction of the Virgin's lineage in the form of the Tree of Jesse.²² Though not completely erroneous, these explanations and treatments are far too simplistic for a program with over 122 figures. Closer examination of the verso reveals basic iconography and understanding of its ingredients.²³

Each side portal is primarily composed of individual, standing figures which do not present a narrative. These male prophets, as they are generally called, fill the first four registers above the drapery-filled blocks which occupy the bottom-most band on each of the three portals. The upper figures of the side portals, which become somewhat chaotic as they follow the form of the pointed arch to its apex, do work together to comprise narrative scenery.

²²Marcel Jay, Le Symbolisme des Nombres a la Cathédrale de Reims (Reims: Communications à l'Académie Nationale, 1960), 72.

²³An identification of each individual figure and scene can be found in Appendix A.

On the south portal the role of John the Baptist in writing the book of Revelation is portrayed via scenes of his experience on the island of Patmos, events of the Apocalypse itself, and various angels enacting Apocalyptic elements. The lintel of the south portal depicts the martyrdom of St. Stephen and the original glazed tympana is lost.

The condition and imagery of the north portal lintel and tympana imitate that of the south. On the left, the upper portion of the north portal contains Old Testament scenes precursory to the life of Christ such as the sacrifice of Isaac and Moses and the brazen serpent. The scenes on the right are events from the life of Christ such as the raising of Jairus's daughter and the calling of St. Matthew. These two sets, the prefigurations and the events from the life of Christ, are kept separate by angels which occupy the apex. These angels provide the necessary break from one time period to the next while simultaneously providing heavenly verification of the relationship between the two.

In contrast, the central portal contains only narrative scenes which can be read from bottom to top and left to right on each side of the doorway. Old Testament prefigurations for the life of Christ, which can also be interpreted as Marian genealogy, compose the southern side of the central portal. Images include King David, the Annunciation to Joachim and Anna (Figure 7), the Massacre of the Innocents (Figure 8), and Gideon and the Fleece.

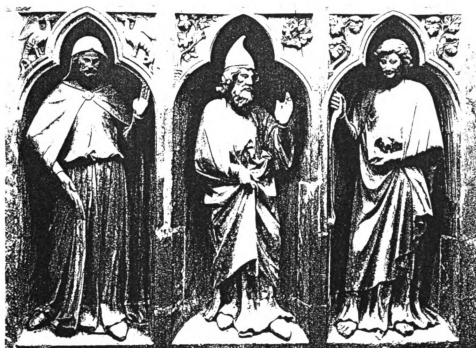


Figure 7 Annunciation to Joachim and Anna, Central Portal



Figure 8 Massacre of the Innocents, Central Portal

John the Baptist is depicted on the right, specifically his role in Christ's life and his premonition of Christ's death in scenes of the Agnus Dei (Figure 9), the baptism of Christ (Figure 10), and John's wavering faith while imprisoned are shown among others. In summary, the central portal illustrates the relationship between the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ and John the Baptist.

There are, however, two scenes on the central doorway which are problematic. Each occupies the first register on either side. On the left there is a figure in long robe and cloak without shoes who is generally believed to be an apostle. He is followed by a prophet and King David (Figure 11). This mysterious trio has received much discussion but no conclusive answer has been brought forth as they do not fit neatly into the schema of that side. On the right the difficult scene contains a priest giving communion to two soldiers (Figure 12). This scene doesn't obviously relate to its surrounding group in the same manner as the former. It is necessary to consider at this time that the bottom most registers on the left and right of the central portal, which have proved to be so troublesome, could very easily, considering their location, have been reserved for those scenes which would speak most directly to their medieval audience.²⁴

²⁴This will be expounded upon more directly as will the iconology and the meaning of the entirety of the verso in Chapters Five and Six.

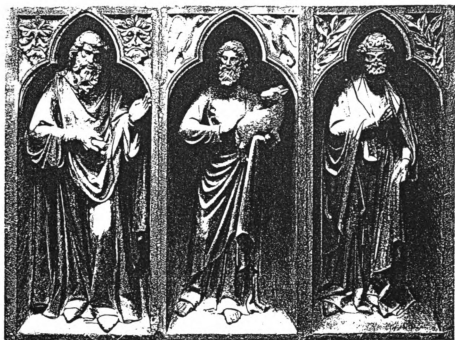


Figure 9 John the Baptist with the Agnus Dei, Central Portal

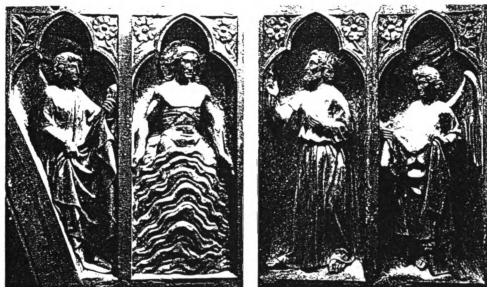


Figure 10 Baptism of Christ, Central Panel

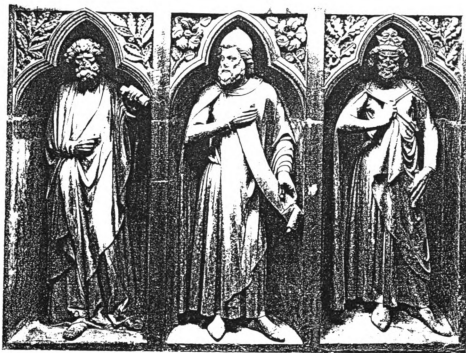


Figure 11 Apostle, Prophet and King David, Central Panel



Figure 12 Communion of the Soldier, Central Panel

The lintel of the central portal is dedicated to the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, the scenes of which are capped with a raised trumeau figure of St. Nicasius holding his head in his hands (Figure 13). The glazed tympanum, like that of the side portals, is modern with the original being a casualty of war. The glazed triforium, directly above the niche figures correctly depicts the baptism of Clovis I by St. Remi. The grand rose window, though a modern restoration, accurately illustrates the Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin.²⁵



Figure 13 Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, Lintel and St. Nicasius, Trumeau, Central Portal

²⁵Donna Sadler-Davis, "The Sculptural Program of the Verso of the West Façade of Reims Cathedral" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1984), 244. The grand rose contains twentieth century stained glass installed by artist Peter Simon in 1908.

The relationship of the component scenes of the verso, as well as that of the lintels and of the glazing program on the interior of the west end, is complex. It is further compounded by the correlation of these interior elements to the exterior sculpture. Consequently, it is fair to surmise that there are various levels of meaning to pursue and explore, but it is first necessary to examine the key sources which have led to this unique and monumental arrangement of sculpture.

Chapter Three

Typological Foundations

Typology and typological organization is based on groupings of types. Placing Biblical scenes into an arrangement based on their typological content has resulted in various parallels between the Old and New Testaments. This eventually became the accepted mode for compositions of the prefiguration of Christ, which was well established by the time of sculptural program of the verso at Reims.

This correspondence between the Old and New Testaments started in the formative years of Christianity. Benedict Biscop, the Abbot of Wearmouth in England, returned from Rome in 684 to his abbey with typological pictures to decorate his monastery. The images expressed "methodically the correspondence of the two Testaments. For example, there is Isaac carrying the wood of sacrifice opposite the Lord carrying his cross."²⁶ But by the Carolingian era typology was not as prevalent. Remaining artifacts from the tenth centuries have yielded no typological works.²⁷

²⁶Emil Mâle, Religious Art in France: The Twelfth Century, trans. by Martheil Mathews (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 161. See also Helmut Buschhausen, "The Klosterneuburg Altar of Nicholas of Verdun: Art, Theology, and Politics," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 37 (1974): 32 which refers to sixth century Rusticus Helpidus who wrote inscriptions for an unsurviving cycle of typological frescoes.

²⁷Mâle, Religious Art, 160. With the possible exception of a miniature from the sacramentary of Drogo, brother of Louis the Pious and the Bishop of Metz. The intended relationship between Abraham carrying the ram substituted for Isaac and Melchisedek preparing bread and wine on an altar is speculative and shows a correspondence between two Old

It is in the Ottonian period that typological associations are firmly established. This is done, incidentally, at the threshold of a nave vessel. It is in 1035 at the Cathedral of Hildesheim that the bronze doors which Bishop Bernward had commissioned for the Abbey Church of St. Michael in 1015 appear with a program of eight Old Testament scenes on the left and eight New Testament scenes on the right, which are intensely paired and compliment each other precisely (Figure 14).²⁸ For example, in the third pair from the top, the temptation of Adam and Eve with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is opposite the crucifixion of Christ upon the Tree of the Cross, creating a connection between the fall of man and his redemption (Figure 15). By 1140, typological systems are a firm contender for compositions in Christian art.

In the late Romanesque period the comparison of the Old and New Testaments in teaching and conversation continued as an illustrative tool. There was also a proliferation of written material, such as Walafred Strabo's Glossa Ordinaria which outlined "Christ's presence on every page of the Old Testament," that made the theories of Christian typology available to literate individuals.²⁹

on an altar is speculative and shows a correspondence between two Old Testament scenes. Thus this work is not the best example of Old to New Testament typology.

²⁸Victor Heinrich Elbern, Dom und Domschatz in Hildesheim (Hildesheim: Aufnahmen H. Wehmeyer, 1979), 43.

²⁹Mâle, Religious Art, 160.



Figure 14 Bronze Doors, Hildesheim

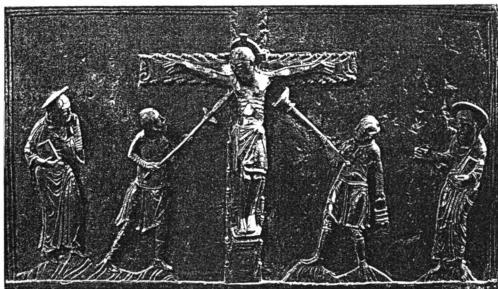
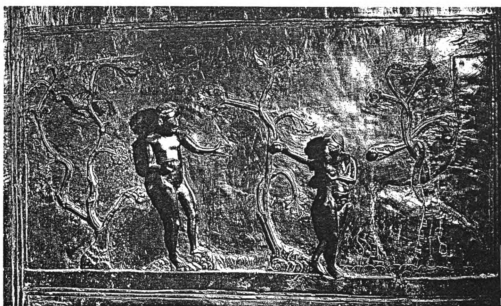


Figure 15 Fall of Man and Crucifixion, Bronze Doors, Hildesheim

Artistically it is at the Abbey Church of St. Denis that the system of typological concordances is reasserted primarily through the work of Abbot Suger. The correlation of the two Testaments became the principal theme of the interior decoration at St. Denis via the resurrection of St. Augustine's text the City of God. St. Augustine is directly cited in Suger's surviving glazing program. In one particular scene Christ is depicted with one hand crowning the New Law and with the other lifting the veil covering the face of the Old (Figure 16). The inscription reads: *Quod Moyses velat Christi doctrina revelat* (What veiled, the doctrines of Christ unveiled).³⁰ This concept is a direct visualization of St. Augustine's famous statement in the City of God: "The Old Testament is not other than the New covered by a veil, and the New is not other than the Old unveiled."³¹ By utilizing St. Augustine, Suger not only gave typology a theological source and philosophy, but he also ultimately added prestige to the abbey as a House of God and, in that vein, forged a further connection to the City of God, the New Jerusalem.

The verso at Reims employs this typological arrangement. The central portal, which illustrates Old Testament

³⁰Abbot Suger of St. Denis, Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis and Its Art Treasures, ed. Erwin Panofsky, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 74-75 and Mâle, Religious Art, 160.

³¹John H. S. Burleigh, The City of God: A Study of St. Augustine's Philosophy (London: Nisbet and Company, Ltd., 1949), 104.

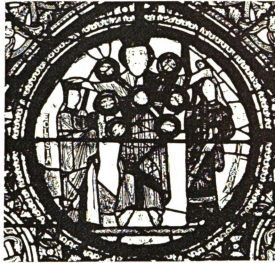


Figure 16 St. Augustine Medallion, Stained Glass Window,
St. Denis

prefigurations on the right and the events of John the Baptist on the left, is filled with typological connections. There are obvious, loose connections such as the Annunciation to Joachim and Anna and to Zachariah and Elizabeth which both point to the Annunciation to the Virgin. In the same manner the prophecy of Habbakuk is similar to the scene of the Baptist with the Agnus Dei in that they both refer directly to predictions about the fate of Christ. The same relationship applies to the Annunciation to Joachim and Anna and the scene directly across the doorway from it. This shows the Baptist, flanked by two prophets, in a pointing position of premonition in front of an axed tree, which is symbolic of the cross and again of Christ's fate.

With the concept of a typological concordance established at Reims the questions remain: How did typology travel to Reims and what was the catalyst for the verso's unique appearance? A return to St. Denis will reveal the beginning of the progression.

At St. Denis, typology directed the course of all things. This "*œuvre théologique*--a sermon in stone" is what Suger must have envisioned for the architectural project of the rebuilding of his church.³² As illustrated previously, the theory behind typology was carried into the windows and, most significantly, also to the minor arts. It is in the Great Cross of St. Denis, now lost, that concordances were directly made in a juxtaposition of sixty-eight scenes from the life of Christ with Old Testament prefigurations.³³ These sixty-eight scenes

of the Old Testament and the mysteries of the New Testament must have encompassed the full drama of the Redemption enacted through the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. These four mysteries were symbolized by the four evangelists seated at the foot of the base of the great cross and would have fittingly been distributed on the four-sided pillar.³⁴

The thorough documentation of Abbot Suger explains the content and the appearance. The artist, Godefroid de Clair, and

³²Georges Duby, The Europe of Cathedrals 1140-1280 (Geneva: Skira, 1966), 14.

³³Ibid., 19.

³⁴p. Verdier, "What do we know of the Great Cross of Suger in Saint-Denis?," Gesta 9 (1970): 14.

the pattern of composition, which had been made of a square plaque and four lobes, were Mosan.³⁵ The fact that Suger employed artisans, especially goldsmiths, from the Meuse River Valley is known.³⁶ The combination of Suger's typological system with that of Mosan artists, the majority of which traveled to their work, resulted in a vehicle for the rapid dissemination of the concordance system in the visual arts.

The entire arrangement of the lost cross of St. Denis is suggestive of the panels of the enameled portable altar from Stavelot (Figure 17).³⁷ It is said that Suger's program was as strictly typological as that carried out in the Klosterneuburg Altar of Nicholas of Verdun (Figure 18).³⁸ It is more likely that Suger's typological program influenced the works of Mosan artists than it is that the works were simply similar or convenient counterparts.

The Klosterneuburg Altar is so often used as an example of what the cross of St. Denis might have looked like that Nicholas of Verdun merits closer examination.³⁹

³⁵Ibid., 14.

³⁶Abbot Suger, Abbey Church of St. Denis, 58. Suger refers to his artisans as *aurifabros Lotharingos* (Lorraine). In the time of Suger, much of the Meuse River Valley area was encompassed in a section of a duchy called Lower-Lorraine, a division of ancient Lotharingia. Mâle, Religious Art, 160.

³⁷Verdier, "Great Cross of Suger," 14. Verdier also cites a connection to stained glass panels at the cathedral of Châlons-sur-Marne, specifically its ambulatory windows of the Infancy of Christ and the Tree of Jesse.

³⁸Ibid., 14.

³⁹Mâle, Religious Art, 169 and Verdier, "Great Cross of Suger," 14.



Figure 17 Top Section, Portable Altar, Stavelot

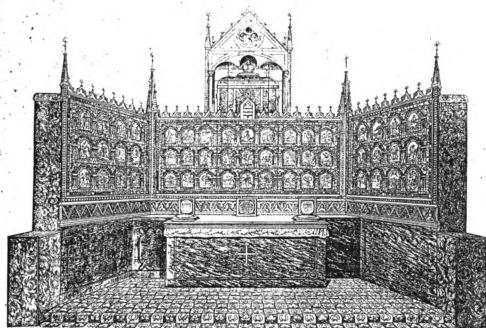


Figure 18 Nicholas of Verdun, Klosterneuburg Altar

This is what Suger's cross, when it was encased in enamels, must have looked like. One could say that the artist was inspired by the cross for the Grapes of the Promised Land and the Tau Sign Inscribed on the House Fronts take us back again to St. Denis. The work is dated 1181. Had Nicholas of Verdun been taught by Godefroid de Clair? Was he one of the last Lorraine disciples who worked for Suger?⁴⁰

The dissemination of concordances was also a tool with which to combat heresy through the images of the typological system which focused on the truth of Redemption.⁴¹ In this manner the system furthered the cause of the Church beyond scholastic queries. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Prior of Klosterneuburg was as intimately involved with the planning and execution of the altar as Abbot Suger was at St. Denis or that subtle theological issues lay at the root of its commission.⁴² The portable altar, which was originally an ambo until a fire in 1330 caused its rearrangement, directly reflects the liturgy which would have been spoken from it in its 51 typological scenes, complete with Latin inscriptions in four large panels and that are executed in a classicizing style (Figure 19).⁴³

Beyond Nicholas of Verdun's knowledge of typology and speculation of his presence at St. Denis, the classicizing style

⁴⁰Mâle, Religious Art, 169.

⁴¹Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 21.

⁴²Helmut Buschhausen, "The Klosterneuburg Altar of Nicholas of Verdun: Art, Theology, and Politics," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 37 (1974): 31.

⁴³Ibid., 9 and Helmut Buschhausen, Der Verduner Altar (Vienna: Tusch, 1980), 9.

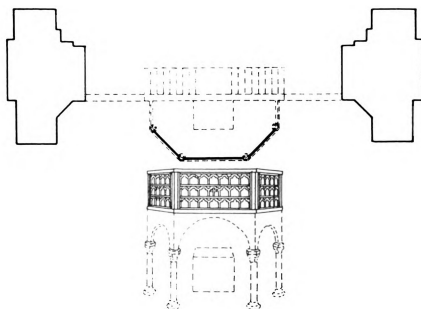


Figure 19 Klosterneuburg Altar, Reconstruction

is another way to track his influence in the Champagne region. It appeared in Gothic sculpture around 1200 "persist[ing] in Saxony, cradle of the Ottonian line, and more vigorously in the cities of the Rhine and Meuse regions, and in Lotharingia, [and] most Carolingian provinces in Europe."⁴⁴ Nicholas of Verdun's work was considered very important in the development of this style, by some as important as Reims which served as a classical center.⁴⁵ In fact, the specific influence of Nicholas of Verdun can be seen at Reims Cathedral. The style of Nicholas' Shrine of the Virgin at Tournai and the Three Kings Shrine at Cologne (Figure 20) have been directly related to the jamb figures of the Calixtus Portal of the north transept (Figure 21) and to Paul of the Last Judgement at Reims.⁴⁶ In addition, his style has been connected to the sculpture at Chartres and Laon.⁴⁷ Though there is dissent as to Nicholas' influence on the classicizing style in the Champagne region it is not as convincing as the original arguments in favor of it by the same scholars.⁴⁸ The more cautious approach merely takes a step back

⁴⁴Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 20.

⁴⁵Peter Cornelius Claussen, "Antike und gotische Skulptur in Frankreich um 1200," Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch 35 (1973): 85-86.

⁴⁶Hans Reinhardt, "Nicholaus von Verdun und die Kunst in Reims," Kölner Domblatt 26/27 (1967): 125-130. There is also evidence of early Mosan influence on the Madonna and Child from the north transept, right portal of Reims Cathedral by comparison with the Madonna of Heribertus Shrine.

⁴⁷William D. Wixom, "The Greatness of the So-Called Minor Arts," chap. in The Year 1200: A Background Survey (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), 97.

⁴⁸Peter Cornelius Claussen, "Zum Stil des Plastik am Dreikönigenschrein: Rezeptionen und Reflexionen," Kölner Domblatt 42



Figure 20 Nicholas of Verdun, Three Kings Shrine, Cologne

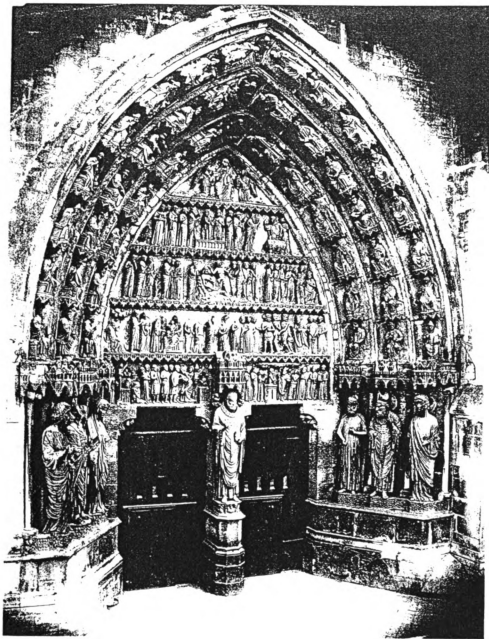


Figure 21 Calixtus Portal, North Transept

to say that it is more than likely that the Champagne region and Nicholas of Verdun were influenced by the same elements than it is that the artist had influence over the region or vice versa.⁴⁹

The presence of Nicholas of Verdun is established by the affinities regardless of the specific direction of the relationship. It was this classicizing style of the Mosan goldsmith which created a significant interaction between the minor arts and monumental sculpture.⁵⁰ This, paired with the possibility that he may have been commissioned to execute a shrine for Reims Cathedral, successfully outlines the association between Nicholas of Verdun and Reims Cathedral.⁵¹

It is significant that the verso at Reims appears more like a monumental reliquary than it does anything else. The composition of the verso is not only unlike that of the exterior, it is an anomaly. The treatment of the wall is unlike anything that had adorned architecture before. The search for architectural influences exhausted, a more intimate influence is likely. Many reliquaries employ niched figures but the compositions are often simplistic. However, the goldsmith or minor arts connection is maintained by an investigation of the

⁴⁹Claussen, "Dreikönigenschrein," 42 and Sauerländer, "Early Gothic Churches," 47.

⁵⁰Eleanor S. Greenhill, "French Monumental Sculpture," chap. in The Year 1200: A Background Survey (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), 35.

⁵¹Hans Reinhardt, La Cathédrale de Reims (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 146-147.

compositional similarities between the verso and the Klosterneuburg Altar of Nicholas of Verdun.

Both works employ niched figures in a grid-like pattern which ultimately reveal a typological composition. Though their content differs that is not surprising, for the source of typologies is generally determined by the liturgy engaged in the presence of the object.⁵² Or to be more clear, in the absence of a portable object, the allegorical scenes are decided by the purpose of the space in which they exist. Therefore, regardless of their differences, the Klosterneuburg Altar of Nicholas of Verdun and the verso of the west façade at Reims stem from the same tradition of typological concordances which inspired Bishop Bernward at Hildesheim and was further promoted by Abbot Suger at St. Denis.

⁵²Helmut Buschhausen, "The Theological Sources of the Klosterneuburg Altarpiece, " chap. in The Year 1200: A Symposium (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), 122.

Chapter Four

Location of the Verso

The placement of the sculptural program of the verso on the interior west wall of the façade at Reims is curious. The addition of a large and complex architectural sculpture program to the interior would seem to merit a more impressive location, particularly one nearer to the sacred east end of the church. An examination of two primary uses of the west end in medieval Christian churches is required to grasp the significance of the sculptural program on this interior space.

The narthex of medieval churches often served as the setting for the viewings which would occur prior to funerals.⁵³ Although it was common to have this custom take place in the home of the deceased, visitation frequently occurred in the narthex of the deceased's church. Either way, this ritual always followed the preparation of the corpse and preceded the funeral proper much in the same manner that is followed today.

The entire funeral process is significant as the importance of burial versus cremation is a hallmark of Christianity. The concept of redemption and, subsequently, resurrection of the body resulted in a full funerary process.⁵⁴

⁵³New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v. "Funeral."

⁵⁴Cyrille Vogel, Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1986), 80. The first funeral liturgy recorded to accompany the process is outlined in *Ordo XLIX* written in 800.

Upon death, the corpse was prepared in a manner that generally involved the expected washing and dressing. The body was then ready for viewing. After this, the funeral proper began with a procession to the church.⁵⁵ This step is eliminated if viewing took place in the narthex. The funeral service occurred at the high altar during which the coffin was often sprinkled with holy water in remembrance of the sacrament of baptism.⁵⁶ The Eucharist was an instrumental part of the funerary process as it was an expression of the belief that communion still existed between the living and the dead.⁵⁷ This reflects again the desire to maintain the body for resurrection. The service culminated in a procession to the cemetery where the grave was blessed and Psalms sung to emphasize the glory of death as a positive gateway to a better life.⁵⁸

⁵⁵New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Funeral" cites Canon Law of 1215 that required funeral ceremonies for the faithful to take place in the church.

⁵⁶J. G. Davies, ed., A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1986), 127. In addition, Michael Ragon, The Space of Death: A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration and Urbanism trans. Alan Sheridan (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 71 indicates that this tradition stemmed out of an existing pre-Christian Roman tradition of lustral water in funerary vases that were placed in the tomb with the deceased. According to Ragon's theory this practice was altered in the Middle Ages when the lustral water became referred to as holy water and urns replaced the vases but remained as a symbolic continuation.

⁵⁷Davies, Liturgy and Worship, 117.

⁵⁸Ibid., 117. Another note relative to this funerary issue is that of sarcophagi art. Specifically, in the late Romanesque and early Gothic period, it was common for the width ends (and occasionally all sides) to be decorated in a manner that divided the panel into niched figures of cloaked mourners. This niched figure arrangement is similar to what occurs on the verso but on a smaller scale and of more generic content. An example of this can be found at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland. A more animated example of this mode of decoration

The funerary aspect of the west end does not cease with the burial process. Many medieval churches reserved the west end, particularly the gallery space above the narthex, for a secondary altar or chapel area. If used in this manner, the space was dedicated to St. Michael the archangel. Such spaces remain today at the Romanesque churches of St. Philibert at Tournus (Figure 22) and at Le Madeleine at Vézelay.

The cult of St. Michael began its artistic legacy at a grotto high atop Monte S. Angelo (Gargano) in Italy which housed an image of St. Michael standing on a dragon.⁵⁹ This sacred place was created by the Bishop of Sipontum on the orders of St. Michael who appeared to him on the mountain and became a popular pilgrimage site. The cult grew with several chapel/sanctuaries perched on high and majestic places.

In France, the Cluniac order sponsored the cult and perpetuated its growth.⁶⁰ The most renowned French site is Mont St. Michel which was the project of Aubert, bishop of Avranches, who was also under the instruction of the archangel.⁶¹

This desire for height was the catalyst for the placement of altars to St. Michael at the west end, specifically in or near the towers. However, the popularity of the archangel as a

is the sarcophagi of Louis, son of St. Louis, c.1260. A replica of the latter is in the Musée des Monuments français, Paris.

⁵⁹Mâle, Religious Art, 257.

⁶⁰Ibid., 261.

⁶¹Ibid., 260.



Figure 22 Interior West End with figure of St. Michael,
St. Philibert, Tournus

cult figure is explained in his deeds and subsequent iconology, both of which contain a funerary connection.

Most often St. Michael is portrayed as a patron saint of Christianity. His vanquishing of the dragon is symbolic of his removal of Satan from Heaven, at which point Hell was created.⁶² It was his intercession which saved many souls from Hell. His cult following primarily grew from the dual nature of St. Michael as protector/intercessor.

St. Michael as protector generally stands over a dragon often with a spear to its mouth, occasionally with shield in hand. As such, he has occupied much artistic space including manuscripts, capitals, and tympana. This role as patron saint of the faith has been manipulated to the role of patron saint of France as illustrated in a panel from the Third Abbey Church of Cluny (Figure 23).⁶³

The concept of St. Michael as intercessor is often portrayed in scenes of the Last Judgement. It is in this manner that St. Michael continues his participation in the west end of church architecture as the Last Judgement which usually occupies a tympana, if not the central tympana, of the west façade in medieval churches as a key part of exterior iconography.

St. Michael's role in the Last Judgement is to weigh the souls, thereby determining the damned and the elect, with a

⁶²Revelation 12:7-9.

⁶³Mina Martens, André Vanrie, and Michel de Waha, Saint Michel et sa Symbolique (Brussels: Editions d'Art Lucien De Meyer, 1979), 128.



Figure 23 St. Michael with shield of France, from
Third Abbey Church of Cluny

mischievous Satan in close proximity.⁶⁴ The most animated of these scenes is at St. Lazare at Autun which shows a demon attempting to increase the weight of sin by tossing a toad into the cup (Figure 24). At St. Foy, Conques, Satan actually applies a finger to the scale in an attempt to throw off the archangel who removed him from Heaven and gain another for his numbers (Figure 25).

In this protector/intercessor role, St. Michael becomes a significant part of the process leading to eternal life. As such, he is at the threshold between earthly existence and heavenly paradise. It is sensible to connect death, the closest physical state to the eternal, with St. Michael who, via the process of weighing souls, is determinant to Heaven.

Merely by location, the sculptural program of the verso associates itself, however loosely, with funerary elements and the related aspects of the aerial cult of St. Michael. Therefore, the potential funerary affiliation of the verso is significant, especially as it is related to the continual battle between Reims and St. Denis, the royal burial place for France, for the rites to the coronation ceremony as outlined in Chapter One.

The connection between the rites of royal burial and those of coronation is, to be put simply, the actual time period between the two events that is basically a ceremonial interregnum. This interval of royal vacancy was greatly

⁶⁴Mâle, Religious Art, 413.

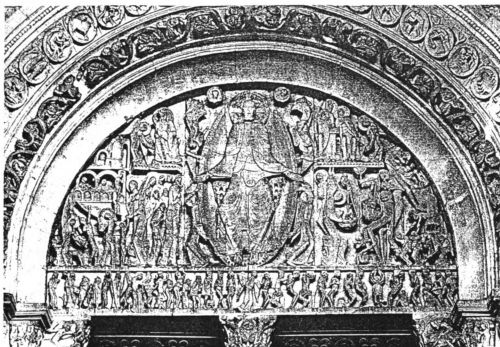


Figure 24 Last Judgement, Central Tympanum, St. Lazare, Autun

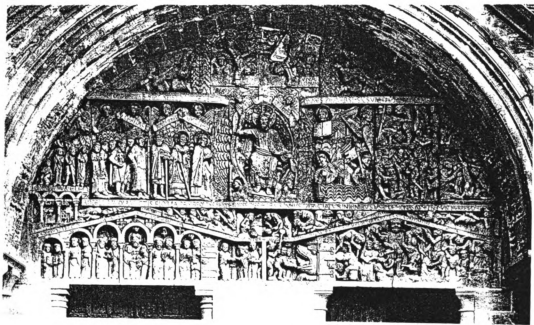


Figure 25 Last Judgement, Central Tympanum, St. Foy, Conques

lessened by the funeral process itself which maintained the deceased's monarchical position from death through interment. In this vein, it is significant that medieval political theory advocated mourning, not for the individual but for the Crown.⁶⁵ Thus, the royal Dignity was considered a separate entity from the person of the king.

Therefore, the focus on the Office rather than the individual reveals that the funerary process of royalty, especially that of a king, was one that paid homage to the Crown and subsequently brought the issue of coronation back to the fore. It is logical that both events could be viewed as parts of a larger process. It is on this, in addition to the already significant claim to the Crown, that St. Denis would argue for the rites of coronation as a logical conclusion to burial. Therefore, it is not surprising that Reims would also attempt to connect the two in some manner in order to check the argument from the abbey church and simultaneously sustain its current position as the coronation site for France.

⁶⁵Ralph E. Giesey, The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), 190. This concept of the role of King as separate from the individual is maintained until the sixteenth century when absolutism dictated that the two were to be recognized as a single entity and that the person was to be venerated as the Office which he held.

Chapter Five

The West Façade:

The Relationship of the Verso to the Exterior

By nature of its development, the west façade of a Gothic cathedral is usually the most rich area of sculpture on the structure. The interior, though a marvel of architectural feats and stained glass, is generally devoid of such adornment save tracery patterns and capital decoration. Therefore, the verso at Reims may be an extension of the exterior and subsequently its iconography. Thus, the verso must be examined as it is related to the west façade (Figures 26 and 27).

The planning of the west façade included the glazed triforium, tympana, and the grand rose window.⁶⁶ These glass elements are significant in that they are transitional. That is, they carry the viewer through the threshold with constancy since conceptually and naturally they are the same on both sides. Though these glazed features are meant to be read from the interior, they solidly connect the scenes of the exterior with those of the interior. This connection pulls together the exterior and the interior through its transitional nature,

⁶⁶Branner, "Historical Aspects," 32; Reinhardt, La Cathédrale de Reims, 119-120; and J. P. Ravaux, "Les Campagnes de Construction de la Cathédrale de Reims au XIII^e siècle," Bulletin Monumental 137 (1979): 51-52. All of these authors believe that the glazed tympana came about due to the modifications in 1222. Richard Hamann-MacLean, "Le Revers de la façade de la Cathédrale de Reims," Mélanges d'Histoire Remoise 158 (1979): 81. Hamann-MacLean believes that the glazed tympana were original to the design of the cathedral.

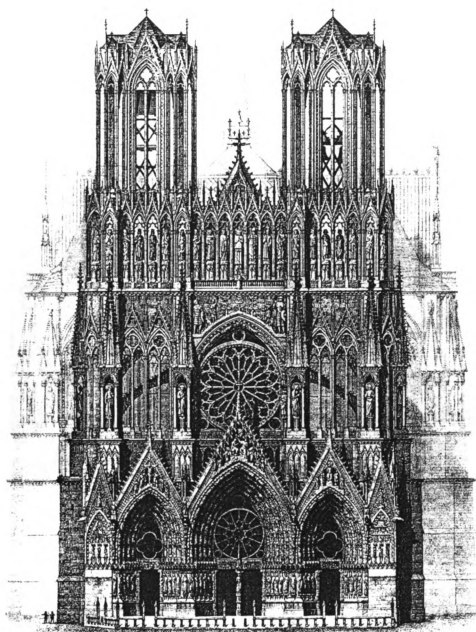


Figure 26 West Façade

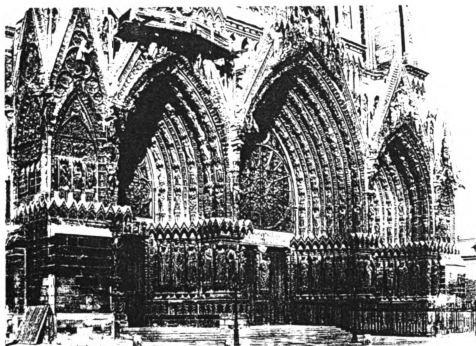


Figure 27 Porch

thereby creating a work that should be examined as a whole as well as separate parts.

The iconography of the exterior begins at the roof line with the gallery of Old and New Testament kings. The grand rose window (below, center), as stated previously, correctly depicts the Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin original to that space. A series of prophets and apostles flank the grand rose and extend completely around the cathedral at each buttress. Directly below the grand rose level is the glazed triforium which depicts the Baptism of King Clovis by St. Remigius. The tripartite entrance at Reims is in many ways the staple portal arrangement of the Gothic. However, attached at the corners of the north and south portals are gabled tabernacles which echo the architectural forms of the towers, the gallery of kings, and so on. These corner additions provide a smooth visual transition to the length of the structure as well as an area to fill with supporting images to those of the side portals. Again, the iconography of the side portals is incomplete due to the loss of the scenes original to their glazed tympana.

The jamb figures of the southern portal include Pope Calixtus on the left and John the Baptist on the right, among other saints. The Virtues and Vices are depicted on the left door post while secular scenes of the seasons fill the right. The archivolts depict the Apocalypse which is crowned with the Last Judgement in the gable. This southern portal can be interpreted as being dedicated to the predictions of John the Baptist as laid out in the book of Revelation.

The central portal is dedicated to Our Lady, the Virgin Mary. The jamb on the left shows the Presentation in the Temple and the right the Annunciation and the Visitation. The door posts carry the calendar with angels. A crowned Madonna occupies the trumeau in her role as Queen of Heaven. The archivolts continue the Marian theme beginning with her lineage, specifically the Annunciation to Joachim and Anna. The kings and cardinals with musical instruments are likely to be her ancestors celebrating her coronation which is in the central gable above. These figures could also represent the Elders of the Apocalypse, a theory which could be supported by the imagery of the flanking portals and the further scenes of the central archivolts which include Christ with the Globe of the World, a common Last Judgement symbol, Christ in a Mandorla, and John the Baptist with the Agnus Dei. The kings with instruments could also be successful assuming both roles in duality. This concept of the end of the earthly world is furthered by a few instructional scenes, including that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Furnace, which promote redemption through prayer. The current tympanum in the central portal depicts the Tree of Jesse and is in keeping with the theme though the original content is not certain.⁶⁷

The north portal is dedicated to the life of Christ. Its jamb figures are saints, including John the Evangelist on the right and Dionysius is on the left.⁶⁸ The door posts contain

⁶⁷Sadler-Davis, "The Sculptural Program of the Verso," 243.

enthroned male figures on the left and angels on the right. The lintel depicts the Conversion of Saul and the Baptism of Paul. The archivolts follow various scenes from the life of Christ beginning with the Temptation, Entry into Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives on the left. A climax is reached at the gable with the Crucifixion. Scenes of Christ in Limbo, an image of Hell, the Resurrection, and the Supper at Emmaus are depicted in a downward manner on the archivolts of the right side concluding with Christ and His Disciples.

In review, the exterior of the west façade depicts the significant events in the life of the Virgin, Christ, and John the Baptist: the Crucifixion of Christ, the Dormition and the Assumption of the Virgin, the Last Judgement, and the Coronation of the Virgin. Through these events the relationship of the most holy of the mortals is manifest. Christ as Savior, John the Baptist as Precursor, and the Virgin Mary as Vessel is the relationship through which the salvation of the people was made possible.

At first glance the verso is a mirror of the exterior. The south portal is primarily Apocalyptic, as is that of the verso. The central portal is dedicated to the Virgin as is the bulk of its interior counterpart. Finally, the northern portal is summarily the life of Christ as is its compliment. In addition, the portal lintels on the north and south depict the same

⁶⁸Stoddard, Art and Architecture, 101. Dionysius was the founder of the Holy Light theory that sparked the increase in stained glass in cathedral architecture beginning at St. Denis. He was never canonized.

subject, the Conversion of Saul, as does that of the interior with the Martyrdom of St. Stephen. Thus the concept of the verso being a continuation of the west façade as an experiment in ornamentation is valid.

This sudden continuation into the interior space with an exterior program must have been provoked. It did not merely appear. The catalyst, in many ways, was the same as that of the typological concordance systems. For the philosophy of St. Augustine not only compares the Old Testament to the New it also divides existence into three levels: *ante legum* (before the law was revealed to Moses), *sub lege* (after the law was revealed), and *sub gratia* (episodes of Christ's life and the New Kingdom of Grace).⁶⁹ In addition, Strabo's Glossa Ordinaria also worked on a premise of threes, specifically that man is composed of the three parts of body, soul, and spirit. Strabo also alleged that every Biblical verse had three meanings: the literal, the moral, and the mystical.⁷⁰ Another significant literary source for triad divisions is the English literary typologist Pictor in carmine, also active around 1200, who drew parallels not only between the Old and New Testaments but also post-Apocalyptic scenes.⁷¹ Through this wealth of written theory and its use of triads, the division of scripture physically and intellectually

⁶⁹Janet Gabarino, "Nicholas of Verdun's 'Classicism' and its Impact on the Sculptures of Reims Cathedral" (Master's thesis, University of Michigan, 1978), 7.

⁷⁰Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 18.

⁷¹Gerhart B. Ladner, "The Life of the Mind in the Christian West around the Year 1200," chap. in The Year 1200: A Symposium (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), 9.

took hold in the early Gothic. Though the level and intent varies, the concept of comparing differing passages for deeper meaning was prominent. Therefore, the surge in the representation of various levels or meanings in the arts in this manner directly applies to the architectural sculpture at Reims. Specifically, the concept of the Trinity, which previously had been set forth in the tripartite façade, returned to the fore in a new light with the theologians of the period.⁷²

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 discussed the symbolism behind the concept of the Trinity extensively. The subsequent interest in the concept of the Incarnation, God taking human form through Christ, resulted in the theory that Jesus is the true door to salvation.⁷³ The search for figurations of the Word made flesh was furthered by the continuance of the Crusades in this period. Specifically, accounts of returning crusaders which focused on experiences related to that of Christ, the focus of religion shifted from the mysterious God the Father to that of the corporal Son.⁷⁴ To ignore the effect of stories about touching Christ's tomb or eyewitness accounts of places where Christ had been such as Judaea and Lake Tiberias would be to ignore a significant influence. In addition, it is known that "as early as 1100, advocates of church reform had sought to replace the cult of the patriarchs [sic] of the Old Dispensation

⁷²Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 18.

⁷³Ladner, "The Life of the Mind," 9 and Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 18.

⁷⁴Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 139.

with that of the apostles, and drew spiritual nourishment from the Acts and the Gospels."⁷⁵

This predilection towards the New Testament is especially understandable when the proximity of plague, disease, and death in the thirteenth century is taken into account. It is logical that the population would identify more with the branch of the Trinity which had lived a human existence and suffered in it. Christ's victory over death and the implicit "promise of redemption" caused death and suffering to lose its sting in comparison to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.⁷⁶ The fact that all people were equal in facing death, regardless of their rank in earthly life, according to the Christian standards of redemption, added a sense of blind justice to an otherwise inequitable existence.

With Christ established as the door, the carrying of adornment into the interior not only creates a new architectural unit, in that the west façade now has an interior as well as an exterior, but it also symbolically carries one over the threshold much in the same manner as the glazed tympana. The actual entrance into a house of worship has always marked a division of the sacred and the secular. With the inclusion of adornment on the verso the human factor of the Trinity acts as a bridge without removing the integrity of the cathedral as a vessel.

⁷⁵Ibid., 139.

⁷⁶Ibid., 160-161.

Chapter Six

The Message of the Verso

Assembled as a triumphal escort celebrating the new age inaugurated by the Incarnation, these figures of the Old Dispensation brought forth the royal lineage of Christ, Son of David--his prefigurations--and also his ancestors in the flesh, those through whom he participated in the created world, the world of men. And, finally, these figures serve yet another purpose as symbols and reminders of the glory of kingdom.⁷⁷

These words were written about the porch at St. Denis but they could just as well apply to the verso of Reims. This parallel of Christ to kings is a particularly appropriate result of the growing belief in Incarnation. The visualization of Christ as a king and ruler of the world was a much more effective method of heralding the cause of Christianity among contemporaries than was the imagery of the Saviour as an infant. Due to the physical nature of the Incarnation, the Virgin began to develop a stronger role in the iconography as well. As Christ became the crowned king she became his mother/bride as she assumed the role of woman/church. As the cult of the Virgin grew, the Church Fathers rationalized the high place that she had won for herself among the people by giving prominence to the physical role she had played as the Mother of God in the Incarnation.⁷⁸ The Virgin was shown, not in her sorrow and loss as the mother of Christ, but rather in glory at her highest moments. The image of the Virgin became more rampant and appeared in the most

⁷⁷Ibid., 18-19.

⁷⁸Ibid., 140.

conspicuous places because she signified the New Dispensation through the fulfillment of the Old. As a mortal she became the link between the human soul and its Creator. In this way she also expressed the idea of a united Church. Therefore, the recognition of Mary in the coronation ceremony alluded to the solidity of the Church.⁷⁹

The subsequent evolution of Marian iconography was paralleled by royal and religious successes. In 1145 the Royal Portal of Chartres, which still had as its focus the Romanesque Last Judgement, dedicated a tympanum to Nativity scenes.⁸⁰ The growth of the symbolism of the Virgin in this part of France was facilitated by a Marian tradition from the Carolingian era which had been promoted by Frankish kings.⁸¹ Marian iconography was further propagandized by Peter the Venerable who stated she also represented "the throne of Solomon, seat of Divinity."⁸² The use of concordances relating to Old Testament prefigurations of her purity, such as the Burning Bush and Gideon and the Fleece, were utilized in celebrations of the Virgin at Laon Cathedral.⁸³

The most popular and direct scenes by far in this wealth of Marian imagery are her most victorious moments, that of the

⁷⁹Mâle, Religious Art, 93.

⁸⁰Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 141.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 141 and Mâle, Religious Art, 93.

⁸²Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 141.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 141.

Coronation and Assumption. Yet around 1220 at Notre Dame in Paris this scene is still relegated to the side of the cathedral. At Reims, thirty years later, images of Mary abound. In fact the original plan of Jean d'Orbais, which provided for a porch with a central portal dedicated to the patron saints of the cathedral, was modified and the patron saints were moved to the north so that the Virgin would reign in their place.⁸⁴

These design changes may have stemmed out of direct competition with the cathedral at Amiens. Archbishop Henri de Braisne wanted the enormous porch at Reims, which was planned by Jean de Loup, to be even more grandiose than that of his neighboring suffragan.⁸⁵ Though most of the statues had been carved under the supervision of de Loup, the archbishop required Maître Gaucher to manipulate them before their installation between 1244 and 1252 in order to conform to the rising trend of the Virgin in theological thought.⁸⁶

She seems to figure into all other places as well being present in the north portal with the patron saints and in the south portal where she seems to intensify the meaning of the Apocalypse. Monumental representations of the Annunciation, Visitation, Presentation in the Temple and King David are clear indicators of her lineage. Some would even allege that the

⁸⁴Henri Deneux, "Des modifications apportées à la cathédrale de Reims au cours de sa construction du XIII^e au XV^e siècle," Bulletin Monumental 106 (1948): 129.

⁸⁵Duby, Europe of Cathedrals, 124.

⁸⁶Ibid., 124

inclusion of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon points to her mystical union with Christ as Bride and Queen.⁸⁷ Again, the summit of all this imagery is the Coronation, a symbol of triumph of Christianity in the secular world that would never have occurred without the Incarnation. Mary is also victorious as the new Eve who has rectified the role of women and rehabilitated those who have sinned.⁸⁸ In this vein, the importance of Mary is continually recapitulated.

The repeated statement of the authority of the church is another essential feature in the iconology at Reims. A constant atmosphere of pomp and circumstance surrounds every aspect of Reims including scenes that aren't in the least bit ceremonial, such as the birth of St. Remi on the Calixtus Portal of the north transept (Figure 28).⁸⁹ Reims's role as a royal monument is continually reiterated in its imagery. This is an unequivocal response to the competition with St. Denis for the coronation rites as well as its acquisition of the role of royal burial site which came as a direct blow to the village of Reims as that title was taken from the Abbey Church of St. Remi.⁹⁰ Even though the coronation rite was victoriously conferred in 1223 and again in 1226 on Reims while the east end was still

⁸⁷Ibid., 141.

⁸⁸Mâle, Religious Art, 431.

⁸⁹Barbara Abou-El-Haj, "The Urban Setting for Late Medieval Church Building: Reims and Its Cathedral Between 1210 and 1240," Art History 11 (March 1988): 29.

⁹⁰Georges Boussinesq and Gustave Laurent, Histoire de Reims (Reims: Matot-Braine, 1933), 228.

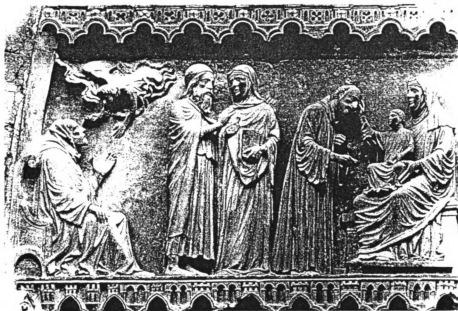


Figure 28 Birth of St. Remi, Calixtus Portal, North Transept

under construction, the diminution of importance at St. Remi and the recent scramble with St. Denis were still vivid memories.⁹¹ Therefore, it is not surprising that Reims reasserts its royal ties at every opportunity in order to solidify the status of royal monument.

This emphasis on the royal role of Reims as coronation site requires that the verso be examined with this in mind. Some have said that the verso was intended as a lesson book for

⁹¹Abou-El-Haj, "Late Medieval Church Building," 23.

neophyte kings, that it "further elucidate[s] the Christian message of the façade."⁹² That may be so, but it is not all. There is a deeply political message involved. This is especially true when the two most odd scenes are examined, those on the lowest registers of the central portal. These images of King David with an apostle and prophet and the Eucharist scene between the clergy and soldier are the ones that cannot be simply explained in relationship to the rest of the concordances. The fact that they are given such a prominent position emphasizes this fact. It is true that they are on the bottom--not in an architecturally superior or climaxing position, but they are the first images to be seen for they are the closest to eye level. They are meant to be seen and understood with some immediacy.

The scene on the left of King David with the apostle and prophet, possible counselors, is an excellent example for a novice ruler. The history of David as an exceptional king is well recorded and the positive connection between the ruler of France and the lineage of Christ has been clearly illustrated as good political move. It is even referred to in a prayer from the coronation ceremony:

May He who raised up David and delivered him from Goliath and who filled Solomon with wisdom, protect the King of France, raise him up like David and make him wise like Solomon.⁹³

⁹²Sadler-Davis, "The Sculptural Program of the Verso," 270.

⁹³Sauerländer, Gothic Sculpture in France, 481.

The other scene is a little more difficult. Many scholars identify this as the Melchisedek and Abraham eucharistic scene from the Old Testament.⁹⁴ That would be a convenient label and it may be accurate, but its specific identity doesn't necessarily make a difference in the meaning of the scene. It is a clear depiction of the sacrament of the Eucharist occurring between a cleric and a warrior, with a warrior in observation. This is a direct assertion to the King of France about the political necessities of his alliance with the community and the see of Reims.

The history of the royal and episcopal relationship is significantly turbulent. The civil disturbances of 1233 to 1236, during the construction of the cathedral, were quelled only by the cooperation of King Louis IX and the Archbishop of Reims, Henri de Braisne, who, consequently was from a branch of the royal family.⁹⁵ In the center of all these images, is the decapitated St. Nicasius presiding more like a ghost than a trumeau sculpture in front of the martyrdom of John the Baptist. The relationship between Christ and the Baptist, the latter who baptizes/anoints the former, prefigures the relationship between the king and the archbishop; here, it establishes a divine precedent for the coronation ceremony and links the king as well as his anointer to divine history. The physical representation

⁹⁴Sadler-Davis, "The Sculptural Program of the Verso," 291. Sauerländer, Gothic Sculpture in France, 480 agrees that this identification is dubious.

⁹⁵Gabarino, "Nicholas of Verdun's 'Classicism'," 43.

of St. Nicasius's death is powerful reminder of the devastation fraught on a community without royal protection and favor. The inference is that if the cathedral at Reims and its community, which bestowed the vestiges of office, isn't cared for, then neither is the Church by manner of neglect which could ultimately result in ecclesiastical disfavor for the King.

Regardless of the subtle communication, this message was very intentional. These two odd scenes and the demise of St. Nicasius were purposefully worked into a standard typological system to reflect the role of the cathedral as the coronation site. Therefore the King David trio and its Eucharistic counterpart work into the fabric of the verso which becomes a vehicle for the illustration of the implications, political, social and religious, of the crown.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Many of the movements and theological theories mentioned above apply to other areas of France if not to all of Christendom. Why then did the extra effort which materialized in the verso of the west façade at Reims occur there and why did it remain unique to Reims, never to be repeated in Gothic architecture? The answer is as political as the verso itself.

After the beginning of the Capetain line of kings with the election of Hugh Capet in 987, a series of changes took place in France which had a direct effect on Reims.⁹⁶ Paris became the residence of the French Court and, subsequently, Reims gradually lost much of its prosperity and its political position. The move of the official royal tomb, from the Abbey Church of St. Remi to that of St. Denis whose rise in the Gothic is well known, was another major loss to the town. In addition, Reims was in continual battle over the coronation rites, its life-line so to speak, first with Sens and then with St. Denis.⁹⁷ Everything that was significant to the community moved away and Reims became the proverbial ghost town; complete with a misaligned social system headed by an abuse of power by the archbishops who were given unlimited authority by the absence of any other authoritative body. The success of this system

⁹⁶Boussinesq and Laurent, Histoire de Reims, 227.

⁹⁷Ibid., 228.

survived until the uprisings of 1233 to 1236, in which the building of the cathedral played a role, and royal intervention was sought. It is not a coincidence that the final campaigns of construction occur after the resolution of these civil disturbances and that in those final stages many changes were made as mentioned earlier. The most basic alterations were based on the growth of the cult of the Virgin and the more subtle ones on political prowess. It is plausible that the archbishop recognized the opportunity afforded him in those modifications to the west end as one in which he could assert his authority and boldly reclaim Reims as the undeniable coronation site for the Kings of France. Through the models laid before him of typological concordances such as the Great Cross of St. Denis and the Klosterneuburg Altar, the plan for the verso emerged in a seemingly innocent theological tool. However, the verso went further in that it was permanent, monumental, and ultimately political in intent.

APPENDIX

Appendix

Both Peter Kurmann, La Facade de le Cathédrale de Reims (Paris: Editions Payot Lausanne, 1987): 280-286 and Willibald Sauerländer, Gothic Sculpture in France 1140-1270, trans. by Janet Sondheimer (London: Thames and Hudson ltd., 1972): 479-480 give identification similar to what is done here. Unless otherwise noted, Sauerländer is the specific source. The following correspond with the Diagram of the Verso (Figure 27).

South Portal

1-4, a-d	Prophets
A, B, L, M	Winds of the Apocalypse represented by open-mouthed heads
C, N, O, Q	John the Baptist writing the book of Revelation
D, E, H, G	Angels of the Apocalypse represented with scrolls, books, and trumpets
P	Angel with a star or sun
F	Angel with crown
R, I	Male figures facing winged rider on a dragon-headed horse
S, J	Woman with child on a crescent moon facing a seven-headed dragon
T, K	God with the Cup of Wrath

Central Portal, Left

1a, b, c	Apostle, Prophet and King David
2a, b, c	Annunciation of Joachim and Anna
3a, b, c	Joachim and Anna meeting at the Golden Gate
4a, b, c	Prophecy of Habakkuk
5a, b, c	Herod ordering the Massacre of the Innocents
6a, b, c	Massacre of the Innocents
7a, b, c	Flight into Egypt

7d, e	Moses and the Burning Bush
7f, g	Gideon and the Golden Fleece

Central Portal, Right

1d, e, f	Communion of the Soldier
2d, e, f	John the Baptist Preaching
3d, e, f	The Baptist before Herod and Herdias
4d, e, f	The Baptist with the Agnus Dei
5d, e, f	Annunciation to Zachariah and Elizabeth
6d, e, f	Baptism of Christ
7h, i, j, k, l, m, n	The Baptist in Prison (his waivering faith)

North Portal

1-4, 1-d	Prophets
A, L	Sacrifice of Isaac
B, M	Impatient Israelites
C, N	Moses and the Brazen Serpent
D	Marking of the sign of Tau
O	Widow of Zarephath
E	Elijah
G	Christ
F	Angel
Q, H, R	Christ and the Samaritan Woman
S, J, I	Raising of Jairus's Daughter
T, K	Calling of St. Matthew

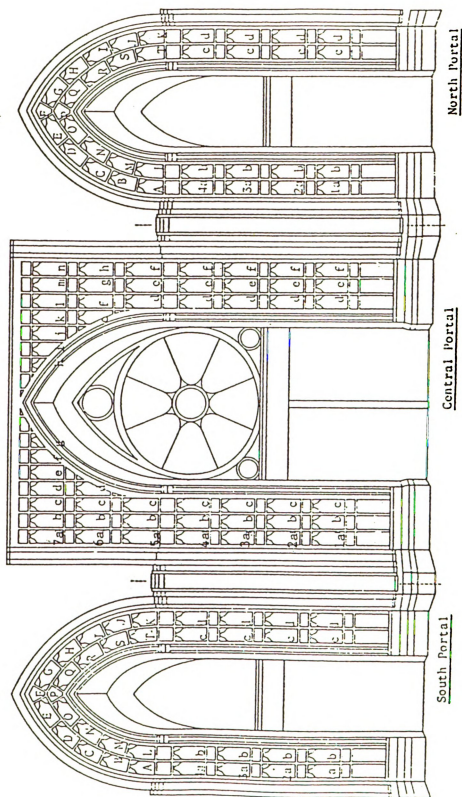


Figure 27 Diagram of Verso

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