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## SUGER: MANAGING CHURCH AND STATE THROUGH ST.-DENIS

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SUGER: MANAGING CHURCH AND STATE  
THROUGH ST.-DENIS

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Office of Graduate Studies  
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for the Degree of  
Masters of Arts

By  
Martin P. McGrath  
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## **Table of Contents**

I. Introduction and Thesis Statement (Page 1)

II. Suger: The Linchpin (Page 4)

III. A Singularity of History (Page 7)

IV. The Gathering of Resources (Page 10)

V. The Politics of Innovation (Page 13)

VI. Construction Begins (Page 17)

VII. From the West to the East (Page 31)

VIII. Adornments and Treasures (Page 50)

IX. Conclusion (Page 61)

X. Endnotes (Page 64)

XI. Bibliography (Page 80)

XII. Images (Page 85)

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## **Introduction**

Art, a simple three letter word that has the ability to evoke the full scope of human emotion and possesses the ability to visually represent the past, present and future. It is through it that humanity actually comes face to face with the supernatural, be it benign or malignant, and can live to tell the tale. In its creation, art has the ability to freeze moments in the artist's own time that are significant to the artist and his community, such as a revolution, or to resurrect a scene from days past that emulates a certain ideal that needs to be preserved or renewed. Other times, art serves as a building block of a society by becoming a vehicle of innovation and change. This promotion of importance illustrates the real power of art and how pivotal its existence can be for a community: the more multi-utilitarian the piece is, the greater the societal regard. The perfect example of this concept of art having multiple purposes is in the construction of religious edifices. In medieval Europe this means churches. The landscape is literally dotted with beautiful representations of artistic examples of church construction, but one of the most important, one that has a historical and artistic pedigree that personifies and defines its people (as much as St. Peter's Basilica in Rome), is the royal abbey of St.-Denis near Paris. The historical and sociological importance of the building to the French people is evident by all of the roles it has played throughout time. This paper will work with the ideas of church and state as a filter in the re-envisioning of St.-Denis in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It will seek to elaborate on the concepts of those two groups and how the physical elements of the abbey worked to cement their relationship; architecture as a sign of might; sculpture as artistic embodiment of their past relationship; patronage in religious devices from the nobility and stained glass illustrating the collective history of

the nation under the guidance of Suger, abbot of St.-Denis, advisor to the throne and regent of France in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

From its very foundation (both literal and figurative), St.-Denis encapsulated the properties that a society would revere in both the physical and the metaphysical. The supernatural conditions surrounding the martyrdom of its namesake creates a compelling story for the masses to draw pride and inspiration from; after his beheading, St. Denis' (who 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century scholars believed to be both the state martyr and the philosopher Pseudo-Dionysius)<sup>1</sup> body retrieved its head and walked 20 miles to find a proper resting place. That spot is the site upon which the church was built, making the area of significant religious importance for Christians in general and a powerful symbol for the Parisian people. The beginning of its life as a church was no less impressive as the initial construction was ordered by the Frankish King Dagobert, who also happened to be the first king to actually be buried at the location.<sup>2</sup> And as if having a connection with two paragons of Christian virtue so far from the Holy Land was not enough, a truly divine event occurred that ensured the building of the abbey was ordained by the Heavenly Father; the foundation stones of the church were touched and blessed by Christ himself, or that is how the myth is recorded. This powerful myth has been upheld and perpetuated for well over a thousand years because of its deep meaning to all of the different branches of society. For the clergy, having an actual building that is so closely linked with multiple saints creates a sense of pride (sin notwithstanding) and religious importance in their specific community and raises their profile in the world around them as a site that is pilgrimage worthy, a status which is dependent upon their cache of relics (to be addressed later). To the burgeoning aristocracy and monarchy, having such a

prestigious center of worship in the region increased their legitimacy as their power was closely linked to the will of the church, but it also provided a center of learning for the nobility of the area, furthering their station in the European community. To the general populace, the physical church not only increased the status of their society, but it was by their hands that the structure was built. If not by their hands directly, it is in the logistical support that their influence can be felt. Obviously religious edifices do not build themselves; the influx of artisans, laborers and materials required a vast amount of tending to and storage space; it is in that that the community's role is truly realized. Good intentions and incredible wealth go into the making of a building as large as a piece of Gothic architecture, but without the basic necessities of life being considered, the entire construction process could not have happened.

Where does one begin when dissecting a specific moment in the history of a 1500 year old church? In this case it has to start with the 12<sup>th</sup> century and around the necessity of building a new structure. Why was the need so great that an immense fortune and countless man hours were to be expended? Not to mention the harsh criticism that was to be leveled at the leadership of this monumental undertaking. Any great building project involving the state and a religious institution was certain to be met with heavy debate and a healthy amount of political maneuvering. But it is the physical condition of the abbey itself that is in question. Was it in such disrepair that normal repairs were insufficient? The historical documentation on this subject answers the question quite clearly with a resounding yes. St.-Denis was not only the home of France's patron saint but was also the Royal abbey, which made it very popular. This being said, there seems to be a certain amount of artistic license taken in the written descriptions surrounding the chaotic state

of affairs of the feast days associated with the abbey. Either that or the ravenously fanatical devotion the French people of the medieval period had towards their abbey or its patron saint was incredible indeed. Suger's accounts range from the walls buckling with the sheer amount of people within; the throngs of people so dense that the women would literally climb atop the mass and run across them to reach the devotional items; and the scene was so chaotic that the priests had to take the relics and jump out of the windows lest they be damaged or torn to bits in order to gain special favor by possessing even the tiniest fragment of the divine items.<sup>3</sup> If even the slightest bit of these accounts is accurate, then the church might very well have been in such bad shape that without a massive facelift to address the degrading physical conditions and traffic flow, it might have actually been lost. Suger's elevation to abbot in 1122 C.E. was fortuitous for both the abbey and history as his career had revolved around the abbey and he had personally witnessed the insanity that assailed his blessed institution and he was finally in a position to do something about it.<sup>4</sup>

### **Suger: The Linchpin**

Before fully engrossing this paper in the lofty topics of philosophy, religious vision and artistic revolution, getting an understanding of the man that had dedicated practically his entire life to the care and proliferation of St.-Denis is a key point. Because of his roles in church and state, Suger's life is fairly well documented, if a little hard to find. Suger was born in 1081 C.E. in a small town north of Paris called Chennevières-les-Louvres; as a younger son in a family of minor knights, he was meant for the clergy.<sup>5</sup> At age 10 he was given to St.-Denis as a child oblate thus beginning his monastic career.<sup>6</sup> He spent the next decade receiving his education a half mile from St.-Denis at L'Estrée (a



satellite campus of the abbey) with the notable exceptions of ecclesiastical feasts and specific lessons at the abbey itself. With his primary training completed at L'Estrée, the first position Suger was assigned was in the archives of the abbey researching documents that were to be used to counter claims against St.-Denis. It was during this time that the established monks noted that Suger had a keen legal mind and gift for writing. After a succession of successful legal victories thanks in no small part to Suger's aid, it was decided by Abbot Adam of St.-Denis, Royal Chancellor Stephen de Garlande (1066 C.E.-?), and/or by the king himself that the young monk should receive further education. Of the exact location there is some speculation, but it is thought to be near Fontevrault or at the Abbey of Fleury, St-Benoît-sur-Loire (one of the most prestigious Benedictine houses).

With Suger's continued education completed, it was time for the young monk's role in France's political structure to be realized. He spent the majority of his time in the service of the court where his knowledge of law would be put to the most use. His role as Royal Advisor had begun. There is also some evidence that Suger was a key player in the treaties between Louis the Fat of France and Henry I of England that spanned a twenty year period.<sup>7</sup> The impression he made on the king and abbot was such that it was Suger that they chose to travel to Rome to plead the kingdom's case on two separate occasions where he successfully argued before both Pope Paschal II (c. 1050 C.E. – 1118 C.E.) and Pope Calixtus II (1065 C.E. – 1124 C.E.).

It was during the second trip in 1122 C.E. that Abbot Adam passed away at St.-Denis and Suger would see his own unorthodox and expedient promotion to the vacant post. The details of how the events took place are vague, but within the pages of *The*

*Deeds of Louis the Fat*, Suger describes (with a filter of humility) his discovery of the news and the immediate problems/dangers that he and his fellow monks faced as a result of their decision.<sup>8</sup> It would appear that his first unofficial duty as abbot was to save his fellow monks from the wrath of a usurped king. It was King Louis VI's prerogative to bestow the title of abbot and to name a person without his blessing was a treasonous offense. Again, it is a tribute to his keen and swift wit that the situation ended without any great tragedy which, given Louis the Fat's reputation for losing his temper and entering into military campaigns at the smallest slight, was a miracle. Suger could not have begun his tenure as abbot in a more tenuous political position but his reputation and personal relationship with the king would see him into his office in good fashion. But being the statesman he was, Suger was able to calm the king and smooth over any perceived indiscretions that had been committed in the zealous actions of full assembly.<sup>9</sup> It is unclear what the "full assembly" means, but he expounds that the people he saved from the king were "the preeminent and most religious of the brothers, and also the noblest knights" which gives some insight into the proceedings.

Not being one to sit idle, Suger began in earnest the plan of rejuvenating the land holdings of St.-Denis that he had formulated in his early years as an oblate seeing, even then, the venerable abbey was in a woeful state of repair.<sup>10</sup> As modern observers, we see and talk about the realized vision of the abbey church as his contribution and due to the ravages of time that is what survives. That is, unfortunately, selling his goal short. Almost immediately after entering the office of abbot he started the rebuilding campaign with a new refectory, dormitory and *domus hospitum* on the grounds of the abbey as well a whole host of other structures across the expansive holdings of the abbey, having finally

been granted the power and the means to launch the aggressive undertaking he and his fellow monks had been wanting to do for some time. Scattered documentation exists through various abbey charters and testaments from the mid 1120's on showing the gathering of funds and descriptions of minor updates building up to the drastic plan that heralded in the Gothic era in the 1140's in a time when the abbot was largely retired from the political world. It was in this decade that he could finally devote his considerable drive and vision to the task that had been in his heart for so long. A lifetime of penitent servitude had enabled Suger to build the social infrastructure he would need to gather the staggering amount of funding as well as secular and non-secular clout required for the project to move forward.

### **A Singularity of History**

It is important to note that, although it would initially appear that Suger was a religious and artistic superhero, there were a number of other factors that were working in Suger's favor that made the construction of the new St.-Denis possible. There was already a historical precedent in place for the modernization of the abbey as well as an intermingling of the secular and non-secular worlds involving the lasting wellbeing of the church as St.-Denis' fate had rested in the hands of great rulers before, most notably its building by Dagobert (7<sup>th</sup> c. C.E.), the Carolingian upgrade as witnessed by Charlemagne (February 24, 775 C.E.), and the direct intervention by (then lay abbot) Charles the Bald who also officially made St.-Denis the Royal Abbey (867 C.E.).<sup>11</sup> With the pedigree of the people that had taken such a great interest in the safety and promotion of their church, it is no wonder that Suger's contemporaries took such a keen interest in the condition and

elevation of St.-Denis: most notably Hugh of Amiens, Bishop Peter of Senlis, Odo of Beauvais and Manasses of Meaux.

This connection with the royal history of France and its current religious leaders undoubtedly expanded with the relationship of Suger and King Louis VI the Fat (r.1108 – 1137 C.E.) who was not as concerned with expanding the royal powerbase, but instead he focused on solidifying what was already in place. Louis VI, through a number of military campaigns, ensured that the feudal hierarchy was cemented in place. His goal was to make it well known that the king was the pinnacle of the social pyramid and that vassal begets vassal below the throne. Suger's role in this was as Louis' biographer and propagandist, which afforded Suger an intimacy with the crown that would serve him throughout that king's reign and those to follow.<sup>12</sup> Even though there was a close relationship between the two powerful men, Louis the Fat made a clear distinction about how much influence religious organizations would have in his administration. At first blush it would appear that this would have created a level of stress between the two social groups, but it forced an evolution of sorts within the clerical sect forcing them to become more diplomatic in their dealings with the secular courts.

During this time in Paris, there was a medieval renaissance underway. The secular community had become worldlier in regards to the patronage of the arts with a greater emphasis being placed on religious affiliated works as well as working to become an intellectual epicenter for northern Europe. This patronage by the nobility was taking on a much more personal role as well. No longer were people content with the anonymous commissioning of devotional artistic pieces; they wanted their names or visages to be included in some way. It could be said that this was just a new trend in art, but it is more

likely that the individualization of public and religious works was an attempt to alleviate one's sins (i.e. indulgences) or a way to place their mark on history.

In conjunction with the proliferation of art, the 12<sup>th</sup> century saw a renewed interest in scholasticism and philosophy within the non-secular communities as well. This new attention to things above the simple day to day existence of a society that had been so temporally motivated was significant and telling. The application of this new-found interest in cerebral pursuits led to a great many innovations in art and architecture that made the introduction of the Gothic style possible. It is a curious phenomenon, this intellectual evolution. History is woefully barren on all of the intricacies that were involved with the bringing about of the revolutionary ideas that inspired Abbot Suger and his cohorts, but it is generally recognized by historians that it was during this time and in that place that philosophy, religion and art came together to give birth to a whole new entity that was the Gothic style.

The reintroduction of the Pseudo-Dionysian philosophies had a profound impact on the understanding of religion as, over the successive years after the First Crusade, certain aspects of the new learning were being superimposed onto the lives of the local saint.<sup>13</sup> Suger and his contemporaries would invest heavily in the expanded legend of their patron saint, Saint Denis' ecclesiastical portfolio being bolstered in a way that afforded Suger the ability to justify the incredible undertaking he was about to begin. The Mediterranean societies had been the center of learning for thousands of years prior to the Crusades; what the war had done was to bring tales of the holy land and Byzantium back into the heartland of Europe. The proliferation and dissemination of this worldly view is

what was needed to jumpstart the intellectual and artistic revolution of the twelfth century.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Gathering of Resources**

Having the ideological foundation in place for this cultural landmark was just the beginning of the movement, for ideas can only go so far. It takes means and ability to give form to the new entity that was in its theoretical infancy. As far as the financial means were concerned, being next to the royal seat of France and having such an impressive lineage of both secular and non-secular persons that were directly associated with the history of the progenitor of the Gothic style meant that wealth flooded into the coffers of the abbey that not only funded the construction of the new church, but all of the new artistic advances as well as an impressive amount of new ecclesiastical adornments. Pledges of funds towards building materials as well as gold and gems that would be directly implanted into new altars and reliquaries were donated by people of all walks of life; different religious institutions, the royal families and private individuals from the burgeoning merchant class gave life and the sense that his monumental task was achievable.<sup>15</sup> It seemed that even though the idea of this break from tradition, this introduction of aesthetic proliferation, was controversial, it was well received indeed by the majority of the population that, literally, saw the appeal and the relevance of the religious evolution and didn't deter them from their commitment to the project. The people were invested, both literally and figuratively, in the rejuvenation or rebirth of the abbey of St.-Denis.

Thanks to the efforts of Abbot Suger, there is an accounting of a lot of the gifts bestowed to the abbey as well as a plan as to how the donations were to be used, a rarity

of the time. The annals of history are sorely bereft of the documentation surrounding the building of such institutions as are present in the history of the life of France's premier church. Thanks to Suger's *Sugerii Abbatis Sancti Dionysii Liber De Rebus In Administratione Sua Gestis* (The Book of Suger, Abbot of St-Denis On What Was Done Under His Administration) we know what kind of logistics, albeit through his particular filter, went into the abbey's facelift as well as the identities of the more prominent individuals that played important roles in the different aspects of the construction.

With the financial aspects well in hand the next and quite possibly most difficult task of gathering the artisans needed to do the actual work was begun. Suger had foreseen how nightmarish a prospect this would become and had already contracted a number of individuals and workshops from far and wide to supplement the artisans and laborers available to him in Paris.<sup>16</sup> He knew that even being near such a metropolis the resource pool of skilled persons would not be sufficient to realize his new vision. During one of his trips to Rome, he witnessed the amount of materials and labor that was involved in the construction of a church that had some of the same social significance of his own abbey, and was being reconstructed in the current Romanesque style. He decided that if the rebirth of St.-Denis was going to be achieved, then his search for the requisite personnel had to begin early.

When trying to understand the scope of such an undertaking in an era that lacked the construction equipment that we, as modern people, accept as a daily reality, the sheer amount of manpower and genius that was involved to complete a single piece of architecture is mind boggling. The masses of unskilled laborers alone that did nothing but move the tons and tons of building materials around would have been a small army unto

themselves. Add to that the number of people that were included under the banner of individual workshops commissioned to execute the finished products and that number jumps exponentially. This idea also only takes into account the people that were employed in the site specific project, the industries that supplied all of the needed building supplies had labor forces of their own that have to be addressed. Stone quarries, lumber and textile workshops all employed large numbers of people that were just as important to the building process as the masons that raised the very walls of the church. A lot of credit for the completion of St.-Denis has to be given to unsung heroes of the project: the people of medieval Paris whose tertiary roles that provided all of the basic necessities of life that the construction forces needed. Unfortunately, with all of his record keeping, Abbot Suger's documentation is painted with such a brush that the names not significant in regards to the clerical community or to the aristocracy were left out.

Although the thoroughness of Suger's accounting of the actual artisans is lacking, serious discussion about the types and quality of their works is present. On multiple occasions within his works, he talks about the skill and devout piety of the craftsmen that created specific pieces in St.-Denis' collection of art. This becomes important when discussing the people who are considered to be the driving forces behind the design of the church and the works contained within. There was a convention that existed during the medieval period that the line was blurred between patron and architect. Therefore, Suger, by his own admission was the architect of the new St.-Denis. This was not a completely self aggrandizing sentiment, but instead being the person that brought forth the idea and gave it life as well as seeing to the day to day administration of the project afforded him the title and historical prestige that goes with it.<sup>17</sup> His level of involvement, as far as



posterity goes, is highlighted by the fact that his is the hand that is penning the recounting.

Not to say that Suger doesn't deserve his due, but he himself was not an artist. His role as facilitator was to assist the actual artists in receiving the necessary materials to create and provide the ecclesiastical guidance of the subject matter that was to be depicted (whether it was him or one of his monks). His foundation in the project was academic in nature as discussed above; addressing the implementation of philosophy and secular learning, but it was to the artists involved that the visualization and empirical realization fell.<sup>18</sup> In bygone centuries, the norm was that the art and the message being conveyed were more important than the individual recognition of the artist (with a few notable exceptions of course). With surviving masterpieces of anonymous execution, the place of residence or the name of the piece is usually used in conjunction with the words "The \_\_\_\_ Master" to express the honorarium of the unknown artist. That is to say that the artists themselves saw their contributions were much more important to the overall process than individual praise. Also, just because their names were not recorded in the annals did not mean that they were not wealthy and famous in their own right. These building projects typically took decades to complete and the sites were visited frequently by dignitaries from other religious and secular institutions which led to further contracts at other building sites just as Suger had done before the construction began in Paris.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Politics of Innovation**

After discussing the role of the artists, it would be easy to just go straight into the analysis of the abbey and all of the wonders within, but the transition is much more difficult than that. There is no simple way to address the evolution of the church from its

worn state to that of the re-imagined abbey. Every aspect of its development had a complex basis that involved every section of society in one way or another; arbitrary is not a word that can be used to describe any part of the project. Abbot Suger was blazing a new path in the understanding of art and ecclesiastical innovation with the backing of the royal family and a number of his contemporaries. He had to balance a certain amount of tradition with this new vision he had for his beloved abbey and, though there is no documentation of this, there had to have been a certain amount of give and take. What is known is that in order to even get his ideas past his own monks and lay people, he had to make sure to preserve the most sacred of basis of the crumbling abbey for there were certain aspects that could not be compromised. The abbey was just too important to the identity of the nation to be stripped down to its foundation and something new erected in its place. This is why he planned his project in multiple phases; he had to work around the areas that were clearly defined as most holy. As stated in the beginning of this paper, it was a commonly held belief that during the initial construction of the abbey, Christ had consecrated the foundation stones, therefore making them not only the building blocks of the structure, but relics unto themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Another part Suger and his planners went to great lengths to preserve was the crypt that held the remains of the past kings of France.<sup>21</sup> Saving this intact was pivotal in maintaining the backing of the aristocracy that Suger was dependent upon for the new project, but also for physical protection. This symbiotic relationship between the secular and non-secular worlds was paramount to the continued existence of the abbey and more directly, Abbot Suger's reign. The last and oddest element that had to be addressed was the resting place of Charlemagne's father, Clovis I (466-511 C.E.), who was buried as per

his wishes under the western porch of the sacred site. Being able to balance the legacy of the abbey as well as having an eye on the future is a tribute to the administrative abilities of Suger.

Keeping the nobility whose families were buried at St.-Denis content was more easily achieved than winning the ecclesiastical battle Suger had to have with his peers whose acceptance of the renewed interest in the Pseudo-Dionysian teachings was slow going as well as justifying the staggering monetary sum in expenses that would be needed for such a daring construction plan. With some of the greatest religious minds of the time focusing their attention on his endeavors, Suger had to justify practically every aspect of his “vision” in order to appease the very organization that he was an esteemed member of. But this is what Suger had spent his life doing: building a stellar reputation within his community. His arguments were based in practicality. All of the senior men of the cloth were well aware of the state of St.-Denis and its desperate condition of disrepair; that was not the issue at hand. It was the staggering sum being spent on adornments (whether they were for the abbey or the monks within). Despite the obvious good intentions for correcting the state of his beloved abbey, the main concern of those who stood in opposition to Suger was the blatant display of opulent wealth and monastic luxury when the income generated by the abbey had very specific purposes and even entertaining such a deviation of expenditures required serious examination.<sup>22</sup> Thanks to his knowledge of the law, a cadre of equally important friends, and his great oratory skills, the vision for the new St.-Denis was going to become a reality.

There were a number of ideological conventions that Suger was basing his work upon with each of them having a strong empirical representation in the finished St.-

Denis. As the abbey is first and foremost a place of worship, all of the advances that the abbot was proposing served to elevate the status of the church in every way, quite literally every way. It was a widely accepted idea that the Heavenly Jerusalem was a city built on top of a high mountain that looked down upon the world in judgment; to church builders of the time, and Suger specifically, this meant height and stone.<sup>23</sup> Build a structure made from the strongest stone one could find and, thanks to the mathematical advances of the new school, attain an imposing height that gives one the impression of standing before a fortress of heaven. The church was to be seen as the rock on which mankind's salvation was built.<sup>24</sup> The correlation between the secular fortresses and the castle-like structure of the abbey was not lost on its architects or the lay people observing the finished product. The design served multiple masters in that it held with the traditional Carolingian style of elaborate westwork that Charlemagne began centuries before to illustrate the connection of the emperor and the church, it was under his protection as the current generation of the church was reminding the secular aristocracy of its commitment to the safety of its clergy. As stated earlier, there was already a strong tradition of secular rulers using their power to alleviate the tension of the world from the abbey, case in point (then) King Charles the Bald (823-877 C.E.) making himself lay-abbot to ward off prospective attacks on the abbey. The second concept being addressed was that once one entered the abbey, you left the grim realization of life on earth and entered a heavenly realm.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to understand the state of the world in which St.-Denis was being rebuilt. There was unrest within the borders of France, the Second Crusade was gaining strength, and there was the ever present danger of invasion from the Normans who had

settled in Normandy, but still possessed the raiding spirit of their Viking forbearers. The people were being pressed into the service of the king to go to the Holy Land and fight. Those still at home were faced with increased pressure of maintaining the status quo without the help of the able-bodied men and women going forth into the Holy Land and needed the reassurance that there was a great benevolent force in the universe that is looking out for them in the hereafter. The delicate, elegant stonework of the interior of the abbey belied the resolute strength of the exterior giving the impression of peace and majesty to the observers. This discussion of the interior is relegated solely to the stonework of the building, the fine art decoration and stained glass is a separate entity.

The last argument (and possibly, the most important) Suger attaches to the construction is an extremely detailed passage in his *De Administratione* in which he addresses the display of wealth in the context of the elevation of reverence and even though there is a great sum of wealth going into the works, in the glorification of Heaven, it still is not enough to do it justice as is illustrated by the dissertation referring to the Golden Crucifix.<sup>26</sup> Simply put, there can be no amount of riches or adornment that is too much in the pursuit of honoring Christ or God.

### **Construction Begins**

If one wants to examine St.-Denis in the twelfth century, then one has to start where Suger and his contemporaries did: with the western façade (Figure 1). There are arguments that state that the Gothic style did not truly begin until Suger's choir was started after the façade was completed; evidence exists that weighs for and against both sides of the discussion but for the sake of this paper, we will take the side of Suger and say that the whole process was part of the overall effect he was striving for and all of its

elements rest well inside the realm of the Gothic style. As noted previously, there was a lot of controversy surrounding the construction project and the architects (both Suger as patron and the actual designer) had to accommodate some compromise in the initial stages to execute the more dramatic stylistic changes in the choir.

In its basic form, the westwork was mostly stereotypical for a Carolingian monastery. Besides, keeping the façade en vogue was a public service of sorts. The fortress like appearance, with its crenellations and soaring towers, reassured the masses that the house of God was a place of safety against the constant assault, whether it was physical or metaphysical, of the world at large.<sup>27</sup> Keeping that convention going also meant that the lineage of Charlemagne's influence was still intact which served to reinforce the status of the abbey as one so closely linked with the secular aristocracy that had championed its existence for centuries; another not so subtle nudge to the ruling class of the day of its duty to the church in general and the abbey specifically. The abbey and, more specifically, its abbot had been charged with the care and protection of the remains and souls of royalty past, so it fell to the living nobility to ensure the protection of the abbey here and now and the physical appearance of the main entrance into the cathedral had to reflect this social contract.

While the structural elements that comprised the overall project were fairly traditional, the artistic additions to the façade marked it a much more modernly conceived structure. As the design group was fighting with their contemporaries for the allowance to implement the plan,<sup>28</sup> they had to be careful to leave the nave intact because of its recognition as a relic; the architects instead went through great pains to ensure that the new design could be added seamlessly to the sacred assembly hall, no easy feat.<sup>29</sup> The

western section that was home to the first leg of the reconstruction was, at first blush, a standard westwork, but upon a more intensive inspection it stands out. The towers, of which there were two at the time of completion, are set back from the face of the structure making them appear more utilitarian than aesthetic. This was a convention of the Northern Europeans and more specifically Carolingian and Ottonian, both societies very militaristic in their individual outlooks, which imparted a sense of strength and power to the abbey.<sup>30</sup> The rest of the face is a little conservative for the progenitor of the Gothic style, only a few windows adorn the somewhat oppressive stonework with only the engaged columns and the great rose window, being the first of its kind, that rests high and center is smaller than those that follow in its wake, to herald the introduction of the new school of architectural thought hints at the artistic majesty within while still upholding the formidable appearance of the western façade.

The formidable construction program introduced engaged sculpture across the top frieze of the right and left sections and around the portals as well as the elaborate tympanum and doors to be discussed later, there is very little artistic embellishment gracing the monastery's face. Of the sculptural representation that is present, much of its imagery is left to conjecture [because of the different wars and the restoration attempts over the centuries has muddled the original iconography] but a number of attempts to uncover the secrets by historians has been mounted with mixed results. Dom Bernard de Montfaucon (1655-1741 C.E.) forwarded a theory that the engaged column figures gracing the portals were actually the visages of Clovis and his descendants.<sup>31</sup> As a romantic notion, this is a wonderful idea. Having physical representations of the secular past adorning the portals served to further Suger's vision for the proliferation of church

and state. Suger understood that for the relationship between the secular and religious worlds to be strong, there had to be a unifying tie that bound them together. If Montfaucon was correct in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Suger's commissioning of statuary was a great break from the tradition of religious figures in an attempt to further reinforce the relationship of his office with the French nobility. More likely, the statuary represents the Old Testament progenitors of Christ, serving as a sculptural Jesse Tree. This is a reoccurring theme throughout the new construction at St.-Denis, again serving not only as a liturgical aspect, but also having a societal element as well. The figures framing the central portal are tied to the lineage of Christ; bearing witness to his majesty and role of judge at the end of days thereby drawing a correlation between Christ and the Kings on earth as anointed rulers and judges of the people. Those miniatures surrounding the Last Judgment scene are linked by an organic vine that both grounds the royal family and ties them to the metaphysical royal family of Christ. The body of the empirical realm set in stone with the foundation of the Christian community binding the Heavenly and the Earthly together.

As a decidedly northern European structure, the architects understood that regardless of location, the building was first and foremost a Christian church, and the seat of the church was in Rome. In an attempt to pay his respects to the father church, Suger had a couple of design elements included that were directly linked to the Church's history. These took the form of alternating stone coloration in the two vertical panels flanking the rose window, which was indicative of the Italian style of church construction and a mosaic over the left door of the western façade that no longer exists. In a place where the greater portion of the population would never be able to travel to the classical



Mediterranean world, the inclusion of these minor elements served as a link to both Rome and Constantinople and brought a little bit of the cultural Meccas of Europe to the north.

Being the subject of much conjecture throughout the modern era, the redesigned left portal has ultimately eluded scholars. There has, however, been a remarkable theory put forward by Pamela Blum that is thematically consistent with the surviving original artwork and fits with the philosophy and persons of note of the time. In her contribution to the 1987 St.-Denis symposium, she postulates that the missing mosaic actually depicted a version of the Coronation of the Virgin, more specifically, the Triumph of the Virgin. This idea warrants consideration with the celestial and historical references that survive and the inclusion of the symbols of the zodiac in the jambs and the presence of the figures of Moses (a common allusion to Christ) and Aaron (older brother to Moses and the first priest of the God of Israel) that bring together elements of the Old Testament and the figural symbols of cosmology.<sup>32</sup> Mary was the person that served as the temporal bridge between the forefathers of Christianity and the Heavenly realm through the miraculous birth of Christ. At this point the reference is still a bit of a leap of faith, but applying a contextual filter to the purposed representation with the Cult of Mary that was popular in some areas of northern Europe at the time and it makes a bit more sense. Alas, there are no other contemporary pieces in the Ile-de-France that support this convention, but in neighboring England the veneration of the Virgin was well documented and among those that championed Mary's adoration in iconographic fashion was Hugh of Amiens (d. 1164 C.E.), a friend of Abbot Suger's and Archbishop of Rouen in 1130 who was also the Abbot of Reading from 1123 – 1129. Hugh had instituted the Feast of the Immaculate

Conception in England as well as served in an abbey that had imagery similar to that suggested to be on the left tympanum of St.-Denis. The trading of ecclesiastical ideas between the two Benedictine friends is well documented so the introduction of an artistic concept is not too difficult to imagine. This is of course conjecture, but it does paint a plausible mental picture for the possible content and context of the left door that has thus far eluded definition.

Despite the incredible amounts of remodeling done to the center and left entrances of the western façade over the intervening centuries, the iconography is more-or-less correct for the campaign begun by Suger. With the left portal dedicated to the evolution of the old to the new religion through Mary and the celestial realm, the center is a much more traditional set of sculptural imagery: The Last Judgment (Figure 2). The placement of an image like the Last Judgment at the central (main) entrance of a church is an ominous reminder to the lay people that pass under it; God is watching and he is keeping an account of all of the daily deeds done by his children. Its location on the structure of the church is another telling indication that the artistic elements of the abbey were painstakingly planned for the maximum affect on the secular audience. The western façade is the farthest point away from the altar, which is the most holy part of the abbey; and due to the common orientation of churches being pointed towards Jerusalem, the façade would be the farthest point away from the Holy City. The significance in this is that the Last Judgment was the iconographical equivalent of scare tactics for the masses: one would be humbled when waiting to enter and looking upon the impending judgment of one's deeds putting the attendant in a much more penitent mindset closer to God's loving embrace and salvation. The architects and artists working on the St.-Denis project

understood the need for illustration, not only for the enhancement of the building, but for the proliferation of the intended message to all, for the majority of the society at large was still illiterate and visualization was a universal medium in which the clergy could work.

The dominant image is that of Christ seated within his mandorla, the symbolic gateway to the heavenly realm and holding the parchments of judgment listing the names of the saved and the condemned. Above his head are the angels bearing the implements of His passion, a reminder of the pain that Christ suffered for his conviction and devotion to the people. Seated to the right and left of the son of God are the Apostles, those mortal men that saw the reality of Christ and followed his teachings despite the persecution they faced. Their example is a moral lesson for those in the “modern” times that it is always right to follow the true path and in the case of St.-Denis, to faithfully follow their secular and religious leaders. The Kingdom of Heaven is waiting for only those that live righteously. As stated above, the intended shock value of the sculpture was a reminder to the population that God and his son are watching and weighing judgment on their souls based on how they lived their daily lives.

Thus far, the discussion of the Last Judgment has been what its message was to the lower classes that frequented the abbey, but the message is equally important to the ruling class as well. Being people of means, they would have had a greater opportunity for benefitting from an almost exclusive level of education for both literary works and a more refined knowledge of the artistic devices being employed by the artists, which fostered a greater appreciation for the messages being conveyed. The ideas being put forth to the aristocracy were that of responsibility to the protection and proliferation of

the abbey and those same concepts for the secular population under their care. Being a royal abbey gives the impression that their allegiances would reside solely in the camp of the nobility, as it was reliant upon them for fiscal and physical protection, but its existence was still one of a center of Christianity and attended to the entire flock of humanity. The idea serves as a public service announcement that spoke to both of the entitled groups that it was their responsibility to maintain order and peace for the entirety of the realm and not just see to the needs of their societal peers.

The right portal has a much more identifiably temporal meaning in regards to time/place/people than the rest of the façade. While the central door imagery contains elements that refer to the past rulers of France and an allusion to St. Denis, the iconography on the right contains the story of the patron saint as well as Suger's dedication emblazoned upon the doors thereby anchoring the artistic language to the Ile-de-France. With the left and center portals representing the origin and otherworldly nature of Christianity, the right deals directly with St. Denis as the bedrock of France's religious foundation (Figure 3). St.-Denis, being dedicated to the patron saint of the kingdom as well as being the site of the Saint's miraculous story of martyrdom while tying in the legend of the consecration by the Holy Son, the sculptural imagery present visually reinforces the campaign Suger was championing in the reinvention of the abbey. The doorjambs depict the labors of the months in an ascending/descending pattern that mirrors the zodiac pattern of the left lateral door. Being the most earthly inspired portal of the western façade, the presence of the labors is a visual reminder of mankind's role in the order of the universe that God has laid forth in the Zodiac, just in a micro perspective.<sup>33</sup> Second, is the multi-layered symbolism within the tympanum. From the

top down Christ and the Holy Host are shown in relief bestowing the Eucharist to Saint Denis with his companions, Rusticus and Eleutherius, as witnesses to the sacred event. The patron saint and his retinue are depicted around an altar with the chalice containing the blood of Christ but within the walls of a fortress. Those stone walls can be viewed through two distinct filters. The first being that the walls shown are that of the abbey that contained the mortal remains of the saint and were the very stones supposedly blessed by the Son of God. The second is a much more literal interpretation: it is a castle. That “castle” can be seen as the monks within as the caretakers of the faith as well as being seen as a covenant of the earthly rulers to protect the ecclesiastical order and through them, the Heavenly ever after.

Lastly, as far as the western façade was concerned, we have the great bronze doors themselves, which no longer exist. It would appear that Suger’s idea of mingling the old with the new extended to the doors as well. Thanks to Panofsky’s incredibly studious nature, what information has survived into the modern era is as maddeningly vague and leading as the rest of the restoration texts published by Montfaucon and his contemporaries. The left portal was graced with the original doors in keeping with its theme. The central is, ever so briefly, described by Suger as bearing the imagery of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, creating a timeline leading up to the Last Judgment of the tympanum. By extrapolation, that leaves the recorded dedication to grace the right door.<sup>34</sup> The placement of Suger’s self-edifyingly humble dedication on the right also serves to reinforce the temporal nature of the sculptural elements surrounding it. Grounded in the slime of the earth, those that pass through the portal are being transported and elevated to an otherworldly plane.

It is important to note in this section that gets weighed down with discussion of structural artistry by nameless individuals whose identities are consumed by time itself that Suger, in *de Consecratione*, makes a point of illustrating the great ceremony of the consecration and who was involved, (Panofsky, p. 101&103)

“Thus, when, with wise counsel and under the dictation of the Holy Ghost Whose unction instructs us in all things, that which we proposed to carrying out had been designed with perspicuous order, we brought together an assembly of illustrious men, both bishops and abbots, and also requested the presence of our Lord , the Most Serene King of the Franks, Louis. On Sunday, the day before the Ides of July, we arranged a procession beautiful by its ornaments and notable by its personages. Carry before ourselves, in the hands of the bishops and abbots, the insignia of Our Lord’s Passion, viz., the Nail and the Crown of the Lord, also the arm of the aged St. Simeon and the tutelage of other holy relics, we descended with humble devotion to the excavations made ready for the foundations. Then, when the consolation of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, had been invoked so that He might crown the good beginning of the house of God with a good end, the bishops- having prepared, with their own hands, the mortar with the blessed water from the dedication of the previous fifth day before the Ides of June- laid the first stones, singing a hymn to God and solemnly chanting the *Fundamenta ejus* (The foundations thereof [are in the holy mountains]) to the end of the Psalm. The Most Serene King himself stepped down [into the excavation] and with his own hands laid his [stone]. Also we and many others, both abbots and monks, laid their stones. Certain persons also [deposited] gems out of love and reverence for Jesus Christ, chanting: *Lapides preciosi omnes muri tui* (All thy walls are precious stones).”

While a consecration of a religious structure would be customary, and an important structure like St.-Denis would certainly be attended by dignitaries all paying their respects, Suger specifically names King Louis in his account of the ceremony assuring a historical link between the king and the royal abbey. Again, there is no mention of any other individual by name taking part in the consecration. He alludes to himself by saying “we” as it is his journal that is being read, but everyone else is observed in functionary roles as if to say who they were was not important, only the

king's presence needed to be recorded for posterity. The attention paid to his relevant details is remarkable. Royal hands building the royal abbey, if only in ceremony, gives Suger that link to a new generation of French nobility and reminds them of the ties that bind them to the continued existence and proliferation of the abbey.

For all of the abbey's intended external psychological influence, the real power conveyed upon the viewer takes place once you enter the narthex. A real sense of foreboding settles across the visitor as they enter the cold, dark stone structure that resembles a crypt in its atmosphere (Figure 4). Whether this was a planned effect or just fortuitous, the parallel with the idea of salvation after the Last Judgment where Christ raises the souls of the dead so they can join the host in Heaven is astounding. The Gothic architect's goal of creating a conduit between the Heavenly Jerusalem and the imperfect mortal world was furthered by the oppressiveness of the symbolic gateway. But because the intellectuals and architects thought on so many different levels and had so many messages they wanted to impart to the population, the westwork had so much more to offer than just a symbolic raising from the condemnation of mortality.

Once one acclimates oneself to the gloom of the narthex, it became obvious that this was not just another Carolingian structure; the portals bear the support of early examples of rib vaulting<sup>35</sup> (Figure 5), one of the new design elements that Suger and his new-age architects were implementing.<sup>36</sup> The melding of the time-honored style of the Carolingian/Romanesque superstructure with the new school of architecture providing the internal strength for the beloved Christian institution creates grounding for the general population. Being able to walk into the center of learning and salvation and know that the hand of contemporary man had opened the pathway to something greater was a powerful

idea that worked to bring them together as a community and closer to their Heavenly Lord.

Far from being just a symbolic entrance to the abbey, there is a much greater utilitarian aspect to be explored. The upper levels of the western façade contained chapels that were devoted to key figures in the Christian dogma and of these the most prestigious and socially powerful was the Virgin Mary and St. Michael shrine.<sup>37</sup> Being the central shrine of the narthex, this honorarium to Mary and St. Michael would have held incredible significance as when one would enter the westwork, they would enter, literally, under the protective care and home of the blessed Virgin and the protector of man. Given that the placement of the shrine coincides with the Last Judgment tympanum of the entrance portals celebrates the loving grace of Mary and her intervention on behalf of the souls standing in judgment, an idea that had come to fruition combining of artistic and liturgical architectural union of 12<sup>th</sup> century St.-Denis. Passing through the portal from the “slime of the earth” to the interior of the church brings the story of the Last Judgment to life; the Archangel Michael is the celestial being that intercedes on behalf of humanity in the end of days and is charged with the protection of the Heavenly city. It is Michael’s job to carry the souls of the pious from the land of the dead (which was understood to be the lands to the west) to the light of eternal salvation (the east). Given the traditional orientation of European religious buildings having the choir facing east, the combination of clerical interpretation and secular patronage created a metaphysically interactive experience for the masses which made the western façade the gateway to salvation.

The upper chapels bear the first empirical evidence of the usage of donated funds for the construction process. Documentation talks about how emotionally overcome



guests were by the grandeur of the building that they would strip the gold and gem encrusted jewelry from their person and give the items to the clergy present for its usage in the adornment of the new chapels.<sup>38</sup> These unsolicited donations provided much of the raw materials the artists needed that may have been hard to acquire as some of these gifts were spoils brought together from different military campaigns or items from pilgrimages undertaken by the feast day attendees. The exact nature of each donation and by whom it was bequeathed are mysteries for the ages, but having at least some historical reference to the generosity of everyday patrons is a huge leap in understanding the role the Church played in the lives of the people of medieval Paris. It would be a logical assumption that the fate of the donated items is that they would have been sold to fill the coffers for the exorbitant expense of funding the reconstruction efforts; but this was not so, for the most part. The physical building was but one part of the overall plan of the artists and architects. From the beginning of the planning phase, the people involved had made conscious decisions that not only would the structural aspect of St.-Denis get a facelift, but the ecclesiastical devices contained within would receive similar attention.

With the new westwork in place, the chapels housed in the upper levels would be graced with all manner of wealth, gold altar frontals, elaborately decorated crosses and the finest textiles that were available at the time. All of these advances were possible due to the generosity of the people, those individuals whose love of their community was such that they would sacrifice significant portions of their personal wealth as an investment into the continuation of their beloved abbey. And, just as the artists' identities have remained anonymous to historians, the names of the majority of donating patrons are a mystery as well. In their own time, their gifts would have most certainly been

recognized with due appreciation, but in the overall scheme of the project, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Monetary costs aside, the communication between the artist and the patron about the appearance of the shrines is deeply rooted in this renewed philosophy, namely Neoplatonic metaphysics and more specifically those thoughts surrounding the idea of light as defined in Pseudo-Dionysus' work *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

Using the substance of this text as a guideline, Suger and his associates were inspired to view the elements of the secular world through the filter of heavenly light and strive to develop an ideology that mimicked the believed luminous luxury of the Heavenly Realm. Since Romanesque and Carolingian architecture were built with much thicker walls and smaller windows, there was a lack of natural (or heavenly) lighting gracing the interior of churches and cathedrals. This new appreciation for eastern learning opened both the physical and metaphysical eyes of the artists and patrons to the world around them and this manifested into a complex cross-dimensional philosophy linking the divine with the worldly.

The exterior of the building was a powerful structure designed to inspire strength in the viewer, but it was light that was the intended goal. Light that shone through great windows casting color across an otherwise bleak frame of stone. Light that was personified in the different precious gems that were affixed to altars and crosses and other liturgical objects. Light that the clergy took as a matter of devout and unwavering faith that God was casting his glorious vision down upon them and their salvation was assured because of their belief. Each of the different elements included in the new construction: the gems, stained glass, brightly colored textiles were all used as devices to express the

same kind of intended piousness upon those of the other social classes. Following certain logical processes, the major donors to the project would have come from the noble and merchant classes and a certain amount of indulgence was to be expected. By funding the construction project, the wealthy individuals sought to elevate their immortal souls and seek everlasting forgiveness for the transgressions they committed while still confined to the flesh. The linking and exalting of material objects in the possession of or in the care of the clergy bequeathed to them by the secular communities in the devotion of the Heavenly realm provided a link to the divine, a closer step to salvation for the benefactors. Understanding the Neoplatonic concept of light and the sociological value of this innovative movement broadened the intellectual horizons of the parties involved; the clergy found new devices in which to enrich the religious experiences of their viewers, the nobility associated with the richness and gloriousness of the transition, and the lower class of everyday people benefitted from the expanded, multifaceted and visually provocative advances that the exploration of light and artistic execution could provide.<sup>39</sup> Never before had there been the availability to express a visual language that had the ability to so completely engulf the audience: to bathe them in both word and imagery, to make the intangible a reality.

### **From the West to the East**

As construction of the western façade neared completion, eyes turned to the east and the birth of the new choir and chevet. The true relationship between clergy and secular community came out in the incredible plan for the east end. Visual philosophy assaulted the viewers with glorious light and delicate form. Whether the impossibly thin columns or gem-like stained glass, the thinning of the columns to improve the visibility

of all those attending ceremonies to the opening of the space so the acoustics were greatly improved through to the sheer amount of light that poured in through the windows to illuminate the religious ceremonies being conducted... It was as if the eyes of heaven were directed on the abbey.

As stated earlier, the construction of the westwork was not without some ecclesiastical concern. With the perceived provenance of the nave being blessed by Christ, the architects had to adapt to the existing structure when planning the western façade and the new choir.<sup>40</sup> With the successful completion of the west end, the architects could turn their attention to the east and the groundbreaking innovations of the first truly Gothic piece, the crypt and choir. From the underground up, the construction of the east end was to be the highlight of the initial process, the fruit of the intellectual and artistic labor that would realize the collective visions of the people involved and elevate the status of their esteemed institution all the more. If the general consensus of the stonework in the nave was that akin to relics, then the attention paid to the crypt was even more paramount based on housing the actual remains of St. Denis and those of the nobility of France and keeping the historical relevance intact was a priority that had to be observed.<sup>41</sup>

Providing the new structural foundation required huge amounts of labor and resources that, again, were drawn from the surrounding region in both manpower and materials. As a tribute to the forethought, planning and richness of the region, the architects found that they were in a great position for the construction process. Metaphysically, it would appear that the plentiful local natural resources that would go into the abbey would have been supplied by the Lord and legitimize the entire endeavor.

In reality, the availability to have materials so close at hand meant that the expense of the stone would be greatly reduced as well as providing a workspace to pre-fabricate the material into the finished product ahead of time. Logistically, this would make transportation easier in that the completed pieces were lighter than raw materials and if a piece did not work out (cracks, imperfections, etc.) there was little extra expense or time involved.<sup>42</sup> The inclusion of these local materials and manpower served the empirical purposes of grounding the construction in the community giving the indigenous people a life changing experience of being part of something great that would enrich the status of their society and provide a personal stake in the continued proliferation of the power of the nobility and clerical castes that made the surrounding area as important as it was in the medieval era.

The cause of much tension within the clergy was because of the pictorial subject matter, the naysayers drawing upon the writings of other theologians, most notably, St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 C.E.). Many of those not indoctrinated in the Pseudo-Dionysian philosophies believed it to be questionable according to the scripture to brazenly display religious figures and Abbot Suger came under scrutiny for even contemplating such an idea.<sup>43</sup> Suger and others theorized that the images were not being used as icons of worship, but as visual aids to be used as allegories to elevate the user to new spiritual heights.<sup>44</sup> The arguments raged back and forth amongst the theologians over the ecclesiastical implications that might have arisen from the introduction of more elaborate sacred symbolic representations; would it matter if the images were meant to be allegorical or is it all still ecclesiastically inappropriate no matter what the intention is? In the end, Suger's logic won out and the stained glass and other decorative arts that came

under fire were completed and installed into the new abbey. The metaphysical doors were opened to allow artistic expression, in all mediums, to enter and lend their limitless possibilities to bridge the gaps in the social class structure and make the whole experience much more meaningful for everybody. Though designed for the masses, there would still be a great deal the lower-classes would not understand of the overall meaning that the well educated upper-class could garner from the combination of oral and visual stimulation.<sup>45</sup> It could be argued that even with greater access to education at the time, it did not really matter; the iconography would have been too advanced and nuanced for the secular community to fully grasp.

Of the monastery itself, we need to carefully examine the structure and the sociological idiosyncrasies involving the history of the building. Not just an abbey, St.-Denis was also the burial place for some of the most important figures from France's past, its founding fathers had been buried within the crypt for hundreds of years (Figure 6), so many that the secular tombs were considered to be national reliquaries in their own right.<sup>46</sup> These were just as important to the church as the religious icons because the French nobility associated those crypts with the legacies of those iconic figures (Figure 7). Suger used the tombs of the Merovingian rulers and his already close ties to the royal family to insure the importance of St.-Denis and reinforce the belief that the kings of France would have a close affiliation with God by displaying the remains and artifacts of previous kings amongst those of a non-secular nature.<sup>47</sup> Because of its long history and notable personages, St.-Denis was already one of the major destinations of pilgrims. The abbey had long ago made allowances for access to the crypts for visitors to allow viewing the tombs and the receiving of their blessings, but here too was a problem of

overcrowding. Much had to be done to make the accessibility to the divine wonder of relics more readily available to the populace. Again, Suger was thinking forward. By enlarging the crypt in elevation and width, the flow of pilgrim traffic could be controlled easier as well as move more smoothly.<sup>48</sup>

While this may seem to be an altruistic sentiment, there was a more practical and secular reasoning that existed in conjunction with Suger's divine purpose, which was the influx of funds to support the abbey.<sup>49</sup> The opening up of the floor plan to afford the public a better vantage from which to view the treasures of the church, whether they are relic enshrined altars or the resting places of national saints and heroes was paramount in the new vision of the abbey. Even the choir screen was removed thereby allowing the public circumnavigating the apse to witness or even to join in the rites and rituals being conducted by the attending clergy. This brought the general populace closer to the ceremonies at St. Denis reinforcing the sociological union of the Parisian power groups that was bolstered by the opening of space.

There is no doubt that the monastery was built to display the majesty of heaven, but as with all things divine, there is a sense of foreboding that attaches itself to the structures as well. From the Last Judgment scenes on the western façade to the feeling of smallness when walking through the nave alone, there is an air of uneasiness about the building when it is empty. Although there are these huge windows letting in a fair amount of light, it is never warm. It is as if there is some force reminding the individual that all is not warm and rosy with the celestial powers. While God and Christ are kind and benevolent, they are also the punishers of the wicked and there are dire consequences for those who defy their wills, in this life or the next. It is then that those panes of

glowing glass, with those faces of saints shift their gaze from one of biblical struggle and contemplation to feel as if they are judging the viewer, deciding which side of Christ he/she will be upon at the end of times; dark and morose to be sure, but a very real concern of medieval life. Crusades, famine, plague; there were all sorts of dangers that threatened the everyday lives of the people. The awesome feeling one gets from visually taking in the size and complexity of the building also serves as a moral compass of sorts. The abbey is always there, looming, bedecked with sculpture, often biblical figures, but also with images of the grotesque. To a point these can be considered little artistic freedoms the workmen had, but any consistent number and theme points to them as devices that ward off evil or to reinforce the message of the church in the populace. Again, although the powers of saints are usually considered benevolent, if you displease one, there are consequences as with any divine being.

It is truly amazing that something that is hundreds of feet long, over a hundred feet high and weighing thousands of tons could be compared to a little gilded box containing one small bone and, theoretically, could hold the same significance. A relic is a relic and the container, whatever size, is a reliquary. History has looked at architectural movements as artistic styles that progress alongside those of the fine arts, but to exclude the multi-functionality of a specific type of art is a little narrow-minded. In a way, Abbot Suger did not make this distinction when he commissioned and helped plan the new St.-Denis abbey.<sup>50</sup> His vision of this gateway between planes: where the heaven and earth meet, had nothing to do with architecture specifically, but more with creating an experience in which the faithful could bask in the glory of the divine all the while preserving the legacy of the place and people that fueled it. There are obviously a few



differences between what is commonly accepted as a reliquary and what could be one, but the essence is the same either way. Suger saw that and he saw what the potential could be. With his faith, dedication and raw ambition, Suger succeeded in making a monumental structure and turning it into a piece of decorative art. At the same time, he took a box that held a trinket and metamorphosed it into a titanic edifice big enough for all to see.

Continuing the conceptualization of ornamentation and the use of visual language discussed throughout this work, and specifically in the context of reinvention and revitalization, the expansive stained glass project bears a striking similarity to the new life breathed into Suger's Chalice and Vase. If the Abbey of Saint Denis is considered a reliquary due to its real and applied provenance, then the glassworks are the gems decorating the structural body of the reliquary. Thanks to the thinning of the walls due to the use of the rib vaulting and other "modern" techniques, more of the surface area could be devoted to elegant and expansive windows without impacting the structural integrity of the abbey itself.<sup>51</sup> The layers of meaning embedded within the panes speak volumes about the state of mind of the collective working to complete the rebuilding project. All of the elements of the human experience are reflected in those windows: decorative art, historical events, philosophical expression, and societal obligation (lay and clerical) as well as religious ideology. All are emblazoned with God's light giving them vibrant life for the masses to behold in pious wonder and awe. Besides the sheer artistic beauty of the entire ensemble of illuminated glass, stories of national pride and religious morality were made available for everyone to experience. Because of the unfortunate number of times that the building has been vandalized, pillaged and, ultimately, restored over the

centuries, the full thematic vision cannot be realized in our age. But, thanks to the incredibly diligent work of early historians and the ability of bureaucrats of following eras to create paper trails, a good number of the physical changes have been uncovered and dated as well as a broad understanding of the dissemination of the original stained glass.

Stained glass was not a new invention to the Gothic Era by any means, but the explosion of quality and proliferation rests soundly within the starting dates of the movement. It is easy to make generalized statements about the newfound importance of glassworks in the building process; instead, examination of relevant examples will illustrate how credible these discussions are. For argument's sake, the window program could be broken down into three distinct, yet overlapping groups: religious, secular, and ornamental. Each subgroup is self explanatory, but in execution they overlap. Only the ornamental receives entire windows unto itself while in the rest of the projects there are elements of multiple subgroups existing simultaneously. Case in point would be the clerestory panels of the north transept (Figure 8), which date to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and unfortunately do not survive in their original splendor. These ornamental windows consist of brightly colored geometric shapes and a glass interlacing that bathe the viewer in a wash of color (Figure 9) whose purpose, again, is to mimic the gems that adorn reliquaries giving the impression that one is standing within and in the presence of objects touched by the divine. This brief review of the purely ornamental widows should suffice for the purposes of this paper for it is within the representational secular and religious windows that the philosophical exploration takes place.

As a launching point for the representational stained glass windows, a powerful piece to start with is the *Quadriga of Aminadab* (Figure 10). Continuing the legitimacy of the legacy of the historical St. Denis, this window provided Suger with a visual reminder of the apostle St. Paul who was supposedly the teacher of St. Denis.<sup>52</sup> This pedigree of teacher-student-patron saint serves the institution by providing a direct link to the extended inner circle of Christ. As a propaganda tool, it does not get much more powerful than this. For the people and the aristocracy/clerical groups specifically, the close tie of the most sacred native site is a validation of the empirical history and monarchical might in France. The association of biblical forefathers directly linked elevated the status of the institution beyond contestation in the eyes of their peers throughout the land and made St.-Denis a major player in the political world that was so reliant upon the good graces of the church. The iconography involved has little direct correlation to the actual architectural meaning of the church, the image showing a mobile device opposed to the obvious stationary nature of St.-Denis. But the image is striking in its symbolic meaning.

The Four Evangelists and Christ surround the Ark of the Covenant. Each of the Evangelists is displayed in their zoomorphic visages so often depicted in religious texts flocking to the central image from the four “corners” of the frame. The main iconography is an interesting image of a decorated wheeled cart, beautiful filigree adorning the sides that would be simple except for the classical representation of God lowering a crucifix bearing the image of his only begotten child into the cart. The unification of ideology of the Old and New Testament by combining two of the most sacred and powerful devices is an obvious bid to further empower Christian ideology as well as provide visual provenance to the divine nature of Christ and the importance and power of his sacrifice.<sup>53</sup>

That the Ark is mobile harkens back to the Old Testament ideology that the Ark was carried into battle by the devout and that the enemies of the faithful are helpless and destined to fall before the symbols of the religion. Showing the capability of the Holiest of Holy's being in different places gives the impression that the grace bestowed upon the faithful of previous civilizations could be/and would be conferred to those whose piousness at St.-Denis was observed. The *Quadriga's* message that Christ had suffered for and made the supreme sacrifice for his followers, and through proper veneration everybody should be honored to live and give their lives in honorarium. An idea that was imminently realized within a few short years of the completion of the window: the onset of the Second Crusade (1147-1149 C.E.) with King Louis VII of France (1120-1180 C.E.) being one of the two leaders of the expedition. The immense mechanization of war was not a speedy thing. While the construction of St.-Denis was underway, the preparations for Crusade were being realized. The king was about to embark on a holy mission and the expectation was that the populace would not only support, but identify and volunteer to join in the Crusade. As with the previous endeavor 50 years earlier, the goal was the reclamation and protection of the Holy Land. Abbot Suger and the unidentified artists of the St.-Denis rebuilding set about creating a visual propaganda campaign that would support the militaristic campaigns of the French rulers. Combining those elements of old and new religious iconography encapsulates the metaphysical and historic home of Christianity: Jerusalem, the seat of Christianity and Judaism.

This idea of church and state working in tandem for socio-political ends is illustrated much more blatantly in a number of other windows, especially in the *Crusader Window* (Figure 11) which when viewed in their entirety, depicted the deeds of

Charlemagne and the brave knights of the First Crusade. Suger understood the power of the iconography as well as the changing climate of the world and sought to provide support for the king and his endeavors as well as promoting a cautionary tale about piety through action.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the existence and content has to be based on the writings and drawings of historians past because its form has been lost to us in its original state.<sup>55</sup> The discussion about the union of church and state has been very theoretical and fiscally motivated, until one interprets the visual language used here. The inclusion of the Crusader Window cements a contrast but reinforces a social contract of sorts. This modern artistic movement literally linked the two groups in an empirical, visual form. The window depicts a crowned ruler leading a force of knights while flying the Standard of St.-Denis while receiving the blessing of the clergy; a modern, non-biblical event that anyone who views the image could understand. Mortal, non-sainted individuals of the age being elevated to a level where their visages graced and decorated the venerated halls of France's most sacred religious site in a manner that offered an air of legitimacy to the temporal deeds necessary to protect the realm and its inhabitants.<sup>56</sup>

Within churches/abbeys/cathedrals there is always an inspiration of secularly based works of art, but in the instance of the Crusader panels, the representation of actual historical events with recognizable and identifiable imagery that the viewer can associate with. Having a secularly driven set of stained glass panels gracing one of the chapels serves multiple masters; being a royal abbey, the importance of elevating the aristocracy cannot be understated for it is within the coffers of that very secular group that the physical and financial safety of the religious institution is assured. It also serves as a reminder that the noble class and the clergy are united in the proliferation of the status of

their nation and religion; in this case it highlights one of the most significant events in Christianity's past, the First Crusade. Considering the world climate at the onset of the construction project, the looming threat of a militaristic campaign was ever present. Even though France was a strict feudal state, a successful enlistment under the King's banner still required the cooperation of the peasant class. Providing them with a divinely associated providence goes a long way in the acceptance and zeal of the endeavor. Conversely, since the Crusades were actions in favor of the Church, they in turn needed the mandate of the Church to even truly begin.

In regards to the actual window, a stronger image is hard to imagine, a lord astride a noble steed surrounded by mail clad knights riding forth. Historians have postulated a number of scenarios that this window could represent, all of them having to do with the First Crusade. The identification of the central figure has been the largest source of debate, aside from original placement which will always be an ongoing topic of contention, is it a representation of the king of France? Is it a generic image meant to invoke the idea of nobility or did they have someone more specific in mind? Since Philip I (1052-1108 C.E.), then king of France, had not personally been part of the First Crusade, the idea of the king being portrayed is unlikely. With the amount of symbolism being invested in the stained glass project it is equally unlikely that such an important panel would be left that vague. After careful consideration of the socio-political climate of the time, a small number of candidates move to the forefront, the most likely being Godfrey of Bouillon (1060-1100 C.E.), Lord of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine and Advocate of the Holy Sepulcher.<sup>57</sup>

Depicting Godfrey of Bouillon in a stained glass project at St.-Denis is the modern equivalent of having a Medal of Honor recipient/ Rock Star/ Action Movie Hero on a recruiting poster. His exploits during the First Crusade made him a figure of great renown and notoriety: his initial refusal to submit to the demands of Emperor Alexius of Constantinople that all of the reclaimed “Roman” lands be returned to him, his timely counter assaults that not only saved his fellow Crusaders but also afforded them the ability to continue the advances with the influx of seized provisions from their enemies which the Crusaders saw as miracles reinforcing their commitment to the campaign, to being the pivotal leader in the battle of Jerusalem. It was Godfrey’s troops that breached the fortifications, drove the defenders from the walls and opened the gates allowing the taking of the Holy City. His piousness and military expertise found him with the nomination to the post of King of Jerusalem in the wake of the other more powerful lords playing political games with each other.<sup>58</sup> He eventually accepted the responsibility of defending the city in the name of the Church, turning down the crown in favor of an honorarium of Protector of the Holy Sepulcher. His concession that there was no king in Jerusalem save Christ himself makes his example in life the definition of behavior for a Christian noble/warrior. Godfrey’s successes were told and retold, often being embellished, making him larger than life and God’s chosen warrior, the defender of their faith.

The homage to Godfrey’s life (albeit implied) that graces a chapel at St.-Denis has a deviously multi-faceted meaning. For the clergy, Godfrey and his fellow crusaders gave all in the defense of the Church by force of arms and by devout vow of allegiance and supplication, thereby reinforcing the societal hierarchy highlighting the Church’s relative

position in relation to the nobility and peasant class. It also serves as a recruiting tool for the upcoming Second Crusade illustrating a noble Godfrey going forth with his retinue to do their duty to God and nation. The third meaning implied by the creators of the Crusader Window is a cautionary tale directed at the king explicitly. While Suger and the rest of the clergy in France supported the Pope's call to arms for another crusade, Suger felt that the danger to the king was too great in relation to the reward he hoped to receive (glory, wealth, land, etc.) and that the king could still fulfill his vow to the Cross by pledging money, supplies and troops to the cause.<sup>59</sup> In wanting the king to stay in his homeland, the relationship between church and state can be seen as a genuine concern for their shared society. The safety of the realm rests on the shoulders of head of the nobility. History shows that these arguments ultimately fell on deaf ears as Louis VII did indeed go on crusade. He did so, though leaving his nation in the capable hands of Abbot Suger as regent.

The panel is actually straightforward in its appearance. There is little in the way of symbolism and the use of color serves to differentiate between the figures in the foreground, middle and back of the composition. Interestingly the one element that would have the most symbolism is not part of the original work, the serpentine dragon that appears to be flying over the central group. Initially the space occupied by the dragon was most likely a banner that has been lost to the ages but thankfully, there are a number of scholarly works that allude to an alternative representation. Unfortunately, that leaves more questions than answers. Would the banner have been decorated with a type of heraldry that would have clearly identified the noble? Could it have been a representation of the *Standard of St. Denis*, otherwise known as the *Oriflamme* (Figure 12), which was



given to the highest ranking member of a military campaign to symbolize the blessing of God as it was only awarded by the abbot if the action was considered “just”? These questions will never be fully answered, but the purposed possibilities are sound.

In regards to the *Oriflamme*, a stronger symbol of the symbiotic relationship of the church and the militaristic state is harder to imagine.<sup>60</sup> Considered both the royal banner and the banner of St.-Denis, it serves the secular and ecclesiastical sects equally. The history of the device shares the monumental story of the abbey itself. The *Oriflamme*’s provenance begins with the bequeathing of the standard to St.-Denis by Dagobert in the 7<sup>th</sup> century to hang over the tomb of the abbey’s patron saint. Since the actual pendant does not survive, it falls to imagery and penned description to devise its appearance. The body of the standard was of the richest of red silks, described as *sendal* whose usage was usually reserved for ceremonial robes and banners, with a star surrounded by flames made of gold.<sup>61</sup> Until the twelfth century, the battle standard of the French military was the banner of St. Martin but that changed under the order of King Louis VI (1108-1137 C.E.) drawing on the history of France and St.-Denis in the adoption of a new war ensign. The use of such a device in combat was as a signal for the troops. By its position, it would signal advances, serve as a rallying point and provide inspiration for the troops in the field (both divine and secular).

As important as the *Oriflamme*’s practical application was, the real power it possessed was in HOW it got to the battlefield. When a King wanted to begin a military campaign, within his borders or outside them, he would petition the abbot for his blessing to ensure victory, if the abbot deemed the military operation worthy, he would present the banner to the king. A seemingly innocuous ceremony for a pious king to seek the

approval of his spiritual advisor, but the whole process is layered with socio-political undertones. The king does not actually need the abbot to condone his militaristic actions, but getting his acknowledgment meant the other lords and nobles would be more willing to join in the action bolstering the royal numbers as well as filling the peasant conscripts with a sense of purpose and divine protection. As for the interplay between abbot and king, the awarding of the *Oriflamme* was a contract that the two leaders would enter into. Since the abbot's job was to advise the king in all things, it was important that the lives of the people were not being thrown away for a frivolous cause or personal vendetta. It was his job to try and keep the king's ego in check. Now, not all of the abbot's work in these negotiations was altruistic. He would add riders of a personal nature, personal being Church business, to these allowances: settle any disputes along the way that were attached to the Church, reinforce the hierarchy of the clergy within France by show of force or force if necessary and ensure that the Church's tax money is being handled properly. The *Oriflamme* was a device that served all of the people of France in one fashion or another with its home being St.-Denis thus anchoring the seat of power in Paris; King, Abbot and it being a mobile instrument of divine power carried forth for the protection of all under its shadow.

Returning to the conversation of the stained glass project, there was a number of panels devoted to the saints and more specifically, their deaths. Understanding their lives and their works opened a window for the masses to view how mere mortals from the slime of the earth could be elevated to the lofty heights of the heavens. Being good people and bringing salvation through Christianity's graces to the nonbelievers was their passion and they wanted nothing more than to help the world embrace the true light.

Obviously, this worked eventually, but when it did not, it failed stunningly. Those missionaries became martyrs, including the abbey's patron, St. Denis. Throughout the chevet were an impressive number of panels of stained glass: panels in each of the nine chapel alcoves and in the elevations of the choir. Again, the majorities do not survive, but some are documented and the ones that do exist tell us some amazing tales.

Another scene from that same secularly based window that warrants closer scrutiny is *A Triple Coronation* (Figure 13) from the Charlemagne window. Initially meant to celebrate the relics of the Passion handed down to the abbey by the Emperor Charles the Bald, one of the grandsons of Charlemagne, who was also a lay-abbot of St.-Denis in the ninth century, the window section acts as a billboard to advertise their presence so that attendees could be filled with holy majesty even on the most crowded of feast days.<sup>62</sup> A number of theories have been touted as to the meaning of the panel, but historians have mostly agreed that the theme of the window has to do with the Oaths of Strassburg, or the Accord of 842, in which the traditions of heredity were overturned. Charlemagne decided to carve his empire into three pieces and awarded them to his sons upon his death thereby shaping Europe as we know it today. Because of this, Charlemagne became the progenitor of France. This would have created a reverence for Charlemagne that we, as modern people, can feel a kinship to in our own veneration of our founding fathers.

This idea of dynasty, closeness to important people and divinity, was part of the foundation of St.-Denis in general and more specifically, in Suger's plans of reconstruction and preservation of the sacred site. Charlemagne felt a need to protect and honor the abbey that had played such an important role in his family's lineage from the

time of his father. It was here that Pepin the Short (714-768 C.E.) was crowned king by Pope Stephen II (715-757 C.E.) in 754 C.E. securing the foundation of the Carolingian line.<sup>63</sup> All of these elements elevated the stature of the royal abbey in the Christian theatre; time, place, people all coinciding again and again, adding layer and layer to the history of the abbey and giving deep, rich meaning to the generations of clergy, nobility and peasantry of France.

Visually, the panel is split into three sections of three figures each set on a horizontal tableau, of which only the central section is of any great significance. Those figures are the representation of the three sons of Charlemagne being crowned by the hand of God. As stated above, this division of territories served to shape the next few hundred years geographically and politically. These three newly crowned kings were the new faces of Europe and Christianity. The crowns hovering above their heads are far more elaborate than the ones worn by the other two groups of men to either side of the main group indicating an elevation of relative importance to the scene. Each group of three individuals overlap each other in their respective placements partially for lack of space in the window, partially to express the close unity of the Holy Roman family, which was partially fabricated but necessary to project the meaning of God's endorsement of the hereditary line. As nothing was arbitrary in the construction of such a pivotal message, each of the groups sits upon a single throne each, symbolizing the three kingdoms that Charlemagne's empire was split into.<sup>64</sup>

*The Martyrdom of Saint Vincent* (Figure 14) from the *Saint Vincent Window* illustrates more somber side of the secular/religious covenant. The association of Saint Vincent and Saint Denis stretches back to the time of King Dagobert in the 7<sup>th</sup> century in

which the King presented the abbey with a great prize, a relic of the saint in the form of his arm: not a fragment, but the entire arm. A gift of such magnitude provided by the first reigning lord of a burgeoning nation is a profound milestone in the timeline of a nation as well as a concrete covenant between the temporal and the ethereal realms.

A precedent had been set in the 9<sup>th</sup> century when the relic of Saint Vincent was placed in the matutinal altar (morning altar) and not in a specifically dedicated altar, and remained this way through Suger's tenure and reconstruction plan (although many historians believe that the window's original placement was within the crypt). Why would an opportunity like this be passed up when so many of the existing relics were finding new resting places more concurrent with the new philosophy? The answer is an easy one to understand. As stated earlier, Suger and his councilors were hesitant to modify the parts of the structure that had a supernatural legacy. Given the already tenuous climate surrounding the architectural evolution, Suger and the people of Paris supporting him had to draw a line in the advances they were going to implement. The answer to the dilemma of the enhancement of such an important piece of Christian and French history was to dedicate an entire panel of stained glass to Saint Vincent thereby maintaining the integrity of the shrine and relic contained within while still being able to elevate the visual signature of the piece by updating its artistic embellishments and giving the altar a new place of honor in which to reside.

What purpose the window serves to the abbey and its viewers is two-fold. The first resides within the ideology of the stained glass initiative which is both decorative and liturgical. The second is as a sort of advertisement. Since the relic was contained within a shrine that was not being renovated, its appearance would be antiquated and

understated in comparison to objects like the main altar. The panel, truly the entire window depicting the life of Saint Vincent, serves as the ornamentation that the other relics in the abbey's collection were receiving. This was an ingenious conclusion to the glorification of Saint Vincent; a melding of the past and future and of earthly cleverness and divine inspiration.

The cleverness of the artists, the accuracy of the builders and the vision of the clergy combined to create something truly spectacular to behold. Impossibly lofty heights decorated with panel after panel of dazzlingly brilliant stained glass that not only humbled the viewer with their sheer beauty, but radiated a sense of divine wonder. The concern of maintaining that storied history that had been previously raised against the renovation project was mostly quelled when the final product was unveiled. From lowly peasant to the highest of nobility were (theoretically) equal in when bathed in the light from the Heavenly Jerusalem. The artists had been successful in creating another world as Suger had envisioned it. When the populace walked from the darkness of the western façade and walked through the ambulatory, every step was illuminated by another set of stained glass, each projecting another parable. Step by step, pilgrims would make their way to the chevet and its multiple chapels, each being lit by their own source of heavenly light. Thanks to the vast amounts of stained glass, the clergy could touch every person within the walls of the abbey, giving blessings and hope to those searching the salvation available to those pious individuals that came from far and wide to visit and pay homage to God and his saints that made St.-Denis their earthly home.

### **Adornments and Treasures**

Whether large or small, the great master that affects all things equally is the passage of time. Would the importance of the construction have been the same if St.-Denis was a new structure and not one already steeped in history? Having been at the center of French culture for the span of ages that it has, time is a very relevant factor in considering not only the architectural history, but also in the material collections within its walls. The repurposing of devices already within the possession of the abbey has been discussed above as an abstract and in some depth, but a great number of items were born anew. This would serve a number of purposes; preserving the past, showcasing new artistic developments and aiding in the solidification of church and state. Unfortunately, the ravages of time and the mechanizations of man have made many of these projects disappear, but thanks to good bookkeeping at the time of their creation and the very lineage that they were meant to create, the descriptions of those lost and a rare few still exist today. Showcasing the relics in the care of the abbey was a great source of pride and honor that elevated the stature of the institution and thereby the citizens of the surrounding area; whether it was advertising the collection with stained glass or re-entombing the physical relics in new extensions of the heavenly realm: as much effort and funding went into creating reliquaries that were fitting to house the remains of saints and items of great importance associated with the Church.

One of the most striking pieces to survive is known as *Suger's Chalice* (Figure 15). Originally a 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC stone cup that was found in the treasury and used as spolia in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Abbot Suger. Gilded and gem encrusted, the Roman cup was re-appropriated into a beautiful liturgical device. The new use of such a venerated piece of history that was perhaps closely linked to the early Roman church served multiple

purposes: the cup provided another link to the foundation of Christian belief, elevated the empirical wealth/value of the monastery, provided a showcase for local goldsmiths and linked the royal families to the clergy. The device would be associated with both power groups to be used in religious ceremonies creating a subconscious reminder and literal understanding of the pathway to Heaven.

Originally an agate (sardonyx) Roman cup dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, Suger embraced the bestowed cup as much for its intrinsic beauty as for the implied historical aspect. Re-appropriating a pre-Christian artifact from one of the most powerful empires in known history who, now, has the head of your religion based within its namesake city is not only symbolic but profoundly psychological. Suger accepted the cup graciously and transformed it into a liturgical device fit for any king, earthly or otherwise. Given Suger's yearning to draw inspiration from the most powerful of Christian dynasties, both Rome and Constantinople, the pedigree of style can be seen as a parallel to those cups brought back by to Italy after the sack of the Byzantine capital in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> While these associations may easily come to the imagination of modern historians, it is ultimately unclear if Suger or his associates had this fully mind in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; although it is a romantic notion that lends itself nicely to the narrative of the burgeoning Gothic movement.

In Suger's time, the chalice went from being a simple, yet elegant cup to being elevated (literally and figuratively). The foundation of the plan was to encase the rim and secure the base of the cup on a pedestal of finely crafted gold and set with a series of beautifully colorful gems keeping with the theme of color and light permeating the new Gothic plan. The foundation for the transformation of the cup being the exquisite gold



housing, festooned with delicate filigree and punctuated with the settings for the donated gemstones was a highlight of local artisans. Beautiful in execution without being ostentatious, the chalice was truly elevated to a regal state. Being a liturgical device, the five panels around the base of the newly formed chalice displayed Christ and the Four Evangelists in youthful appearance, almost as if the contents the chalice had renewed them: the blood of Christ sustained an everlasting life upon the faithful. Christ is identifiable by his regal bust with his hands in a blessing position and cruciform halo. Descriptions of the other panels are relegated to ancient texts as they do not survive.<sup>66</sup>

The idea of the chalice facilitating the miracle like transmutation in the conversion of wine into the blood of the savior is a powerful concept for anyone to behold. Having a functional device that existed in its original state during time the lifetime of the messiah serves as a tangible link to that moment of passion that, through ritual, shaped the viewer's very existence in both a temporal and metaphysical sense. Transubstantiation through the Holy Sacrament elevates the lowly creatures of Earth and slime and imbues in them a bit of the divine. Bringing to them a sense of salvation through performing the ceremony with a device so steeped in history and yet, re-imagined would have had a number of possible social impacts; the trans time implication of a piece of antiquity being made current draws the viewer farther into the mythos under visual relation; the artists and patrons whose gold and gems went into the modernization of the chalice created a sense of pious pride and closeness to the device, and the reaffirming of this new philosophy that the monks of St.-Denis were promoting made real and tangible. The combination of these, and quite possibly many more ideas, imbued a gilt stone cup with a psychological and sociological power that was far greater than the

intrinsic value of the chalice. Over a millennia in the making, the sardonyx cup had taken on a new purpose as Suger's Chalice: the cup that held everlasting life.

While his chalice garners quite a bit of attention when the discussion of Suger's liturgical devices is mentioned, it is far from the only piece that was repurposed in the reinvention of the abbey. One of the most striking is the simply named *Suger's Eagle Vase* (Figure 16). This antique porphyry vase was discovered in a coffer and was envisioned as something much more grandiose.<sup>67</sup> The vase, being constructed of a type of stone that was almost solely associated with the nobility of the highest order during the Roman era, was already venerated for its symbolic nature with the bygone empire and was seen as deserving of rejuvenation and appropriation. Suger drew inspiration for the design of the vase from the Byzantines who had a wealth of philosophical and Christian teachings to garner knowledge from, but was also the seat of the Roman Empire for quite some time, making the porphyry twice as symbolic in his eyes. With little done to the physical elements of the vase itself, the addition of the gold eagle anatomy constituted the decorative elevation of the piece. Perhaps that is an understatement. The design literally created an eagle with the vase serving as the body while the head, wings, tail and claws were made from gilt silver and etched further enhanced using niello, a style popular in Byzantine society that harkens back to antiquity.<sup>68</sup> This process was most likely used to give depth to the device as well as giving it the appearance of being as old as the vase. With no known liturgical purpose, the vase offers an interesting bit of insight into the mind of the man.

Why was it elevated? With the disturbing amount of time, money and resources being consumed by the construction, why did this relatively obscure vase warrant the

attention? It would appear that within the Herculean task of reinventing his beloved abbey, Suger still found time to be human. He just liked the vase and felt it deserved a new life.<sup>69</sup> Whether steeped with historical and philosophical meaning or *just* an aesthetic piece of art, this new perception regarding the visual power of artwork can be seen and felt when regarding the Eagle Vase. A sentiment that can be nicely encapsulated by the inscription Suger had placed upon it; “*Includi gemmis lapis iste meretur et auro. Marmor erat, sed in his marmore carior est.*” or “This stone deserves to be enclosed in gems and gold. It was marble, but in these [settings] it is more precious than marble.”<sup>70</sup>

Or was there a more ideological plan for the vase? We know that Suger was greatly interested in preserving the history of France’s ruling family as well as the union between that family and his abbey. What better way to do that than to link visual references of their time to those of one of the greatest civilizations to have existed to date. As previously addressed, the construction material of the vase itself is of great historical importance. Porphyry was used almost exclusively for the Roman Imperial family (both Roman and Byzantine) and as such carries an inherent association with nobility and the idea of legacy. The eagle, as added by Suger, was also a symbol of Imperial Rome. The allusion of the vase with its new golden eagle adornments to Roman Imperialism lends an iconographical filter to the viewing public. The combination of artistic movements paints a whole new picture in the mind’s eye which adds more layers to the rich history of the France’s ruling family: being able to trace their lineage back to Charlemagne, having two Holy Roman Emperors amongst their numbers, being patron and protector of a religious institution that was blessed by the hand of Christ... The psychological power surrounding such an innocuous sculpture is astounding which suited the historian in Suger perfectly.

He understood the co-dependent relationship of nobility and church, more specifically that of France's nobility and the status of St.-Denis as the royal abbey. It was Suger's goal to ensure that the royal line of the French people lasted as long and existed with the same renown as those great emperors of the Roman and Byzantine eras and through them, the assured importance of St.-Denis.

In the case of the *Serpentine Paten* (Figure 17), a liturgical device used in conjunction with *Cup of Ptolemies* (to be discussed later), we see another item steeped in history being repurposed to fill a new role as part of the coronation regalia.<sup>71</sup> Although, the use of the cup and paten in a coronation setting was not documented until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the obvious importance of these items to Suger was self evident as well as their continued legacies after his time. Its name is drawn from the mineral from which it was made, *serpentine*: a greenish rock with serpentine veins of off colored minerals running through it, and *paten* which denotes the shallow plate used to hold the Eucharist during religious ceremonies; in this case, the crowning of a new king or queen. This already beautiful piece was elevated by the artists of the St.-Denis project with the addition of the gold outer rim that houses a vast collection of gem stones and decorative glass. *Suger's Chalice* was remade to be used in conjunction with religious ceremonies, the *Serpentine Paten* held special import due to its narrow usage in dealing with only the king, queen and priest performing the ceremony anointing them to the position of ruling entity of the land granting them God's grace. It would have held special prominence to the clergy with the addition of the eight gold dolphins set into the body of the device. These would point to the longstanding tradition of using fish to represent Christ coming from *Ichthys*

acronym meaning “(I) Jesus, (ch) anointed, (th) God, (y) son, (s) savior” broken down from the use of Greek letters.<sup>72</sup>

Unlike the paten’s beautifully mundane origin, the *Cup of Ptolemies* (Figure 18) was thought to have been designed for the funeral procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, ruler of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt from 285 until 246 BCE. Due to the difficulty dating items of this kind because of lack of comparison, its likely date of origin is the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE and of Roman make.<sup>73</sup> The provenance of the chalice can be traced, reliably, to the treasury of Charlemagne and through him, the treasury of St.-Denis. The imagery carved into the faces of the cup are Dionysian in nature which lends the purpose of the cup in transmutation of blood into wine as part of Christian ideology. Combined with the paten, these two devices make up beautifully elevated windows of history that were eventually used as containers housing the Eucharist for the purpose of the coronation ceremony in the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE (see end of footnote 54). The elevation of the cup (Figure 19) followed the plans of *Suger’s Chalice*, adding a large golden foot beautifully etched and festooned with jewels and gems. As with the other cup and paten, the use of spolia tied the lives of the current royal families and clergy to the majesty and power of previous empires that were the foundations of France. Those providing and those receiving the gifts blessed within the cup and paten were graced with a hereditarily based sense of authority given to them by God.

In addition to these portable objects, the very altars of a holy place were supposed to contain relics in order to sanctify them, and they too were encased and adorned with some of the richest materials found in order to pay homage and represent the splendors of the New Jerusalem as closely as possible without being heretical.<sup>74</sup> In major places of

worship, there were often multiple altars, usually one for every chapel; St.-Denis has seven besides the main altar in the choir meaning that there had to be an incredible number of relics to be distributed amongst them, as well as those contained within the specific reliquaries that were brought out on feast days. It was common for churches to unofficially compete to see who could have the most relics as well as to who had the most important ones as this could be a deciding factor in their revenue. The number and the prestige of the relics would dictate how many pilgrims traveled to that specific church, and more importantly, how many noble patrons would donate to the institution and Suger knew this.<sup>75</sup>

Besides being an amazing administrator, Suger was a public relations genius as well. He knew that St.-Denis had a lot of relics and some very important ones, and in order for him to be able to progress with his building plans, he needed his contemporaries to know that he was working within his right as a major church and not building out of hubris. He concluded that the only way to do this was to invite all of the most notable clergy and nobles for a holy day so that when he verified his relics did exist, they were all there to witness it thereby securing his abbey's reputation as well as securing further donations for the construction of his new Gothic monastery.<sup>76</sup> This was for good reason; the main altar of St.-Denis had multiple relics within it as well as the top of it was constructed from porphyry. These remarkable gifts were bequeathed to the church by the late Emperor Charles the Bald so that his resting place would be well watched over (he is buried right in front of the altar).<sup>77</sup> Suger's gamble paid off as everyone was duly impressed and satisfied by what was uncovered when the altar was opened. Interestingly, amongst the French clergy and nobility was one foreigner of note: Theobald, a

representative of Canterbury Cathedral in England.<sup>78</sup> After the re-entombment of the altar relics, a new cross was erected adorned with the ancient gift of a necklace from Dagobert's wife, and another placed around the neck of the statue of St. Denis in memoriam of the events leading to his martyrdom.<sup>79</sup>

As previously stated, Suger was severely interested, almost obsessed, with the relationship between the nobility and the clergy in France. The interest in preserving the legacy of the royal line going back to Charlemagne was paramount. We have discussed Suger's repurposing of older *objets d'art* in order to breathe new life into them. A number of pieces illustrate this campaign, Suger's Chalice, the Eagle Vase. But an argument could be made that one of the most important pieces to his mission is also one of the most overlooked, the *Throne of Dagobert* (Figure 20) whose date is attributed to the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. (although mention of it does not get recorded until the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE and may have been created under false provenance). The obvious draw for the historical benefit of rejuvenating the throne is its tie to France's royal past and initial patron of the first royal abbey at Saint-Denis as Suger says in his *De Administratione*, (Panofsky p.73)

“Further, we saw to it, both on account of its so exalted function and of the value of the work itself, that the famous throne of the glorious King Dagobert, worn with age and dilapidated, was restored. On it, as ancient tradition relates, the kings of the Franks, after having taken the reins of government, used to sit in order to receive, for the first time, the homage of the nobles.”

By itself, the throne is a beautiful piece of functional bronze art. Whatever artists from antiquity that designed Dagobert's throne for him had an eye for innovation with the addition of the scissor joint at the center of the piece allowing it to be folded for easy

storage and transport. Reading the throne is fairly straight forward; the four legs were designed to resemble fierce wildcats with their mouths open as if to give the impression of a moment in time where those great beasts are capable of leaping into action. While the rest of the decorations of rosettes in the bottom register and a plainer geometric motif in the upper register allude to a more reserved and refined occupant. The cast and gilt throne is an amazing symbol of royal power and it is obvious to the beholder why Suger and those before him found it such a compelling piece of art and history to preserve for future generations of French nobles. While the existence of *The Throne of Dagobert* is enough to warrant its inclusion in a paper about Suger's reconstruction campaign at Saint-Denis, for the purposes of this paper we need to look a little deeper into the socio-political implications of what something like this meant to their specific society at that time in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the most important devices at the disposal of the king of any nation at this time was their royal seal. It was the symbol that was carried forth on writs and edicts to represent the royal will to all the corners of their lands when the actual presence of the king was unnecessary or impossible. The 12<sup>th</sup> century saw an evolution to the existing seal that was changed on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 962 by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I (912 – 973 CE). In the previous French and German traditions, the royal seal was much more Roman in appearance; the face gracing it was in profile crowned in a laurel or diadem. Otto brought the Byzantine traditions into the west during his restructuring campaign, abandoning those ancient ideas for a more modern, unified iconography throughout the empire.<sup>80</sup> The contemporary convention was that of a seated person on a throne, viewed



from a forward perspective, with devices of royal authority being worn or held and remained in this fashion from the 10<sup>th</sup> century on.<sup>81</sup>

Each king in succession augmented the seal to their own specific tastes with the iconography remaining the same, just individualized. It was in 1137 when King Louis VII (1120 – 1180 CE) came to power that the seal (Figure 21) was further augmented. With the *Throne's* rejuvenation well under way, or already completed (no firm dates exist for Suger's completion of the item), the young king was kept apprised in the progress of such an important piece of royal history. The influence of Suger and his knowledge of royal and clerical histories combine beautifully in Louis VII's addition of the *Throne* to the seal. As stated above, one of Suger's arguments for the renovation/preservation of the abbey is that Christ had laid his hands in consecration upon the stones of the nave highlighting the institution's importance to the religious community. In regards of the secular community, the attention Suger paid to the *Throne* does the same thing. It serves as a reminder of the long history the French royalty have had with St.-Denis, likening the tradition to that of the Christ myth.<sup>82</sup> Under Suger's supervision, Louis' inclusion of the *Throne* solidified his place, through the use of iconography, in the line of French kings. That the residence of the throne is in the vaults of St.-Denis is a not so subtle reminder of through whose grace those royals rule.

### **Conclusion**

Life in the medieval era was a precarious balance of power between the secular and the clerical communities. In order for either of them to maintain a level of stability or to expand their individual realms of influence, the other's base of societal power had to be increased as well in a complex symbiotic relationship that perpetuated a co-

dependency akin to a political powder keg. In an example of circular logic, European nobility needed the clergy to legitimize their claims to power and to justify military actions undertaken to settle secular disputes or to expand their physical holdings. The peasantry relied on both the nobility to provide their physical safety as well as the clergy to maintain their spiritual wellbeing. The clergy had the ability to weigh heavily upon the matters of state, such as matters of hereditary inheritance or international diplomacy as well as see to the needs of the lower classes that provided the majority of the labor for the Church's properties. But, with all of that apparent power and influence at the clergy's fingertips they were, by far, in a worse position than the nobility or peasantry as the safety of their religious institution was reliant upon the secular rulers with their armies for protection against the dangers of an uncertain world where mortal threats could appear unexpectedly and devastate the community. On their own, the three groups were vulnerable, but together they formed a union that stabilized a chaotic Europe. The relationship was not always an easy one; each group was either constantly vying for the upper hand or just trying to survive in their communities: a societal battle between the kingdoms of men versus the gateways to the kingdom of Heaven with the peasants caught in the middle being pulled both ways simultaneously.

In order to reinforce this social contract, and in addition to written treatise, a visual tradition was expertly implemented. The use of art as a social media has been widely accepted throughout the history of mankind to reinforce social mores, solidify a public understanding in the religious beliefs of that particular culture as well as just used for entertainment. In the case of medieval Europe, there exists a shining example of this idea of societal codependence that is France in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Art history marks it as

the birth of a new artistic style, the Gothic Style, but as far as being the intention of the people at the heart of the affair, a new movement in art was the last thing on their minds. The proliferation of their respective class and the betterment of the society that they were a part of were first and foremost. The interplay of the French aristocracy and the Catholic clergy, specifically Abbot Suger, became a catalyst in the rejuvenation of a national landmark, the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, p. 118, “It was a fortunate superimposition of errors which assembled at that time in the figure of a single Saint Denis, patron saint of Paris, a composite of three historical personages: Dionysius the Areopagite, convert and disciple of Saint Paul in the first century; Dionysius, first bishop of Paris and a martyr, in whose honor the abbey of Saint-Denis had been founded; and a great theologian, then believed to have been Dionysius the Areopagite, but now known to be a late fifth-century Syrian, thereby attracting himself the scholarly nickname of the Pseudo Areopagite. This overlay of Areopagite and Pseudo Areopagite and their identification with Dionysius, martyred bishop of Paris, furnished the abbey of Saint-Denis with the most prestigious background of culture of medieval times and reflected its brilliance upon the nascent Gothic.”

<sup>2</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*, p. 59, “In fact the blessed Denis had rested on this very spot for five hundred years or more, that is to say, from the time of Dagobert up to our own day.”

<sup>3</sup> Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*; p. 87, “Through a fortunate circumstance attending this singular smallness-the number of the faithful growing and frequently gathering to seek the intercession of the Saints- the aforesaid basilica had come to suffer grave inconveniences. Often on feast days, completely filled, it disgorged through all its doors the excess of the crowds as they moved in opposite directions, and the outward pressure of the foremost ones not only prevented those attempting to enter from entering but also expelled those that had already entered. At times you could see, a marvel to behold, that the crowded multitude offered so much resistance to those who strove to flock in to worship and kiss the holy relics, the Nail and Crown of the Lord, that no one among the countless thousands of people because of their very density could move a foot; that no one, because of their very congestion, could [do] anything but stand like a marble statue, stay benumbed or, as a last resort, scream.”

<sup>4</sup> Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, p. 61 “As a young monk, Suger had seen the congestion that resulted on feast days when the faithful came to admire and worship precious relics. The entrance to the Carolingian building, still standing at the time, was far too narrow. So his first aim was to build a façade with three wide doorways. It was to have two towers, and between them and over the central door was to be a chamber, the *camera*, serving as a chapel, with two further chapels to the left and right of it, at a slightly lower level. The central chapel was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Romans, and contained the relics of the latter.”

<sup>5</sup> Lindy Grant, *Abbot Suger of St.-Denis Church and State in Early Twelfth-Century France*, p. 75, “Suger was born in 1081 into a family of minor knights who were using the appellation ‘*miles*’ for some of their more prominent members by 1100. Their principle lands, which they probably held from the abbey of St-Denis, were at Chennevières-les-Louvres, a small village in the rich arable lands of northern Paris. Suger himself was clearly a younger son, destined from his childhood for the church.”

<sup>6</sup> Miriam Webster Dictionary: “Oblate: (1) A layman living in a monastery under a modified rule and without rules. (2) A member of one of several Roman Catholic communities of men and women.”

<sup>7</sup> Grant, p. 86, “In his old age, he told Geoffrey of Anjou that he had been involved in every truce negotiated between Louis the Fat and Henry I of England over twenty years. The long sequence of wars and peaces between the two kings did indeed extend over twenty years, from 1108 to 1128.”

<sup>8</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, pp. 122 – 123, “Suddenly, a servant from our household encountered us on the road; and after he recognized my companions and me, he was both happy and sad as he led me to one side. He reported the death of my predecessor, our lord abbot Adam of good memory, and the election of our own person, which had been carried out in full assembly with the assent of those present, but without the king being consulted in the matter. So, when the preeminent and most religious of the brothers, and also

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the noblest knights, had brought word of the election to the lord king for his approval, they found themselves locked in the castle of Orléans, the victims of much abuse.”

<sup>9</sup> John F. Benton: *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium*, p. 4, pp. 3, “If the monks reasoned that Suger’s royal connection would benefit the abbey, they still made the crucial mistake of failing to consult the king about the election and had to face his anger and even imprisonment when they sought his assent after the fact. Only after negotiation did the king grant Suger his peace and confirmation.”

<sup>10</sup> Grant, p. 238, “Suger tells us that even as an oblate he longed to repair, rebuild, and embellish the crumbling fabric of the abbey church: like Peter of Celle and Henry of Blois, he had something approaching building mania. He started work on the fabric of the abbey in the early years of his abbacy, and his relentless desire to rebuild and embellish was halted only by his death.”

<sup>11</sup> Sumner Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis in the Time of Abbot Suger (1122-1151)*, pp. 13-15, “...Rebuilt as one of the very first great Carolingian abbeys- a new church was dedicated in the presence of Charlemagne and his court on February 24, 775 – it became a royal abbey when Charles the Bald in 867 assumed the title of lay abbot in order to give it every possible protection as the successive Norman raids disturbed the security of northern and central France. Saint Denis by this time had long been recognized as the patron saint of the monarchy, and the fairs held under the abbey’s aegis were also renowned throughout Western Europe. After Hugh Capet, who was buried in the abbey church in 996, only three of the French kings- Philip I, Louis VII, and Louis XI – were to be buried elsewhere.”

<sup>12</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*, p. 201, “Louis’s virtues were amplified and broadcast by his biographer, Suger (1081-1152), the abbot of Saint-Denis, a monastery just outside Paris. A close associate of the king, Suger was his chronicler and propagandist. When Louis set himself the task of consolidating his rule in the Ile-de-France, Suger portrayed the king as a righteous hero.”

<sup>13</sup> Jean Bony, p. 118, “It was a fortunate superimposition of errors which assembled at that time in the figure of a single Saint Denis, patron saint of Paris, a composite of three historical personages: Dionysius the Areopagite, convert and disciple of Saint Paul in the first century; Dionysius, first bishop of Paris and a martyr, in whose honor the abbey of Saint-Denis had been founded; and a great theologian, then believed to have been Dionysius the Areopagite, but now known to be a late fifth-century Syrian, thereby attracting himself the scholarly nickname of the Pseudo Areopagite. This overlay of Areopagite and Pseudo Areopagite and their identification with Dionysius, martyred bishop of Paris, furnished the abbey of Saint-Denis with the most prestigious background of culture of medieval times and reflected its brilliance upon the nascent Gothic.”

<sup>14</sup> Paula Gerson, *New Research on Abbeys of the Parisian Region in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries Abstracts of Papers Delivered at Sessions 66 and 87 of the Thirteenth Conference on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 4-7, 1978*, p. 73, “There has been very little attempt to explain the iconography of the Saint-Denis Trinity. Kantorowitz has discussed the presence of the Lamb in a Utrecht Psalter depiction of the Trinity, suggesting that the image there makes reference to the two natures of Christ in the one person, the Lamb representing the divine nature rather than the human. However, recent research indicates that the problem of the Trinity at Saint-Denis is not so much related to the question of the two natures of Christ in one person. Rather, it reflects a renewed interest in the twelfth century in two areas of speculative theology-concepts of the Trinity, and the cosmos and its relationship to God. Many of the ideas derive ultimately from Greek authors, especially those of the neo- Platonic and mystical schools. These concepts were filtered through Western theologians, like John Scotus Erigena, who in addition to his translations of Dionysius the Pseudo- Areopagite, composed treatises which rely heavily on the Pseudo-Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor. These, in turn, were popularized in the twelfth century by writers like Honorius Augustodunensis. For Suger, of course, the theological tracts of the Pseudo-Areopagite, the figure he considered his patron saint, are the most important source. It is, however,

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important to see Suger's image of the Trinity, idiosyncratic as it is, as a reflection of the general interest in more mystical theology which appears to be in vogue in the twelfth century."

<sup>15</sup> Panofsky, p. 55, "You could see how kings, princes, and many outstanding men, following our example, took the rings off the fingers of their hands and ordered, out of love for the Holy Martyrs, that the gold, stones, and precious pearls of the rings be put into that panel. Similarly archbishops and bishops deposited there the very rings of their investiture as though in a place of safety, and offered the devoutly to God and His Saints. And such a crown of dealers in precious gems flocked in on us from diverse dominions and regions that we did not wish to buy any more than they hastened to sell, with everyone contributing donations."

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth John Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800-1200*, p. 108, "Until the towns and monasteries became large, the masons necessary worked as traveling bands. It was the same with bell-founders, glass-makers, stucco workers, fresco painters, and mosaicists, for a longer period. Bernardo, who had a French name, and fifty master masons, many of them indubitably French, were called by bishop Diego Peláez to work (from 1075 onwards) at the remote Galician cathedrals of Santiago de Compostela. Yet Abbot Suger at Saint-Denis, only a few miles from medieval Paris, was no better off. When his great church was undertaken (about 1135) he was obliged, as he says, to call craftsmen from various regions and considerable distances."

<sup>17</sup> Roger Stalley, *Early Medieval Architecture*, pp. 103-104, "It is important not to minimize the role of the patron. In church building the bishop or abbot usually took the initiative, sometimes in the face of considerable opposition: monastic communities could be very conservative institutions, as Ratger discovered to his cost when he continued the reconstruction of the abbey church at Fulda between 802 and 817. The patron had to raise the cash (often sacrificing much of his own income), seek out suitably qualified craftsmen, and resolve difficulties over the supply of stone and other materials. It was a task that demanded self-belief, energy, and determination. The responsibilities of one enlightened patron are vividly described by Leo of Ostia in his account of the rebuilding of Montecassino by Abbot Desiderius. The abbot conceived a plan for a new church which involved demolishing the old one: 'To most of our leading brethren this project seemed at the time entirely too difficult to attempt. They tried to persuade him from this intention by prayers, by reason, by every other possible way, believing that his entire life would be insufficient to bring such a great work to an end.' In fact Desiderius confounded his critics and rebuilt the church in five years, from 1066 to 1071. According to Leo, it was Desiderius who decided to level the top of the mountain as a platform for the new building. He also went to Rome where, 'after consulting each of his best friends', he purchased huge quantities of columns, bases, epistyles, and marble. He organized the transport of these materials back to Montecassino, no easy feat given the monastery lies at the summit of a precipitous mountain. On his return from Rome he hired 'highly experienced workmen'. No doubt Desiderius had assistants, but he clearly took most of the decisions himself. To a considerable extent he was the architect of Montecassino."

<sup>18</sup> Bony, p. 117, "The beginnings of Gothic architecture have to first be analyzed in purely architectural terms: in terms of light-weight structures, of spaciousness increased and reorganized, and of a new play of linear rhythms involving new kinds of repetitive effects. The technical and formal approach of necessity takes precedence, because it is in such terms that new concepts of art take shape in the mind of their inventors. Art is, after all, the creation of artists, not of statesmen or philosophers. But art is closely linked, and at a very deep level, with all the other aspects of historical life and it would be wrong to neglect these connections."

<sup>19</sup> Andreas Petzold, *Romanesque Art*, p. 31, "Another twelfth-century English source provides information on an architectural project. Gervase of Canterbury, a monk of the abbey of Christ Church, which was attached to Canterbury cathedral, wrote an unusually full account of the rebuilding of the eastern end of Canterbury Cathedral after a fire in 1174. He records that the monks of Christ Church first obtained the

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services of a French architect, William of Sens, and after his fall from scaffolding in 1178 (which for architects and stonemasons must have been an occupational hazard) employed a local architect, William the Englishman, to complete the project.”

<sup>20</sup> Roland Recht, *Believing and Seeing the Art of Gothic Cathedrals*, p. 112, “We would retain, however, as much as we could of the old walls on which, by the testimony of ancient writers, the Highest Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, had laid His hand.” These ancient, “consecrated” stones were, therefore, in Suger’s words, true “relics.”

<sup>21</sup> Frankl, p. 269, “A second innovation which influenced architecture was the exhibition of newly acquired relics on altars, and the transition of older relics from crypts to the churches above... At Saint-Denis, Suger preserved the old crypts because, as consecrated ground, they seem sacrosanct to him.”

<sup>22</sup> Grant, p. 215, “The abbey of St.-Denis sat like a giant spider at the centre of an immense web of churches, properties, cells, and priories all ultimately dependent on it, and all to some extent dedicated to supporting it. In spite of alienations, the potential revenues were enormous, and Suger applied all his considerable energies to realizing them.

Enormous revenues were needed. The congregation of St.-Denis numbered around 150-200. All must be decently housed, clothed and fed; services must be maintained and charity dispensed. In his Ordinance of 832, Hilduin had divided the abbey’s revenues into those which supported the abbot and his household, and those which supported the monastery. Many of the properties Hilduin specified for the housing, food and clothing of monks, are, in the *De Administratione*, dedicated to the support of, and under the control of, the abbot.”

<sup>23</sup> Peter Fingesten, *Topographical and Anatomical Aspects of the Gothic Cathedral*, p. 5, “An increasing desire for height, together with the expanding ground plan which became so typical of the Gothic cathedral, besides answering practical needs, such as accommodating greater numbers of worshippers in the nave, more clergy in the rituals, and more relics in the side chapels, reflects a certain topographical awareness, at least on the exterior. In order to erect architectural magic mountain’s the builders and ecclesiastics studied real mountains. As we shall see, the exterior of the cathedral conforms to natural rock formations to an astonishing degree. The mountains they observed, however, were held in superstitious awe by the mediaeval mind. In other words, architectural needs, nature study, and the miraculous entered into a strange relation-ship in the building of the great cathedrals.”

<sup>24</sup> Fingesten, p. 4, “The idea of the cathedral as a sacred city, holy mountain, and center of the earth derives from the Hebrews, and, through them, from the religious traditions of the Ancient Near East, where the symbolism of the mountain of God (ziggurat) was first conceived. Every cathedral, like the temple at Jerusalem, stands upon a "holy mountain" (Ps. 48:2). It is symbolically the "center of the nations, with countries round about" (Ez. 5:5). From it the truth radiates in every direction and around it, like a cosmic axis, everything revolves; thus every cathedral signifies both the physical and spiritual center of the world. It is built upon the "rock of salvation" (Ps. 95:1, 1 Cor. 10:4), upon the mountain where God met his people (Ex. 19:11). The steps which lead into the cathedral force one to ascend, as on the holy mountain itself, so that man may see the face of God again.”

<sup>25</sup> Rosenwein, p. 244, “Certainly town and gown agreed on the building style: by c.1200, “Gothic” (the term itself comes from the sixteenth century) was the architecture of choice. Beginning as a variant of Romanesque in the Ile-de-France, Gothic style quickly took on an identity of its own. Gothic architects tried to eliminate heavy walls by enlivening them with sculpture or piercing them with glass, creating a soaring feel by using pointed arches. Suger, abbot of Saint-Denis and the promoter of Capetian royal power, was the style’s first sponsor. When he rebuilt portions of his church around 1135, he tried to meld royal and ecclesiastical interests and ideals in stone and glass. At the west end of his church, the point where the faithful entered, Suger decorated the portals with figures of Old Testament kings, queens, and

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patriarchs, signaling the links between the present king and his illustrious predecessors. Rebuilding the interior of the east end of his church as well, Suger used pointed arches and stained glass to let in light, which Suger believed to be God's own "illumination", capable of transporting the worshiper from the "slime of earth" to the "purity of Heaven."

<sup>26</sup> Panofsky, p. 57, "We should have insisted with all the devotion of our mind – had we but had the power – that the adorable, life-giving Saviour (of which the Apostle says: *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*), should be adorned all the more gloriously as the *sign of the Son of Man*, which will appear in Heaven at the end of the world, will be glorious not only to men but also to the very *angels*; and we should have perpetually greeted it with the Apostle Andrew: *Hail Cross, which art dedicated in the body of Christ and adorned with His members even as with pearls*. But since we could not do as we wished, we wished to do the best we could, and strove to bring it about by the grace of God. Therefore we searched around everywhere by ourselves and by our agents for an abundance of precious pearls and gems, preparing as precious a supply of gold and gems for so important and embellishment as we could find, and convoked the most experienced artists from diverse parts."

<sup>27</sup> Crosby, pp. 17-19, "An unusual feature at Saint-Denis today is the presence of crenellations crowning the top of the façade. Though rebuilt, they were mentioned by Suger as part of the original design. Similar crenellations over gateways can be traced back to antiquity and are present in early images of the Temple of Solomon. At Saint-Denis, they remind us that the patron saint was protector of the monarchy and that the church guarded the royal crowns and the Banner of Saint Denis."

<sup>28</sup> Stalley, p. 176, "...a Neo-Platonic argument used by Hugh of St. Victor, when he explained that a wise man could consider 'the external beauty of the work' and so comprehend 'how wondrous the wisdom of the Creator is'. This rather obtuse line of reasoning was later seized upon by Abbot Suger (1122-51) as a welcome means of justifying his lavish expenditure at the Benedictine abbey of St. Denis. Both the Cluniacs and the Benedictines had their critics and as the eleventh century advanced these became more vociferous."

<sup>29</sup> Crosby, *The Plan of the Western Bays of Suger's New Church at St. Denis*, p. 40, "Suger writes: 'we began work at the former entrance with the doors. We tore down a certain addition asserted to have been made by Charlemagne ... .' This is a reference to the western end of the old, then standing, Carolingian church. The identification of the western end as an addition, augmentum, built by Charlemagne, was to distinguish it from the rest of the old church, which Suger and his contemporaries believed had been built by Dagobert in the seventh century. A legend also related that this church had been miraculously consecrated by Christ, so that every stone in its construction was venerated as a sacred relic. Because of this veneration there evidently was opposition to Suger's project for a new, larger church. To pacify such objectors, he identified the western entrance as an addition of the eighth century; and it was there that he began his work. It also served a very useful purpose, since it allowed the planning of the new western entrance to be laid out in direct relation to the old nave to which it was to be joined."

<sup>30</sup> Crosby, p. 17, "Order in the temporal realm dominates this first building campaign. The façade at Saint-Denis is not just an exterior embellishment. The twin towers, developed to such a degree by Norman masons, are not flush with the plane of the façade but are set back on the mass of the entrance bays so that they become an integral part of the whole western section of the church. Such a western mass or westwork was introduced into ecclesiastical architecture in Carolingian times and was further developed in the Ottonian imperial basilicas of the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Rhine Valley. The westwork was the symbol of secular, royal authority, as distinct from the authority of the clergy, who presided over the church at the opposite or eastern end."

<sup>31</sup> Marvin Chauncey Ross, *Monumental Sculptures from St.-Denis: An Identification of Fragments from the Portal*, p. 96 & 98, "According to Montfaucon 'We come to the three portals of St.-Denis which are the frontispiece of the church. On the first portal to the left, as one enters, are six statues, five kings and one



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queen of which the head is lost. The second portal, which is the central one, has eight statues, five kings and three queens, one of which has no head. The third portal has six kings, of which the extreme left one has fallen through the damage of time. Altogether there are sixteen kings and four queens. Nine of these kings have crowns shaped like caps, quite different from each other. There are some which have at the base bands which resemble diadems; the others differ considerably among themselves. Only three of these crowns have the trefoil; which brings us again to what we have often said, that the trefoil was merely an arbitrary ornament. Here the nimbus is no longer used, and it is not found at all from this time on, as I pointed out at length in my preliminary dissertation. "It should be remarked that this number of sixteen kings comprises all those who reigned from Clovis to the end of his dynasty, counting only those who ruled in Paris, in accordance with the old method of counting; as follows: 1. Clovis. 2. Childebert. 3. Clotaire. 4. Cherebert. 5. Clotaire II. 6. Dagobert. 7. Clovis II. 8. Clotaire III. 9. Childeric II. 10. Thierry I. 11. Clovis III. 12. Childebert II. 13. Dagobert II. 14. Chilperic. 15. Thierry II. 16. Childeric III."

<sup>32</sup>Pamela Blum, *Abbot Suger and Saint Denis: The Lateral Portals of the West Façade of the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis: Archaeological and Iconographic Consideration*, p. 211, "Yet Moses and Aaron, two Old Testament figures, have no iconographic associations with the martyrdom of St. Denis, which is represented in both modern tympana. In the exegetical literature of the early Church fathers, Moses is understood as a type of Christ, for he led his people in the way of the Lord. The tablets containing the Old Law make a typological reference to the New Law, which first fulfilled and then supplanted the Old. As an allegorical figure for both the Temple and the priesthood, Aaron, the first priest, provides a type for the Church; his flowering rod makes a typological reference to the Virgin, who in the language of symbols bore the *flos*, or flower, that is Christ. Also, in the medieval tradition of a play on words, the rod, *virga*, and the Virgin, *virgo*, were linked conceptually. The flowering rod had further associations with the Tree of Jesse, a reference to the royal ancestry of Christ."

<sup>33</sup>Colum Hourihane, *Time in the Medieval World Occupations of the Months and Signs of the Zodiac in the Index of Christian Art*, p. 48 (introduction), "For the medieval world the most important aspect of the passing of time appears to have been based on the changes of nature – the seasons on earth and the movement of the stars in the zodiac... In the case of the labors it was based on recognizable everyday life..."

<sup>34</sup>Panofsky, p. 47, "Bronze casters having been summoned and sculptors chosen, we set up the main doors on which are represented the Passion of the Savior and His Resurrection, or rather Ascension, with great cost and much expenditure for their gilding as was fitting for the noble porch. Also [we set up] others, new ones on the right side and the old ones on the left beneath the mosaic which, though contrary to modern custom, we ordered to be executed there and to be affixed to the tympanum of the portal. We also committed ourselves richly to elaborate the tower[s] and the upper crenellation of the front, both for the beauty of the church and, should circumstances require it, for practical purposes. Further we ordered the year of the consecration, lest it be forgotten, to be inscribed in copper-gilt letters in the following manner.

"For the splendor of the church that has fostered and exalted him,  
Suger has labored for the splendor of the church.  
Giving thee a share of what is thine, O Martyr Denis,  
He prays to thee to pray that he may obtain a share of Paradise.  
This year was the One Thousand, One Hundred, and Fortieth  
Year of the Word when [this structure] was consecrated."

"Whoever thou art, if thou sleekest to extol the glory of these doors,  
Marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work.  
Bright is the noble work; but, being nobly bright, the work  
Should brighten the minds, so that they may travel, through the true lights,  
To the True Light, where Christ is the true door.

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In what manner it be inherent in this world the golden door defines:  
The dull mind rises to truth the that which is material  
And, in seeing this light, is resurrected from its former submersion.”

“Receive, O stern Judge, the prayers of Thy Suger;  
Grant that I be mercifully numbered among Thy own sheep.”

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth John Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800-1200*, p. 439, “The problem of modernizing the shrines of the Île-de-France did not become acute until the twelfth century, when the breath of new intellectual life was drawn in Paris. Then the same type of intellect which created scholasticism was focused on the problems of great church architecture. What began as a local differentiation of the Romanesque style in ordinary buildings with a clever type of rib vaulting, became a new style through the reasoned, novel, and systematic development and exploitation of such vaulting. From the moment of Suger’s new design for Saint-Denis (about 1135) the face of Western architecture began to change.”

<sup>36</sup> Crosby, *Early Gothic Architecture --- New Problems As A Result of the St. Denis Excavations*, p. 14, “What are the problems, then, that the “new” twelfth-century St.-Denis poses for a student of early Gothic architecture? The plan, and the structure, I believe, was a curious combination of deeply rooted, traditional forms and of daring innovations. The first campaign, completed in 1140, contemporary with the early work at the Cathedral of Sens, saw the erection of the western portions, or narthex. It was a large, rectangular mass, to be surmounted by twin towers, which were set back several feet on the upper platform from the plane of the facade. The lower nave and single side-aisles are separated by tremendous compound piers, obviously designed from the very beginning for the support of ribbed vaults. The upper galleries, or tribunes, infrequently visited today, were chapels, as vividly described in Suger’s texts. The different levels of the stories are clearly reflected in the design of the facade, which thus, in spite of the strong verticle accents supplied by the heavy wall but-tresses, displays a hesitant compromise in the evolution of the twin-tower facade. The entire construction must stem from northern traditions, reflecting the massive Carolingian west-works, as well as the trend toward the Gothic harmonic facade, especially notable with the early upper rose window. The heavy, often awkwardly constructed rib vaults, identify the construction as proto-Gothic, if not Gothic, but the ensemble must be considered as developing out of basically Romanesque traditions. The three portals, with their remnants of twelfth-century sculpture, present a problem in and of themselves. We were able to make a “spot” cleaning of the central tympanum and archivolts in 1947 and proved that considerably more detail of the original sculpture remains than had been believed. An unexpected find during the excavations in the south transept, to be described at the end of this paper, throws new light on this problem and strengthens the thesis that the sculptors at St.- Denis were responsible for initiating the theme and style of the early Gothic Royal Portal.”

<sup>37</sup> Recht, p. 110, “Most beautiful and worthy to be the dwelling place of angels, in honor of the Holy Mother of God, the eternal Virgin Mary, of St. Michael the Archangel, of All the Angels, [and] of St. Romanus.”

<sup>38</sup> Panofsky, p. 55, “You could see how kings, princes, and many outstanding men, following our example, took the rings off the fingers of their hands and ordered, out of love for the Holy Martyrs, that the gold, stones, and precious pearls of the rings be put into the panel.”

<sup>39</sup> Bony, p. 117, “The many studies which have been made in the last forty years on the personality of Abbot Suger and on the historic significance of the choir of Saint-Denis have all placed insistence on the direct relationship which must be recognized between that great architectural work- the first articulate manifestation of the new ideal in art- and the religious and philosophical ideas expressed by Suger in his

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writings. Not that Suger was a philosopher, but he crystallized from the complex metaphysics he found in the writings then attributed mistakenly to Saint Denis a concept of spiritual ascension toward the understanding of God through the physical medium of the contemplation of light. And it is this radiance of light, diffused through an uninterrupted sequence of unusually large windows, that Suger extols as the great splendor of the new choir built at his command and certainly with the intention of materializing the Dionysian metaphysics of light.”

<sup>40</sup> Crosby, p. 17, “Even while still a pupil, Suger had wished to be able to renovate the old church. When finally, as abbot, he had the opportunity, he was faced with an unexpected obstruction. A popular legend recounted that the old church, which was believed to have been built by Dagobert, had been consecrated by Christ himself and a crowd of angels on the eve of its consecration by the clergy. This miraculous event, of course, endowed the building – and indeed every stone with which it was built – with the veneration due a relic. Such veneration proved more effective in those days than any number of historic-preservation groups would today and Suger was forced to build his new church piecemeal, beginning at the western entrance and then moving to the eastern end to erect his splendid new choir, leaving the old nave and transept standing between the two. The great western entrance with its three sculptured portals – including column statues closely resembling those of the Royal Portals at Chartres Cathedral, and the rose window – was consecrated on June 9, 1140. Although only one of the towers that surmounted the western mass of the structure was finished in Suger’s lifetime, this “westwerke,” with its three upper chapels, dominated the plains north of Paris as a symbol of royal power and a Church militant.”

<sup>41</sup> Crosby, p. 13, “Although Saint Denis, the first Bishop of Paris, was apparently martyred in the mid-third century, and the site of his burial in the village of Catulliacum, now the suburb of Saint-Denis, attracted special veneration from that time on, it was not until the sixth century that the first royal burial took place there, and not until the seventh century that the generosity of King Dagobert I and his son Clovis II gave the religious community its monastic standing and endowed it with the properties and particular privileges that were to make it one of the powerful institutions in Medieval France.”

<sup>42</sup> Vibeke Olson, *Colonnade Production and the Advent of the Gothic Aesthetic*, p. 21, “The ideal circumstance, of course, would be to have the building site and quarry in the same general vicinity and thereby avoid the problem of long-distance transport entirely. This appears to be the case of the quarry near Pontoise described by Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis in his text on the consecration of the abbey church, in which he describes pious individuals hauling columns out of the quarry and up to the church. Thus, frugally, he has eliminated any cost for the transportation of stone.

Suger’s statement has often been cited as support for the theory that the stone was cut at the quarry because he refers to completed columns being removed from the quarry. When taken as documentary evidence, Suger’s text implies that pre-fabrication away from the building site was an existing practice and, perhaps ultimately, also that colonnettes were mass produced.”

<sup>43</sup> Grant, p. 271, “A more sophisticated use of the same corpus of Dionysian ideas occurs in the *De Consecratione*. Its brief concluding sentences claim that by the sacraments of consecration and Eucharist enacted in the new church, God has ‘conjoined the material with the immaterial, the corporeal with the spiritual, the human with the Divine... miraculously transforming the present into the Heavenly Kingdom.’ It relates back to the introduction to the treatise, which skims over various aspects of the problem of the corporeal and incorporeal, the human and the Divine. It puts a weakly Dionysian gloss on the problems of Incarnation, and the associated questions of God’s love for man, and man’s for God, which exercised so many of Suger’s more spiritually profound contemporaries, including Bernard, Abelard, and Peter the Venerable. In a few brief pompous, superficial and bathetic sentences, Suger reduces Divine love for humanity to God’s ‘immeasurable beneficence’ in allowing Suger to build and consecrate the church of St.-Denis.”

<sup>44</sup> Panofsky, p. 21, “These instances may be interpreted as normal medieval symbolism without specifically “Dionysian” connotations. But the famous passage in which Suger relates his experience in contemplating

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the precious stones that glowed on the main altar and its ornaments, the “Cross of St. Eloy” and the “*Escrin de Charlemagne*,” is full of reminiscences: “When- out of my delight in the beauty of the house of God- the loveliness of the many-colored stones has called me away from external cares, and worthy meditation has induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial, on the diversity of the sacred virtues: then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the Grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.” Here Suger gives a vivid picture of that trancelike state which can be induced by gazing upon such shining objects like crystal balls or precious stones. But he describes this state, not as a psychological but as a religious experience, and his description is principally in the words of John the Scot. The term *anagogicus mos*, explained as a transition from the “inferior” to the “higher” world, is as literal a quotation as is the phrase *de materialibus ad immaterialia transferendo*; and the “diversity of the sacred virtue,” which reveals itself in the diverse properties of the gems, recalls both the “celestial virtues” appearing to the Prophets “in some visible form” and the spiritual “illumination” to be delivered from any physical object.”

<sup>45</sup> Recht, p. 319, “Just as the clergy sought constantly to contain any risk of an upsurge of heresy or idolatry by extending even further the register of representation so as to please the congregation, including even sacred relics in subtle plays of unveiling, so artists too, greatly encouraged to assist in this process, came to approach commissions by taking the artistic form itself as one level of meaning, separate from its content. This level of meaning rested on sensory qualities that were accessible to the *illiterati*, although the allusions, references, and cross-references made by the artists were perceptible only by the circle of connoisseurs, which only partly overlapped the circle of *literati*.”

<sup>46</sup> Frankl, p. 269, “A second innovation which influenced architecture was the exhibition of newly acquired relics on altars, and the transition of older relics from crypts to the churches above... At Saint-Denis, Suger preserved the old crypts because, as consecrated ground, they seem sacrosanct to him.”

<sup>47</sup> Lawrence Nees, *Early Medieval Art*; p. 242, “In relating to fellow monks and posterity his stewardship of the abbey of Saint-Denis, near Paris, the mid-twelfth-century Abbot Suger described new administrative, financial, and artistic achievements of which he was proud. He also told of some older things, including a bronze throne that still survives.” Further, we saw to it, both on account of its so exalted function and of the value of the work itself, that the famous throne of the glorious King Dagobert, worn with age and dilapidated, was restored.” Both its apparent age and its association with the seventh-century Merovingian king were evidently important to Suger, and exploited by him in his campaign to establish Saint-Denis as the pre-eminent royal church of France.

<sup>48</sup> Frankl, p. 67, “According to Suger, the Carolingian church at Saint-Denis had two faults: the entrance was too narrow for the crowds of pilgrims, and the space round the main altar was not large enough on feast days when the relics were being shown. The first of the vaults was eliminated in 1140, when the new west part was finished. When the building at the west had reached the level of the horizontal above the *camera* and the original battlements were finished, Suger turned to the reconstruction of the east end. Suger describes how the old crypt and the chapel to the east of it were used to put the new choir on a higher level so that the relics might be more easily viewed.”

<sup>49</sup> Petzold, p. 37, “One of Suger’s motives for rebuilding of the east end was the urgent need to provide greater space for the throngs of pilgrims who came to visit the abbey’s holy relics, the most revered of which was that of St. Denis himself, considered to have been the first bishop of Paris. The donations of pilgrims to churches fortunate enough to house important relics was a vital source of income, although the practice was referred to disparagingly by St. Bernard in the famous critique of artistic excess and practices in tradition Benedictine monasteries contained in his *Apologia*: “their eyes are feasted with relics, and their purse strings are loosed.”

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<sup>50</sup> Fingesten, *Topographical and Anatomical Aspects of the Gothic Cathedral*, p. 1, "Leading allegorists of the Middle Ages, like William Durandus, and even, to a certain extent, Abbot Suger, the guiding spirit of the Abbey church of St. Denis, took function for granted and only saw the symbolic meaning of form."

<sup>51</sup> Emily Cole, *The Grammar of Architecture*, p. 202, "Flying Buttresses: The flying buttress transmits the thrust of the vault to the ground, thereby relieving the wall. As a result, this can be lighter in construction, with a greater proportion of windows."

<sup>52</sup> Crosby, p. 86, "...since its iconography is taken from Saint Paul, the window is a direct reminder, on Suger's part of the connection thought to exist between the abbey's patron and the apostle who, supposedly, was his teacher."

<sup>53</sup> Crosby, p. 86, "The symbolic significance of this scene is to be found in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 9 and 10, where the New Alliance between God and mankind is explained. The Ark of gold containing the rod of Aaron and the tablets of the Law is the altar of the Old Testament. It becomes the altar of Christ through his sacrifice on the cross. The First Alliance occurred when Moses, by asperging the people with the blood of animal sacrifice, expiated their sins against God. The Second Alliance took place when Christ offered his own blood to God as a sacrifice for mankind."

<sup>54</sup> Crosby, p. 94, "Of all the windows of the choir, within the iconographic program these two were most directly related to the abbey and the monarchy. They served as historic reminders of the role of the French kings as protectors of the abbey. In 1147, just three years after the choir was completed, Louis VII accepted the sacred battle standard from Suger's own hand to carry in a Second Crusade to free the Holy Land. It is obvious that the Crusade window was propaganda for this endeavor."

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth A.R. Brown, Michael W. Cothren, *The Twelfth-Century Crusading Window of the Abbey of Saint-Denis*, p. 2, "There is, in addition, no sure information regarding the original arrangement of the panels or the precise site at Saint-Denis where they were originally installed. Montfaucon's descriptions are not clear on either point, and the panels were probably rearranged before he published them. The late eighteenth-century drawings of Charles Percier, so important for reconstructing other windows in the abbey's ambulatory, cannot be clearly correlated with this glass."

The Pitcairn medallions pose similar problems. In style and subject matter they relate not only to the panels reproduced by Montfaucon, but also to other twelfth-century glass from Saint-Denis. Their presence at the abbey, however, cannot be documented before the 1830s.

In his fundamental studies of the windows of Saint-Denis, Louis Grodecki proposed that the fourteen known panels came from two pendant, single-lancet windows, each consisting of fourteen medallions. To a Charlemagne Window he assigned Montfaucon's two panels portraying the Emperor, and the Pitcairn scene of the nine seated figures. Montfaucon's ten crusading panels and the other Pitcairn medallion he gave to a companion window dedicated to the First Crusade. Thus, he supposed fourteen additional panels to have existed in the original windows: eleven in the first window and three in the second. The pair of windows, related formally and iconographically, would have been installed in one of the westernmost chapels of Suger's ambulatory, whose relatively narrow lancets could, by his calculations, have accommodated windows of fourteen medallions the size of the Pitcairn panels. Conceived by and executed for Abbot Suger soon after 1145, they served, Grodecki believed, as propaganda for the crusade on which Louis VII departed in 1147."

<sup>56</sup> Gerson, p. 259, "In a fourth chapel, Grodecki envisaged a pair of historical windows containing the story of the First Crusade and Charlemagne's journey to the Holy Land, perhaps combined with the expedition to Spain as told in *Chansons de Roland*."

<sup>57</sup> Crosby, p. 94, "Grodecki has suggested that the scene might represent the Lotharingian crusaders of Godfrey of Bouillon or the march of the Christian armies across Asia Minor after the battle of Dorylaeum."

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<sup>58</sup>Thomas F. Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades*, p. 38, "In council, the leaders to offer the crown [of Jerusalem] to Raymond of Toulouse, still the wealthiest and most powerful of the crusade leaders. As commander in chief, Raymond had distinguished himself as a pious and effective leader. In addition, his troops were already in control of Jerusalem's citadel, the Tower of David, and it would be difficult to dislodge them. Raymond responded coyly to the offer, saying that he would not be king where Christ alone reigned. Given his material and strategic position, Raymond indulged in cleverness, piously refusing a crown he knew would be pressed on him again. He was too clever. After his refusal, the council offered the crown to Godfrey of Bouillon. Godfrey was well liked by the rank and file, who knew him as a gallant and courageous warrior and the commander who first led his troops into Jerusalem. Godfrey also refused the crown, but later took the city, saying that he would act as defender against the infidels. Later, he appears to have accepted the title *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri*, Protector of the Holy Sepulcher."

<sup>59</sup> Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades*, p. 52, "The devout and pious King Louis VII of France (1137-80) had for some time been considering the idea of leading an expedition to the East, although his barons and advisers continued to dissuade him. Even after the formal declaration of the crusade, the king's chief counselor, Abbot Suger of St. Denis, urged him to remain home."

<sup>60</sup> Georges Goyau, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "In verses 3093-5 of the "Chanson de Roland" (eleventh century) the oriflamme is mentioned as a royal banner, called at first "Romaine" afterwards "Montjoie". According to the legend it was given to Charlemagne by the pope, but no historical text affords us any information with regard to this oriflamme, which is perhaps fabulous. As Eudes, who became king in 888, was Abbot of St. Martin, the banner of the church of St. Martin of Tours was the earliest military standard of the Frankish monarchy. It was a plain blue, a colour then assigned in the liturgy to saints who were, like St. Martin confessors and pontiffs. The azure ground strewn with gold fleur-de-lis remained the symbol of royalty until the fourteenth century, when the white standard of Jeanne d'Arc wrought marvels, and by degrees the custom was introduced of depicting the fleur-de-lis on white ground. But from the time of Louis VI (1108-37) the banner of St. Martin was replaced as ensign of war by the oriflamme of the Abbey of St. Denis, which floated about the tomb of St. Denis and was said to have been given to the abbey by Dagobert. It is supposed without any certainty that this was a piece of fiery red silk of *sendal* the field of which was covered with flames and stars of gold. The standard-bearer carried it either at the end of a staff or suspended from his neck. Until the twelfth century the standard-bearer was the Comte de Vexin, who, as "vowed" to St. Denis, was the temporal defender of the abbey. Louis VI the Fat, having acquired Vexin, became standard-bearer; as soon as war began, Louis VI received Communion at St. Denis and took the standard from the tomb of the saint to carry it to the combat. "Montjoie Saint Denis", cried the men-at-arms, even as in England they cried "Montjoie Notre Dame", or "Montjoie Saint George". The word *Montjoie* (from *Mons gaudii* or *Mons Jovis*) designates the heaps of stones along the roadside which served as mile-stones or as sign-posts, and which sometimes became the meeting-places for warriors; it was applied to the oriflamme the sight of which was to guide the soldiers into the mêlée. The descriptions of the oriflamme which have reached us in Guillaume le Breton (thirteenth century), in the "Chronicle of Flanders" (fourteenth century), in the "Registra Delphinalia" (1456), and in the inventory of the treasury of St. Denis (1536), show that to the primitive oriflamme there succeeded in the course of centuries newer oriflammes which little resembled one another. At the battle of Poitiers (1356) and Agincourt (1415) the oriflamme fell into the hands of the English; it would seem that after the Hundred Years' War it was no longer borne on the battlefield."

<sup>61</sup> Merriam Webster: "Sendal - A thin medieval silk used for fine clothing and church vestments."

<sup>62</sup> Crosby, p. 96, "It can only be interpreted in relation to the legend fabricated at Saint Denis by 1124 in order to authenticate the abbey's relics of the Passion. These relics had been given to Saint Denis by the Carolingian Emperor Charles the Bald in the ninth century. According to the legend, Charlemagne had journeyed to the Holy Land with his army and had received at Constantinople by the Emperor Constantine.

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While there, Charlemagne had been given the relics by Constantine and had taken them back to his Palatine Chapel at Aachen. His son, Charles the Bald, had then given them to the Abbey of Saint Denis.”

<sup>63</sup> Jane Hayward, *Radiance and Reflection Medieval Art from the Raymond Pitcairn Collection*, p. 98, “... Official papal sanction was not accorded the new Carolingian line until 754, when Pope Stephen II repeated the coronation of Pepin together with his sons Charlemagne and Carloman, at Saint-Denis. Thus, this coronation at the royal abbey founded the Carolingian dynasty, an even that had historical importance to the abbey.”

<sup>64</sup> Crosby, p. 96, “In each case, three figures sit upon a single throne. Thus, both the unity and the partitioning of the empire are expressed in the scene.”

<sup>65</sup> Crosby, p. 110, “Suger’s Chalice demonstrates a respect for Byzantine traditions. Its overall shape and proportion are generally similar to those of several Byzantine chalices made in the previous two centuries in Constantinople and brought back to Venice after the sack of Constantinople in 1204.”

<sup>66</sup> Crosby, pp. 110-111, “The one remaining medallion, that of Christ as Pantocrator, while clearly western in its modeling and in the paleographic character of the letter A (alpha), is nevertheless Byzantine in inspiration... The actual decorative detail of the Chalice, however, seems western in inspiration when compared with the metalwork of the late tenth and eleventh centuries in the Rhineland. The filigree volutes of notched wire and the carefully positioned cabochons, alternating with smaller gems on the knob...”

<sup>67</sup> Panofsky, p. 79, “And further we adapted for the service of the altar, with the aid of gold and silver material, a porphyry vase, made admirable by the hand of the sculptor and polisher, after it had lain idly in a chest for many years, converting it from a flagon into the shape of an eagle; and we had the following verses inscribed on this vase: “This stone deserves to be enclosed in gems and gold. It was marble, but in these [settings] it is more precious than marble.”

<sup>68</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica: “Niello, black metallic alloy of sulfur with silver, copper, or lead that is used to fill designs that have been engraved on the surface of a metal (usually silver) object. Niello is made by fusing together silver, copper, and lead and then mixing the molten alloy with sulfur. The resulting black-coloured sulfides are powdered, and after the engraved metal, usually silver, has been moistened with a flux, some of the powder is spread on it and the metal strongly heated; the niello melts and runs into the engraved channels. The excess niello is then removed by scraping until the filled channels are clearly visible, and finally the surface is polished. The contrast of the black niello against the bright silver surface produces an attractive decorative effect. Objects decorated with niello, called nielli, are usually small in scale. During the Renaissance, at the height of its popularity, the technique was widely used for the embellishment of liturgical objects and for the decoration of such utilitarian objects as cups, boxes, knife handles, and belt buckles. Before filling in the incised design with niello, Renaissance metalsmiths commonly made a record of the design by making a sulfur cast of the engraved metal plate or by taking its impression on paper. Nielli were produced by the ancient Romans, and the ring of King Aethelwulf (839–858) in the British Museum demonstrates that the technique was well established in England at an early date. The art of niello reached its peak in 15th-century Italy in the workshop of the Florentine goldsmith Maso Finiguerra.”

<sup>69</sup> Panofsky, p. 36, “That he selected and invited the individual craftsmen, that he ordered a mosaic for a place where apparently nobody wanted it, and that he devised the iconography of his windows, crucifixes and altar panels is attested by his own words; but also an idea such as the transformation of a Roman

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porphyry vase into an eagle suggests a whim of the abbot rather than the invention of a professional goldsmith.”

<sup>70</sup> Panofsky, p. 79, “And further we adapted for the service of the altar, with the aid of gold and silver material, a porphyry vase, made admirable by the hand of the sculptor and polisher, after it had lain idly in a chest for many years, converting it from a flagon into the shape of an eagle; and we had the following verses inscribed into this vase:

“This stone deserves to be enclosed in gems and gold.

It was marble, but in these [settings] it is more precious than marble.”

<sup>71</sup> Sir W. Martin Conway, *The Treasures of Saint Denis The Abbey of Saint-Denis and its Ancient Treasures*, p. 15, “In the Galerie d’ Apollon is a well known paten made of a disc of green serpentine set in a border of gold and gems. Eight golden dolphins were inlaid in the serpentine, whereof one had been already lost in 1634 and another has fallen out since. The inventory of 1634 also notes the stones gone from the setting. Félibien falls into error in grouping this paten with the chalice of Suger. All the earlier authorities clearly state that it belonged with the ‘Coupe des Ptolémées’. It is always considered to have been of Carolingian date, yet I have no doubt but that it was, in fact, made in the East, perhaps at Byzantium, about the time of Justinian. The probability is that both the splendid agate chalice and this paten came together as gifts from some Eastern emperor to Charlemagne or some other king of the Franks. Such gifts were constantly coming from quite early days and are frequently recorded. The chalice most likely belonged to the imperial treasure, which by the sixth century retained almost a monopoly of such objects. Treasures of that kind, if carried off as loot by barbarian chieftains, soon met an untimely end by rough usage. Only the ancient world were there hands deft enough to preserve them through such troublous times as the fifth to the ninth centuries. Probably it was to Charlemagne himself that both chalice and paten were sent, and Charles the Bald gave both together to the abbey of St.-Denis. The gold dolphins are a common Early Christian decorative feature, descending from an ancient Greek tradition. Constantine the Great gave a gold lamp to St. Peter’s, which was adorned with figures of dolphins. A dolphin is engraved on the back of the top stone of the Ecrin of Charlemagne, the other side of which bears a Greek monogram. There is a Byzantine intaglio of a dolphin in the Cabinet des Médailles, and instances might be multiplied. The border, moreover, is of early date. There are no pastes but only stones, and these are set in plain, close-fitting box mounts. The heart-shaped designs are of Eastern form, similar to those on the little gold chalice of Gourdon in the Cabinet des Médailles, which was clearly made by an Eastern craftsman. The arrangement of the red cylindrical stones round the outer edge with a ring of gold between each is paralleled in the Bowl of Chosroes and the golden fibula with three tails found at Nagy Mihçly in Hungary, now in the Hofmuseum at Vienna, a fine example of Eastern Roman work of about the fifth century. The absence of all filigree and enamel, the plainness of the chatons, the strong design, the lack of exactness in symmetry—all these features point to a date as early as the sixth or even fifth century, and to the Eastern Empire as the place of manufacture for the St.-Denis paten.”

<sup>72</sup> Nees, p. 33, “As Clement says, a fish or fisherman would make a Christian think of ‘the apostle’, presumably Peter and Andrew, or James and John, fisherman before being called to follow Jesus (Matthew 4: 18-22). That Clement is speaking of practical needs and real images is clear from the occurrence of the imagery he discusses, such as a fish or fisherman, on the class of objects to which he specifically refers, seals. The fish in this sense could seem almost an attribute of certain apostles, but this was clearly not the most important meaning signified by the image. In Matthew’s Gospel (4:19) Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, saying “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Seen in reference to this well known text, the fish symbolizes the souls to be pursued by Jesus’ mission, particularly those that will be “caught”, brought to salvation among the blessed in heaven after their death. Moreover, one of the miracles of Jesus is the provision of sustenance for multitudes, sometimes wine (John 2: 1-11), sometimes bread and fish, as when five thousand people were fed with five loaves of bread and two fish (Mark 7: 33-44). Christian believers would know this story, and the fish would remind them of Christ’s power to work miracles, to save them from hunger as well as other dangers. Yet the manner in which the story was told in the Gospel and interpreted by later Christian preachers also presented such miracles as prefiguring the central Christian



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liturgical rite of the Mass, in which bread and wine are consumed by the faithful after being transformed through prayers of consecration into the body and blood of Christ. In this last sense the image of the fish symbolizes the Mass, and can represent the miraculous food, Jesus's body, offered in the Eucharistic sacrifice... IXOYC [ichthys], the common Greek word for fish, but also representing an anagram comprised of the first letters of the Greek words spelling Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

<sup>73</sup> Conway, p. 15, "Far more important than the foregoing objects, which are rather of manufacture than of art, is the splendid two-handled cantharus of agate, generally known as the 'Coupe des Ptolémées', now one of the greatest treasures in the Cabinet des Médailles. It is engraved by Félibien on a large scale in the fine setting of gold and jewels with which Suger endowed it, but this was stolen and melted down in 1804, only the vase itself being recovered. The vase is so well known that we may deal with it briefly. The surface is covered with figures wrought in high relief representing Bacchic scenes and emblems. Its date may be about the first or even the second century, AD, but some think it Hellenistic. The dating of objects of this class is uncertain, as few exist for comparison. The Farnese Tazza at Naples is the most splendid, and is probably Alexandrian work of late Hellenistic date. The Gonzaga vase at Brunswick is attributed to the age of Augustus. The beautiful ewer of St. Martin at St. Maurice d'Agaune belongs to about the same period. All these cameo-vases of sardonyx are enriched with figure-decoration. The I Hamilton vase now in the Wyndham-Cook collection, is another splendid example of such work in precious stone, but, except for two satyrs' heads, its embellishment is of foliation. it is doubtfully called Hellenistic. The beautiful Waddesdon vase in the British Museum is likewise decorated with foliation cut in cameo, but it is of later date and has even been set down to the fourth century AD, though, in my opinion, that is at least a century too late. The inscription on the foot of the 'Coupe des Ptolémées', added by Suger, states that it was presented by Charles III, who has been wrongly assumed to be Charles the Simple. Seeing that Suger himself in his own writings calls Charles the Bald Charles III, and as Charles the Bald gave many treasures of great value to St. Denis, whereas Charles the Simple is not otherwise known to have given any, it is practically certain that Charles the Bald was the donor. How he came by it we shall probably never know, but we may guess that it had belonged previously to Charlemagne. On the occasion of their coronation the queens of France, says Millet, 'prennent l'ablution en ce calice, après la sainte communion'."

<sup>74</sup> Fingesten, p. 10, "Other of John's remarks concern the substance of the new Jerusalem, that it was adorned with every jewel: "the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chryso-prase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst" (21:18-21). As we remember, Abbot Suger encrusted the altar of St. Denis with seven of the twelve precious stones mentioned by John. He added one new one (sardius) and made a point of the fact that one, the carbuncle, was missing. Since neither the sardius nor the carbuncle was mentioned by John, Suger undoubtedly had their magical properties in mind. That the mediaeval mind conceived of the cathedral as a magic city built of precious stones is proven by Suger's account of the laying of the foundation for the enlarged abbey church of St. Denis, "The Most Serene King himself stepped down [into the excavation] and with his own hands laid his [stone]. Also we and many others, both adults and monks, laid their stones. Certain persons also [deposited] gems out of love and reverence for Jesus Christ, chanting: *Lapides preciosi omnes muri tui*."

<sup>75</sup> Stalley, p. 148 "The status of religious houses was defined by the relics they possessed, which explains why, in the twelfth century, Abbot Suger of St. Denis was so anxious to discover how his collection compared with those at Constantinople and Jerusalem."

<sup>76</sup> Panofsky, p. 67, "We also undertook to renew, out of reverence for sacred relics, the altar which, by the testimony of the ancients, is called "The Holy Altar" (for so the glorious King Louis, son of Philip, had learned it, as he used to say, from the older residents of this place from early childhood while he was brought up here); for, partly on account of old age, partly for want of faithful care, and partly also in account of the frequent movement occurring on the occasion of solemn decoration- of which [decorations]

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different ones are set up for different feasts, the important for the more important ones- it did not appear to be in very good condition. The sacred porphyry stone on top of this altar, very appropriate no less by the quality of its color than the quantity of its size, was set into a hollow [frame of] wood covered with gold and very ruined by the lapse of time. It was believed that in the front part of this hollow [frame] there was placed, with artful contrivance, an arm of the Apostle St. James, a document inside attesting this through clear disclosure by a most limpid crystal. In the right part, too, there was hidden, as an inside inscription proclaimed through the appearance of a document in the same form, an arm of the Proto-Martyr Stephen; and, likewise, in the left part an arm of St. Vincent, Levite and Martyr. Anxious to be fortified by the protection of so important and sacred relics, I had for a long time joyfully longed to see and kiss them had I not feared to incur the displeasure of God. Thus, taking courage from our devotion and saving the honor of truth for antiquity, we selected the manner and date for the disclosure of these sacred relics, namely, on the day of the martyrdom of our blessed Patron Saints, viz., the eighth day before the Ides of October. There were present archbishops and bishops from diverse Provinces who, as though paying a debt to the apostolate of all Gaul, had most joyfully come hither to bring pious prayers to the celebration of so great a solemnity, namely: the Archbishops of Lyons, Reims, Tours, and Rouen; the Bishops of Soissons, Beauvais, Senlis, Meaux, Rennes, St. Malo, and Vannes; further, a conflux of abbots and monks or clerics as well as noblemen; but also an innumerable crowd of people of both sexes. On the day of this solemnity then, after the offices of Tierce had been sung, and when the most solemn procession of so great a day was already being formed before the eyes of all, we, filled as we were- on the mere testimony and writ of our forebears- with so much confidence in the certain truth of the matters as though we had already seen everything, convoked the archbishops, bishops, abbots and the attending personages of high rank to the altar which we proposed to lift from its place; and we explained that we wanted to open it, that we wanted to see the treasure of the most sacred relics. Some of our intimates said, deliberately, that it would have been safer for the reputation of our person and church if it had been secretly ascertained whether in truth it were as the documents said. To these I answered on the spot, aroused with the fervor of faith, that, if it was as written, I would prefer that all those who had seen it would know it, than that- in case I had investigated the matter in secret- all those who had not seen it would doubt it. Thus we took down the aforesaid altar into our midst; summoned goldsmiths who would carefully open those little compartments, which contained the most sacred arms, where pieces of crystal that offered their inscriptions to the eye were superimposed upon them; and, God granting, we found everything as we had hoped, all complete and before the eyes of everyone.”

<sup>77</sup> Panofsky, p. 71, “We also discovered the reason why all the relics had been placed in said little compartments, namely, because Charles the third Emperor who, gloriously buried, lies in front of this altar had ordered by Imperial decree that they be taken for him from the Imperial repository and be placed near him for the protection of his soul and body...”

<sup>78</sup> Peter Kidson, *Gervase, Becket, and William of Sens*, p. 979, “It was no accident that Theobald was the only English prelate to be invited to Suger's consecration party at Saint-Denis in 1144, which might be said to have introduced the French episcopacy to Gothic architecture. Although Saint-Denis was an abbey, no other abbot apart from Suger himself took a conspicuous part in the proceedings. The rest were all bishops, and one after another on their return home they built themselves Gothic churches or at least Gothic choirs. Whether Theobald ever thought of doing likewise at Canterbury, no one can say; but "Conrad's glorious choir," though consecrated as lately as 1130, must have struck him as absurdly out of date alongside the new churches already going up in northern France.”

<sup>79</sup> Panofsky, p. 71, “We further erected the cross, admirable for its size, which is set up between the altar and the tomb of the same Charles, and to the middle of which is fastened, according to tradition, the most noble necklace of Queen Nanthilda, wife of King Dagobert, the founder of the church (another one, however, [we fastened] to the brow of Saint Denis, and this, though smaller, is equaled by none according to the testimony of the most competent artists); [we did this] chiefly out of reverence for the most sacred

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Iron Collar which, having circled the most sacred neck of the blessed Denis in the “Prison de Glaucin,” has deserved worship and veneration from us and all.”

<sup>80</sup> Brigitte Bedos Rezak, *Suger and the Symbolism of Royal Power: The Seal of Louis VII*, p. 95, “Otto I, after receiving the western part of the Empire (February 2, 962), had introduced a fundamental change to the seal’s iconography: he abandoned the ancient type of effigy – a face in profile crowned with laurel or diadem – which had been used by French and German rulers since the time of the Carolingians, in favor of a full-face bust with scepter and globe, thus imitating the iconography of the Byzantine imperial bull.”

<sup>81</sup> Rezak, p. 97, “When Louis VII ascended to the throne in 1137, the great seal of France possessed an iconographic program designed to symbolize royal authority, with an impression of the royal person on the obverse. Crown, scepter, throne – the regalia- were already in place, having been introduced into the sigillographic field in imitation of the Ottonians, but were based on biblical, Byzantine, and Carolingian models.”

<sup>82</sup> Rezak, p. 98, “...for Suger, the throne was that of Dagobert; its restoration should be related to the earlier institution of a liturgy commemorating the death of this ruler who, first among the kings of France, was buried at Saint-Denis and who, while he lived, had considerably enhanced the prestige and wealth of the abbey by bestowing upon it rights, privileges and lands. It was Dagobert that the monks referred to when they wished to recall the antiquity of their association with the throne. Suger reasserted the tradition of the abbey’s foundation by Dagobert, as it had been established by Hincmar in the *Gesta Dagoberti*. During his reconstruction of the abbey church, he sought to preserve the wall of the eighth century church, which legend claimed had been consecrated by Christ. To invoke Dagobert was to recall the royal foundation of Saint-Denis and to demonstrate to his royal successors the fidelity owed then abbey. To place Louis VII on the “throne of Dagobert,” preserved at Saint-Denis, was similarly to affirm, by means of the seal image, the bond uniting monarch and monastery.”

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## Images



Figure 1: St. Denis



Figure 2: Central Portal, The Last Judgment, St. Denis



Figure 3: Right Portal Tympanum, St. Denis



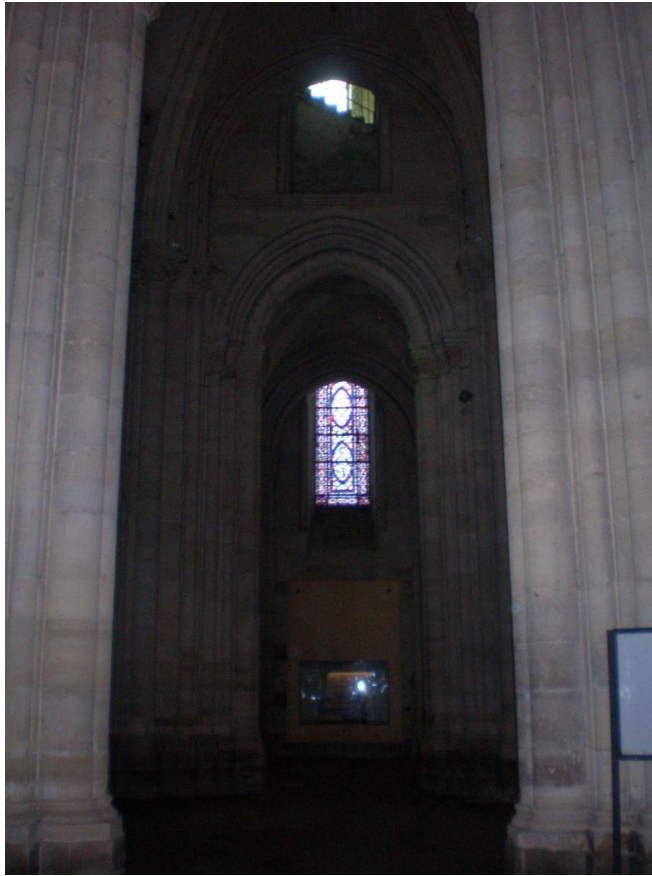


Figure 4: Narthex of St. Denis, St. Denis

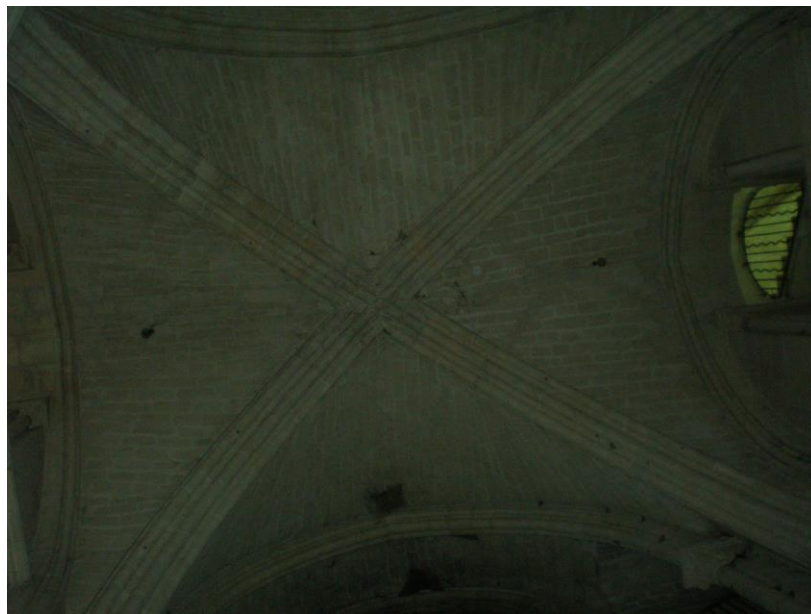


Figure 5: Rib Vaulting, St. Denis



Figure 6: Original Crypt, St. Denis



Figure 7: Tomb of Frédégonde, St. Denis (545-597)





Figure 8: Northern Transept Clerestory Windows, St. Denis





Figure 9: Illumination from Stained Glass, St. Denis

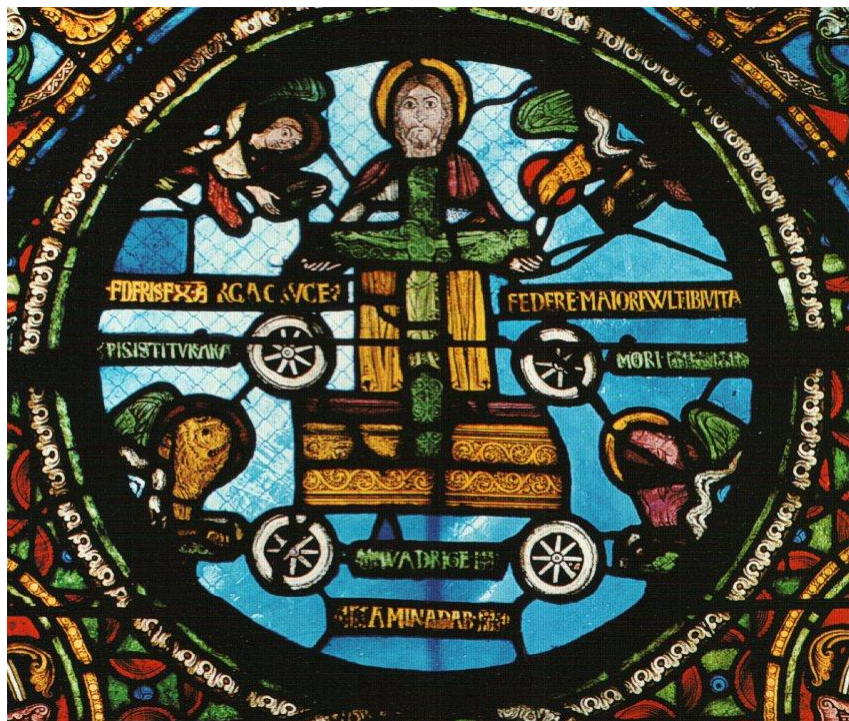


Figure 10: Quadriga of Aminadab, 1140's, St. Denis



Figure 11: Crusader Window, 1140's, St. Denis



Figure 12: Oriflamme, The Battle of Poitiers 1356, 1350's





Figure 13: A Triple Coronation, 1150, St. Denis



Figure 14: Martyrdom of St. Vincent, 12<sup>th</sup> century, St. Denis





Figure 15: Suger's Chalice, 1147(?), The National Gallery Washington D.C.



Figure 16: Suger's Eagle Vase, 1147(?), Louvre, Paris





Figure 17: Serpentine Paten, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE or 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, Louvre, Paris



Figure 18: Cup of Ptolemies, 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris



Figure 19: Cup of Ptolemies (enhanced), 12<sup>th</sup> century, Not surviving





Figure 20: Throne of Dagobert, 7<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> century, National Library of France



Figure 21: Royal Seal of Louis VII, 1137, Paris