

SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORIANS



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Advancing Knowledge, Driving Change

The Labyrinth of Reims Cathedral

Author(s): Robert Branner

Source: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Mar., 1962, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Mar., 1962), pp. 18-25

Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the Society of Architectural Historians

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/988130>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Society of Architectural Historians and *University of California Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*

The Labyrinth of Reims Cathedral

ROBERT BRANNER Columbia University

LAI D out like a great emblem on the floor of the nave, the famous lost labyrinth of Reims cathedral once commemorated the first architects of the Gothic monument (fig. 1).¹ There were images of masons in the four corners of the maze, with inscriptions stating their names, their lengths of service and the parts of the edifice they had worked on, and another image, which will now probably never be precisely identified, in the center. The work unfortunately was destroyed in 1778 and is known to us only through copies.

Throughout the nineteenth century the labyrinth was generally treated as a piece of curiosa in guidebooks and studies of the cathedral.² It was Louis Demaison who first showed, in 1894, that the masters named in it were the veritable thirteenth-century architects of the cathedral.³ He listed all the known copies, including the oldest and most detailed one by Jacques Cellier (ca. 1550–ca. 1620), and quoted all the descriptions and the paraphrases of the inscriptions (fig. 2). Furthermore, he established a succession for the masters: Jean d'Orbais (in the upper right-hand corner) began the *coiffe*, that is, the chevet; Jean le Loup (in the upper left-hand corner), in office for sixteen years, began the portals; Gaucher de Reims (in the lower left-hand corner), in office for eight years, worked on the portals and the *voussures*; and Bernard de Soissons (in the lower right-hand corner), in office for thirty-five years, made five of the nave vaults and the western rose window. And finally, since he assumed the labyrinth was made

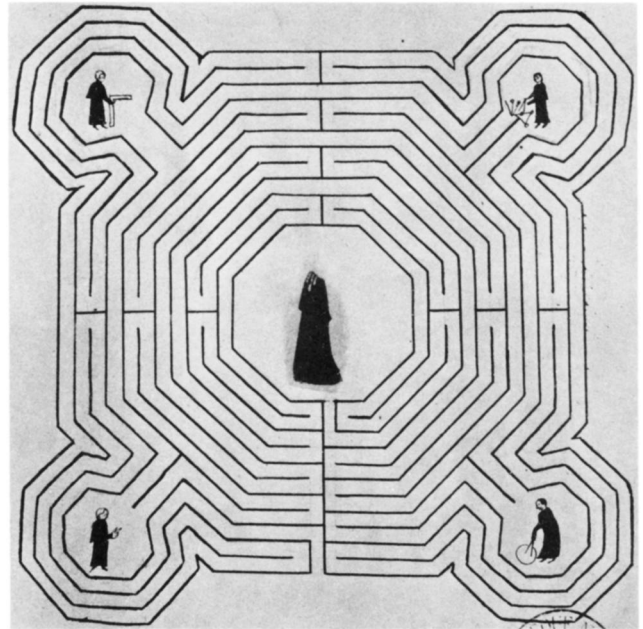


Fig. 1. Reims Cathedral, former labyrinth, drawing by J. Cellier (courtesy: Bibliothèque Nationale).

about 1290,⁴ Demaison was able to fix approximate dates for the masters as follows: Jean d'Orbais, 1211–1231; Jean le Loup, 1231–1247; Gaucher de Reims, 1247–1255; and Bernard de Soissons, 1255–1290. Some confirmation of these dates was provided in 1898, when Demaison discovered Bernard's name in a tax list of 1287.⁵

4. Demaison, 'Les architectes . . .', p. 23; the assumption was based on the similarity of the Reims labyrinth to the one at Amiens, which was made in 1288.

5. Louis Demaison, 'Nouveaux renseignements sur les architectes de la cathédrale de Reims au moyen âge', *Bull. arch.* (1898), pp. lx–lxi and 40–48; Demaison later discovered the same master's name in 1282: see his communication to the *Société nationale des antiquaires de France*, *Bulletin* (1931), pp. 150–153 and 'Nouveau renseignement sur Bernard de Soissons, maître de l'oeuvre de la cathédrale de Reims', *Nouvelle revue de Champagne et de Brie* ix (1931), 186–187.

1. See W. H. Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths* (London, 1922), pp. 60–61 and *passim*.

2. For example, A. P. M. Gilbert, *Description historique de l'église métropolitaine de Notre-Dame de Reims* (Reims, 1825), pp. 26–27; P. Tarbé, *Notre-Dame de Reims*, 2d ed. (Reims, 1852), pp. 111–112; L. Paris, 'Notice sur le dédale ou labyrinthe de l'église de Reims', *Bulletin monumental* xxii (1856), 540–551, the first serious consideration of the subject; and Ch. Cerf, *Histoire et description de Notre-Dame de Reims* (Reims, 1861), i, 77–80 and 395–396; ii, 229–230.

3. Louis Demaison, 'Les architectes de la cathédrale de Reims', *Bulletin archéologique, Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* (1894), pp. 1–40; see his communication, *ibid.* (1891), xxxiii–xxxiv. He maintained and defended the position stated in 1894 throughout the next forty years.

JEAN D'ORBAIS

- C: ... l'image d'un Jehan d'Orbais maistre des dits ouvrages qui encommencea la coiffe de l'église.
 L: La dernière (figure) en remontant est de Jean d'Orbais
 R: Cette image est une remembrance de maître Jean d'Orbais qui fut maître de l'église de céans ...
 H: Cette image est en remembrance de maître Jean d'Orbais qui fut maître de l'église de céans ...

JEAN LE LOUP

- C: ... l'image d'un maistre Jehan de Loup qui fut maistre des ouvrages d'icelle église l'espace de seize ans et commença les portaux d'icelle.
 L: La première figure ... est de Jean Loup qui a commencé le grand portail.
 R: ... Jean Loup qui fut maître de l'église de céans seize ans et en commence ...
 H: ... qui fut maître de l'église de céans seize ans et encommença ...

GAUCHER DE REIMS

- C: ... l'image d'un Gaucher de Reims qui fut maistre des ouvrages l'espace de huit ans qui ouvra aux vossures et portaulx.
 L: La deuxième (figure) est de Gaucher de Reims qui travailla aux voûtes et aux portaulx.
 R: Gaucher de Reims fut maître de l'église de céans sept ans et ouvra a vouzure dou ...
 H: qui fut maître de l'église de céans sept ans et ouvra a vosures ... dor ...

BERNARD DE SOISSONS

- C: ... l'image d'un Bernard de Soissons qui fit cinq voûtes et ouvra à l'O maistre de ses ouvrages l'espace de trente cinq ans.
 L: La troisième (figure) est de Bernard de Soissons qui fit cinq voûtes et la grande roze du portail.
 W: Cette image est en remembrance de maître Bernard de Soissons maîtres de l'église de céans.
 R: Cette image est la remembrance de maître Bernard de Soissons qui fut maître de l'église de céans ... il fit cinq voûtes.
 H: Cette image est en remembrance de maître Bernard de Soissons qui fut maître de l'église de céans ... fit cinq voûtes.

Fig. 2. Table of paraphrases of the labyrinth inscriptions. (c) Cocquault, d. 1645. (l) Lacourt d. 1730. (w) Weyen, first quarter, eighteenth century. (R) Robin, 1779. (H) Havé, 1779.

Since 1894, however, discord has reigned over the proper interpretation of the labyrinth. At first, such men as Saint-Paul, Kunze, and Bréhier proposed only minor changes in Demaison's hypothesis.⁶ Then a fundamental disagreement arose when Henri Deneux suggested, in 1920, that the correct order of succession was the one formed by the labyrinth path itself.⁷ This would place Bernard de Soissons first or last, and since he was alive in 1287, the order should be Gaucher (1211–1219), Jean le Loup (1219–1235), Jean d'Orbais (1235–1255), and Bernard de Soissons (1255–1290). The *coiffe* built by Jean d'Orbais would then have been the upper stories of the chevet, according to an interpretation of the word once propounded by Demaison himself.⁸ It may now seem emi-

nently logical to us to follow the path of the maze—this is suggested by the very number of scholars who have subscribed to Deneux's hypothesis—but there is in fact no reason whatever to assume that the late thirteenth-century designer of the labyrinth also found it so: maze and masons may well have been unrelated except in the simplest physical sense. At Amiens all the architects were represented in the central cartouche of the labyrinth there together with the founding bishop, rather than individually, at special points along the path. Both of the latter features seem unique at Reims. Moreover, neither the general nor the specific purpose of the labyrinth in the mediaeval church has yet been satisfactorily explained,⁹ whereas the inscriptions and images at Reims clearly had a commemorative function.¹⁰ The images may have been placed in certain corners or in a certain sequence in response to some contemporary evaluation of the architects' respective merits, or even, as Saint-Paul suggested,¹¹ from a deep-seated liturgical habit that prompted one always to start any movement in the far end of the church and on the epistle side (in the case at hand, with Jean d'Orbais). The labyrinth path therefore seems irrelevant in determining the order of succession of the thirteenth-century masters.

9. For a discussion of the question, see Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths*, pp. 66–70, with bibliography.

10. The phrase noted by Weyen in the early eighteenth century (see fig. 2) removes any doubt that Robin and Havé might have copied one another.

11. Saint-Paul, 'La cathédrale de Reims ...', pp. 297–298.

6. A. Saint-Paul, 'La cathédrale de Reims au XIII^e siècle', *Bull. mon.* LXX (1906), 297–322; H. Kunze, *Das Fassadenproblem der Französischen Früh- und Hochgotik* (Leipzig, 1912), pp. 44–75. See also W. Noack, 'Aufgaben und Probleme architekturgeschichtlicher Forschung', *Festschrift für A. Goldschmidt* (Leipzig, 1923), pp. 116–125, esp. 122–123; L. Bréhier, *La cathédrale de Reims, une oeuvre française* (Paris, 1916), pp. 25–40.

7. Henri Deneux, 'Chronologie des maîtres d'oeuvre de la cathédrale de Reims', *Bull. soc. nat. ant. France* (1920), pp. 196–200. This article was perhaps stimulated by Demaison's communication on technical terms to the same revue in 1919 (pp. 233–248), as well as by Deneux's appointment as chief architect in charge of restoring the cathedral after the first World War. See Demaison's two answers, *ibid.* (1920), pp. 200–201, 236–242.

8. See Demaison, 'Les architectes ...' p. 24, note 1; Demaison, *Bull. arch.* (1919), pp. 237–240; Deneux, 'Chronologie des maîtres ...', pp. 198–199; and Demaison, *Bull. arch.* (1920), pp. 240–241.



Fig. 3. St.-Remi, Reims, paving stones from St.-Nicaise, now rearranged (photo: author).

Paul Vitry could not decide between the alternatives proposed by Demaison and Deneux.¹² In 1921, however, Émile Mâle suggested that the first architect was neither Jean d'Orbais nor Gaucher, but was represented by the central, unnamed figure of the labyrinth.¹³ It is hoped that the present essay will demonstrate how unnecessary this suggestion is. Then in 1927 Erwin Panofsky proposed the last remaining possibility, Jean le Loup, as the first architect and justified his choice in the following manner.¹⁴ Jean le Loup began the portals, according to the labyrinth inscription, but the project was altered and the sculpture moved to the north transept, while a new west façade was started under a new master; since the latter exerted an influence on sculptors at Mainz and Bamberg in the mid-1230s, Jean le Loup must already have been out of office for a few years, and his sixteen years of work, placed at the start, would fit these requirements perfectly (1211–1227). Jean d'Orbais would then have been in charge from 1227 to about 1247/1250 (and *coiffe* must be translated in Deneux's manner), Gaucher from 1247/1250 to 1255/1258, and Bernard from 1255/1258 to 1290/1293. This hypothesis becomes untenable, however, if Jean d'Orbais is considered the first architect.¹⁵

12. Paul Vitry, *La cathédrale de Reims* (Paris, 1915–1919), I, 10.

13. Émile Mâle, 'La cathédrale de Reims (à propos d'un livre récent)', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, series 5, LXIII (1) (1921), 73–88, repeated in his *Art et artistes du moyen âge* (Paris, 1927), pp. 231–234.

14. Erwin Panofsky, 'Über die Reihenfolge der vier Meister von Reims', *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* (1927), pp. 55–82.

15. Robert Branner, 'Jean d'Orbais and the Cathedral of Reims', *Art Bulletin* XLIII (1961), 131–133.

In 1943 Marcel Aubert proposed that the second master was Gaucher (1231–1239), who would have been primarily a sculptor, according to the labyrinth inscription, and who would have carved the portals now in the north transept.¹⁶ But even this did not exhaust the explanations and combinations. In 1949 Walter Überwasser revived Deneux's order,¹⁷ and in 1957 Mme. Wyffels-Simoens proposed a half-Deneux, half-Mâle solution:¹⁸ the unknown central figure was the first architect, in office for a single year (1210–1211), and he was succeeded by Gaucher (1211–1219), Jean le Loup (1219–1235), Jean d'Orbais (1235–1255), and Bernard. And finally in 1958 Élie Lambert suggested that there might have been a gap between 1241, when the canons were installed in the chevet of the new cathedral, and the undertaking of a new campaign about 1247, hence: Jean le Loup (1211–1227), Jean d'Orbais (1227–1241), Gaucher (ca. 1247–ca. 1255), and Bernard; and that the central figure was Robert de Coucy (d. 1311), the early fourteenth-century master of the cathedral.¹⁹

The order that Demaison proposed in 1894 was based on a sensible interpretation of the information available from the labyrinth and it happened to form a regular, counterclockwise progression. At that time Demaison obviously had no idea that his article would prove to be the touchstone for so much scholarly disputation, or that the labyrinth would be treated as an alternate and shorter route to the normally lengthy business of isolating and dating the campaigns of construction. This, it seems to me, is the error into which many of the recent hypotheses have fallen. Because our knowledge of the images and inscriptions is very incomplete, the labyrinth cannot serve as a point of departure for the study of the monument; quite the contrary, it must itself be interpreted in terms of the traditional analysis of the monument and of the

16. Marcel Aubert, 'Les campagnes de construction de la cathédrale de Reims', *Comptes-rendus de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1943), pp. 203–209 and *Bulletin de la société des amis du musée de Dijon* (1946–1948), pp. 24–26; more recently, this author returned to Demaison's proposal of 1894 in 'L'ordre des architectes de la cathédrale de Reims', *Bull. soc. nat. ant. France* (1955), 165–166; 'Les architectes de la cathédrale de Reims', *Bull. mon.* CXIV (1956), 123–125; 'La construction au moyen âge', *Bull. mon.* CXIX (1961), 28.

17. Walter Überwasser, 'Massgerechte Bauplanung der Gotik an Beispielen Villards de Honnecourt', *Kunstchronik* II (1949), 200–204, esp. 203–204.

18. M.-L. Wyffels-Simoens, 'Note sur le labyrinthe de la cathédrale de Reims', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, series 6, XLIX (1957), 337–340.

19. Élie Lambert, 'Le labyrinthe de la cathédrale de Reims, nouvel essai d'interprétation', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, series 6, LI (1958), 273–280; this opinion seems to be accepted by M. Eschapasse in the official guidebook of the Commission des Monuments Historiques, *La cathédrale de Reims* (Paris, 1961), p. 11. See, however, Élie Lambert, 'La construction de la cathédrale de Reims au XIII^e siècle', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, series 6, LVII (1961), 217–228.

texts. Having elsewhere studied a number of the texts,²⁰ and one of the major changes of plan,²¹ I shall endeavor here to provide new arguments to support the main lines of Demaison's hypothesis.

The labyrinth inscriptions have often been analyzed, but one aspect of their physical state has not yet been sufficiently emphasized. The maze was thirty-four feet wide, with eleven-inch paths outlined by 'lines' of bluish-black stone that were probably about four and one-half inches wide.²² It was thus a sort of cosmatesque design, like the majority of labyrinths from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in northern France. But the inscriptions and the figures, rather than being executed in mosaic, were probably chiseled into the limestone and filled with lead or mastic. Cocquault, whose description of the work is undoubtedly the best, described the central image as 'insculpée', which suggests a broad, shallow depression something like a large enamel *cloison*, into which a thin layer of material had been poured.²³ This would explain the solid bodies of Cellier's drawing. The heads, hands, feet, attributes, and inscriptions, on the other hand, were most likely executed in filled lines. This was a standard technique, of which both the tombstone of Hugh Libergier and the pavement from St.-Nicaise at Reims are contemporary local examples (fig. 3).²⁴ Like the 'cloisonné', it was very vulnerable to the passage of feet, since both the limestone and the filling were soft: Libergier's tombstone had been almost completely denuded of its lead by the nineteenth century, and the designs are nearly effaced on several of the St.-Nicaise paving stones. The labyrinth suffered in the same way. In Cocquault's time the inscription surrounding the central figure was so worn that it could no longer be read, and during the next century and

20. Robert Branner, 'Quelques dates pour servir à l'histoire de la construction de la cathédrale de Reims (1210-1241)', *Mémoires de la société d'agriculture, commerce, sciences et arts du département de la Marne* LXXV (1960), 78-81, and 'Historical Aspects of the Reconstruction of Reims Cathedral, 1210-1241', *Speculum* XXXVI (1961), 23-37, esp. n. 5.

21. See Robert Branner, 'The North Transept and the first West Façades of Reims Cathedral', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* XXIV (1961), 220-241.

22. Ch. Cerf, *Histoire . . .*, I, 78, mentioned fragments still visible at Reims, but by Demaison's time they seem to have vanished. See Demaison, 'Les architectes . . .', p. 15, n. 1.

23. The term meant sculpted, engraved, or imprinted (Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du XVI^e siècle, ad verb. insculper*). Martène and Durand described the pavement of Arras Cathedral, which was similar to the Reims labyrinth, as 'en bosse', that is, with a depressed design. See L. Serbat, *Bull. mon.* LXXXVIII (1929), 372. See also J. Gaillhabaud, *L'architecture du Ve au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1858), III, 'Dalles tumulaires' and E. Amé, *Les carrelages dy moyen âge* (Paris, 1859), pp. 57-64, for the technique and for other mediæval examples.

24. See L. Demaison in *Congrès archéologique* LXXXVIII (1911), 1, illustration between 48 and 49, and 97-98, and E. Amé, *Les carrelages . . .*, pp. 70-71.

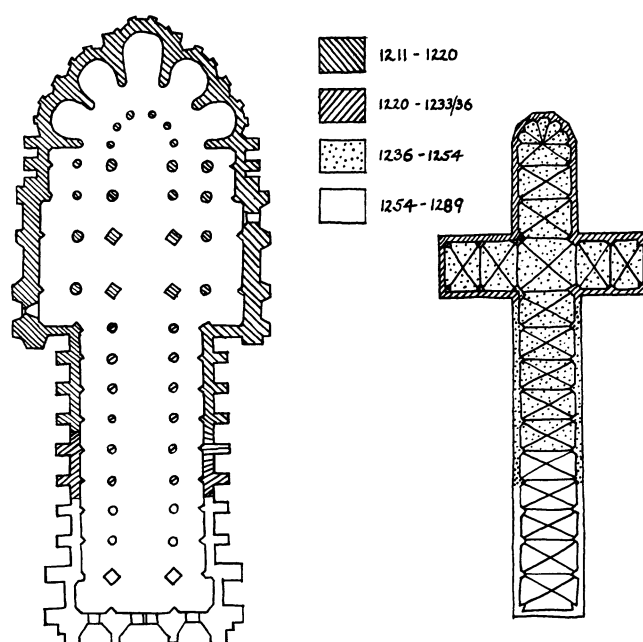


Fig. 4. Reims Cathedral. (A) campaigns of construction at ground level. (B) at triforium and main vault level.

a half other parts deteriorated beyond recognition or vanished, as can be seen from figure 2. The losses very likely included Jean d'Orbais's 'coiffe', Jean le Loup's 'portail', Gaucher's 'portaulx', and Bernard's 'O' and term of office. Gaucher's term was also altered from VIII to VII between about 1600 and 1778, a point of capital importance to which we shall return below.²⁵

The documents inform us that the Gothic cathedral was undertaken immediately after the fire of 6 May 1210 and that the first part of the work above ground was begun exactly a year later.²⁶ About 1220 the upper stories of the chevet were in preparation, and the termination of the building was in sight in the 1230s, when the civic disturbances of November 1233-January 1236 seem to have interrupted the work. On 7 September 1241 the chapter was installed in the choir, and from that time on the work seems to have progressed at a somewhat slower rate. Quests for funds were made in 1246, in 1251, and in 1295, and by 1299, when the southwestern tower was undertaken, the body of the nave and façade had been terminated.²⁷

25. See Demaison, *Bull. arch.* (1920), p. 238. These changes make it likely that the labyrinth had sustained losses before the time of Cellier, namely, Gaucher's attribute and the head of the central figure, and perhaps Jean d'Orbais's tenure had vanished before the time of Cocquault. Demaison also noted that Cocquault's text on the Jean d'Orbais inscription was written at two times, as if the good canon succeeded in deciphering a worn portion only after considerable effort (Demaison, 'Les Architectes . . .', [1894], p. 43, n. 2).

26. See Branner, 'Historical Aspects . . .', pp. 23-24.

27. See, *inter alia*, L. Demaison, *Album de la cathédrale de Reims* (Reims, 1899), pp. 7-8.



Fig. 5. Reims Cathedral, capital from first campaign, south aisle of chevet (photo: author).

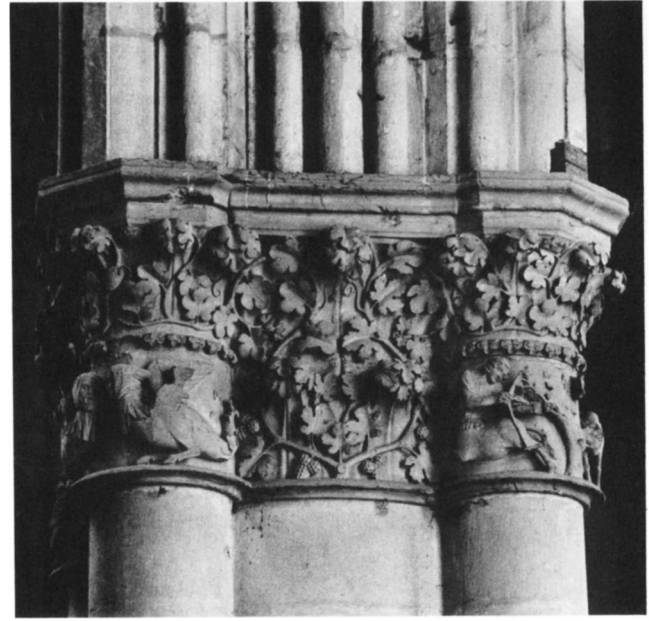


Fig. 6. Reims Cathedral, capital from second campaign, nave, south file (photo: author).

The analysis of the monument reveals that there were four major campaigns of construction in the thirteenth century (figs. 4, 5).²⁸ The first comprised the ground story of the chevet and the transept, including the peripheral wall of the first three bays of the nave aisles (counting from the east).²⁹ At that time, only simple doorways were planned in the transepts, the *Porte romane* giving access to the cloister lying to the north and an even less elaborate opening in the east bay of the south transept connecting the cathedral with the archbishop's palace. Some sculpture for the future west façade was also begun in this campaign.³⁰

Henri Deneux showed conclusively that the triforium and clerestory of the chevet and transept were erected by a new master in another campaign of construction.³¹ This must have been inaugurated about 1220.³² In addition to

the upper stories to the east, it included the lowest parts of two more bays of wall in the nave aisles and twelve of the piers (fig. 6). The projected nave was probably to have comprised eight bays, with a pair of heavy, rectangular piers at the western end, but the foundations for this portion do not seem to have been laid.³³ Moreover, the work above ground also did not come to its full, logical conclusion due to the riots of 1233. By that time, preparations had been made to vault the chevet and the south transept, including the construction of the vault springers. The north transept, the crossing, and the six bays of the nave, however, were not so advanced; the Rémois passage in the side-aisle wall, for instance, had not yet been built in the last two bays of the north aisle, and the aisle vaults there could not have been erected. It was during this campaign, about 1225, that the plan of the west façade was laid out in detail and the sculpture for the portals was undertaken in earnest.³⁴ Only two or three years later the project was rejected, the sculpture was fitted into two new portals opened to receive it in the north transept, and another project was designed for the west façade. It must again be kept in mind, however, that the architecture of the western end of the cathedral was not erected at this time.

28. See Aubert, 'Les campagnes . . .', and H. Deneux, 'Modifications apportées à la cathédrale de Reims au cours de sa construction du XIII^e siècle au XV^e siècle', *Bull. mon.* cvii (1948), 121–140.

29. Aubert, 'Les campagnes . . .', p. 206, is certainly incorrect in attributing the three south aisle responds of the nave to another campaign; the eighth and ninth piers from the crossing, in the south file, are also incorrectly attributed, since they are identical in time with their opposite numbers on the north.

30. The prophets now adorning the right jamb of the right portal of the present west façade, and the peak of the Last Judgment tympanum now on the north transept are generally considered to be the oldest pieces of thirteenth-century sculpture at the cathedral.

31. Deneux, 'Modifications . . .', pp. 123–125.

32. Branner, 'Historical Aspects . . .', pp. 30–31; *Zeitschrift* xxiv (1961), 230; and 'Paris and the Origins of Rayonnant Gothic Architecture down to 1240', forthcoming in the *Art Bulletin*.

33. Panofsky, 'Über die Reihenfolge . . .', p. 56 and Überwasser, 'Massgerechte Bauplanung . . .', complicate the situation needlessly by dividing the total number of eight bays into seven for the nave and one for the façade. A straightforward numbering system is used here.

34. See Teresa G. Frisch, 'The Twelve Choir Statues of the Cathedral at Reims', *Art Bulletin* xlii (1960), 1–24, for the date.

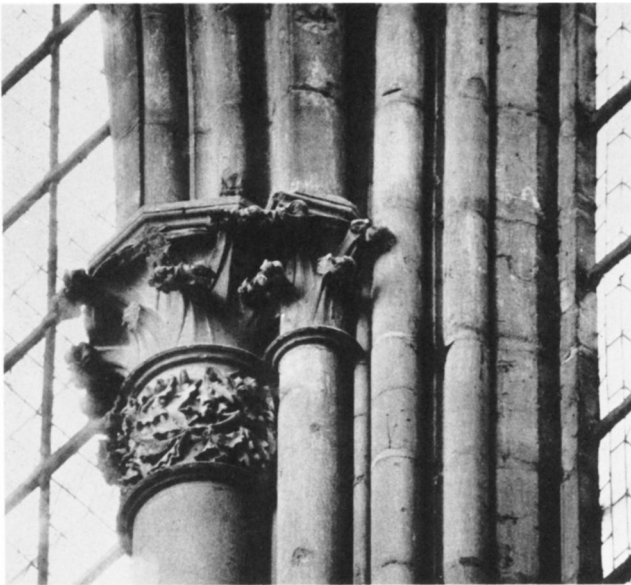


Fig. 7. Reims Cathedral, capital from third campaign, nave, north side, respond above sixth pier from crossing (photo: author).

After the peace of 1236, the chapter apparently felt it was imperative to put the monument into service as quickly as possible. The presence of another group of workmen and another master is indicated by the sculpture of the capitals in the triforium and clerestory of the first six bays of the nave (fig. 7).³⁵ Unlike the elaborate capitals made in both of the preceding campaigns, those of the third campaign are simple and severe, with long, spiny crockets but few leaves, if any, on the core. By 1241 this shop, undoubtedly working from scaffoldings left in place by its predecessor, had completed the vaults of the chevet and south transept on a new and higher curve, as Deneux pointed out;³⁶ it had also vaulted the north transept and crossing and it had finished the first three bays of the nave, which were probably closed off by a temporary wall.³⁷

35. The bases executed by the third shop have no cavetti. This feature generally vanished from bases in northern France in the decade between 1235 and 1240.

36. Deneux, 'Modifications . . .', pp. 126–128.

37. A thin closing wall would be a practical necessity to protect the occupied parts of the church from weather. But such a wall did not have to rest on heavy foundations, such as Deneux found lying across the west side of the first nave bay (H. Deneux, *Dix ans de fouilles à la cathédrale de Reims, 1919–1930* [Reims, 1944], folding plan); the latter must have been intended as a transverse link between the longitudinal foundations beneath the piers and aisle walls. Although there are no longer any physical indications of the *jubé* on the piers between the third and fourth bays of the nave, that is where it was located (see the Lepautre engraving of the coronation of Louis XIV in M. Sartor, *Les tapisseries, toiles peintes et broderies de Reims* [Reims, 1912], fig. 8) and where the liturgical choir at Reims always terminated. The colonnettes on the four piers to the east of

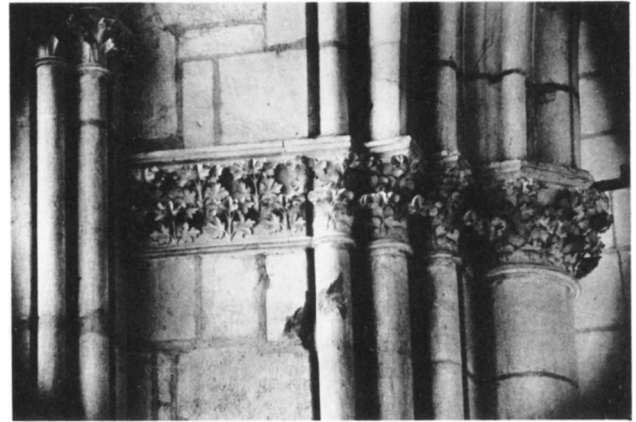


Fig. 8. Reims Cathedral, capital from start of fourth campaign, nave, south aisle, seventh respond from transept (photo: author).



Fig. 9. Reims Cathedral, capital from end of fourth campaign, nave, north side, respond above northwest tower pier (photo: author).

After 1241, it continued work on the next three bays of the nave and by the early 1250s it seems to have terminated those parts that had been laid out and started before 1233.

The masonry of the façade and of the four western bays of the nave is uniform and belongs to a single campaign, the fourth in the series. This is indicated by the design of the window tracery, by the bases (without cavetti but not resembling the two-torus type of the third campaign) and particularly by the capitals, in which the crockets have almost entirely given way to groups of very naturalistic leaves (figs. 8, 9).³⁸ At first glance the latter seem quite

— this line seem always to have rested on corbels, to permit the choir stalls to be placed farther apart from one another and to enlarge the area of the choir proper.

38. A longer list of changes will be found in Deneux, 'Modifications . . .', pp. 128–132.

close in style to the capitals of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris (1240–1248).³⁹ But the technique of cutting, the *épannelage* or distribution of ornament over the core, and the ‘feel’ of the leaves differ at Reims and must be compared with such works as the triforium in the chevet of Amiens cathedral (ca. 1250), St.-Urbain at Troyes (1262 and after), and the ambulatory of St.-Germain at Auxerre (1277 and after).⁴⁰ This suggests that the fourth campaign at Reims was inaugurated only in the 1250s and extended over the next several decades. Such a date, however, largely concerns the architectural framework (including the lower groups of reliefs on the verso of the façade), since many of the portal statues had been carved in the 1230s and 1240s.⁴¹

The major campaigns at Reims can therefore be dated with relative clarity as follows: I, from 1210 to about 1220; II, from about 1220 to 1236, with little or no work being done during the riots; III, from 1236 to the mid-1250s; and IV, from about 1255 to the 1280s or 1290s. It is not difficult to see a correspondence between these dates and the terms of office mentioned in the labyrinth.

Jean d’Orbais was probably the first master of the Gothic cathedral, since the pattern he was shown drawing in the labyrinth seems to have represented the geometric procedure used in the layout of the hemicycle of the monument.⁴² He would therefore have designed the ground plan and built the lower portions of the chevet and transept, and ‘coiffe’ would mean nothing more or less than ‘chevet’ in a general sense. Since no length of office is known for him, it is logical to assume that he was replaced by a second master about 1220, when the second campaign was undertaken.

During the second campaign two west façades were successively designed and the sculpture for them was undertaken. The first was the false start of about 1225, the remains of which can now be seen in the north transept, and the second was the design of about 1228/1230, which ultimately formed the basis of what we see today at the western end of the cathedral. But architecturally both projects were probably quite similar to one another and may well have been due to the same hand. This would have been Jean le Loup’s, ‘qui . . . commença les portaux’,

39. D. Jalabert, ‘La flore sculptée de la Sainte-Chapelle’, *Bull. arch.* (1935), pp. 739–747.

40. For Amiens, see G. Durand, *Monographie de l’église Notre-Dame, cathédrale d’Amiens* (Paris-Amiens, 1, 1900), figs. 86 and 96; for Troyes, F. Salet in *Cong. arch.* cxiii (1955), fig. p. 108; for Auxerre, Branner, *Burgundian Gothic Architecture* (London, 1960), pl. 33; resemblances also exist with the second campaign at Strasbourg, see Ch. Wittmer, *La cathédrale de Strasbourg* (Lyon, 1950), fig. p. 31.

41. Aubert, ‘Les campagnes . . .’, p. 208, has suggested that Jean le Loup implanted the foundations for the present façade between 1239 and 1255, but there is no evidence for this in Deneux, *Dix ans de fouilles* . . .

42. Branner, ‘Jean d’Orbais . . .’.

and his term of office would have extended from 1220 to 1236, just after the end of the civic disturbances at Reims.⁴³

Since Bernard de Soissons was alive in 1287 and hence could not have assumed office before 1252, the third architect of the cathedral must have been Gaucher de Reims, whose eight years of work would span the years 1236–1244. From 1236 to 1241 he finished the chevet, the transept, and the first three bays of the nave, and according to the labyrinth he was primarily occupied by the sculpture for the west façade. In this light, three years would scarcely have been sufficient to complete the remainder of the nave. There is, however, some question as to the accuracy of the labyrinth inscription, or rather of the paraphrase of the inscription. As was noted above, the portion that mentioned Gaucher’s tenure was well worn; the VIII, for instance, had already degenerated to VII between about 1600 and 1778. It is not impossible that before 1600 an X had been lost and that the number was originally XVIII rather than VIII.⁴⁴ Eighteen years would, in fact, span the period from 1236 to 1254 and give sufficient time for Gaucher to have completed those parts of the nave that had already been started, as well as to have continued the portal sculpture which the labyrinth inscription assigned to him.

1254 is a perfectly acceptable date for the accession of Bernard de Soissons, who would have died or left the *chantier* in 1289, two years after his name is last recorded in the documents. It was therefore he who undertook to construct the western bays of the nave and the architecture of the present façade. The span of time between the designing and the execution of this project (before 1233–after 1254) was not unusual, for even longer gaps are known at Paris and at Laon in the late twelfth century.⁴⁵ There seem also to have been changes of plan at Reims during the interval, as there were at both Paris and Laon, and of course Bernard de Soissons himself altered the work as it progressed.⁴⁶

43. It would not have been unusual for the master mason to have remained on duty during the interruption of work caused by the riots. A Master Arnoul the Stonecutter, who lived on the *parvis* and was very likely engaged in work on the cathedral, raised £20 *Pruv.* on his house in November 1234, see Demaison, *Cong. arch.* (1911), p. 159. This suggests both that work was in fact suspended and that even some of the skilled labor stayed on at Reims.

44. This number of years was also given to Gaucher by several authors in the early nineteenth century, such as Gérusez, Povillon-Piérard, and Tarbé (see Demaison, ‘Les architectes . . .’, p. 18, and Demaison, *Bull. arch.* [1920], pp. 238–239), but it was obviously a simple error for eight and has nothing to do with the present argument.

45. For Paris, see M. Aubert, *Notre-Dame de Paris. Sa place dans l’histoire de l’architecture*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1929), p. 39; for Laon, see E. Lambert, ‘Les portails sculptés de la cathédrale de Laon’, *Gazette des beaux-arts*, series 6, xvii (1937), 83–98.

46. For a major alteration to the buttresses, see Doris Schmidt, ‘Portalstudien zur Reimser Kathedrale’, *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* xi (1960), 14–58.

It thus seems unnecessary to revise Demaison's proposed order of succession for the architects, or to dwell unduly on the mysterious central figure of the labyrinth. If the latter represented an architect at all, then it must have been one who was in office after 1289 and who was therefore not responsible for any part of the body of the cathedral (Lambert's thesis). If, on the other hand, it was an archbishop,⁴⁷ whether Aubri de Humbert (1207–1218),

who was in office when the fire broke out in 1210, or Pierre Barbette (1273–1298), or Robert de Courtenay (1299–1324), one of whom was archbishop when the labyrinth was made, the same conclusion can be drawn. In sum, the lost labyrinth of Reims cathedral seems capable of a coherent, logical explanation, but one that must be considered a conclusion and not a point of departure for the study of the cathedral.

47. Demaison and C. Enlart both thought that the dress of the central figure was that of a prelate. See Demaison, 'Les architectes . . .', p. 23, and Enlart (1920), p. 242. In fact the only indications of dress are three rectangular panels below the neck, which can indeed be likened to the amict, a strip of the chasuble, and one branch of a Y-shaped pallium. See J. Demay, *Le costume au moyen âge d'après les sceaux* (Paris, 1880), figs. 330, 332, 339, etc., where the line drawings seem to approximate the forms of the labyrinth

figure. The Cellier manuscript was recently rebound and partially laminated, and a small piece of paper was removed that once covered the area where the head should be in the drawing; but no head was found beneath. A similar attempt seems to have been made some time ago, when the area was treated with chemicals to darken any lost lines; unfortunately none appeared. We must therefore return to the obvious conclusion that Cellier did not draw in the head because none existed in the labyrinth at the time he made his copy.