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Guillaume de Machaut and Reims

Context and meaning in his musical works



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I Guillaume de Machaut in Reims

The procession of Reims Cathedral that took place annually on the Feast of Saint Mark (25 April) wandered further afield, spiritually as well as geographically, than any other ceremony of the entire year.¹ In fact, the peregrinations were quite syncretistic, for on this, the annual celebration of the Greater Litany, Guillaume de Machaut and the other canons of Notre Dame de Reims (Figure 1) made a tour of pagan as well as sacred sites in the city (Figure 2).

One sensed an air of penitence from the very start, with the somber chant *Benedicamus domino*, rather than the more joyful *Ite Missa Est*, being sung at the Mass that took place inside the church in front of the altar of the Holy Cross. Bells rang out during this service to signal to the populace to come and join the throng for the general procession.² Following Mass, the canons left the cathedral and formed their lines, led by two crosses, two reliquaries, a boy dressed in a white alb carrying the lantern, and the twelve banners – no doubt the ones displaying the insignia of the twelve churches of the archdiocese of Reims that had supplanted the twelve administrative districts of the late Roman province of Belgica Secunda. In this arrangement, they circled the inner city (*Cité*), touching walls that were encrusted with the remains of ancient idols, all the while chanting by heart the antiphons and prayers of latter-day saints of their city and the Western church.

The first stop in this hybrid ceremony was the abbey of Saint-Denis, a house of Augustinian canons, where the assembly chanted four antiphons – more, if needed. From here, they made their way to the Gallo-Roman Porte de Vesle, also known as the Porte de Vénus in honor of the goddess of love.³ Near this part of the wall stood a chapel dedicated to Saint Victor,⁴ and here two antiphons and an oration for this saint were performed. Passing through a residential area known as the archbishop's *Couture*, two priests began the Greater Litany and continued it up to the part where the apostles are named. When they arrived at the cemetery of the church of Saint-Pierre-le-Vieil, the company interrupted the Litany to chant a pair of antiphons and an oration for Saint Martin, whose chapel stood here. Now two deacons resumed the Litany at the enumeration of the holy martyrs. The procession next arrived at the Porte de Mars (Figure 3),⁵ named for the god of war, where



Figure 1 Reims Cathedral, west façade. From Kurmann, *Façade 2*, Pl. 3.

two antiphons and a prayer were offered for Saint Vincent, for whom a chapel had been erected next to this portal. There followed a similar remembrance of the patron of the nearby church of Saint-Hilaire, lying just outside the gate.

Only after these interruptions did the deacons resume the Litany, still extolling the holy martyrs. Now the procession headed for the church of the Holy Trinity



- 1 - Cathedral of Notre-Dame
- 2 - Palais du Tau (archbishop's residence)
- 3 - Collegiate church of St-Symphorien
- 4 - Porte Chacre (Cérès)
- 5 - Saint-Hilaire (inside the walls)
- 6 - Church of Holy Trinity (Temple)
- 7 - Porte de Mars and archbishop's chateau
- 8 - English encampment, Dec. 1359/Jan. 1360
- 9 - Saint-Hilaire (outside the walls)

- 10 - River Vesle
- 11 - Porte de Vesle (Vénus)
- 12 - Church of St-Pierre-le-Vieil
- 13 - Archbishop's *Couture*
- 14 - Abbey of St-Denis
- 15 - Dominicans
- 16 - Machaut's house near here
- 17 - Hôtel de Ville
- 18 - Abbey of St-Pierre-lès-Dames

- 19 - Porte Bazée (Bacchus)
- 20 - Chapel of St-Nicholas
- 21 - Augustinians
- 22 - Parish church of St-Maurice
- 23 - Abbey of St-Rémi
- 24 - Coll. church, Sts-Cosme-et-Damien
- 25 - Coll. church, St-Timothée
- 26 - Parish church of St-Martin
- 27 - Abbey of St-Nicaise

Figure 2 Reims in the early seventeenth century (direction north toward the left), engraving by Mérian (before 1622); Paris, BNF, Cabinet des Estampes, Topographie de la France, vol. 8, Va 51.



Figure 3 Porte de Mars, Reims, second/third century. From Reims Cathedral Slide Collection “Reims Cathédrale,” No. 5.

(also known as the church of the Temple), where they offered a memorial consisting of antiphons and a prayer to Saint Remigius. On the move once again, the two subdeacons sang as much of the Litany of confessors as they could before the procession arrived at the Porte Chacre, sometimes called the Porte de Cérés to commemorate the Roman goddess of corn, where a chapel for Saints Crispin and Crispinian was situated.⁶ Following the commemoration of these two saints, the Litany of confessors continued until the company arrived at the Benedictine convent of Saint-Pierre-lès-Dames. This building housed a chapel to the Virgin Mary, memory of whom occasioned two antiphons and an oration. The boy acolytes then began the invocation of virgins in the Litany, as the ensemble proceeded to the last of the four gates of the inner city wall of Reims, the Porte Bazée, also suggestively labeled Porte de Bacchus for the god of wine.⁷ In front of the nearby oratory for Saint Michel that was embedded within the wall itself a final set of antiphons and a prayer were chanted. The last segment of the Litany for virgins carried the procession to its conclusion at the entrance to the cathedral. As two subdeacons sang the final words, “All saints, pray for us,” the company went in, and the Litany concluded with a prayer for the Virgin Mary and all saints.

This dynamic ritual exemplifies the powerful displays of combined sacred and secular forces that could occur in Reims. In no other ceremony of the cathedral, however, did Guillaume de Machaut and his fellow canons reach out so deliberately to the city’s Gallo-Roman past, interspersing the performance of segments of the

Litany and liturgical songs for martyrs with stations among the actual and pseudo-ruins of the city. They undoubtedly passed other profane sites in Reims as well along the route, for instance, the thirteenth-century sculptures of five musicians playing loud (*haut*) and soft (*bas*) instruments, once found on the walls of a house on the rue des Tambours (just east of the Hôtel de Ville in Figure 2).⁸ With the twelve banners of their church attesting to the marriage between the old pagan autocracy and the newer ecclesiastical administration, the canons of Reims Cathedral could remind themselves of the multi-layered symbolism that informed not only the foundations of their church, but those of their city as well.

Reims: Rome of the West

Rome was the paradigm for cities in the West, and many tried to emulate her in the middle ages. But Reims in northeastern France succeeded in name as well as deed. Long before Machaut took up his benefice in the cathedral of Notre Dame of Reims, Flodoard (894–966), also a canon and the earliest historian of this church, played a crucial role in shaping public perception of the city. In documenting the various aspects of the early church, his *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* promotes an agenda that aims both to enhance the mythical past of Reims and to instill that memory in the minds of his contemporaries.⁹

In typical fashion for chroniclers of the day, Flodoard begins, not with the cathedral itself, but with a panegyric to the city. And with little backing other than a fortuitous coincidence of names, Flodoard revisits a ninth-century legend that inextricably links Reims with Remus, the traditional co-founder of Rome:

Concerning the founder of our city [Reims] or him who gave it its name, we cannot altogether approve the common opinion that Remus, brother of Romulus, established this city and gave it his name. For when Rome was founded by the twins Romulus and Remus, we learn from certain authors that Remus was killed by his brother's soldiers and that prior to this time he had never been separated from his brother, since they were found to have established this city [Rome], having been born at the same time, raised among shepherds, and given over to robbery. Following a quarrel, Remus was killed by his brother, and Romulus is read to have given the city its name after his own name . . . It seems worthier of approval, therefore, that our city [Reims] is considered to have been founded, or the race of the *Remi* established, by soldiers of Remus who fled their homeland, for our walls bear as ornaments the emblems of the Romans, and the highest gate still carries the name [Porte] de Mars, who, according to ancient opinion, was father of the Roman race.¹⁰

Clearly Flodoard does not entirely believe the connection that he reports between Reims and the Roman brothers, for he cannot manage to find a time when Remus might have been free to travel westward prior to his murder. Instead, he opines that adherents of Remus drifted across the Alps following the death of their leader and established a city or tribe in his honor.

Flodoard likewise explains the nature of the alliance between Reims and Rome, which dates from the time of Julius Caesar. Citing the general's *Gallic Wars*,

Flodoard depicts a subservient tribe, called the *Remi*, living in the environs of the present city and forming part of the coalition of Belgic peoples.¹¹ As Caesar himself reports, when he reached their lands to crush an uprising in 57 BC, the *Remi* were first to desert their neighbors and extend the hand of friendship to him:

On [Caesar's] arrival . . . the Remi, the nearest of the Belgae to Celtic Gaul, sent . . . the leading men of their tribe, to tell him that they placed themselves and all they possessed under the protection and at the disposal of the Roman people. They explained that they had taken no part in the conspiracy which the rest of the Belgae had planned against the Romans, and that they were ready to give hostages, to obey his orders, to admit him into their strongholds, and to furnish corn and other supplies.¹²

The alliance held throughout Caesar's campaigns, and the general's subsequent military success was in no small measure due to the friendship of the *Remi*.¹³ Along with the inhabitants of a few other towns, the *Remi* enjoyed Roman favor precisely because of their collaboration. Thus carefully linking the city of Reims to a somewhat embroidered past, Flodoard now moves on to discuss the brilliant ecclesiastical and royal heritage of its most prominent church.

Approaching Reims on the 120-kilometer train ride from Paris, one is struck by the lush rolling hills that lie at the feet of gentle mountains in the area.¹⁴ Vineyards dating from Roman times line the slopes, and these host grapes that are now the envy of the champagne industry.¹⁵ Situated in a basin surrounded by these features, the city of Reims stands apart from other major metropolises of France – Paris, Rouen, and Lyon – owing to its location, not on one of the *grands fleuves*, but rather on the River Vesle, an offshoot of the Marne, itself a tributary the Seine. The Vesle nonetheless afforded natural protection on the south and west of the city and offered a site for the growth of a large urban area on both its banks.

The favorable geographic setting of the city, called *Durocortorum* (apparently meaning “emplacement of towers”) by Caesar, made it a natural locale for an administrative center in Gallo-Roman times.¹⁶ In the third century AD, the name of the city changed from *Durocortorum* to *Civitas Remorum* or *Urbs Remorum*, in this way enshrining the name of the *Remi* tribe.¹⁷ As a governor's seat within the crumbling Roman Empire, Reims served as capital of the province called *Belgica Secunda*. In this supervisory role, Reims had jurisdiction over eleven other cities: Soissons, Châlons-sur-Marne, Vermand/Saint-Quentin, Arras, Cambrai, Tournai, Senlis, Beauvais, Amiens, Théroutanne, and Boulogne. And just as Roman roads became Frankish roads, so this Roman bureaucratic structure in Reims served as the matrix for the ecclesiastical one that would follow, for these same eleven cities, placed under the jurisdiction of a bishop and later an archbishop, formed the ecclesiastical province of Reims that endured throughout the middle ages.¹⁸ In Reims, the late classical and proto-episcopal worlds thus meet, as the church's boundaries, for the most part, were superimposed upon those that the Romans had created.

The most noticeable remains from the Gallo-Roman period in Reims include the ancient Cryptoportique and the Porte de Mars, mentioned earlier. The Cryptoportique, lying beneath the present-day Forum of Reims, was probably something

akin to an underground mall,¹⁹ while the Porte de Mars, one of the four major gates of the wall of the *Cité*, is among the best-preserved Roman arches from the period (Figure 3). The mythological tableaux carved on its inner passages recall Roman legends, including the She-Wolf suckling the twins Romulus and Remus. Although the name “Mars” may have been added after its construction in the second or third century, this appellation lent a decidedly Roman flavor to the complex of buildings later associated with it, among them one of the medieval residences of the archbishop of Reims.²⁰ This arch, along with the three others mentioned at the outset of this chapter, also marked the most prominent lines of communication in Reims. These axes, the north-south *cardo* and the east-west *decumanus*, pass through each of the four arches and once comprised part of the Romans’ elaborate system of roads, vestiges of which still crisscross Europe. The central location of Reims within this network contributed much to its growth and to the preeminence of its church.²¹

The importance of the Roman origins of Reims is difficult to overestimate. In rehearsing the story of the mythical beginnings of his city, Flodoard immediately provides it with a legitimacy that was not as easily captured elsewhere in Gaul. Rome was mistress of the world, Reims her “sister city” in the Western empire.²² Even the fact that the Romans were pagans was of little consequence to Flodoard, because the persecutions of the second and third centuries AD provided the city with its treasured martyrs.²³ The errors of Rome could, after all, be translated into the *exempla* of medieval literature. And indeed, they were: Guillaume de Machaut was certainly influenced by the city’s past, just as he was inspired by such literary links to the classical world as the anonymous, Christian commentary on Ovid’s ever-popular *Metamorphoses*, known as the *Ovide moralisé*.²⁴ When Machaut names three of the four gods commemorated in the city gates of Reims in close succession in his narrative poem, the *Fonteinne amoureuse* (“Mercury was present, / And Jupiter came, / Bacchus, Ceres the goddess of corn, / Were at the gathering, / As well as Mars the god of battle / Who grants victory to the brave”²⁵), it is difficult to imagine that he did not have these portals in mind. From a *rémois* point of view, moreover, a glorious Roman past for Reims spelled a smooth transition from the Rome of the emperors to the Rome of the popes. And these pontiffs of the new Christian church would prove substantial allies for their Western counterparts, the archbishops of Reims.

Christianity in Reims, Christianity in France

Legend had it that Saints Sixtus and Sinicus founded the episcopal see at Reims in the second half of the third century,²⁶ but the first unmistakable evidence of a Christian community comes in the acts of the Council of Arles in 314, which include the signatures of the reigning bishop Imbetausius and his deacon Primogenitus.²⁷ We can probably assume, therefore, that seeds of the faith were planted in the late third century, perhaps as an outgrowth of the same missionary



Figure 4 Baptism of Clovis; London, British Library, Royal 16 G VI, fol. 16.

expedition from Rome which, according to Gregory of Tours, brought Saint Denis and his cohorts to France around 250. Even without a first-century apostolic origin, therefore, Reims, along with cities such as Paris, Tours, and Toulouse, could claim an ancient Christianity that existed side-by-side with waning Roman influence.²⁸

In addition to establishing the bond between the Romans and the people and prelates of Reims, Flodoard also weaves the Frankish crown into his web of associations. Drawing on Archbishop Hincmar's (845–82) embellished life of Saint Remigius, Flodoard reports that then Bishop Remigius brought Christianity into the realm by baptizing King Clovis (481–511) in 496. The defining moment of this embroidered story is the baptism itself. Lacking a vial with which to draw up some water, Bishop Remigius looked up to heaven for assistance. In an obvious parallel with biblical accounts of the baptism of Christ, a dove carrying an ampulla filled with holy oil, so the story goes, came to his aid.²⁹ Archbishop Hincmar and the Franks seized upon this event, and particularly on the act of anointment with oil.³⁰ They equated Clovis's baptism with a coronation (Figures 4 and 5), and claimed that all kings, in emulation of Clovis, were sanctified through unction and made both king and priest (*rex et sacerdos*).³¹ As a prelate, of course, Hincmar had been wary of granting sacerdotal authority to the secular ruler.³² He did, however, allow that the temporal authority of a religiously inclined sovereign might flourish, and that the kingdom of Clovis could become a latter-day Rome in the West, provided that it adhered to the faith.³³ In claiming Clovis's conversion for Reims, moreover, Hincmar, and Flodoard after him, established the role of the archbishop of Reims as the person who not only crowned but also lent counsel to the king.³⁴

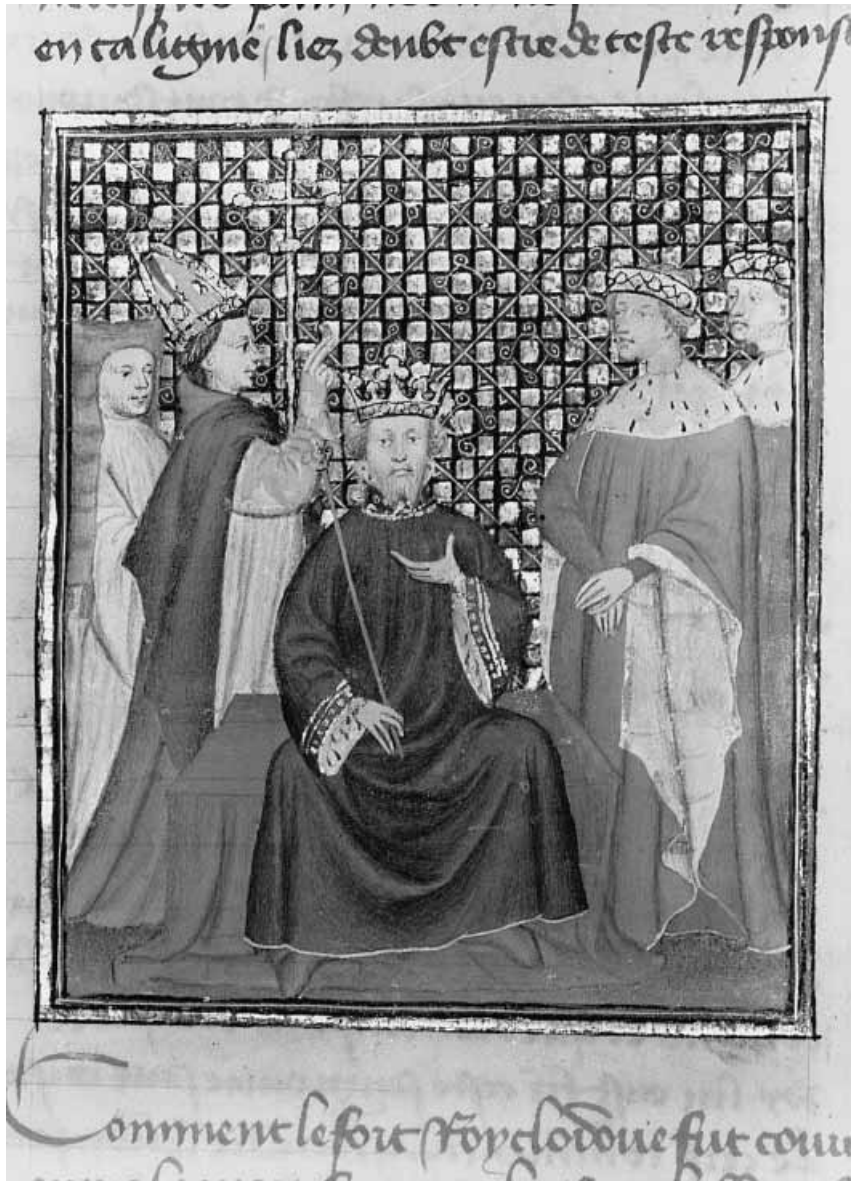


Figure 5 Coronation of Clovis; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Phill. 1917, fol. 7v.

In this way did the church of Reims pave its way to become the advisor of French monarchs, a role that would eventually lead to the naming of the archbishop of Reims as First Peer (*Premier Pair*) of the realm.³⁵ As such, he headed up the six ecclesiastical “dukes of the church” (*Ducs de l’église*) and sat alongside the six secular “temporal dukes” (*Ducs temporels*). This pontiff had both the ear of the king and a strong personal relationship with him, as will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 7.

In much in the same way, the abbey of Saint-Denis in Paris was simultaneously positioning itself to serve as the royal necropolis.³⁶ Thus the archbishop of Reims could claim to prepare the monarch for his role in this life, while the abbot and monks of Saint-Denis purported to take up where the archbishop left off upon the death of the king, helping to convey the ruler's soul to heaven.³⁷ The coronation ceremony in Reims was the focal point of the archbishop's efforts. Although some of the last Carolingian kings were anointed by the archbishop of Sens, with whom the archbishop of Reims had competed for the right of anointment since the ninth century, beginning in 999, the prelate of Reims secured the privilege of unction once and for all through papal proclamation. From this time forward, only two kings were crowned elsewhere.³⁸

Just as the royal-archiepiscopal connection was progressively strengthened, so the relationship between pope and archbishop became dogmatic, when Pope Zachary conferred the pallium on Archbishop Abel (743-45) of Reims and his successors.³⁹ The pallium was band of white linen, worn by the archbishop as a symbol of the union between its wearer and the Roman see.⁴⁰ Through this act, Reims became an *urbs metropolitana*, and its bishops archbishops.⁴¹ So great was the influence of the aforementioned Hincmar, in fact, that Pope Leo IV accorded him a second pallium, one that he could wear on a daily basis. This distinction for the *rémois* prelate was unique in the West and illustrates the favor that the city enjoyed vis-à-vis the Roman pontiff.⁴²

Later Carolingian rulers showed their gratitude to prelates of Reims by adopting Saint Remigius as their patron. Veneration of this saint grew, and he came to be recognized as patron of the realm, with Saint Denis finding his place as favored saint of the monarchy.⁴³ The cult of Remigius is evident in many ways in Reims. His sixth-century basilica was transformed into a Benedictine monastery in the eighth century, and the church became an important pilgrimage site.⁴⁴ When the king of France sojourned in Reims, he often stayed at Saint-Rémi, and popes conferred on it the title "archmonastery." The coronation of King Lothaire in 954 was celebrated here, rather than in the cathedral; and the abbey tried briefly to become the royal necropolis, thus again vying with Saint-Denis in Paris. The Holy Ampulla used in the coronation likewise was kept at Saint-Rémi. To king and pope alike, Saint Remigius was an icon, and devotion to this saint afforded the monastery a prestige within the city of Reims that rivaled the stature of the cathedral.

Growth of Reims and the fourteenth-century laicization

In addition to the cathedral and the abbey of Saint-Rémi, many other religious establishments in Reims filled out a diverse ecclesiastical montage. Five churches supported colleges of secular canons (Figure 2): Sainte-Balsamie (also known as Sainte-Nourrice), Saint-Symphorien, Saint-Timothée, Saints-Cosme-et-Damien, and Saint-Pierre-lès-Dames. Although Saint-Symphorien was nominally independent, the archbishop of Reims appointed some of its personnel; and

Sainte-Balsamie was under full authority of the metropolitan chapter. The abbot of Saint-Rémi, on the other hand, exercised jurisdiction over Saint-Timothée and Saints-Cosme-et-Damien.⁴⁵ The allegiance of these churches was thus divided, respectively, between archbishop and abbot, and those in which archiepiscopal influence was strong were incorporated into the liturgical processions of the cathedral, as will be seen.

Within the monastic establishments of Reims, the level of deference to the archbishop likewise fluctuated. The abbot of Saint-Rémi managed to answer, not to the archbishop at all, but to the king.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the canons of the cathedral of Notre Dame were closely allied to the monks of Saint-Rémi. The monks held joint services with the canons when processions of the cathedral came to their monastery, and they likewise went to the cathedral to assist in coronation ceremonies. Monks and canons also supported one another in solemnizing services for their deceased brethren. The remaining abbeys and convents in Reims came more directly under the jurisdiction of the archbishop.⁴⁷ Archbishop Gervais (1055-67), for example, had installed Benedictine monks in the abbey of Saint-Nicaise (Figure 2), and this house consequently deferred to him and to his successors. Other Benedictine establishments in Reims include the abbeys of Saint-Thierry and Saint-Pierre-lès-Dames, the latter accommodating a community of nuns along with a college of four canons.

Reims was the first city north of Paris to welcome the mendicants, beginning in 1219, and the arrival of these new monastic orders, particularly the Dominicans (Figure 2), changed religious life in the city markedly.⁴⁸ Similarly, the Augustinians, assigned to the abbey of Saint-Denis by the aforementioned Archbishop Gervais,⁴⁹ played an important role in the intellectual and spiritual climate of the city, and the positive popular response to their teaching and preaching can be seen in the steady flow of testamentary bequests of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, preserved in the archives of Reims. Two houses of the religious women known as Beguines were established in Reims in the thirteenth century: the Grand Cantipré and the Petit Cantipré.⁵⁰ The latter, in particular, may well have been familiar to Machaut, since it stood in the parish of Saint-Timothée, where he owned property.⁵¹ In addition to this varied religious activity in the larger establishments, the diocese of Reims included scores of other parish churches and monasteries within its 465 parishes.⁵²

Enjoying excellent conditions in trade and production, the lands, population, and economy of Reims grew enormously in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵³ The city had two fairs annually: one held in the *Cité* around Pentecost, and the other in the *bourg* of Saint-Rémi on the feast of this saint (13 January).⁵⁴ The city was well known as a textile center, and, to a lesser degree, as a marketplace for agricultural products. Groups of artisans likewise organized into professional associations of weavers, drapers, cobblers, furriers, metal workers, carpenters, clothes merchants, bakers, butchers, and fishmongers. In addition to these various *métiers*, arts of all kinds abounded. An important atelier of manuscript Bibles existed in the abbey

of Saint-Thierry in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and this school had links with other important scriptoria in northern France.⁵⁵ Monumental art in Reims likewise grew apace with the vanguard of northern European trends. The various reconstructions of the abbey of Saint-Rémi exemplified first Romanesque, and later Gothic, elements; and the thirteenth-century cathedral of Reims is an early representative of the High Gothic style.

By contrast with this era of flowering on so many fronts in Reims, the period during which Machaut grew up in and around the city showed signs of considerable strain. Around 1300, Reims boasted somewhere around 20,000 inhabitants, but by 1328 this number had decreased to between 16,000 and 18,000.⁵⁶ As if warning of dire things to come, the city's economy took a decided turn for the worse.⁵⁷ Insufficient harvests and problems in the textile industry were early signs of the decline, and these predictors were verified with the onset of the protracted conflict between France and England known as the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). Owing to the status of Reims as the crowning place of France, the city was under constant threat of attack by the English throughout this struggle. As people unable to defend themselves took refuge in the city, commerce usually transacted in outlying areas gradually vanished. Similarly, the Black Plague, the severity of which was felt most strongly in Reims between August and October 1349, took an enormous toll.⁵⁸ The fairs of Reims were suspended, and merchants were compelled to seek customers elsewhere. Notably, it was during this period at mid-century that the wine trade, which had existed in the region since Roman times, began to be seriously cultivated in Reims. If something of a desperation measure, growing grapes was in fact a good idea, since the resulting product, which did not spoil, proved an ideal commodity for the kind of long-distance traffic that was engaged in during these years.

With the steady influx of people into the city in the second half of the fourteenth century, *rémois* society underwent a profound laicization. The church's power waned, and secular influence increased.⁵⁹ Great patrician families, ruined in the early years of the war, were unable to collect rents, and in their place, a smaller elite arose in Reims, comprising a new *bourgeoisie* of drapers, haberdashers, apothecaries, and iron workers. This demographic shift also resulted in a rise in the number of charitable foundations in the cathedral, now often instituted by these same bourgeois.⁶⁰ The expanding lay influence in Reims is correspondingly witnessed in the appearance of confraternities and the reorganization of older ones in the mid-fourteenth century. The three most important were Saint-Pierre-aux-Clercs, which was open to all inhabitants; Saint-Gibrien, associated with the abbey of Saint-Rémi; and Sainte-Anne, an offshoot of Augustinian presence in the city.⁶¹ Mainly these organizations conducted funerals for their respective members, although the confraternity of Saint-Gibrien also said a low Mass daily.

Amid this swirl of profound socio-economic change, Guillaume de Machaut settled in Reims in the middle of the fourteenth century. As a canon of the cathedral of Notre Dame, he was intimately involved in the affairs of this place, spiritual and temporal. Let us focus, then, on the church and those who served it.

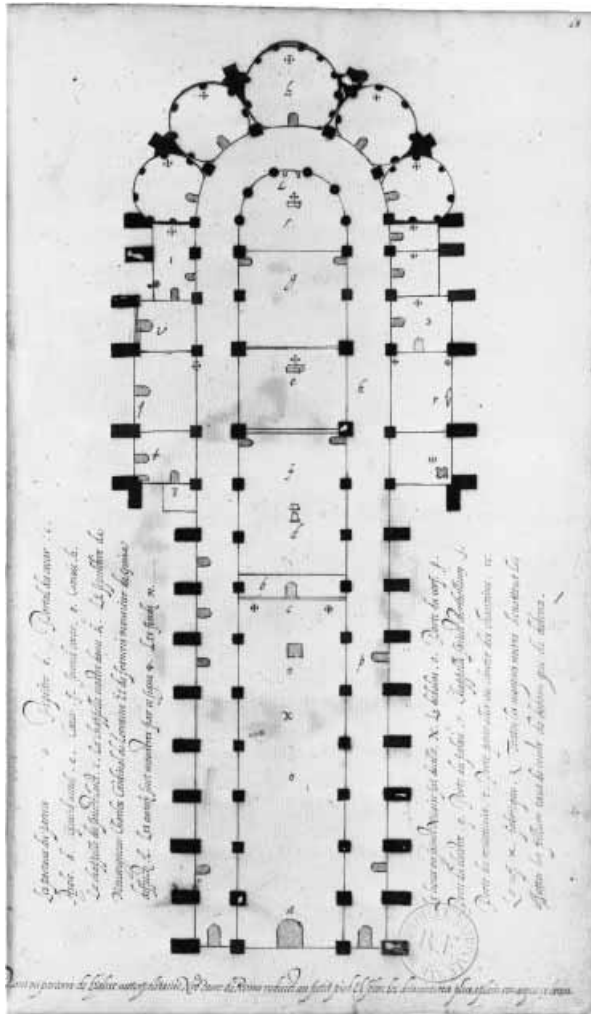


Figure 6 Plan of Reims Cathedral by Jacques Cellier (1580); Paris, BNF, fr. 9152, fol. 68.

Reims Cathedral

The first church at Reims, built probably in the fourth century, was dedicated to the Holy Apostles. It is thought that Bishop Nicasius (*d.* 406/407), later Saint Nicasius, subsequently moved the site 300 meters to the west, where he constructed what was probably a rectangular edifice without a transept, and a baptistry that stood at the west end. Around this building, all subsequent reconstructions took place, including that of the present-day Gothic cathedral of Notre Dame.⁶²

Among the surviving remnants of Nicasius' church, two are particularly important to our discussion of Machaut. First is the *Rouelle*, originally a round stone,⁶³ and now a slab engraved in the pavement in the fifth bay of the nave (Figures 6

and 11). This marker indicates what was the west end of Nicasius' basilica, and its history is significant with respect to Machaut's music. Under threat from Vandal invaders, Nicasius gathered his people into the church, placing himself at the threshold of the building. On the spot subsequently enshrined by the *Rouelle*, he defended his flock to the bitter end, perishing alongside his sister Eutropie.⁶⁴ Today the marker that has replaced the *Rouelle* reads "In this place Saint Nicasius, Bishop of Reims, was beheaded and died a martyr in the year of our Lord 406" (*Hoc in loco Sanctus Nicasius Remensis Archipraesul truncato capite martyr occubuit Anno Domino 406*). Nicasius's actions as defender of his city set the tone for the image of future archbishops of Reims as warrior-prelates, a role alluded to in Machaut's Motet 18. An altar to the Virgin Mary, before which Machaut's *Mass* and Motets 21 and 23 were most likely performed, likewise stood near this spot.⁶⁵ The second vestige of the early church is the main altar, also dedicated to Mary, traces of which have been located in excavations beneath the high altar of the Gothic cathedral.⁶⁶ All rebuildings of the church have attempted to respect the positions of these two hallowed sites.

Under Archbishops Ebbon (816–35, 840–41) and Hincmar (845–82) a new edifice was constructed between 817 and 862 as a joint project between Emperor Louis the Pious (814–40) and the *rémois* prelates.⁶⁷ The rededication took place in 862 in the presence of Charles the Bald (840–77), thus attesting to increasing royal awareness of the church. This Carolingian edifice, now with a transept, an enlarged nave and crypt, and a façade on the west end, was consecrated both to Mary, Mother of God, and to Christ the Savior. Subsequent additions and reconstructions begin with those of Archbishop Hervé (900–922), who rebuilt the crypt beneath the choir. Archbishop Adalberon (969–89) next expanded the nave and added a tower to the center of the façade, and Archbishop Samson (1140–61) reconstructed the façade, replacing Adalberon's tower with two symmetrically placed ones, and built a choir with ambulatory and seven radiating chapels. These modifications greatly extended the length of the building.⁶⁸

Compared to the state of research on comparable French churches, the chronology of the present Gothic cathedral at Reims (Figure 1)⁶⁹ is still poorly understood, although ongoing archeological and architectural investigations promise to unravel many of its mysteries. The cornerstone was set in place in 1211, a year after a devastating fire demolished Archbishop Samson's church. By 1221 the axial chapel was available for use in the daily Marian Mass, and by 1241 the Feast of the Mary's Nativity (8 September) was celebrated in the new choir.⁷⁰ These landmark dates indicate that the work had progressed sufficiently to allow for at least partial resumption of services by the mid-thirteenth century. The appearance of a new ordinal for the church around this time confirms the presence of liturgical activity, and the instructions in this book reflect the altered topography of the church in several ways.⁷¹ The roof and west façade were finished at the end of the thirteenth century, and further fine-tunings in construction occurred in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁷² The entire project was almost achieved in 1481, when fire destroyed the upper timbering of the crossing. Repairs were made with

royal financial assistance between 1484 and 1516, but the church never received the crowning spires atop the crossing and on each of the towers of the west façade and transepts that were envisaged.

Numerous architectural and decorative features of this structure relate to the celebration of the liturgy and paraliturgical services. The form of the building is a standard Latin cross, with a slightly projecting transept. The nave is particularly long, comprising ten bays, and was undoubtedly conceived in recognition of the coronation ceremonies that would utilize this space periodically for splendid royal processions into the church. In addition, a massive octagonal pavement labyrinth (Figure 7) was built in the floor in the middle of the seventh and eighth bays of the nave. This maze, which was destroyed in the eighteenth century, served both symbolic and liturgical functions in Guillaume de Machaut's day. At its center was an effigy, most likely that of an architect, and each of its corners contained likenesses of the four thirteenth-century architects of the church.⁷³

The canons' choir, where Machaut sat during church services whenever he was in residence, occupied part of the westernmost bay of the transept as well as the first two bays of the nave (Figures 8 and 11). The first rood screen, or *jubé*, that can be firmly documented in the cathedral was the one erected in 1417 in front of the entrance to the choir.⁷⁴ This partition, some thirteen feet in depth, was once situated on the border of the third and fourth bays of the nave. A somewhat less elaborate screen undoubtedly preceded it,⁷⁵ and the numerous contemporaneous mentions of altars on the left and right side of the entrance to the choir, discussed further on, support the existence of this earlier *jubé* during Machaut's lifetime. The unusually large choir proved a boon in light of the frequent episcopal and royal visits, but its size probably also reflects the desire to maintain the ancient position of the main altar of the original church.⁷⁶ The archbishop's seat stood behind this altar in the choir axis, in the place where it is traditionally situated in Roman basilicas. An organ is thought to have existed in the church as early as the tenth century, and a later instrument evidently stood on the choir screen in the thirteenth century.⁷⁷ The best known of the organs at Reims is the one that was installed in the north transept in the fifteenth century.⁷⁸

East of the transept are two bays of unequal size, and a hemicycle caps off the east end of the church. The transept and hemicycle house twelve side chapels (Figures 6 and 11), where endowed services were performed by chaplains of the church. These chapels, moving from north to south, are dedicated to Saint John (also known as the "Altar of the Transfiguration"), Saint Lait ("Mary's Milk"),⁷⁹ Saint John the Baptist, Saint Nicasius, Saint James, Saint Remigius, Saint Nicholas, Saint Calixtus, Saint Anne, Saint Bartholomew, Saint Leonard, and Saint Margaret.⁸⁰

At least three oratories stood in the nave near the *Rouelle*: an altar for Saint Nicasius (in addition to the one in the chevet); along with ones for Saint Paul, also known as the altar of the "Beautiful Image" (*Belle Image*); and for the Holy Spirit, also called the altar of the *Rouelle*. The *oratorium* for Saint Nicasius was evidently constructed early in the fourteenth century. References to the *Rouelle*

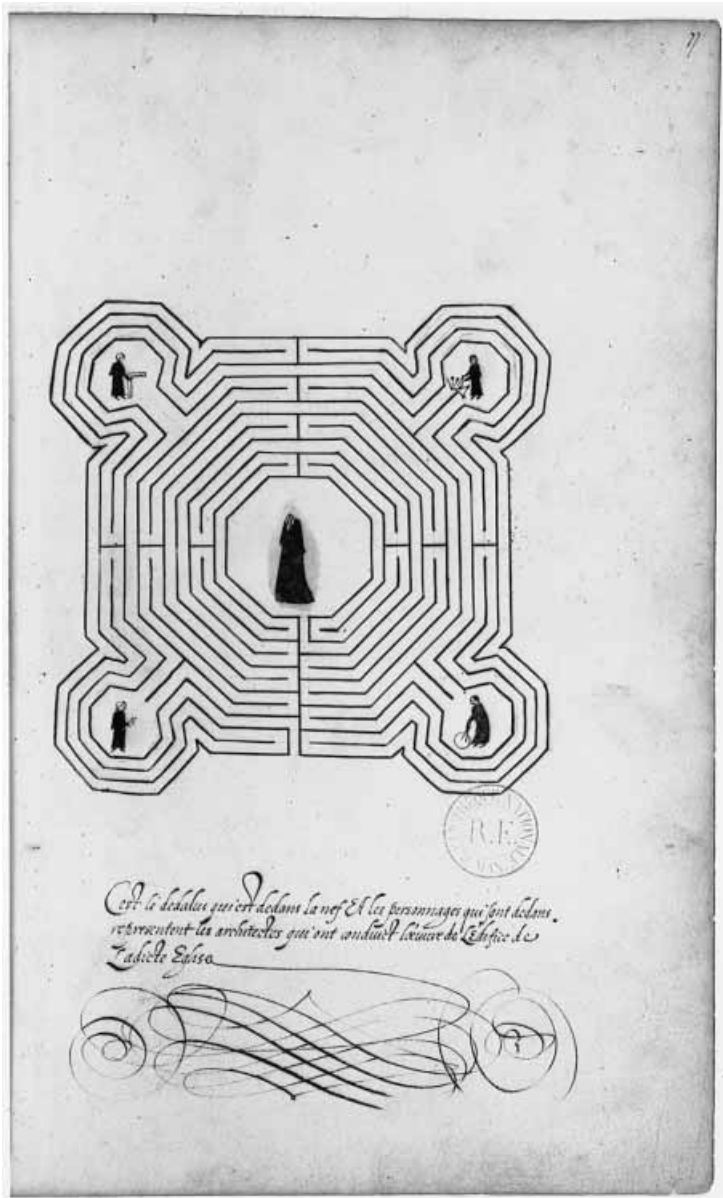


Figure 7 Labyrinth, Reims Cathedral; Paris, BNF, fr. 9152, fol. 77.

prior to this time do not mention it,⁸¹ but in 1335, Jean d'Escamps established a chaplaincy "in honor of almighty God, of the Virgin Mary his mother, and of Saints Mary Magdalene and Mary of Egypt at the altar of Saint Nicasius in front of the *Rouelle* in the church of Reims."⁸² Several decades later, Canon of Reims Etienne de Juilly requested his burial in the nave of the cathedral in front of the altar of Saint Nicasius.⁸³ The two additional side altars, those of Saint Paul (*Belle Image*)

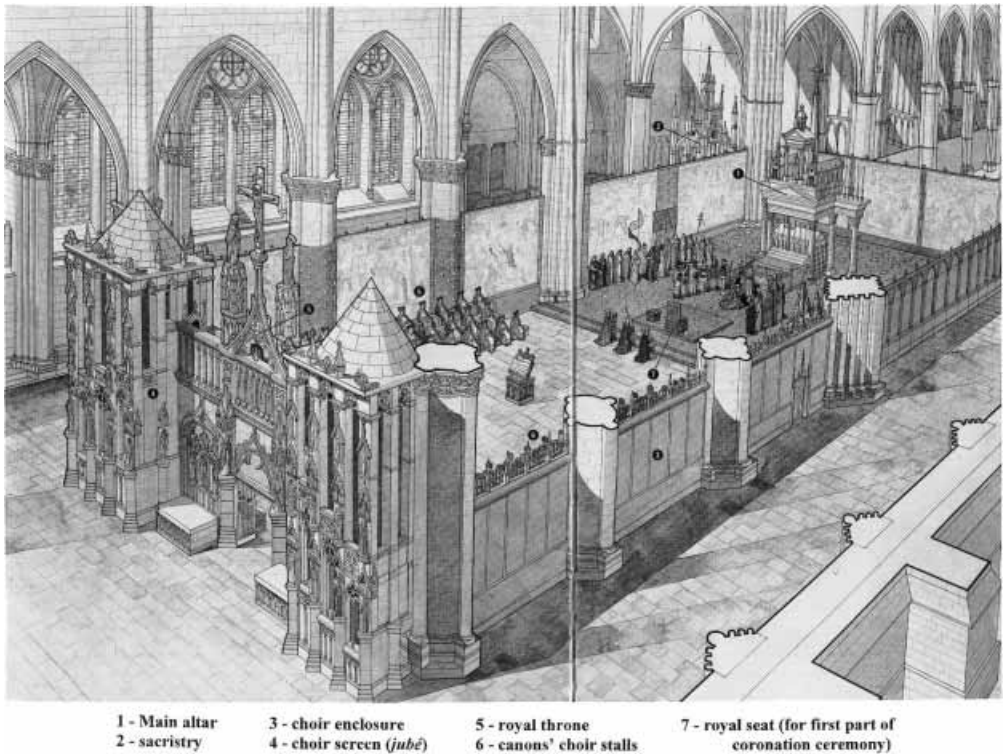


Figure 8

Choir of Reims Cathedral, late sixteenth century (reconstruction); from Demouy, *Notre Dame*, 96–97 (Plan II).

and the Holy Spirit (*Rouelle*), stood adjacent to the *jubé*, framing the door leading into the choir on the left and right, respectively.⁸⁴ By the fourteenth century, the altar for Saint Paul contained both a statue to him and a cross,⁸⁵ as well as a new image of Mary after 1343.⁸⁶ In the mid-fourteenth century, this altar was the most important site for Marian devotions.

Another *oratorium* dedicated to the Holy Cross stood in the apse, directly behind (east of) the main altar (Figure 6).⁸⁷ A second altar for the cross was located in the south transept, next to the baptismal font (Figure 6); this is probably the “altar of the Holy Cross outside the choir,” where Mass was sometimes celebrated, according to the thirteenth-century ordinal.⁸⁸ Established in 1314 in the will of Archbishop Robert de Courtenay (1299–1324), this *oratorium* bore a shared dedication to the Holy Cross, Saint Nicasius, Saint Denis, and Saint Catherine.⁸⁹

Both the sacred and royal themes of Reims Cathedral find luminous expression in the thirteenth-century stained glass of the church, which has undergone extensive restoration over the centuries.⁹⁰ The high windows of the choir, painted during the pontificate of Henri de Braine (1227–40), depict the glorious ecclesiastical heritage of Reims. The upper portions of the two axial windows show Mary, seated on the Throne of Wisdom, on the left; and the crucified Christ, surrounded



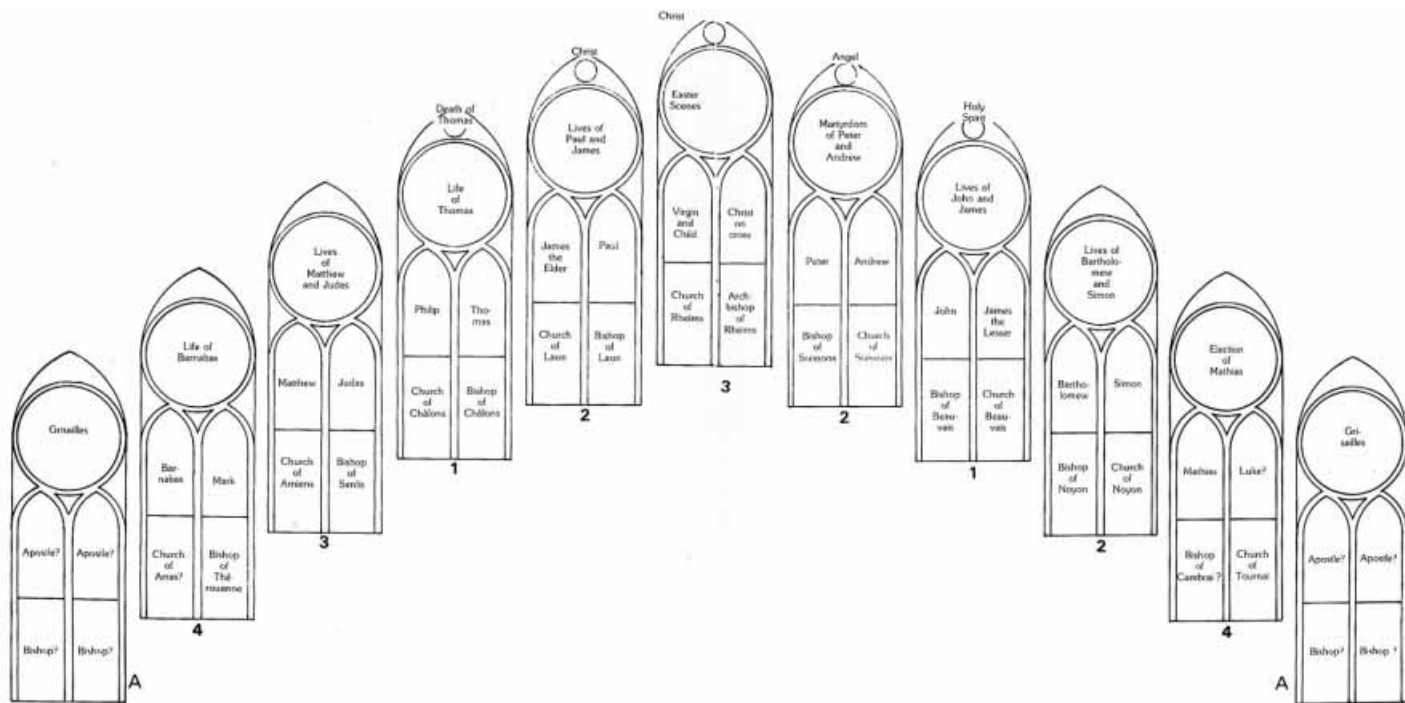
Figure 9 Mary on the Throne of Wisdom (left), Crucified Christ (upper right), Archbishop Henri de Braine (lower right); axial windows, thirteenth century, choir of Reims Cathedral. From Demouy, Neiss, *et al.*, *Reims*, Pl. 127.

by Mary and John, on the right (Figure 9). The remaining windows contain the twelve apostles, and beneath them the twelve bishops of the archdiocese of Reims (Figure 10). The lower parts of the two central windows exemplify this apostolic-episcopal coupling, with Archbishop Henri de Braine on the right and the church of Reims on the left. The remaining windows flank these central ones and correspondingly portray the other eleven bishops of the archdiocese and their churches. This deliberate equation of the twelve dioceses of Reims with the twelve apostles likewise permeates into the musical iconography of Machaut's Motet 18.

Beginning in the twelfth century, or perhaps earlier, the archbishop resided in a set of buildings adjacent to the south transept of the church.⁹¹ These structures were laid out in the shape of the letter "T," hence the name "Palais du Tau" for the ensemble (Figure 11). In addition to housing the archbishop, the Palais served as hotel to princes who came to Reims to be crowned. During the thirteenth-century reconstruction of the cathedral, a chapel was added to the archbishop's quarters. While this work was in progress, the prelate resided temporarily in his second residence, a chateau in the Porte de Mars. At times in the fourteenth century, as Chapter 7 will illustrate, the prelate's physical distancing of himself from the cathedral in this outlying abode caused consternation for the chapter and citizens of Reims.

The emphasis on ecclesiastical supremacy in the choir windows is matched by a diaphanous display of royal iconography in the windows in the nave of the church, which were altered to varying degrees after the First World War. Their medieval theme, however, is largely preserved: here the kings of France are depicted in the upper portions of the glass, with the archbishops who crowned them standing beneath.⁹² Another regally informed sculpture from the same period is the reverse side of the central portal of the west façade (Figure 12). This work, which is unique to Reims Cathedral, likewise portrays the subject of kingship in numerous ways, serving as a didactic tableau for princes who were crowned inside the church.⁹³ The coronation of the Virgin carved on the gable of the central portal of the west façade similarly extends the theme of crowning to the exterior of the building. So, too, does the gallery of kings that was sculpted above it in the mid-fourteenth century, and the clerestory windows on the reverse (interior) side, largely restored in later times, likewise depict a coronation service.⁹⁴ To complement these visual examples of regality from Machaut's time, a feast for King (later, Saint) Charlemagne (29 January), consisting of a simplex service of nine lessons and five candles,⁹⁵ was added to the liturgy of the cathedral around mid-century.⁹⁶

A cloister for the canons once stood adjacent to the north transept of the church (Figure 13). This area included a courtyard that was defined by several buildings: the *Pretiosa* Hall,⁹⁷ the vestry, the chapter hall, and the school of theology. On the second floor of the chapter hall stood the room that housed the church's archives, and atop the school of theology a library was constructed in the fifteenth century. On the north side of the courtyard was the chapel of Saint-Michel, the personal church of the canons, their families, and their retainers. Here the canons held Mass on various occasions, including times when the chapter came under interdict.



WINDOWS OF THE CHOIR

Figure 10 Arrangement of windows in the choir of Reims Cathedral. From Demouy, *Reims Cathedral*, 14-15.