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Beauvais: Stained Glass

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Martin Chambiges, for example the transepts of Sens Cathedral, and the numerous copies they inspired, such as the choirs of the churches at Allonne and Marissel, near Beauvais.

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(ii) *Stained glass.* The glazing of the Gothic cathedral was accomplished in six campaigns distributed over three centuries. The architectural context of the earliest extant stained glass in the axial Virgin Chapel dates to the 1240s. To judge from the stylistic diversity evident in the chapel glazing, this first campaign seems to have involved three separate workshops. Discernible in the central window, with its conventional representations of the *Tree of Jesse* (left lancet), *Infancy of Christ* (right lancet) and *Crucifixion* (rose), is a conservative, regional stylistic tradition that also appears in the windows of several small churches in the Beauvaisis. This glass is characterized by passive, stiff and meticulously articulated figures who inhabit compositions governed by strict rectilinear principles and are realized through the careful and varied arrangement of an extensive and distinctive palette of colours. The right-hand window of the Virgin Chapel depicts the *Legend of*

Theophilus (see fig. 4), at this time the most popular miracle of the Virgin, painted in the style associated with the glazing of contemporary Parisian monuments, notably St Germain-des-Prés (panels in London, V&A; Baltimore, MD, Walters A.G.; New York, Met.) and the Sainte-Chapelle. The style of the third window in the Virgin Chapel, comparable to work at Rouen Cathedral, might be characterized as a mannered version of a classicizing current popular in the art of north-eastern France earlier in the 13th century. The subject is the life of a bishop-saint, but the protagonist cannot certainly be identified; St Constantine (an obscure, 7th-century bishop of Beauvais) is, however, a likely candidate. The emphasis on stock scenes rather than on events peculiar to the life of a particular saint allows an easy association between a sanctified predecessor and a contemporary bishop of Beauvais, which may be intentional. In a window that prominently employs the royal fleur-de-lis as an ornamental motif, a local episcopal patron may have attempted to emulate the self-reflexive iconographic structure that was employed by his monarch, Louis IX, in the near-contemporary programme of the Sainte-Chapelle.

A series of 'band windows', executed c. 1268-72 for the hemicycle clerestory, represents the second glazing phase. Produced by two workshops distinguishable by style, the programme consists of monumental figures aligned so as to create a band of colour in the immense field of grisaille that extends downward into the glazed triforium. Each stylistic feature of these windows (the painting of figures, the design of grisaille, the general format) contributes towards legibility, a significant concern in such a tall building. The iconography is bold and simple: the *Apostles*, representing the first church, flank its personification in



4. Beauvais Cathedral, *Theophilus Distributing Alms under the Supervision of a Devil*, two stained-glass panels from the Theophilus window in the Virgin Chapel, c. 1245

the figure of the *Virgin* and its institution in a symbolic *Crucifixion* with a monumental chalice at the base of the cross. This ecclesiastical programme, prefigured in the windows of the Virgin Chapel, may have continued into the clerestory windows of the straight bays of the choir, destroyed in the collapse of the high vaults in 1284.

The third and fourth glazing campaigns were devoted to repairs necessitated by this disaster. During the 1290s, under individual patronage, windows were produced for choir chapels. Two 'band windows' from this period are now installed in the St Vincent Chapel, one portraying scenes from the *Life of St Andrew*, the other episodes from the *Martyrdom of St Vincent*. A kneeling donor figure in each lancet identifies the patron of both as a local canon, Raoul de Senlis (*d* 1293-4).

The fourth campaign, undertaken in the 1340s by a single large workshop, included the restoration of windows damaged in the collapse of the choir vaults but focused on the creation of glass for the reconstructed clerestory and for the chapel of St John. The chapel window portrays *St John on Patmos*, the *Crucifixion* and the *Coronation of the Virgin*; donors kneeling in ranks extending across both lancets probably represent the Confraternity of St John, closely associated with the chapel at this time. The clerestory band windows continue the ecclesiastical programme of the hemicycle with a series of saints, many of local significance. Most of the windows contain three standing figures, one to each lancet, but two bays present three-figure narrative scenes: the *Stoning of St Stephen* and the *Last Communion of St Denis*. In some instances subjects may have been dictated by patrons. Portraits and arms permit their identification in two windows: *Bishop Jean de Marigny* (1313-47) is accompanied by his patron, *St John the Baptist*; and three members of the house of Roche Guyon kneel below saints, of whom only *St Christopher* can be identified. The precious and mannered meticulousness of style in the chapel window is characteristic of stained glass throughout France at this time, but in the large-scale figures of the clerestory the artists eschewed current tastes in favour of spontaneously executed schematic systems of articulation, which may represent an attempt to harmonize the style of the new windows with the remnants of the 13th-century glazing in the hemicycle.

The fifth and sixth glazing campaigns date to the 16th century. The earlier, involving windows for the newly built transepts, extended through the first half of the century and was entrusted to local glass painters of the illustrious LE PRINCE family, who filled these vast openings with monumental figures of commanding presence, which are surrounded by the Italianate ornament favoured in contemporary French figural arts. Perhaps the most notable is an extensive tableau window donated by Louis de Rocherolles and painted in 1522 by Engrand Le Prince for a transept chapel, but the campaign also produced the two enormous rose windows of the transept façades. Of the north transept glazing, commissioned in the 1530s from Jean Le Prince and Nicolas Le Prince, only a gallery of *Sibyls* has survived, but the south transept rose, signed by Nicolas Le Prince and datable to the 1550s, is intact. Two registers of *Prophets* and *Church Fathers* are surrounded by an ambitious *Genesis* narrative in the rose

itself. The crowned arms of France at the top of the ensemble identify Francis I as the likely donor.

Seven lancets in the choir clerestory, painted by Frédéric Véri in 1576, represent the last campaign, excluding the major restorations and additions of the 19th and 20th centuries. Véri's windows replaced 14th-century glass destroyed when the crossing tower collapsed in 1573.

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2. CENTRE OF TAPESTRY PRODUCTION. Although there was a strong weaving tradition in Beauvais, especially from the 11th century, the town became an important centre for tapestry production only in the late 17th century. On the instigation of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's Surintendant et Ordonnateur Général des Bâtiments, Arts et Manufactures, a tapestry factory was founded by the Parisian tapestry dealer Louis Hinart (*d* 1697) on 5 August 1664. The town's geographic location made it particularly suitable as a commercial centre for trading tapestries.

Although it was patronized and subsidized by the Crown, the factory was initially conceived as a private enterprise and was therefore responsible for its own finances. Colbert's intention was to discourage the purchase of Flemish *verdure* tapestries, which, despite prohibitions, continued to be bought. Beauvais was to occupy an intermediary role between the Gobelins (*see* GOBELINS, §2), which worked almost exclusively for the King, and Aubusson (*see* AUBUSSON, §1) and Felletin, which produced for a middle-class clientele.

Initially the factory encountered problems and customers were few. Contrary to the wishes of Colbert, however, production was guaranteed when the Garde Meuble purchased 254 tapestries, mostly *verdures*, between 1667 and 1683 (*see* MAISON DU ROI, §IV). From this period tapestries from Beauvais were given by the King as diplomatic gifts, for example the series depicting the *Story of Polyphemus*, which was delivered to the King of Guinea in 1671.

Hinart was, however, unable to run a financially self-sufficient establishment and the King became sole owner