

The *Book of Suger Abbot of St. Denis* was probably begun shortly after the consecration of the choir in 1144 and finished no earlier than the end of 1148.

In the twenty-third year of our administration, on a certain day when we sat in general chapter conferring with our brethren about common and private matters, these same dear brothers and sons began to beg me vigorously and in love that I should not remain silent about the fruit of our past labors but rather with pen and ink should preserve for future memory the additions which the munificence of almighty God bestowed upon this church during the time of our leadership in the acquisition of new things, the recovery of lost ones, the multiplication of refurbished possessions, the construction of buildings, and the accumulation of gold, silver, precious gems and quality textiles.

#### XXIV. Concerning the [Decoration](#) of the Church

Having thus assigned these increases in the revenue, we turned back to the memorable construction of buildings, so that through this activity thanks might be given to almighty God by us and our successors, and enthusiasm for its continuation and, if necessary, for its completion should be fired by good example. For neither poverty nor opposition by any power is to be feared if one securely makes use of one's own resources through love for the holy martyrs.

Therefore, by divine inspiration, the first work we did on the church was as follows. Because the walls were old and threatened to weaken in some places, having summoned the best painters we could find from various places, we devoutly had the walls repaired and worthily painted with gold and costly colors. I carried this task out all the more gladly because, even when I was a student, I had wanted to do so if ever I had the opportunity.

#### XXV. Concerning the [First Addition](#) to the Church

Even while this was being carried out at great expense, however, because of the inadequacy we often felt on special days such as the feast of the blessed Denis, the fair, and many other times, when the narrowness of the place forced women to run to the altar on the heads of men as on a pavement with great anguish and confusion; for this reason, moved by divine inspiration and encouraged by the council of wise men as well as the prayers of many monks, in order to avoid the displeasure of the holy martyrs I undertook to [enlarge and amplify](#) the noble monastic church consecrated by the divine hand, devoutly praying both in our chapter and in church that he who is beginning and end, alpha and omega, should join a good end with a good beginning by way of a sound middle, and that he might not exclude from the building of the temple a bloody man who wholeheartedly desired this more than the treasures of Constantinople. Thus we began with the [former main entrance](#), dismantling a certain addition said to have been built by [Charlemagne](#) on a very worthy occasion, because his father, the Emperor [Pepin](#), had ordered that he be buried outside that entrance, face down, for the sins of his father [Charles Martel](#). As is obvious, we exerted ourselves, vehemently [enlarging the body of the church, tripling the entrance and doors, and erecting tall, worthy towers](#).

#### XXVII. Concerning the Cast and Gilded Doors

Having summoned bronze casters and chosen sculptors, we erected the [main doors](#), on which are represented the passion and resurrection or ascension of Christ, with great expense and heavy outlay for their gilding as befits such a noble portico. We also set up new ones on the right, and old ones on the left beneath the mosaic which, contrary to modern custom, we had placed in the [tympanum](#). We also arranged to have the towers and upper crenelations of the front altered with an eye to beauty and, should circumstances require, to utility.

#### XXVIII. Concerning the Enlargement of the Upper Choir

In the same year, cheered by so holy and auspicious a work, we hurried to begin on the [upper part of the chamber of divine atonement](#), in which the perpetual and frequent victim of our redemption should be sacrificed in secret without disturbance by the crowds. And as can be found in the treatise on the consecration of this upper part, we, along with our brothers and fellow servants, were mercifully enabled to bring such a glorious and famous work to a favorable conclusion, God having aided us and

given success to us and our endeavors. We were all the more indebted to God and the holy martyrs inasmuch as he, by long postponement, had reserved the task for our age and labor. "For who am I, and what is my father's house" (I Kings 18:18) that I should have presumed to begin or hoped to complete such a noble, pleasing edifice unless, relying upon the aid of divine mercy and of the holy martyrs, I applied myself completely, mind and body, to the enterprise? Yet he who gave the will also provided the power, and because the good work was present in the will, it came to perfection with God's help.

That the divine hand which accomplished such things protected this glorious work is shown by the fact that it allowed the entire magnificent edifice, [from the crypt below to the summit of the vaults above, varied by the division of numerous arches and columns, and even the roof, to be completed in three years and three months](#). Thus the inscription of the earlier consecration, with only one word added, would include the year of completion of this building: The year when it was consecrated was the one thousand, one hundred, forty and fourth year of the Word.

To these verses of the inscription we decided to add the following:

When the new rear part is joined to that in front,  
The church shines, brightened in its middle.  
For bright is that which is brightly coupled with the bright  
And which the new light pervades,  
Bright is the noble work Enlarged in our time  
I, who was Suger, having been leader  
While it was accomplished.

#### XXIX. Concerning the Continuation of Both Works

This being done, when, through the persuasion of certain people, we had applied our effort to work on a [front tower](#) (the other already having been completed), the divine will, we believe, drew us away to another project: We would endeavor to renovate the middle part of the church, which they call the [nave](#), conforming and equalizing it with the two remodeled parts. Nevertheless, we would save as much as possible of the old walls, on which, according to the testimony of ancient writers, the high priest Lord Jesus Christ had placed his hand. We sought to safeguard both reverence for the ancient consecration and a harmonious coherence with the modern work according to the pattern already established.

#### XXXIII.

Because of our reverence for [sacred relics](#), we also took up the task of renovating the altar which, according to the testimony of the ancients, was called "the Holy One" (For so [King Louis](#), son of Philip, who was brought up here, had heard it called by the older people of the place from his early childhood, as he used to say.) It was apparently the worse for wear due to age, lack of faithful care, and frequent movement in order to decorate it, since it is arranged differently for different feasts, the more distinguished ones receiving more distinguished decoration.

The holy porphyry stone on top of the altar, appropriate both qualitatively by its color and quantitatively by its size, was set in a hollow frame of wood covered with gold. This frame was very damaged by the passage of time. The front part of the frame was believed to contain, through cunning workmanship, an arm of [St. James](#) the Apostle, and a document inside said as much through an opening of the clearest crystal. Another document within announced that in the right-hand part was hidden an arm of the [protomartyr Stephen](#), while the left-hand part contained an arm of [St. Vincent](#) the Levite and Martyr. For some time desiring to be fortified with the protection of such great and holy relics, I had longed ardently to see them and kiss them if I had not feared to displease God. Therefore, taking courage from my devotion and believing in the truth of the ancient testimony, we chose a date and selected the manner in which the holy relics were to be examined.

#### XXXIVA.

Moreover, with the devotion due to the **blessed Denis**, we acquired **vessels of gold and precious stones** for the service of the Lord's table, in addition to the ones already donated for this purpose by kings of the Franks and those devoted to the church. To be specific, we ordered a big gold chalice containing one hundred forty ounces of gold and decorated with precious gems (hyacinths and topazes) as a substitute for another which had been pawned during the time of our predecessor.

We also offered to the blessed Denis, along with some flowers from the empress' crown, another very precious vessel of praise, carved in the form of a boat, which King Louis, son of Philip, had left in pawn for nearly ten years. When it was offered for our inspection, we had purchased it with the king's permission for sixty marks of silver. This vessel, marvelous for both the quality and the quantity of its precious stones, it decorated with verroterie cloisonné work by St. Eloi and is considered by all goldsmiths to be very precious.