

2017

# Building Heaven on Earth: Bishop Maurice and the novam fabricam of Burgos cathedral

Teresa Witcombe  
*University of Exeter*, [tw347@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:tw347@exeter.ac.uk)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs>

 Part of the [Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture Commons](#), [Architectural History and Criticism Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), [European History Commons](#), [Medieval History Commons](#), and the [Medieval Studies Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Witcombe, Teresa (2017) "Building Heaven on Earth: Bishop Maurice and the novam fabricam of Burgos cathedral," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 42 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.  
<https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1252>  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol42/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* by an authorized editor of Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. For more information, please contact [jesus@udel.edu](mailto:jesus@udel.edu).

## Building Heaven on Earth: Bishop Maurice and the *novam fabricam* of Burgos Cathedral

Teresa Witcombe

The founding stone of the Gothic cathedral of Burgos was laid by its bishop, Maurice, on July 20 1221, the feast of St. Margarita.<sup>1</sup> This was one of the first Gothic cathedrals to be built in the Spanish kingdom of Castile, in the important, wealthy and well-connected city of Burgos, and is a building of unique importance in the architectural and cultural history of Spain.<sup>2</sup> The first half of the thirteenth-century has been seen as the moment at which French Gothic architecture arrived in the Peninsula, the *opus francigenum* prefigured in buildings such as the Cistercian monastery of Las Huelgas and whose epitome was reached in the impressive constructions in Burgos, Toledo and later, León, Osma, Palencia and many others.<sup>3</sup> However, little attention has been paid to the precise historical context and circumstances in which these new, foreign-looking cathedrals were built. As Tom Nickson has recently suggested in his study of Toledo cathedral, art historical studies of the cathedral buildings themselves have often been isolated from research into the figures who populated and perhaps most significantly, commissioned them, and who played an active role in the introduction of new architectural ideas.<sup>4</sup> This is particularly important in the case of Burgos and its founder-bishop Maurice.

Henrik Karge's comprehensive monograph on the architectural development of the Gothic cathedral of Burgos reveals a building that occupied a 'decisively intermediary position between French and Spanish art in the thirteenth century', and was the first of its

---

<sup>1</sup> Burgos Cathedral Archive [ACB], *Kalendarium Antiquum*, Codex 27 and 28; also S. Serna Serna, *Los Obituarios de Burgos* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidro", 2008), 480-481. See below, n. 11.

<sup>2</sup> For the most important studies of Burgos cathedral, see H. Karge, *La catedral de Burgos y la arquitectura del siglo XIII en Francia y España* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1995); and also M. Martínez y Sanz, *Historia del templo catedral de Burgos* (Burgos: Revilla, 1866; reprint, Burgos: Aldecoa, 1983); E. Lambert, *L'art gothique en Espagne au XII et XIII siècles* (Paris: Henri Lauret, 1931), 218-238; T. López Mata, *La catedral de Burgos* (Burgos: H. de Santiago Rodríguez, 1950); E. J. Rodríguez Pajares, ed., *El arte gótico en el territorio burgalés* (Burgos: Universidad Popular para la Educación y Cultura de Burgos, 2006); and J. González Romero, *El secreto del gótico radiante. La figuración de la Civitas Dei en la etapa rayonnant: Burgos, León y Saint-Denis* (Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2012), 83-121. For an overview of Burgos in this period, see C. Estepa Díez and J. Valdeón Baroque, *Burgos en la Edad Media* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1984), esp. 157-175; L. Serrano, *El obispado de Burgos y Castilla primitiva desde el siglo V al XIII*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, 1935-36); and T. Ruiz, *The City and the Realm; Burgos and Castile 1080-1492* (Aldershot; Ashgate Variorum, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> See above, and also T. Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral: Building Histories in Medieval Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); P. Abella, "Opus francigenum en el Iter francorum: el fecundo siglo XIII y la nueva arquitectura de Castilla," *Portium, Revista d'Estudis Medievals* 1 (2011), 69-104; Rodríguez Pajares, ed., *op. cit.*; J. Harvey, *The Cathedrals of Spain* (London: B.T Batsford, 1957); F. Rahlves, *Cathedrals and Monasteries of Spain*, trans. J. Palmes (London: Nicholas Kaye, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> Nickson, *op. cit.*, 8.

kind in Castile.<sup>5</sup> However, Bishop Maurice, who governed the see from 1213 until his death in 1238, has received much less historiographical attention. The only modern study devoted to him, that of Luciano Serrano from 1922, presented the foundation of the new cathedral as a practical solution to enlarge the church, since the old Romanesque building was too ‘timid and modest’ to contain the growing congregation.<sup>6</sup> He does not address the question of why this new building should be modelled on French designs and notably different from the cathedrals that both preceded and surrounded it in Castile.

This question remains a pressing one, and although there are many excellent analyses of these new buildings, there has been little assessment of the cultural significance behind the various reproductions and innovations upon French models that were constructed across Castile.<sup>7</sup> Rocio Sánchez Ameijeiras, writing about the sculpture of Burgos cathedral, has put her finger on a wider problem when she points out that the architectural developments of thirteenth-century Castile have too often been seen as no more than ‘the result of the passive reception of an exotic and foreign new style’.<sup>8</sup>

Maurice’s own connection with this foreign style is the issue that this essay sets out to explore. The architectural history of the cathedral cannot be divorced from the history of the institution and the people who served it, as represented in the cathedral archives.<sup>9</sup> Most important is the figure of Maurice, patron, founder and bishop for twenty-five years, whose life has remained in the historiographical shade since Serrano’s study of 1922. Ongoing work on Maurice has revealed a culturally complex figure whose career weaves in and out of some of the most important themes of early thirteenth-century Europe, incorporating the reception of Arabic texts and their translation into Latin in Toledo, responses to the papal agenda and the Fourth Lateran Council, and the intellectual and cultural pull of the city of Paris. A fresh appreciation of his life and writings, especially the remarkable constitution he wrote for his cathedral in 1230, provides us with new ways of understanding the choices he made in the run up to July 1221.

Other bishop-patrons in England and France from the same period have recently come under close analysis, and the work of Tom Nickson on Toledo cathedral has provided an important comparison in Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada and his building project, begun in 1226, that is, five years after Burgos. Nickson has suggested that for Rodrigo, the building of Toledo cathedral was a statement of his world-view, a

---

<sup>5</sup> Karge, *op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> L. Serrano, *Don Mauricio, Obispo de Burgos y fundador de su catedral* (Madrid: Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, 1922), p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Abella, *op.cit.*; J. Ávila Jalvo, “La explosion gótica: del origen de su lenguaje constructivo,” in Palares, ed., *op.cit.*, 47-59; R. Suckale, “La theorie de l’architecture au temps des cathedrales,” in R. Recht, ed., *Les batisseurs des cathedrales gothiques* (Strasbourg: Ed. Les Musées de la ville de Strasbourg, 1989), pp. 41-50.

<sup>8</sup> R. Sánchez Ameijeiras, “La portada del Sarmantal de la catedral de Burgos: Fuentes y fortuna,” *Materia: Revista internacional d'Art* 1 (2001): 161-198, esp. 161.

<sup>9</sup> See J. Garrido Garrido, *Documentación de la catedral de Burgos (1184-1222)*, (Burgos: Garrido Garrido, 1983); and D. Mansilla Reoyo, *Catálogo documental del archivo catedral de Burgos (804-1416)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1971). Most documents from the cathedral archives of Burgos remain unpublished for the years 1223 to 1254.

way of ‘writing history by other means’.<sup>10</sup> I hope to illustrate that Burgos cathedral should also be seen in the same light.

This essay will first try to identify the progress of the construction under Maurice’s auspices before his death in 1238, drawing on the detailed architectural analysis of Henrik Karge as well as the written evidence of the cathedral archive. I then hope to shed some light on what this building may have meant to its founder-bishop, and why Maurice made the choices he did. To do so, I will probe Maurice’s possible connections with France, and particularly with Bourges, before turning to the symbolism of this *novam fabricam*, as represented in Maurice’s own writings.

### ***Fortiter et pulchre***

The date of the new cathedral’s foundation, July 20 1221, is recorded in the thirteenth-century calendar and obituary of Burgos cathedral, the *Kalendario Antiquo*, which informs us that: *festo beato margarite incipit dominus Mauricius episcopus burgensis fabricam ecclesie burgensis*.<sup>11</sup> There is also a contemporary narrative account, the *Chronicon Mundi* of Lucas, bishop of Tuy, finished around the time of Maurice’s death in 1238, which mentions the new cathedral in Burgos, as well as several later foundations.<sup>12</sup> Lucas informs us that ‘the most wise bishop Maurice built the church of Burgos to be strong and beautiful’ (*prudenterissimus Mauricius episcopus Burgensis ecclesiam Burgensem fortiter et pulchre construxit*.) News of the building had clearly reached Rome by 1223, since we find a bull from Pope Honorius III in this year granting forty days of indulgence to all who contributed to funding the building, in order that ‘the structure should rise nobly and indeed sumptuously’ – although of course, the pope had not seen it.<sup>13</sup>

However, it is more of a challenge to identify precisely how far the building project had progressed by the time of Maurice’s death in 1238, that is, the ‘strong and beautiful’ cathedral that Lucas had described by the end of the same decade. This is important, as in attempting to probe Maurice’s relationship with his new cathedral, we can, of course, only take into account what he himself would have been responsible for commissioning.

The detailed architectural study of Henrik Karge has illustrated that the nucleus of the Gothic cathedral was constructed between 1221 and the end of the 1270s, by which point the ground plan and basic structure of nave, transept and chevet were complete.<sup>14</sup> The first stage of the building campaign was very rapid, as the chevet, a crown of chapels (although not the crown in existence today), and the eastern walls of the transept, as well

---

<sup>10</sup> Nickson, *op.cit.*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> There are two codices of this *Kalendario*, both of which supply the same date in AD and in Spanish Era (ACB, Codices 27 and 28). See Serna Serna, *op.cit.*, 480-481. It appears however that the entry in Codex 28 has been corrected by a later hand: for a full discussion of this, see Karge, *op.cit.*, 40. It is worth noting however that the date of 1221 has been widely accepted by scholars.

<sup>12</sup> Lucas of Tuy, *Chronicon Mundi*, IV.95, ed. E. Falque (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> ‘Structura nobili et adeo sumptuosa consurgat’, Serrano, *Don Mauricio*, 65. The pope also pointed out that ‘vestram opus tam pium et sanctum valeat feliciter consumari’. See also, Mansilla, *Catálogo documental de la catedral de Burgos*, no. 553.

<sup>14</sup> Karge, *op.cit.*, 39-53 and *passim*.

as at least one rectangular chapel at the corner with the transept (the chapel of St Nicholas) appear to have been completed by 1230.<sup>15</sup> The magnificent southern portal, the Puerta del Sarmental, was underway and most likely complete by the end of the decade. The sculpture of the Puerta del Sarmental has also been dated to the 1230s, and work on the great rose window of that portal was underway shortly afterwards.<sup>16</sup> Finally, there was also a bishop's palace, which seems to have pre-existed the Gothic structure, although possibly being re-built or altered at the start of the thirteenth century, and lay to the south of the new cathedral, accessible from the Puerta del Sarmental; very little survives or is known of this building however.<sup>17</sup>

The completed chevet that had been erected by Maurice's death would thus have provided a workable space for the celebration of mass by the chapter, most likely protected by a temporary wall as building work continued to the west and the old Romanesque church began to be dismantled.<sup>18</sup> As Karge's analysis has revealed, the new choir was flanked by arcades and an ambulatory, in which there were six-ribbed vaults. Off this ambulatory, there seem to have been isolated, semi-circular radial chapels, dotted between the buttresses, which were replaced in the 1260s once the basic structure of the whole cathedral was near completion.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it is possible that work had begun before the official laying of the foundation stone – although, as we shall see later, it is unlikely to have begun before the end of 1219.

Professor Karge has illustrated that this east end was unquestionably the work of a French master mason, and most likely, a French team of builders, who used the measurement system known as the 'Parisian foot' in both floor plan and elevation.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it seems clear that these masons and their workshops must have arrived in

---

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, 39-43.

<sup>16</sup> For the two key studies of the Puerta del Sarmental, see F. Deknatel, "The Thirteenth Century Gothic Sculpture of the Cathedrals of Burgos and Leon," *The Art Bulletin* 17, 3 (1935): 243-389; and R. Sánchez Ameijeiras, *op.cit.*, 161-198. With regard to the rose window in the southern portal, see M. P. Alonso Abad, "Recuperación de algunas de las más notables vidrieras de la catedral de Burgos," *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González, Burgos* 85, 233 (2006), 341-371; and M. P. Alonso Abad, *Las vidrieras de la catedral de Burgos* (Burgos: Antonio Sorni Aguas CEGAL, 2016), 52-69.

<sup>17</sup> See Karge, *La catedral de Burgos*, p. 24. A number of documents from Maurice's life are recorded as being signed here, for example, a charter from October 1222 was signed 'in palatio domini episcopi, iuxta claustrum' (Garrido Garrido, *Documentación de la catedral de Burgos*, Doc. 543). For more on episcopal palaces, see M. Miller, *The Bishop's Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Karge, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p. 103.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, pp. 71-74. There is no reference to a master mason in the cathedral until 1277, that is, Master Enrique, who was also the mason of Leon cathedral. However, he would have been too young (if alive) in 1221 to have led work on Burgos from its foundation. Rocio Sánchez Ameijeiras has warned against the 'distorting prism' of seeking a particular named mason; see Sánchez Ameijeiras, "La portada del Sarmental," 165. It should be noted that Harvey, *op.cit.*, 46, 94 and 241 mentions a 'Ricardo of Burgos' as an English master mason in Castile in the late twelfth century and attributes Burgos cathedral to him, although I have found no documentary evidence to support this theory.

Burgos from the French city of Bourges, since the Burgos chevet, as Karge has demonstrated, was closely modelled on the cathedral of Bourges, one of the most spectacular cathedrals of early thirteenth-century French Gothic.<sup>21</sup> Although Burgos is considerably smaller and has three naves instead of Bourges's grandiose five, the heights of the arcades, the triforia, the clerestory, and the total height, are proportionally nearly identical to those of the lateral naves of the Bourges east end. The forms of elevation of the Burgos choir are also extremely similar; there are, for example, three different forms of pillar used in Burgos, which are prefigured only in the lateral naves and ambulatories of Bourges and are not observed elsewhere. Similarly, the bases of columns, the design of the triforia, profiles of the arcade and other structural links have led Karge to his conclusion that the early work on the cathedral was an attempt to reproduce the grandeur of the cathedral of Bourges, and he suggests that 'no Gothic building has been so greatly influenced by the French cathedral of Bourges than the Castilian one of Burgos'.<sup>22</sup> Subtle variations in the design have led Karge to suggest that the master mason of Burgos chancel was in fact improving on problems that he had encountered in the construction of Bourges.<sup>23</sup> It is important to point out that the transept and nave diverge from this model and cite other major French cathedrals, suggesting that after Maurice's death, the plans for the rest of the building developed in a slightly different direction to the chevet (a conclusion also supported by the redesign of the radial chapels just thirty years after the original chapels were built).<sup>24</sup>

There are very few references to the ongoing building works in the cathedral archive during the period of Maurice's life, and almost no mention of any of the masons, carpenters or sculptors who must have inhabited Burgos at this time. In his will, dated to 1230, the cantor Pedro Diaz de Villahoz left some money to the *maestro de obra*, although without naming him, and in 1246 Maurice's successor, Bishop Juan, granted the princely sum of 4,000 maravedis to the building project and made a separate payment to 'the men of Master Martin Glazaron who come and go to Paris: Garcia Juanes, Martin Domingo and Martin Esteban', although who these figures were remains unknown.<sup>25</sup>

However it is possible to extrapolate a considerable amount about the progress of the building work from the archival documents. For a period of about nine years, until 1230, the old Romanesque cathedral remained in use: not only did the royal wedding of Fernando III and Beatrice Hohenstaufen take place there in November 1219, but also that of King John of Jerusalem to Berenguela, Fernando III's sister in 1224, which is recorded as happening *in ecclesia burgensis* (and thus not in the monastery of Las Huelgas, the only possible alternative).<sup>26</sup> In May 1221, two months before the foundation of the new

---

<sup>21</sup> Karge, *op.cit.*, 71-97 and 131-139.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p. 131.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, p. 133.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, pp. 71-73. Also see above, n. 19.

<sup>25</sup> For the will of Pedro Diaz, see Karge, *op.cit.*, 42. For the will of Bishop Juan, see ACB, v.25, f. 351.

<sup>26</sup> For Fernando and Beatrice, see J. González, *Reinado y diplomas de Fernando III*, 3 vols (Córdoba: Publicaciones del Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros de Córdoba 1980), Doc 93: 'in cathedrali ecclesia Burgensi duxi sollempniter in uxorem'. For John and Berenguela, see Garrido

building, a parishioner named doña Mayor chose a tomb in the old cathedral and granted her body to be buried there, adding that ‘if perchance I am healed, they cannot give my body to any other place’.<sup>27</sup>

The earliest evidence of the chapter’s involvement in the building project is to be found in the will of canon Juan Peregrino, written in 1225, in which he leaves 50 gold coins for the ‘fabric’ of the building.<sup>28</sup> Five years later, in 1230, the cathedral cantor, Pedro Diaz, founded the chapel of St Nicholas, a chapel still extant on the northern corner of the transept (see Figure 1), ordering in his will that his body should be buried there.<sup>29</sup> He must have been on his death bed when he wrote this will, as there is indeed a corresponding gravestone in this chapel, still extant and dated to 1230, on which Pedro Diaz is commemorated.<sup>30</sup> A chapel dedicated to St Peter was also in use by November 1230, when Maurice appointed two chaplains to say mass there.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 1: The chapel of St Nicholas, founded by Cantor Pedro Diaz de Villahoz in 1230 (Photo (c) The Author)

---

Garrido, , *op.cit.*, Doc 566 (April 23 1225). This charter also records that the Archbishop Rodrigo of Toledo, came up to Burgos for the ceremony.

<sup>27</sup> Garrido Garrido, *op.cit.*, no. 530 (May 1221).

<sup>28</sup> ACB, v.40, f.209.

<sup>29</sup> Karge, *op.cit.*, 42-43.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*; and M. Gómez Barcena, *Escultura gótica funeraria en Burgos* (Burgos: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Burgos, 1988), 75-76.

<sup>31</sup> ACB, Cap de Núm, Caja 6, n.40.

Work on the chapels continued up to and beyond Maurice's death, as in February 1239, two chaplaincies were founded by canon Aparicio, archdeacon of Treviño, to attend to the altar in the chapel of St John the Evangelist.<sup>32</sup> This was seemingly one of the crown of original chapels identified by Karge. Importantly, Aparicio's will also provides a glimpse into the state of the inside of the cathedral; in particular, he describes a lack of altar vestments, and stipulates for the provision of vestments for the altar of St John. He also countenances the possibility that his sepulchre will have to be moved in the future, suggesting a rapidly changing and expanding church interior. Finally, in 1242, a donation was signed 'in the chapel of the altar of St Michael', suggesting that a third chapel must have been under construction by the end of the 1230s.<sup>33</sup>

However, perhaps the most striking and detailed evidence pertaining to the internal arrangement of the new cathedral is a constitution composed by Bishop Maurice in November 1230. This document, known as the *Concordia Mauriciana*, provides us with clear evidence that the choir was as good as finished by 1230 and the cathedral usable for the mass.<sup>34</sup>

The *Concordia* stipulates in precise detail how the chapter should celebrate the liturgy, and where they should position themselves within the new space of the Gothic church.<sup>35</sup> It regulates every aspect of the ceremony, even prescribing how canons should behave and dress in the choir, the days on which they should wear silk copes, the colour and fabric of their clothing, the type of shoes, and even when to shave. It informs us that the great altar in the centre of the choir was being used for mass by 1230, as two boys were instructed to swing thuribles before the altar and then around the choir during the celebration. The cantor was appointed to regulate entry and exit to and from the new choir, and non-attendance was to be punished by confiscation of the canons' daily stipend. The document establishes the number of canons at thirty, and specifies the order in which they are to sit in the choir, arranged according to seniority, with all other prebendaries (or *portionarios*) sitting behind them. On the innermost two rows were to sit the dignitaries: first, to the right-hand side nearest the altar, sat the dean, followed by the cantor, then two archdeacons, the sacristan, and then two local abbots.<sup>36</sup> On the left, the archdeacon of Burgos was seated first, followed by three more archdeacons and two more abbots.<sup>37</sup> This order, Maurice instructed, was to be followed in all liturgical matters, including processions through the church to the altar. There is also reference on several

---

<sup>32</sup> ACB, v. 18, f. 224.

<sup>33</sup> ACB v. 26, f. 316.

<sup>34</sup> *Concordia Mauriciana* ACB v. 17, f. 52. An edition (with some lacunae) has been published in Serrano, *Don Mauricio*, 143-147.

<sup>35</sup> On liturgical space in Gothic churches, see E. Fernie, "La fonction liturgique des piliers cantonnés dans la nef de la cathédrale de Laon," *Bulletin Monumental* 145 no. 3 (1987): 257-266. Also E. Carrero Santamaría, "Architecture and Liturgical Space in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The Libro de la Coronación de los Reyes de Castilla," *Hispanic Research Journal*, 13:5 (2012): 468-488.

<sup>36</sup> The archdeacons of Valpuesta and Treviño, and the abbots of Froncea and Cervatos; see Serrano, *Don Mauricio*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> The archdeacons of Briviesca, Lara and Palenzuela, and the abbots of Salas de Bureba, and San Quirce; see *ibid.*

occasions to processions from the ‘vestry’ (*revestiario*). This seems to have been just outside of the chevet, and was quite possibly within the bishop’s palace, mentioned above.

This evidence thus reveals something of the *fabrica* of the Gothic building founded by Maurice in 1221 and constructed at a remarkable pace over the course of the 1220s and 1230s. However, what would this new cathedral have meant to its founder-bishop? And why did he employ masons who would recreate the architectural imagery of Bourges? To start to answer these questions, we must understand more about the figure of Maurice himself.

### **French Connections**

Maurice had certainly visited France before 1221. There are two possible occasions that can be teased out of the archives, the first involving Maurice before he became a bishop. From at least November 1208 until 1213, Maurice was a member of Toledo cathedral, serving as archdeacon.<sup>38</sup> Toledo was preparing for battle in 1212, with the large Muslim army on their southern border, the Almohads, in what was to become the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa – the first decisive victory for the king of Castile against the Almohads.<sup>39</sup> In the run up to the battle, Toledo’s archbishop, Rodrigo, went on a trip to France to recruit troops. His aim was to present the war as a crusade, and his mission was to involve as much French support as possible.<sup>40</sup> There are several references to this trip to France in the narrative chronicles from this period, including Rodrigo’s own account in his *De Rebus Hispaniae*, but we have limited evidence of precisely where he went.<sup>41</sup> However, he returned to Toledo followed by nobles from across Gaul: the archbishop of Burgundy, the bishop of Nantes, and many barons from the area as well as the archbishop of Narbonne.<sup>42</sup> As Tom Nickson has pointed out, the fact that he was trying to preach a

---

<sup>38</sup> Maurice is first unambiguously identifiable on November 25 1208: see F. Hernández, *Los Cartularios de Toledo* (Madrid: Fundación Ramón Areces, 1985), 275-276 (Doc. 298). Maurice has generally been recognised as being in Toledo from 1209; see R. González Ruiz, *Hombres y Libros de Toledo: 1086-1300* (Madrid: Fundación Ramón Areces, 1997), 190, and L. Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence, Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 79.

<sup>39</sup> For an overview, see J. O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983), 443-453.

<sup>40</sup> Nickson, *op.cit.*, 4-6. See also, Peter Linehan, *The Spanish Church and the Papacy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 5-6.

<sup>41</sup> See Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, VIII.1, ed. J. Fernández Valverde (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1987). We have confirmation that Archbishop Rodrigo went on a preaching campaign to France in Lucas of Tuy, *Chronicon Mundi*, IV.88, ed. E. Falque (Turnhout, 2003): *Etenim fultus auctoritate domini Pape Innocencii Gallias adiit, verbum Dei assidue proponendo et suadendo populis, ut ad defensionem fidei convenirent*. Another account is supplied in the *Anonymous Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*; see L. Charlo Brea, ed., *Crónica latina de los reyes de Castilla* (Cadiz: Universidad de Cadiz, 1984), 32: “Rex gloriosus miserat archiepiscopum Toletanum et legatos suos in Franciam et in alias regiones Christianorum invitare populum catolice fidei sectarorem ad bellum futurum.”

<sup>42</sup> *De Rebus Hispaniae*, VIII.2.

crusade means that a stop by Bourges was extremely likely.<sup>43</sup> We also have evidence from the *Chronicle* of Bernard Itier that a group of 400 men left Limoges for Toledo in 1212.<sup>44</sup>

Did Maurice, then one of the most senior canons in the chapter of Toledo, accompany Rodrigo on this trip into France? Notably, there is one significant gap in his otherwise continuous appearance in the charters of Toledo, and that gap falls between January 1212 and June 1213, suggesting that Maurice too was absent over this period. Indeed, he seems to have been abroad, since in June 1212, Pope Innocent III wrote to Rodrigo, referring by name to the archbishop of Toledo's messenger; none other than *Mauricium, clericum tuum*.<sup>45</sup> Clearly, Maurice was absent from the Toledo records because he was travelling through Europe – and most likely would have started out with the archbishop on leaving Toledo. Whether he went as far as Bourges before branching off to Rome with a message for the pope is impossible to ascertain. If he had, he would have seen the French cathedral two years away from completion.

The second occasion on which Maurice travelled through France was in 1219, on his way north to Germany. Sometime at the start of this year, he was sent as an ambassador to Swabia on behalf of King Fernando III, in order to propose marriage to Beatriz, daughter of King Philip Hohenstaufen.<sup>46</sup> Again, we know very little about this mission and Maurice's precise route. Archbishop Rodrigo's *De Rebus Hispaniae* contains the longest description of the journey:

The ambassadors who went to request her, *Bishop Maurice of Burgos, a praiseworthy and wise man*, Pedro, abbot of San Pedro de Arlanza, Rodrigo abbot of Ríoseco, and Pedro Odoario, prior of the Hospital, went to Germany before Frederic, king of the Romans, who then had tutelage of the young lady, and were magnificently welcomed by the king [the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederic]. And after explaining the motive of their mission as had been ordered of them, the aforesaid king and his princes delayed the response for some time, and the aforesaid ambassadors waited for almost four months. Finally, King Frederic, emperor elect, sent his niece Beatriz, a noble, elegant, beautiful, and wise young lady, to King Fernando with the abovementioned ambassadors and with a splendid bridal party. And *when they arrived in Paris*, the king of the French, called Philip [Augustus or Philip II] who then governed over Gaul, received them

---

<sup>43</sup> Nickson, *op.cit.*, 47.

<sup>44</sup> A. Lewis, ed., *The Chronicle and Historical Notes of Bernard Itier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 84-85.

<sup>45</sup> *Quoad petitiones tuas, quas obtulisti nobis per Mauricium, clericum tuum*. J. Gorosterratzu, *Don Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada: gran estadista, escritor y prelado* (Pamplona: Imp. y Lib. de Viuda de T. Bescansa, 1925), 416.

<sup>46</sup> Bruno Meyer has seen this as an expression of the growing proximity between Castile and the Holy Roman Empire. See B. Meyer, *Kastilien, die Staufer und das Imperium. Ein Jahrhundert politischer Kontrakte im Zeichen des Kaisertums* (Husum: Matthiesen Verlag, 2002), esp. 72-83. See also J. Valdeón, K. Herbers, K. Rudolf, eds., *España y el 'Sacro Imperio'. Procesos de cambios, influencias y acciones recíprocas en la época de la 'europeización' (siglos XI-XIII)* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2002); and M. Caballero Kroschel, *Reconquista und Kaiseridee. Die Iberische Halbinsel und Europa von der Eroberung Toledos (1085) bis zum Tod Alfonsos X. (1284)* (Hamburg: Krämer, 2008).

wonderfully, conceding them a guard of honour through his land, and so they arrived happily to the kingdom of Castile<sup>47</sup>

Although we have no details here about precisely where this group went, we do have some corresponding evidence from the Lorraine area. Richer's *Deeds of the Church of Senones*, written by the 1260s, records a group of Spanish ambassadors passing through in 1219: *nuntii regis Yspanie postulantes regis Phylippi filiam domino suo dari in uxorem*.<sup>48</sup> On his way back through Paris, Maurice must surely have visited Blanche of Castile, the wife of Philip's son, Louis, and aunt of Fernando III – who would have been keen to meet any senior figures from the kingdom of Castile who were passing by.<sup>49</sup> Clearly then, this was another opportunity for Maurice to have come into contact with the *opus francigenum*, and particularly that of Bourges, which lay on the major pilgrimage route up from Spain, along which Maurice is likely to have travelled to and from Swabia.

Moreover, passing Bourges in 1219 would have been a splendid sight. The east end of the cathedral was completed in 1214, and what is more, the bishop-founder of this construction, Guillaume, had been canonised just before, in May 1218.<sup>50</sup> At his canonisation, his body was transferred into the new cathedral choir, set in a gold and silver chest, and raised up on columns behind the great altar.<sup>51</sup> This would have been *in situ* a year later in 1219 (indeed it remained so until the sixteenth century), and would have been enormously impressive to any passer-by, especially another ambitious bishop. It is also very tempting to see this as the opportunity not only for Maurice to decide to build a cathedral like Bourges, but to have been able to meet masons involved in the work and to have recruited, and most likely returned with, the team and master mason who would begin work on Burgos, just two years later.

### **Ordering the *novam fabricam***

We have thus established an immediate context for the foundation of the cathedral of Burgos. But what might this building have meant to its founder bishop, Maurice? The role of the episcopal patron has received increasing scholarly attention in recent years, although as Lindy Grant has pointed out, it is very rare to uncover evidence of a medieval patron's own intentions beyond the final product of the building itself, which may or may not have fulfilled expectations; one of the most well-known exceptions is Abbot Suger and his written account of the building of the basilica at St Denis.<sup>52</sup> In 1951, Erwin

---

<sup>47</sup> *De Rebus Hispaniae*, IX.10. The *Chronicle of the Kings of Castile* tells the same story, although with some different companions; see Brea, *op.cit.*, 59. My translation and emphasis.

<sup>48</sup> *Richeri Gesta Senoniensis Ecclesiae*, III.12, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores XXV* (Hannover: Hahn, 1880), 292.

<sup>49</sup> Blanca/Blanche was the daughter of Alfonso VIII and Eleanor of England, and sister to Berenguela (Fernando's mother). For more on Blanche, see Lindy Grant, *Blanche of Castile, Queen of France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> Also known as Saint William of Donjon (c. 1155 – 1209). See O. Nauleau, *Saint Guillaume du Donjon : archevêque de Bourges, primat d'Aquitaine 1200-1209*, 4 vols (Paris, 1989).

<sup>51</sup> A. Boinet, *La cathédral de Bourges* (Paris, H. Laurens, 1911), 12.

<sup>52</sup> Lindy Grant, *Architecture and Society in Normandy, 1120-1270* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 2. Some of the most important recent work on episcopal patrons include: P. Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England, 1170-1300* (New Haven: Yale

Panofsky famously suggested a direct connection between the architectural and intellectual developments of the twelfth century, linking the form and architectural design of St Denys with the Neoplatonic interests of its abbot.<sup>53</sup> Much subsequent scholarship has checked this contention, and as Peter Kidson has pointed out, the path between the scholar's cell and the stone mason's yard has yet to be found.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, as Charles Radding, William Clark, Paul Binski, Paul Crossley and many others have illustrated, this does not mean that architectural form should be seen to be necessarily devoid of meaning, intellectual or otherwise.<sup>55</sup> The question of how to understand medieval architectural developments within their cultural and intellectual context – immediate and general – has remained pressing for historians and art historians. Recent work has raised more nuanced questions about the 'frame of cultural reference' within which medieval buildings were constructed, the role of the architect or patron, and the 'symbols, formal ideals, and unconscious attitudes' that lay behind some of the major building projects of the middle ages.<sup>56</sup>

Although there are many gaps in our knowledge of the early stages of Burgos cathedral, we can in fact get closer to Maurice's own ideas about his new building by returning to his own words on the matter: the *Concordia Mauriciana*, the constitution he composed in 1230.

The opening paragraph of the *Concordia* is rather unusual. As we have discussed above, the text lays out a detailed account of the daily business of the cathedral and the precise duties of its members. However, the opening section of the text makes clear that for Maurice, this daily routine had a conceptual as well as practical value: this physical order was an expression of the cathedral's place within a greater hierarchy of ecclesiastical order.

---

University Press, 2004); S. Murray, *Notre-Dame: cathedral of Amiens: the power of change in Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and S. Murray, *Beauvais Cathedral: architecture of transcendence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>53</sup> E. Panofsky, *Gothic architecture and scholasticism* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1951), *passim*.

<sup>54</sup> P. Kidson, "Panofsky, Suger and St Denis," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 1-17. For a summary of the most important critiques of Panofsky, see A. Speer, "Is there a theology of the Gothic cathedral? A re-reading of Abbot Suger's writings on the abbey church of St. Denis," in Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché, eds., *The mind's eye: art and theological argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 65-72.

<sup>55</sup> For a selection of key works, see: C. Radding and W. Clark, *Medieval architecture, medieval learning: builders and masters in the age of Romanesque and Gothic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Paul Binski, "Working by words alone: the architect, scholasticism and rhetoric in thirteenth-century France," in M. Carruthers, ed., *Rhetoric Beyond Words: delight and persuasion in the arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14-51; E. Fernie and P. Crossley, eds., *Medieval architecture and its intellectual context: Studies in honour of Peter Kidson* (London: Hambledon Press, 1990); Grant, *Architecture and Society*, 1-5; Nickson, *op.cit.*, 45-47 and *passim*.

<sup>56</sup> Grant, *op.cit.*, 232 and J. Dodds, *Architecture and ideology in early medieval Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 1.

In this opening section, Maurice praises ‘order’ extensively, and states his desire ‘to restore to certain order those things that are seen to be less ordered’.<sup>57</sup> This ‘ordo’ is just as important in ‘the things of nature’ or the sensible world as it is in ‘invisible and eternal things’:

For indeed, the wise man does not ignore the great value of order in the things of nature, since without order, the workings of the sensible world would not exist even for a moment. Likewise, how valuable is order in the more worthy invisible and eternal things<sup>58</sup>

The *Concordia* is a clear manifestation of the order in the cathedral’s daily functions – in the sacraments or in the office – but Maurice’s eye is also on the new building, a manifestation of the sensible world, in contrast to the eternal world of the liturgy. He makes explicit reference to the ongoing building project that was being erected around him:

Wishing to restore to certain order those things that are seen to be less ordered...in this time of our translation into new fabric (*novam fabricam*)<sup>59</sup>

This ‘new fabric’ was then part of a larger manifestation of the ‘order’ that Maurice was imposing inside its walls. And indeed, his aim was no less than to reflect heaven itself in his new cathedral:

What is carried out in the church of God, whether in the sacraments or in the office, holds a certain likeness to that which was set in order in the super-celestial hierarchy by the Supreme Hierarch, that is to say, the divine goodness, who is the beginning of all things<sup>60</sup>

This terminology is recognisably Neoplatonic, and indeed Maurice himself attributes this theology to the teachings of Pseudo-Dionysius, to whom he refers as ‘Dionissi magni’. He exhorts the reader ‘who wishes to know’ more about heavenly order to consult Pseudo-Dionysius’s two great tracts on theological hierarchies, *De Coelesti*

---

<sup>57</sup> *Concordia Mauriciana*: ‘Volentes quedam que minus ordinata videbantur in ecclesia nostra ad certum ordinem reducere, quedam etiam que vel ambigua sub ancipiti fluctabant’.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid*, ‘Quante siquidem dignitatis sit ordo etiam in rebus naturalibus vir sapiens non ignorant cum sine ordine mundi sensibilis machina non subsisteret etiam per momentum. In invisibilibus quoque que digniora sunt, et eternis, quantum valeat ordo’.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, ‘Volentes quedam que minus ordinata videbantur in ecclesia nostra ad certum ordinem reducere...tempore nostre translationis ad novam fabricam’.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*, ‘Fiunt in ecclesia Dei sive in sacramentis sive in officiis, similitudinem quandam habere cum illis que Supremus Jerarches qui est principium omnium, divina scilicet bonitas in supercelesti Jerarchia ordinavit’.

*Hierarchia* (On the Celestial Hierarchy) and *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* (On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy).<sup>61</sup>

These opening lines thus attach an immediate significance to the order that the *Concordia* goes on to establish. The ranks, seats and duties of the members of the chapter are, through this rhetoric, transformed into theologically significant hierarchies, symbolic of no less than the structure of the celestial world. However detailed the instructions of the *Concordia*, they had a part to play in this wider theological vision of an ecclesiastical 'ordo'. Under Maurice, Burgos cathedral was to become a microcosm of a wider, indeed universal, order. The fabric of the building and the practices that took place within it were mirror images; the re-ordered stones were no more than a reflection of the re-ordered church more broadly.

Indeed, an important article by Paul Binski has suggested a link between architectural design and intellectual symbolism, seen through the vocabulary that was coming into use in the Parisian schools.<sup>62</sup> He suggests that, as the works of Aristotle, particularly his *Physics* and *Logic*, reached the syllabus in Paris, as we know they did from censorships in 1210 and 1215, architectural terminology came to be used by intellectuals as a means of discussing causality. Aristotle's Primary Cause was symbolised as an architect: the *auctor* who was able to order others. The outcome of this process was *ordinatio*, the correct ordering of society, and this had a moral significance – rightful order was quite literally 'edifying'.<sup>63</sup>

Binski's article has revealed how these ideas are expressed most clearly by Thomas Aquinas, whose *Summa Contrae Gentiles* draws on St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to explain how it is the job of the 'wise man' to order his society. Aquinas combines this with the Aristotelian imagery of the architect and the mason – the architect is the 'wise man', and has the ability and indeed duty to order others. This rhetoric, Binski points out, provides us with a link between the intellectual processes of the Parisian schools in the early thirteenth century and the ongoing Gothic building projects of the same time.<sup>64</sup>

It is also a rhetoric reflected in Burgos, where Bishop Maurice was also busy re-ordering the architecture of the cathedral to be modelled on one of the most important French Gothic cathedrals of the early thirteenth century. Maurice seems to have been aware of these same ideas concerning 'ordo'. The *Concordia* opens with a phrase from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, an exhortation to order: 'let all things be done decently, and according to order among you', and the words 'ordo' and 'ordinatio' are

---

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, 'Legat qui scire voluerit librum Dionissi Magni de Celesti Jerarchia...idem sanctus martir docet in libro de Ecclesiastica Jerarchia'.

<sup>62</sup> Binski, *op.cit.*, 14-51.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*, esp. 21-27 and 36-41.

<sup>64</sup> Other manifestations of 'ordinatio' are also mentioned in the article such as the layout of manuscripts from the early thirteenth century; compare M. Parkes, "The influence of the concepts of 'ordinatio' and 'compilatio' on the development of the book," in J. Alexander and M. Gibson, eds., *Medieval Literature and Learning: Essays presented to Richard William Hunt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 115-141. On the idea of conceptual copying, see C. Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind: A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

repeated nine times in the opening lines of the text.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Maurice also draws on the idea of the wise man engaging with order, for as we have just seen, the *vir sapiens* understands the value of order and knows that without it, the sensible world will fall apart. The ‘wise man’ in this instance appears to be the bishop himself: he is the one ‘restoring things to order that have been disordered’, and he is doing so both inside the cathedral and simultaneously in the fabric of the building, as its *auctor*.

It would seem to be clear that Maurice’s vision of his church and his desire to re-order both the chapter and the external fabric in line with the rightful order to heaven was a response the same sort of intellectual and rhetorical framework as that echoed in the *Summa Contrae Gentiles*. Aquinas was of course writing some thirty years after Maurice’s death, and so there could hardly have been any direct link between the two men. What they had in common was an intellectual appreciation of ecclesiological order and its symbolism, of the sort discussed amongst scholars in the nascent schools of Paris at the start of the thirteenth century. Whether our bishop came into contact with the intellectual milieu of Paris in 1219 on his way back from Swabia, or whether, as seems to be more likely, he had had a much longer exposure to such ideas, possibly studying there as a young man, is impossible to prove.

However, it remains evident that the foundation of this Gothic cathedral, more closely modelled on a specific French building than any other cathedral in Castile, must be seen as a conscious decision by Maurice to align himself and his diocese with intellectual and theological trends from north of the Pyrenees. The splendour of the *opus francigenum* was not only in its flying buttresses and magnificent internal spaces, but also in its symbolism. To build the cathedral in Burgos in this particular way was to make a statement about Maurice’s own intellectual outlook; he was the *vir sapiens*, and his re-ordering of the cathedral brought it into line with contemporary French theology just as with contemporary architectural designs.

The *Concordia Mauriciana* thus provides an important insight into the bishop’s own priorities when founding the new cathedral of Burgos in 1221, and one that not only shapes our understanding of Maurice himself but also challenges what Jerrilynn Dodds has described as the ‘deterministic and geocentric view of medieval architecture as an evolutive juggernaut lumbering towards Gothic’.<sup>66</sup> The re-ordering of the fabric of the cathedral must be seen in conjunction with the re-arrangement of its daily liturgical life,

---

<sup>65</sup> I Corinthians 14.40; quoted in the *Concordia Mauriciana* as, ‘Omnia honeste et secundum ordinem fiant in vobis’ – compared to the Vulgate’s ‘Omnia autem honeste, et secundum ordinem fiant’. It is notable that a matching configuration of the phrase is found nine times in the writings of Aquinas: see Aquinas, *De articulis fidei et Ecclesiae sacramentis ad archiepiscopum Panormitanum* 2 in R. Verardo and R. Spiazzi et al., eds., *S. Thomae Aquinatis: Opuscula theologica* I (Rome: Marietti, 1954), 141-151. Aquinas, *Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram* 14, in Commissio Leonina, ed., *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia* vol XXVIII (Rome: Marietti, 1974). Aquinas, *Summae theologiae secunda secundae*, 43.6 and 145.1, in *ibid.* vol VIII (1895), 327 and *ibid.* vol. X (1899), 146. Aquinas, *Super Ad Colossenses reportatio*, 2.2.88, in R. Cai, ed., *Super epistolas S. Pauli lectura*, vol. 2 (Rome: Marietti, 1953), 125-161. Aquinas, *Super Ad Thessalonicenses II reportatio*, 3.1.70, in *ibid.*, 191-209. Aquinas, *Super Epistulam ad Romanos*, 12.1.963 and 13.3.1073, in R. Cai, ed., *op.cit.*, 1-230.

<sup>66</sup> Dodds, *op.cit.*, 3.

reflecting Maurice's efforts to align Burgos within what he saw to be a universal hierarchy. The physical church on earth was, as his own words make clear, nothing less than a reflection of heaven – and in Burgos, heaven looked a lot like the splendid cathedral of Bourges. Maurice's choice of Gothic architecture was not haphazard; it was a statement of his own cultural and theological priorities, and the sort of prelate he saw himself to be.