

# ST. LAZARE: A ROMANESQUE CONUNDRUM

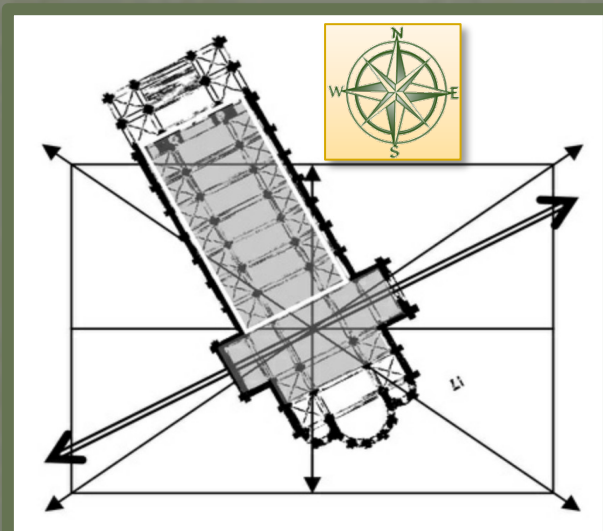
Debora Alcide FA ARTH 4100  
For: Professor Malcolm Thurlby

Art historians have almost unilaterally reached similar conclusions about St. Lazare. The identification of Gislebertus as the sculptor goes unchallenged, but perhaps the famed signature did not belong to the artist?

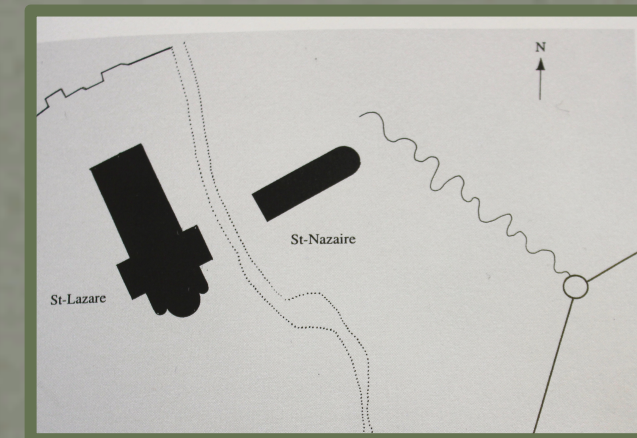
The sculpture in the cathedral is renowned for its artistry and for the moral and often enigmatic messages it imparts, however new findings show the sculptor had an advanced understanding of astronomy, that he demonstrated in the capitals.

Scholars have also been baffled by the strange positioning of the cathedral and the reason for its original construction. By examining the design, the patrons and the politics of the 12<sup>th</sup> century church, I challenge outdated hypotheses to solve the mysteries of the 900-year-old cathedral.

## #2 The Orientation



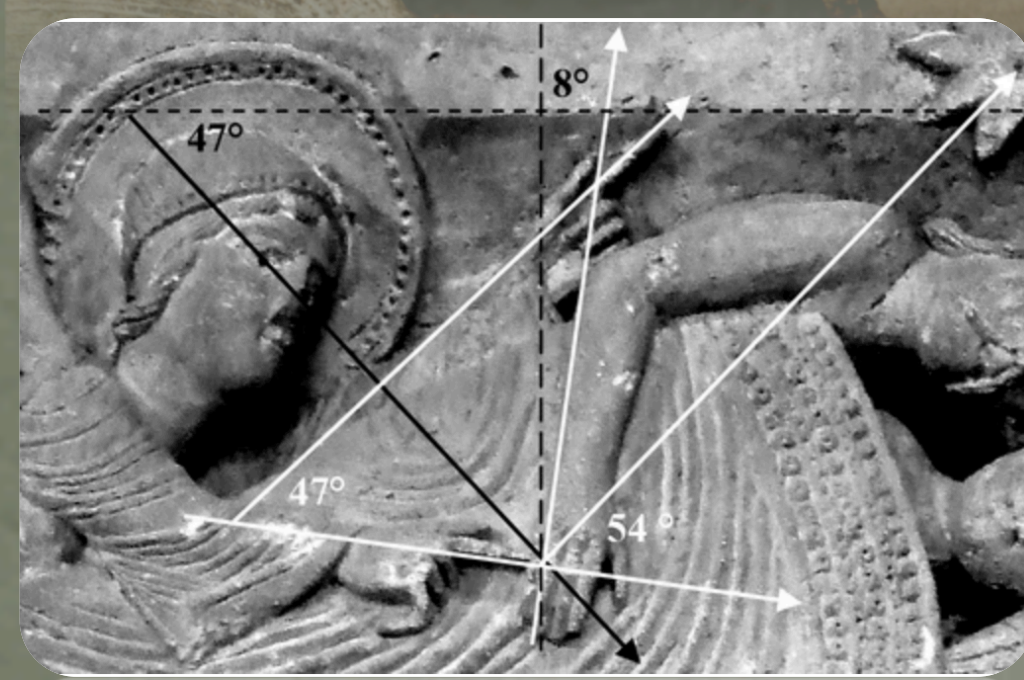
Most churches are situated on an E/W axis. St. Lazare axis is N/S, but 8° off true N/S axis as well, most unusual. The explanation lies with the extant cathedral of St. Nazaire. St. Lazare was built with its main portal facing the main portal of the existing cathedral.



The positioning of the two cathedrals



- The cathedral is situated at a latitude of 47°
- The solstice of the setting sun at the summer equinox is 54° N/E, both represented in the angles.
- 8° is the degree of difference between the angle of the sunrise at the summer solstice and June 1<sup>st</sup> the saint day of St. Réverien, identified as the saint the old cathedral (St. Nazaire) was dedicated to.
- It is represented by the angle created by the angel's right hand finger and a line from the center of the sun



**The Sleeping Magi:** The angle of the king's arm and the axis of the pointing finger of the angel, are both placed deliberately, identifying St. Lazare's positioning using astronomical readings, to the location of the original cathedral of St. Nazaire.

### The Gift of the Magi:

- The gold filled coffret carried by the magi representing summer, is at an angle of 8°, as is the pot of incense carried by the magi representing spring. The date that corresponds to this 8° degree difference, from the summer equinox and the true east/west axis is June 1<sup>st</sup>, St. Réverien's saint day.
- Once again, the angles generated on the capitals. position the location of, and the relationship between the two churches, St. Nazaire and St. Lazare demonstrating the sculptor's knowledge of astronomy.

## #3 The Capitals

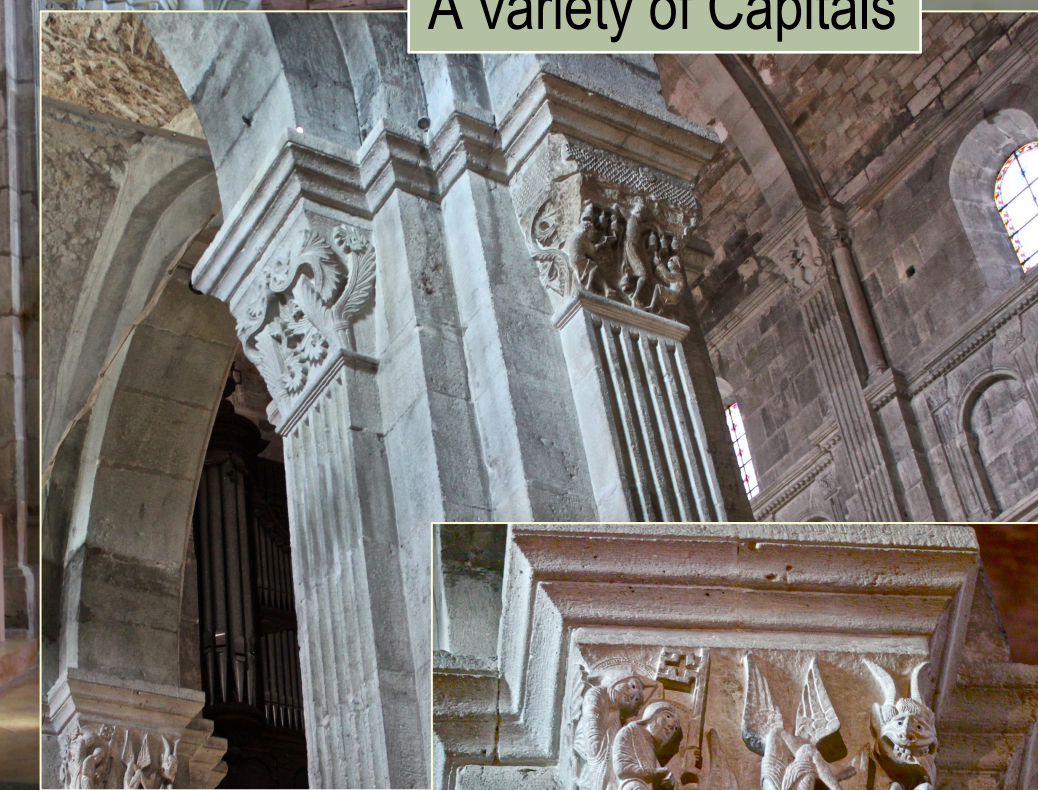


The ratio of length to width of the church at the time of the capital's carving, is the identical to the size of the rectangular container being offered to Jesus, which might be coincidence, but then again maybe not.

All drawings: La cathédrale d'Autun et ses mystères, by Daniel Minard. Photos by Debora Alcide,

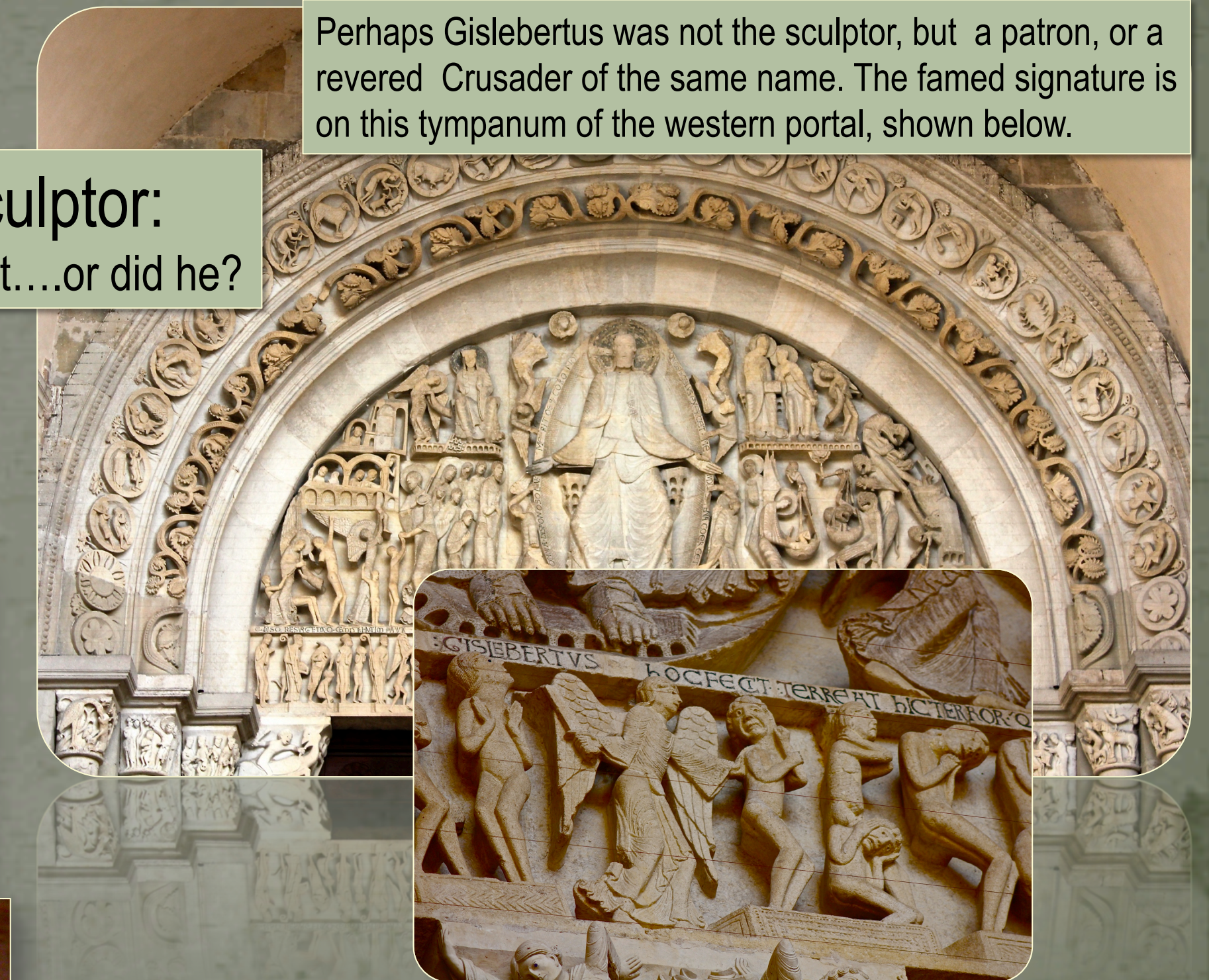


The South Aisle,



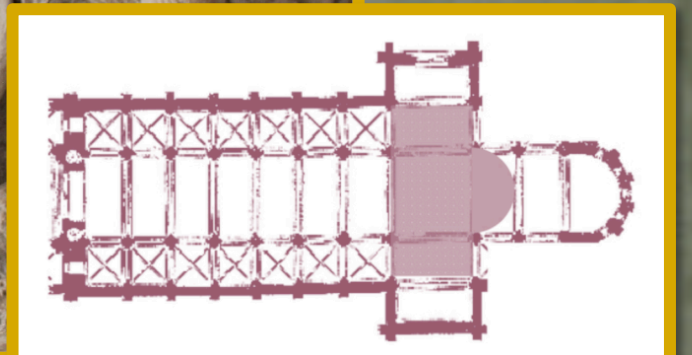
A Variety of Capitals

## #1 The Sculptor: Gislebertus hoc fecit...or did he?



Perhaps Gislebertus was not the sculptor, but a patron, or a revered Crusader of the same name. The famed signature is on this tympanum of the western portal, shown below.

**The Offering of the Church:** I believe this represents the donation of the private chapel of Robert 1<sup>st</sup> to Etienne de Bagé, Bishop of Autun, supervised by an angel offering heavenly approval for the Duke's generosity.....and the forgiveness of his many sins!



Chapel for Robert 1<sup>st</sup>, the Duke of Burgundy placed within the cathedral of St. Lazare, which I believe represents the original building on the site.