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**CHRISTIAN THOUGHT IN
ARCHITECTURE**

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT IN ARCHITECTURE.¹

BY MR. BARR FERREE, OF NEW YORK CITY.

I.

The subject discussed in this paper is one that will not be found in the text books, either architectural or theological, though it touches on both. Architecture is a human idea, a product of the human mind; it is not a creation of the fancy, not the deliberate design of the draughtsman, not the outcome of a moment's inspiration. Originating in the need of man for shelter it has been the most human of the arts, closely associated with human life and thought, advancing with human civilization, retrograding with man's backward steps. To a very great extent, though perhaps not wholly so, architecture is a correct index of man's mental, social, political and religious state. Certain political conditions will be followed by certain intellectual advancement, or *vice versa* as the case may be, and architecture will be developed in a proportionate degree. The present discussion is limited entirely to the manifestation of religious ideas in architecture, and especially in Christian architecture.

¹The literature of the subject *Christian Thought in Architecture* is a limited one so far as the particular idea conveyed in the title is concerned. As a matter of fact, however, any adequate list of works bearing on the topic would scarcely be less than the enumeration of the most trustworthy works on architecture supplemented with a goodly list of theological works. It seems scarcely wise, therefore, to burden these pages with references which at the most would be fragmentary and unsatisfactory in throwing very little light on the question at issue. The historians of theology and of architecture are each too much concerned with their especial topic to give more than the most cursory glance at the subject of the other. Obviously there is abundant room for a more ample discussion of architecture from the standpoint here taken than will be found in this paper.

It is no new thing to study the history of art for the illustration of the influence of religion, because in both sculpture and painting, man has chiefly expressed his conception of his God. A very large part of ancient and Christian painting and sculpture is composed of sacred images or is concerned with the treatment of sacred themes. The religious impulse in architecture—the oldest of the arts, and the most important, as being the most useful to man—has, however, been generally overlooked. Religious architecture has been well chronicled, because architectural history is little more than the history of religious edifices. But the history of religious structures is a very different thing from the history of the religious ideas calling those structures into existence, and which is illustrated in them.

If architecture is simply ornamental and ornamented construction, as some of the text books put it, there can be no benefit from a search after religious motives underlying any part of it. As a matter of fact architecture is much more, and a study of the Christian ideas in Christian building will help to show how wide and broad and true this is. Viewed from the standpoint of Christian faith architecture assumes a new importance in the eyes of the student. It becomes, as it is, a real, living art, having a purpose and expressing it. A church seems more than a simple building, more than a mere shelter for worshippers, but an actual testimony of the worshippers' faith and trust, which needs no vivid imagination or keen insight to make evident.

Christian architecture reached its highest stage in an age which was above all things architectural. As the scholar or the writer of to-day gives expression to his thoughts and ideas in printed or spoken form, the people of the middle ages gave expression in architecture. The religious books of that time are scarcely more valuable as indication of the place of religion in the minds of the philosophers and writers than is the architecture. Perhaps only a student of architecture would admit this; yet if we search the written records for the mediæval conception of Christianity, should we not also ask the art monuments which freely and thor-

oughly expressed the life and ideas of the age, what manner of light they also throw on the question?

In discussing the architectural illustration of Christian ideas it is well to note that they come to an end with the Renaissance. We may find copious expression of Christian thought in the cathedral of the thirteenth century but none at all in the city church building of to-day. The complete disappearance of Christian faith and doctrine from the religious architecture of the early Renaissance is one of the most striking and interesting of architectural psychological questions. Yet the matter is not wholly psychological but depends not only on the strange fascination of the early Renaissance architects for pagan forms and pagan ideas, but upon the general change in methods of thought and progress current at that time. It need scarcely be pointed out that the modern church is far from expressing any especial Christian idea of doctrine. To an extent, of course, the most extraordinary of modern churches does correspond to some modern religious ideas, but the wonderful and complete illustration of Christian life and doctrine that is to be found in the mediæval building has disappeared.

Architecture and religion have now ceased to hold the exclusive attention of humanity. The Renaissance introduced new thoughts, new ideas, new occupations. The old life was dead and people began to live a new existence in which the old idea of religion was modified. The Reformation divided the Church and turned people's thoughts from the building of churches. Personal, subjunctive, religion took the place of good works and outward visible signs of inward spiritual graces. The great cathedral was neglected for the parish church, the sermon took the chief place in the sacred service.¹ Many a form and

¹ Yet the parish church is not a product of post-Reformation times, but is as marked a feature of mediæval architecture as the cathedral. One of the most striking things in many of the smaller European cathedral cities is the number of small churches, though the cathedral would seem large enough for all ordinary occasions. Canterbury contains nine small churches in addition to the cathedral, not including modern buildings or remains of monastic establishments. The city of Troyes in France has seven churches dating from the xvi c. and earlier, beside the cathedral.

doctrine were modified in the turmoil of the Reformation. It is no wonder in a movement so far reaching in its effects, so revolutionary in its results, that Christians should have ceased to express their faith in architecture, or indeed in any form of art. The Christian conscience underwent a change, and in the present day it seeks to glorify God in the sending forth of missionaries, in the establishment of homes and hospitals and other works of a charitable nature, rather than in erecting stupendous churches or magnificent cathedrals. Yet all these things were done, after a fashion, by the great monastic orders, which managed at the same time to build some of the most remarkable churches in Europe. We cannot explain the absence of Christian thought in our architecture as it was manifested in the middle ages by pointing to our charities and missions.

II.

It is a significant indication of the important place that religious ideas, religious influences, religious conceptions have exercised upon humanity that much the larger part of the architectural remains of any people, of any race or time, are buildings that have been put to a religious use, either as temples of gods or connected with forms of worship. There seems to be a general or primitive idea that a temple, a house, a covering of some kind, is a fit symbol wherein to express the conviction of religious thought. And so as shelter must have preceded any attempts at ornamentation, and man have made for himself some sort of retreat before he picked up some strange shaped twig and worshipped it, so architecture may claim to be the most religious and most ancient of the arts. Certainly it is the one that was first employed with a religious significance: certainly it is the one in which it has received its most imposing and lasting expression.

In Egypt the tomb alone approached the relics of religion in the multiplicity of its monuments, but the idea of a future life, of which the tomb was an expression, was part of Egyptian religion, and its peculiar form and decoration

were determined by religious ideas. Of the people of antiquity, the Chaldæans and Assyrians appear to have been the most deficient in erecting temples. The temple or the tomb is the most characteristic monument of Egypt; the palace of the valley of the Euphrates. Archæologists have ventured to define several varieties of Chaldæan and Assyrian temples, but at the best their attempts are largely conjectural.¹ As a matter of fact, Assyria has not yet been explored sufficiently to warrant any opinion as to the exact nature and extent of its religious structures; but there is still abundant evidence of the prevalency of religious ideas, traditions, and worship amongst these people. Future explorations will doubtless show that religious architecture received from the Assyrians quite as much attention as, relatively, it had from the other peoples of antiquity.

With the Greeks as with the Egyptians, it was the temple that received the most care, on which was lavished the utmost resources of art, and which was the finest and most imposing product of the national culture. Though of small size, the Greek temple was more than a simple shelter for the statue of the god. The sculptures and paintings with which it was decorated made it a veritable treasury of the best result of Greek thought and labor. It was the joint product of the skill of the greatest architects, painters, and sculptors. It was under the inspiration of religion that the finest forms of Greek art were obtained, and the temple thus naturally became the seat of its most inspired thought. Yet the artistic splendors of the Periklean age were not alone an expression of pious fervor, but visible illustration of the power of the state, of the wealth of the community, of the superiority of Athenian genius. With the increase of culture in antiquity there is a corresponding decrease in the popular appreciation of the gods. The infidelity of poets and philosophers was not without its effect on all classes, but though in the days of her greatest

¹ A full discussion of this matter is contained in Perrot's *History of Art in Ancient Egypt*, i., 126, *et seq.*; i., 318, *et seq.* Also Perrot's *History of Art in Chaldæa and Assyria*, i., 364, *et seq.*

artistic triumphs Greece had, to a certain extent, lost her early faith in the gods and goddesses, temples were rebuilt, new ones proposed, and the income of a city expended in the creation of a single sacred statue. Whatever may have been the religious doubts of the Greeks, they had in religion a convenient way of expressing their national greatness and prosperity, their wealth and their resources. Religion with them never fell into such contempt that it did not serve as a medium through which to give vent to artistic form and thought.

The Romans, more irreligious than the Greeks, like them built temples, kept up elaborate households of priests, supported costly sacrifices and festivals, and gave outward indications of being religiously disposed. With them, more than with the Greeks, religion was a function, kept up for the credit of the state and the benefit of the uncultured who had not yet learned to understand the empty claims of the occupants of Olympus. Under the sensual, wasteful life of the empire Rome easily became the first infidel city of the world, yet, with all her impiety, she supported the temples, and even projected new ones. Low as was the estimation in which the Roman held religion, he found use for it in his most impious days. No features of Roman religious life are more marked than its liberality and its narrowness. The Romans absorbed religions much as they did political states. Setting forth to conquer the world, they exacted homage and tribute, but left each nation free to practise its own religion in its own way. Sometimes the foreign faith was engrafted on the Roman pantheon, the foreign gods given Roman names and Roman features; sometimes the strange faith was bodily transported to Rome or to Roman cities, where the worship was continued in its original form. More remarkable was the support given to foreign religions even when not borrowed from. The most noteworthy illustration of this is that of Herod, who rebuilt the temple of the Jews at Jerusalem, with the hope of making both himself and his nation popular with the chosen race. This was strictly in keeping with the

Roman treatment of religion as a political element rather than as a source of personal feeling or gratification. The rebuilding of the temple was a piece of astute politics on the part of Herod, who spent a very large sum of money for a religious purpose, though actuated by no religious motives.

III.

Christianity differed from paganism in being a religion of the people. The small temples of Greece and Rome were not intended for anything but shelters for the statues of the gods, and convenient treasuries for gifts of the pious and the moneys of the state. Christianity required buildings that were large enough to accommodate a considerable number. Actual worship by the people was a part of the outward forms of Christianity, which in this differed essentially from paganism. This fundamental fact of Christian worship is of the utmost importance in the history of architecture, since to it is due the evolution of the Christian church building, with its wonderful accompaniments, in the middle ages, of richly designed subsidiary arts. The earliest buildings of the Christians gave no indication of this later stage, but were small, insignificant structures, sometimes not more than a single room, where a few could gather together and practice a simple form of worship, that, like the structure itself, gave no hint of the elaborate forms and ceremonies of later times.

Originating in the private room, the Christian church naturally advanced to the private basilica or oratorical hall forming part of the residence of every wealthy Roman and in which it first found typical and permanent expression. This consisted of an oblong apartment divided by two rows of columns into a nave and aisles. Situated in the centre of a private residence windows were inadmissible in the side walls, and light could only be obtained through an aperture in the roof or in windows cut in the wall of the nave carried above the height of the aisles. The transition from this structure to the public basilica was easy, and was

made with comparatively few changes. When this had been accomplished the Church found itself possessed of a real type of structure which formed the basis of all future Christian church buildings.

Christianity was an indoor religion; buildings were essential to its growth; architecture became its necessary accompaniment. The enclosed buildings of the Christians were typical of the fundamental principles of Christian faith. They had ample space for large congregations, and the church proper was extended by the narthex and atrium, one or both, as the case might be, where both Christian and pagan freely mingled with each other, and where the latter may perhaps often have become acquainted with the new religion, from the free and public discussions held in them. The early churches were not open to all, full membership and baptism being requisite for admission at all times and to all services. Even catechumens were confined to a part near the entrance, and at the celebration of the Eucharist those not in full communion were compelled to retire.

The Christians had erected church buildings of considerable magnitude prior to the conversion of Constantine, but this event marks the real beginning of Christian art. Nothing could have been more marked than the difference between the appearance of the early Christian church and the heathen temple. The one was plain and forbidding without, with rough walls, broken with a few small windows, the whole poor and unimposing, a small round tower, which, like the church, was without ornamentation, forming the single exterior feature. The other was light and graceful in form, ornamented with columns of fine workmanship and decorated with rich sculptures.¹ Yet the lowness and solidity

¹ Several of the Roman basilicas, and one or two other churches built under the especial patronage of the emperors, were very large and splendid buildings, notably S. Peter's, S. Paul's, and S. John Lateran, dating from the IV c., which, notwithstanding many changes and alterations, we know to have been originally buildings of great size and magnificence. A recent restoration of the ancient basilica of S. Peter's, by Mr. H. W. Brewer (*The Builder*, Jan. 2, 1892), retaining in the XV c. the chief characteristics given it by Constantine, shows an elaborate group of buildings which, while without the grace and

of the one expressed a truth and purpose wanting in the other. The Christian church offered as much difference to the pagan edifice within as without. Whatever means the builders possessed were lavished on the interior. Rich mosaics on backgrounds of burnished gold gave a brilliancy to the walls that could have been had by no other ornament. At the farthest extremity was a semicircular apse where on curved benches sat the bishop and higher clergy as previously in the same place had sat the Roman judge and the assessors in the Roman legal basilica. Before these seats was the altar under a ciborium, with curtains drawn during the celebration of the Eucharist. A low wall separated the choir from the body of the church, and on either side were pulpits or amboes, from which was read the Epistle and the Gospel. A semicircular arch opened into the apse, and above was a great figure of Christ surrounded by His Apostles or by angels; His hand extended in benediction toward the people below.

This arrangement of the interior, its furniture and decoration, marks a distinctly different religious system from any yet practised. The nave and aisles, divided in a suitable manner, afforded accommodations for the congregation, the men on one side, the women on the other or in the galleries above.¹ However the arrangements differed in minor re-

beauty of the Roman temple, and differing from it wholly in style, might, in magnitude, compare very well with some of the great pagan edifices. But this was an exceptional structure, and the probable average type of early Christian church may better be looked for in the stone churches of Syria, dating from the IV to the VII c., or in the churches of Ravenna, than in the buildings of Rome itself. See De Vogüé: *Syrie centrale arch. civile et relig. du premier au septième siècle de notre ère*, 2 vols.

¹ The subdivision of sexes and persons was carried out to a considerable extent in the early basilicas. The women were on the right or epistle side, the men on the left; catechumens of both sexes were assigned places behind the full communicants. The penitents were confined to a space near the door. When there were galleries, which were not common in the West, widows were given one side and young women vowed to a religious life the other. The atrium was open to pagan and Christian alike. In the Coptic churches of Egypt the division of sexes was across the church instead of longitudinal, the men being near the altar, the women near the door, the division being made by a screen. See Butler: *Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, Oxford, 1884.

spects, the necessities of the people, the worshippers, received careful attention. It was for them that the church was planned and built. It was for them the walls were decorated with paintings and mosaics, which told tales of truth and pointed lessons that would otherwise have been taught with difficulty. The new religion needed but the opportunity to make for itself architectural forms and features that were characteristic of its faith and its worship. By this radical departure from pagan architecture, and the characteristic manner in which it brought new forms to its own use, it emphasized its individuality and rendered it impossible for the people to find traces of the old faith in the structures dedicated to the new, a condition not to be despised in the early ages of Christianity.

The great Roman basilicas as we know them now—S. Paul without the walls, S. Marie Maggiore, S. Clement, or the gigantic church of S. Sophia at Constantinople, constructed in another style and on another system—were far from expressing the ideal of Christian architecture. The Christian architect had not yet realized his power nor the possibilities of expressing his faith in stone. The use of pagan symbols, of pagan decorations, and the modification of pagan ideas continued long after the Church had freed itself from the influence of heathenism. Columns, capitals, and entablatures from pagan edifices were wrought into the fabric of Christian churches. Economical as this method was, it perpetuated heathen forms for a longer period than would have been possible had the use of these things been forbidden. The Church, however, knew its strength; it knew that with the peculiar individual form of its buildings it might employ the entire structure of a heathen temple without recalling too vividly heathen ideas. It knew the solid foundation on which the faith of its members rested, and thus, even in its very earliest days, did not hesitate to employ the images of pagan deities as symbols of Christ himself and illustrative of its own stories and faith. Though the identity of these early Christian paintings with pagan ones has been denied, and the resemblance claimed to be

more accidental than real, there could have been no uncertainty in it. To the pagan inquirer, the sight of his own familiar gods on the walls of a Christian chapel would have shown him that, perhaps, the new religion was not so directly opposed to his own as he had been led to suppose. The Christian was enabled to extract equal comfort from the same spectacle, since it would indicate, in a measure, the continuity of all religions and the ultimate triumph of Christ over the inspirations of the evil one.

The Roman basilica, typified by the church of S. Paul's without the walls, and the Byzantine church of S. Sophia, at Constantinople, represent two very different phases of church architecture, yet both systems aimed to accomplish the same thing and fulfil the same purpose. The idea of the Christian church, as has already been pointed out, was to provide ample space for the congregation, and the early Christian custom of dividing the sexes and the members into various ranks, each with their own position, necessitated more room than would have been necessary had all been mixed indiscriminately together. In the West space was secured by building large oblong rooms, in which width was acquired by the addition of aisles.¹ In the East, the domical system of architecture, practised from immemorial times by the Assyrians and other people of Mesopotamia, naturally suggested the square, with an inscribed circle, the base of the dome, as the plan on which the architect should work. Although the square church is much more common in the East than in the West, the former is not without churches in which the elongated plan of the oblong basilica can be traced. In no instance is this more evident than in S. Sophia where the central square or circle of the dome is ex-

¹ The oblong form is not the only one adopted for churches in the West. S. Pietro-e-Marcellino at Rome, attributed to Constantine, and S. George at Salonica, supposed to date from the same time, are simple rotundas. S. Costanza at Rome (IV c.), is a rotunda surrounded by a circular passage. Baptist-eries were frequently of circular form, as at Ravenna and Milan. Cf. Planat : *Encyclopédie de l'architecture et de la construction*, art. *Arch. relig.* De Fleury : *Le Messe*, tom. iii., 167-169, gives a list of plans of primitive churches with diagrams.

tended by means of semi-domes until a large area has been obtained that is recognizably oblong in form though with semicircular appendages. The Eastern Church, illustrated in S. Sophia at Constantinople, and S. Vitale at Ravenna, gives no indication of the cruciform shape which was afterwards universally adopted in the West. The adoption of the cross as the ground plan of Western cathedrals was a legitimate evolution of the basilican type. In the basilicas the transepts which formed the arms of the cross were undeveloped. Sometimes they were absent, at others they were insignificant or internal only, and there was no eastern arm, the apse being applied to the nave immediately beyond the transept. The plan of the basilica is, in fact, a **T** and not a cross. It was reserved for later times to thus freely express the symbol of salvation in the form of the church building. It should be remarked, however, that there is not the smallest ground for supposing that the cruciform plan bears any relation to the cross of Christ or has Christian significance.¹ It would, perhaps, add an additional interest to religious architecture if it could be maintained that the cross did actually become the basis of the church building, just as it became the symbol of the Founder of the Church. The cross of the ground plan of the church edifice developed

¹ There is no more popular delusion in architecture than that the cross of Christ was deliberately selected as the plan of the church building. A study of the conditions under which the churches were erected shows how totally without foundation such an opinion is. Not only were round and oblong churches built in the West from the earliest times, but a comparison of a series of church plans, and a study of the development of ritual demonstrates that the latter was the chief cause in finally determining the cruciform plan. Even more preposterous is the idea that a deviation of the choir towards one side, noticeable in some churches, symbolizes the inclination of the body of Christ hanging on the cross. The building of churches extended over considerable periods of time in the middle ages, and it needs no symbolic explanation for slight irregularities in structures built at different epochs. Doubtless it is possible to design a church in which various doctrines and traditions shall be symbolized or represented in the architecture, but the work of the middle ages is too spontaneous, too extended, and too easily accounted for by common-sense means to render such reasons necessary. Dehio & Bezold: *Die Kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes*, Stuttgart, 1884-88. Three parts published, give a very complete series of plans and sections of churches from the earliest times.

under the influence of constructional and ritualistic requirements. Primarily the transepts were used by the singers of the choir. When the choir became a part of the structure and was limited to a portion of the nave enclosed within walls, they were taken by the congregation. From them good views could be had of the altar, and the worshipper was enabled to take a more interested part in the services than when forced to keep at a distance. More room than the narrow aisles could supply was needed here, and this was given by the transepts. The extension of the nave beyond the transepts, forming the so-called eastern arm, originated likewise in ritualistic requirements. Greater space was needed for the ceremonial functions of the church, and this was obtained without encroaching upon the portion reserved for the people by extending the church beyond the transepts.

The record of the evolution of the mediæval church building from the earliest form to the most complex is a story of constructional change, of progress in mechanical methods, of adopting fresh materials and new ideas to old systems. Rich and elaborate as were the ceremonies of the church in later times, the great cathedrals of the middle ages contain few ritualistic features which were not to be found in idea at least in the early Christian churches. Primarily the needs of worship were simple enough. The altar, at which the priest first celebrated the communion facing the congregation,¹ the seats of the bishop and clergy, the choir or place

¹ Mr. G. G. Scott in *An Essay on the History of English Church Architecture*, pp. 14-23, contends that the position of the priest was facing the east, irrespective of the direction of the congregation. He gives a list of "about forty churches [in Rome] of early date, or giving evidence of the preservation of early arrangements, in which, contrary to the mediæval or modern rule, the sanctuary is placed at the western end of the buildings, as against seven of distinctly early date arranged upon the more modern plan" (p. 20). He sites the *arcosolia* of the Catacombs, which could only be used as altars by the priest standing with his back to the people, as further evidence. Rohault de Fleury, *Le Messe*, tom. iii., 146, points out the influence of the eastern position in determining the orientation of the Christian church, but gives ample evidence (tom. i. 51, *et seq.*) of the early custom of standing behind the altar. While it is quite true the *arcosolia* necessitated the priest's standing in front of them,

for inferior clergy, singers and attendants, reading desks for the epistle and gospel and a pulpit comprised a programme that even in the XIIIth and XIVth centuries had few additions. Such changes as were made were due to an elaboration of ritual, not to the introduction of new forms of worship or the addition of new dogmas to Christian faith. The choirs were enlarged to give more room to those who had place within them.¹ Chapels were built between the buttresses of the side walls and around the apse and in the XIVth century became a marked feature of the church. Aisles or ambulatories were carried around the choir for processions and great functions. The Lady Chapel, dedicated to the Virgin, was placed at the extreme east end of the building, and in English churches was often of great size and beauty. It is more characteristic of English churches than of French, because in France very many of the cathedrals, as Senlis, Noyon, Paris, Laon, Chartres, Soissons, Rouen, Amiens, Reims, Coutances, Bayeux, Evreux, and Seès, were dedicated to Mary.

Christian architecture reached its fullest development in the north of Europe, where civilization might be said to be coëval with the growth of Christianity, where the thought of the people and their work were less affected by the cultured paganism of Greece and Rome, and where art could take a fresher, more original, more Christian form than where it was constantly in contrast with heathen productions. It was under such circumstances that the great Gothic cathedrals of northern Europe were built, and it is interesting to notice that though in a certain sense they

three other kinds of altars, the portable, the isolated, and placed against the wall, have been found in the Catacombs, leaving any argument drawn from the *arcosolia* alone of doubtful value. Cf. De Fleury: *Le Messe*, tom. i., 103.

¹ In Canterbury cathedral, a church with two pairs of transepts, the choir is of vast extent, extending from the apse to the westernmost transepts. The altar is placed well forward, with considerable space behind it, formerly filled with the episcopal throne and the shrine of S. Thomas à Becket. The cathedral of Reims has likewise an immense choir which extends beyond the transepts into the nave. As at Canterbury, there is a large open space behind the altar. It is interesting to note this common characteristic in the metropolitan churches of England and France.

were the product of the barbaric north, though the ancestors of their immediate builders were plunged into the deepest depths of ignorance and heathendom, it was here that the greatest of all Christian edifices were built. From its environment the Gothic style fully warrants the name of Christian.

IV.

The XIth century is the beginning of the greatest revival in architecture the world has seen, a revival, it is well to note in the present connection, due to the inspiring influence of Christianity. The fiction long popular in historical and philosophical circles, that the people of Europe were widely and generally alarmed at the supposed approaching end of the world in the year 1000 is no longer admissible.¹ It is true enough that almost immediately after this date great activity is to be noted in architecture all over Europe, but the reason for this activity is not to be found in any feeling of relief at having escaped the terrors of the Last Judgment. The preceding centuries had been centuries of Christian growth; the strength of the Church and the people had been exhausted in diffusing a knowledge of the new faith, and in recovering from the disorders attendant upon the break up of the Roman empire. At the beginning of the XIth century, not only had Christianity become deeply rooted in western Europe, but society was more settled, governments more stable, arts more developed, education, perhaps not more universal, but more widely distributed. It was the political and social condition of Europe, rather than any feeling concerning the Last Judgment that brought about the architectural revival of this time. This and the monks.

It is well nigh impossible to exaggerate the value of the services the monks rendered humanity in the past. Their services to architecture are the same as they were to other forms of culture, and the architectural history of the XIth century would have been very different

¹ On this point consult Quicherat, *De l'Architecture romane*, in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, Paris, 1886, for architectural evidence.

from what it was, had it not been for the extraordinary development of the building art among them. It is safe to say that Gothic architecture would never have been so thoroughly developed, would never have penetrated from France, where it originated, to England, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and even to Sweden and Norway, and have retained such general similarity of form and style, had it not been for the monks, who with their systems of communication and visitations, and energy as architects and builders, devised a persistent form of art that to but a limited extent shows the influence of the very varied environments in which it flourished. All the monastic orders had characteristic buildings, but it is to the Cistercians the world is chiefly indebted for the distribution of Gothic architecture.¹ They were the greatest monastic builders, and were one of the prime causes in the revival of the XIth century.

The buildings of the monks were not churches alone, but vast establishments that provided food and shelter for large numbers of people, and included within their walls, farms, factories, workshops, and gave labor and sustenance to the inmates without the help of the outer world. Most of these great groups of buildings have disappeared, and such as remain exist in a fragmentary state, but many of the churches still testify to the greatness of the establishments and the genius of the builders.² Not only did abbeys, priories, and other monastic establishments each have its own church, but great cathedrals were built under monastic rule. This was especially the case in England, where many of the more important cathedrals were under the special care of some one of the orders.

The secular clergy looked with a jealous eye upon the encroachments of the monks on popular favor, as illustrated in the magnificent structures they erected. The great French bishops especially endeavored to surpass them,

¹ Cf. Prof. Frothingham's interesting and valuable series of papers on the *Introduction of Gothic Architecture into Italy by the French Cistercian Monks*, now publishing in the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

² Dugdale: *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 8 vols.; Courajod: *Le monasticon Gallicanum*, Paris, 1869.

and the cathedrals which quickly sprang up in all the chief cities of France were expressions of the growing power of the secular clergy. The age was in every respect an architectural one; popular enthusiasm centred in the art. Municipalities vied with one another in the erection of monumental churches. No effort was too much, no work too stupendous, no toil too arduous if it was required to complete the structure that was to be the crowning glory of the city, and an enduring monument to the piety of the state and its love for God. This feeling was eagerly encouraged by the French bishops as an offset to the power of the orders. Chartres, Laon, S. Denis, were churches in which the record of popular interest and fervor have been preserved to our day.¹ In Italy there was a similar movement in the civil pride of the cities in their cathedrals.² The history of architecture in the middle ages is a most inspiring illustration of the inspiring influence of religion in architecture.

The masons who were the successors of the monastic builders were another important element in this great revival. Their brotherhoods and communications with other bodies in distant parts were prime causes in hastening the mechanical development of architecture, and they were especially instrumental in carrying identical ideas of construction and of art all over Europe. The general similarity of the Gothic throughout Europe is readily traceable to them and their predecessors the monks.³

¹ As to Chartres see Bulteau: *Monographie de la cathédrale de Chartres*, 2d ed., Chartres, 1887-91, tom. i., 118 et seq.

² Norton: *Historical Studies of Church-Building in the Middle Ages*, New York.

³ Gothic architecture is now admitted to be of religious origin, as opposed to lay influences. It is, of course, impossible to speak of the invention of Gothic architecture: it was not an invention, but was a growth, an evolution, a union of varied characteristics, which are first found in common in a religious structure, the abbey church of Morienvall. See Gonse: *L'Art Gothique*, Paris. His chapter on the *Origin of the Pointed Style* is most admirable. For the influence of the lay workers, see p. 142. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française*, art. *Architecture* attributes the beginnings of Gothic to the lay element.

It is not the adaptability of the building to the service of the church that is the most conspicuous feature in the mediæval cathedral, nor even the splendor of the ritual it suggests, but the expression of religious thought, of Christian faith and hope, of trust in God, and love for Christ. Architecture was more than simple building; it was an intellectual expression. All forms of art were pressed into its service: painting, sculpture, mosaic, inlay, work in iron, bronze, lead, and other metals, gold, silver, and precious stones. The product of the gold-beater, the jeweller, the carver in wood, all had architectural form that helped to make the age the most architectural in the history of art. These subsidiary arts served both to express the architecture and to ornament it, and to express the Christian ideas which underlay the whole edifice. It was fortunate that architecture thus widened its scope and included all forms of art within its field. The buildings were not simple arrangements of columns, vaults, walls, windows, and other architectural features. They were loaded with sculpture in the capitals, string courses, bosses, window- and door-jambs, wherever a stone could be carved it was cut and made a portion of a living unity. While it cannot be said that each individual piece of sculpture was an expression of the carver's religious faith, the work, as a whole, was permeated by a thorough Christian feeling and a genuine piety that has seldom been so beautifully illustrated. In no part of the cathedral building was sculpture employed so freely as in the porches of the doors, and especially in the great western porch.

Christian architecture reached its culmination in the French cathedrals of the XIIIth century: in S. Denis, Chartres, Paris, Reims, Bourges, Beauvais, Rouen, Amiens Christianity put forth its mightiest effort in art and made its greatest successes. There is an immense contrast between the basilica and the cathedral, both architecturally and from the standpoint of Christianity. The early Christian church was a low small building, without especial external features. The cathedral was the largest structure in

the city. It was frequently placed on an elevation, and the houses of the people clustered around it as if to gain protection from its proximity.¹ The plan was markedly cruciform: two mighty transepts, with fronts scarcely less imposing than the vast western façade, formed the arms of the cross. The eastern arm was likewise well marked, but its chief glory was the cluster of chapels surrounding the apse with their wonderful external and internal perspective and their buttresses, flying buttresses, pinnacles, and gargoyles. The body of the church consisted of a nave with one or two aisles on either side, and beyond these a series of chapels, making the view across the church almost as rich and imposing as the view towards the altar; while the climax to the whole was the vault, built at a higher level than man had heretofore placed a roof.

In the cathedral of Nôtre Dame at Paris no less than thirty-eight piers support the roof of the church west of the transepts, the total number of columns and piers springing from the floor amounting to eighty-three. In the cathedral of Bourges, which, like Nôtre Dame, is a five aisled church, sixty columns and piers are required to support the vaulting.² But it was not in width, nor in number of the columns alone the cathedral impressed the eye: the vaulting was placed at a height far exceeding any roof before devised by man. The vault of the cathedral of Amiens is 147 feet above the floor, that of Cologne 155 feet, and that of Beauvais 157 feet. Nothing more stupendous than these lofty vaults has been built by human hands, and even the

¹ This refers more especially to France, where the cathedral was frequently at the actual centre of the city, or upon the highest point. In England the cathedral is more generally on the outskirts of the city, apart from the noise and bustle of daily life. The French cathedrals were people's churches; the English were, many of them, monastic churches, and thus quite outside ordinary daily existence.

² These figures include only the main piers springing from the floor and standing free, without walls behind them. Bourges cathedral (Barreau: *Description de la cathédrale*, Chateauroux, 1885) contains 2,662 columns, columnettes, and clustered columns. Upwards of 4,350 human figures are employed in its ornamentation, of which 1,700 are statues or statuettes, and 2,950 painted on glass.

spaces of the great domes of the Renaissance, of S. Peter's at Rome, of the Duomo at Florence, or of S. Paul's at London, are scarcely superior to them in impressiveness of effect.

It is hardly necessary to point out that churches with such prodigious dimensions within must have appeared not less tremendous without, and indeed the vast bulk of the mediæval cathedrals, and their almost overpowering immensity, are not their least important features. Christianity was no longer forced to conduct its services in humble retired edifices utterly devoid of external character and ornament, wherein it seemed to hide rather than to flourish. Its churches are now the most stupendous edifices in the land, and their external features are not less imposing and elaborate than their interiors. The former was now a full expression and growth of the latter, in place of a box-like covering characteristic of the basilicas. Lofty towers finished with spires marked the main front and gave it dignity. In France there was an elaborate system of towers, which unfortunately was never carried to completion in any church. In the cathedral of Laon the towers rise to a height sufficient to give an idea of what a mediæval cathedral would have been like had they all been completed. The plan included seven towers, two on the main front, and two on each of the transept fronts, with a small spire or *flèche* over the central crossing, though sometimes two towers were added beyond the transepts, making nine in all. English cathedrals do not show such a symmetrical arrangement. In England it is the central tower which is most distinctly marked and the most conspicuous feature of the exterior. Towers were not wanting on the front, as at Lichfield, but with the exception of the central lantern, they were not often important parts of the cathedral design. Of the French cathedrals Chartres alone, of the churches of the first rank, has its western towers completed in a manner worthy of the building. The cathedrals of Paris, of Reims, and of Amiens all have unfinished western towers.

If Gothic architecture was not the product of a natural growth, it would be easy to find symbolic references to the Trinity and to Christ in the designs of the west fronts of the French cathedrals. The French architects lavished all their resources on their main fronts, and made them typical of the church behind. It is a singular coincidence, though only the growth of natural constructive influences, that the figure three, the symbol of Trinity, should be thoroughly marked in the façade. Three elements, the nave flanked on either side by a tower, form the basis of the design. The most important features of the front are three lofty and deeply recessed portals, one in the centre and one under each tower, ornamented with a profusion of sculpture, and which by their wide open thresholds seem to invite the multitude to enter, and are, in truth, true entrances, not insignificant doors as in English cathedrals. Vertically the front is also divided into three parts, the portals forming one, while above, another section includes the great bull's eye, or rose window—a characteristic French feature that received most wonderful treatment,—in the centre of the nave, with other windows in the towers. Over all runs a gallery, forming the third part, which is carried around the towers across the nave, binding the whole edifice into one complete harmonious design. The elements are simple enough, but the architects of the Ile-de-France produced fronts of wonderful variety with no more extensive materials than this, and it is not the least remarkable feature of these cathedrals, that though composed of essentially the same materials, the façades exhibit a marked diversity and individuality. It is needless to ask if Gothic architecture, had not its growth been interrupted, would have produced more effective designs, whether enlarged materials would not have given its artists more extended scope; it is sufficient that with these almost elementary ideas it produced most successful work.

The church building was but a part of a whole wherein the mediæval Christian sought to express his religious convictions. The age was architectural, not only that architec-

tural forms and ideas were prevalent in every kind of art, but because all arts were brought into the service of architecture. It was in their architectural application as ornaments of the church building or as part of the structure itself that the allied arts reached their greatest perfection, obtained at the same time their greatest utility, their most refined beauty. Two forms of art stand out in the architecture of the middle ages both from the superior technical treatment they received and the masterly manner in which they exhibit Christian ideas. These are sculpture and painting on glass. The art of painting on glass is exclusively mediæval; it originated, reached its culmination, and declined in the middle ages. It is an art of the North, where the cold, damp climate necessitated large windows, that the buildings be well lighted by the sun. Whether the use of painted glass had any effect on the increase in the size of the windows shown in the progress of Gothic architecture may perhaps be doubted,¹ but the mediæval architect did not conceive a finer idea than a vast clearstory of large windows filled with glass glowing with brilliant colors. No more superb decoration has been invented by human hands than this: mosaic and painting pale before its dazzling hues. No cathedral to-day retains in its entirety the glass with which its windows were filled, but enough has survived the vicissitudes of war and disturbance to show how incomparable must have been the effect of a great church filled with it. The architecture was a frame of exquisite workmanship wherein were placed jewels of unsurpassed brilliancy. The painted windows were useful as well as ornamental in affording opportunities for telling sacred stories and truths in a pictorial manner intelligible to all. In the absence of books and, indeed, of any general popular knowledge, some means of common instruction was necessary, and there was no better or more effective way of accomplishing this end than by the scenes represented on

¹ Cf. Sir G. G. Scott: *Lectures on the Rise and Development of Mediæval Architecture*, London, 1879, ii., p. 63.; Moore: *Development and Character of Gothic Architecture*, London, 1890, p. 69.

the windows, and in the sculptures with which the churches were decorated.¹

Next to architecture sculpture was the most important art of northern mediæval Europe, and especially of France, where it developed more rapidly than in Italy. Exteriorly and interiorly the French architects employed sculpture in the greatest profusion both as an architectural adjunct and as illustrative of Christian doctrine. In England its use was comparatively limited. The front of Wells cathedral contains a remarkable series of sculptures, and in some of the other cathedrals it is found to a slight extent, but nowhere in England did it receive the intelligent application it had in France, where it not only strengthened the construction and increased the appearance of solidity, but set forth simple truths and doctrines in a manner that could be understood by the most ignorant. An art which could thus bring home the truths of the Gospels and of the Church to minds that could learn of them in no other way, fully

¹ The finest painted glass in Europe may be briefly summarized thus: Chartres cathedral contains nearly all the original glass in its 175 windows. Most of it dates from the XIII c.; two windows are from the XII c., eight from the XIV, one from the XV, two from the XVI. Le Mans, choir, aisle, and clear-story, XIII c., contains in one of the apsidal chapels the most ancient known example, dating from the XI c. The rose windows of the transepts of Amiens are very fine. Angers has some magnificent XII c. windows in the nave, and XIII in the choir. The glass of the choir of Tours, XIII c., is complete and of marvellous beauty. Bourges contains much magnificent XIII c. glass in the eastern part of the church, and also some fine examples of the XIV, XV, and XVI c. Limoges has some good glass of the XIV and XVI c. Troyes has some XIII, XV, and XVI c. Reims also has some superb windows, and the Ste Chappelle, partly XIII and XV c., at Paris, is extremely well known. The French cathedrals contain much more and much finer painted glass than the English. The beauty of the XIII c. glass is its intense rich coloring, not the drawing of the design, though this is of marvellous complexity and ingenuity. The intensity of color, especially when the glass is seen at its best, with the sun shining directly through it, has never been reproduced. Several of the French cathedrals contain modern imitations of the ancient windows that are melancholy examples of modern workmanship. Reproductions of painted glass may be found in Cahier et Martin: *Monographie de la cathédrale de Bourges*, Paris, 1841-44; Hucher: *Vitraux peints de la cathédrale du Mans*, Le Mans, 1864; Lasteyrie: *Hist. de la peinture sur verre d'après ses monuments en France*, Paris, 1853-57; Schaefer and Rosstenschier: *Ornamentale Glasmalereien des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, Berlin, 1888.

merited the wonderful development it received at the hands of the mediæval sculptors.

Sculpture reached its highest development in the choir screen and the portals. The history of the choir screen is a most interesting study in evolution. Originally, in the basilica, designed as a means of separating the inferior clergy and singers from the congregation—a signification it has retained to the present day—it was a simple low wall, whose richest ornamentation was a geometrical design in mosaic, and whose most imposing features were the amboes or reading-desks for the Gospel and Epistle, which formed part of their construction. In the mediæval cathedral this simple structure had grown from these elementary proportions to massive walls of stone or marble, often ten or fifteen feet in height, and ornamented with elaborate sculptures and other decorations, the whole forming an architectural combination of the most impressive kind. Here the mediæval artist told the story of the patron saint of the church, or set forth the episodes in the life of the Virgin, or depicted some Scripture incident in forcible and effective sculptures. Perhaps the most famous of these works, and certainly the most beautiful and elaborate, though dating from the XVth to the beginning of the XVIIIth century, is the choir screen of the cathedral of Chartres, representing scenes from the lives of Jesus and the Virgin. A long series of designs enclosed in an architectural framework of arches, pinnacles, and tracery of almost lace-like delicacy extends around the choir. The cathedral of Amiens has a screen with similar, though less numerous, sculptures, illustrating the story of S. Firmin, the patron saint of Amiens, and the life of S. John the Baptist. Nothing more useful and beautiful than these screens, which exhibited, in language that all could understand, the truths of the Bible and of the Church, is to be found in the whole range of Gothic art. With their graphic illustrations of sacred themes they offer a marked contrast to the walls of the choirs in English churches, which are chiefly ornamented with monuments to departed individuals or with

Gothic tracery, which, while beautiful in itself, is quite without the real living Christian interest of the French screens.

The Christian who could thus study noteworthy events in sacred history in the vivid sculptures of the choir screens found further sources of instruction and pious thought in the sculptures which adorned the portals of the church. It was on the doorway that the French artists lavished the utmost resources of their skill and gave freest scope to their inventive genius. In one of his most characteristic but fragmentary essays Mr. Ruskin has graphically told the story of the sculptures on the west front of Amiens cathedral, showed their meaning, given the names of the almost innumerable statues, and explained how the whole forms a wonderful combination of Christian history and doctrine, dogma and belief. Its title, *The Bible of Amiens*, is a most picturesque and truthful description of what the French mediæval cathedrals really were. They were more than mere churches, more than mere places for the display of priestly ritual, for elaborate ceremonies, and imposing functions. They were the centre of the life of the city, the places of popular resort, the most conspicuous feature of the town. They were epitomes of the culture and thought of the time. Here alone was found education and ideas, and here the people came for inspiration, not only of purely spiritual things, but of the intellect. The churches were in truth mighty Bibles, sources of instruction and light in a time when just such illustration was needed. It is impossible to study these monumental milestones in the history of humanity without feeling that the light these buildings disseminated was of a wholesome and manly nature. One cannot come from studying them without gaining renewed confidence in the people and in the religion that produced them, in the faith that gave them being.

Like the entire façade, the portals were designed on an elementary basis. Sometimes the outer opening was flush with the main walls of the church, sometimes they projected beyond it, while in occasional instances, as the lat-

eral doorways of Chartres cathedral, they are prefaced with a porch. The entrance was deeply recessed, the columns supporting the arches forming the roof having statues in front of them or between them. The whole design was in a measure subordinate to the central sculpture in the tympanum over the door, or perhaps it would be more proper to say, all the sculptures led up to this central feature. Various subjects occupied this space, the most usual being a representation of the Last Judgment. No single piece of sculpture of the middle ages is more impressive than the Last Judgment of the great portals. The entire doorway is, in fact, given up to representing this most awful event in Christian theology, which effectively warns all of the wrath to come and the dangers of a worldly life. The scenes of the Last Judgment itself are shown on the tympanum, but the entire inner surface of the arches that form the portal is covered with figures of cherubim and angels, the hosts of heaven, who appropriately occupy the most lofty position. Sometimes scenes from the life of the Virgin, or some other events in sacred or legendary history fill the tympanum, but the Last Judgment is the topic most often employed and the most appropriate. Though of very great variety and individuality, there is much similarity in all these conceptions which are widely distributed in the Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals and churches of Europe.

Christ, the Judge of the world, is enthroned above, with S. John and the Virgin, or attendant angels, on either side. Below, the centre is occupied by an angel weighing the souls of the departed. On one side is a hideous Satan, ready to seize the condemned, and who hands them to his minions behind him, who pass them on to the fiery pit, represented by a cauldron over a fire vigorously fanned by devils with bellows. On the other side are the blessed, and in the lowest division the dead rise from their tombs. It is a close and graphic transcription of the scene described in the Gospels.

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Thus the Church taught the truths committed to its care ; thus the Christian was reminded of the cardinal facts of his religion in all the parts of his church building. The structure itself, not less than its decoration, made one great whole that was the product of Christian ideas, the outcome of Christian faith, the expression of Christian truth. It may, perhaps, be going too far to point to the great monuments of Christian architecture as evidences of revealed religion, but it is impossible to study these works of art in the light of Christian history and experience without being convinced of the absolutely genuine piety and Christian feeling that called them into being. It is thoroughly in keeping with natural laws that Christianity should have freely expressed itself in architecture, but it is scarcely short of marvellous that it should have done so in so thorough a manner and with such stupendous results. It is one of the chief glories of Gothic architecture as practised in the middle ages that it can be studied not alone as the visible expression of a great intellectual movement, but as the typical representative of the most active religious impulse that has animated mankind.

It should not be forgotten that the monuments of Christian art, whether they be architecture, painting, or sculpture, are the common heritage of every Christian. The great mediæval cathedrals do not belong to any one part of the Church, or call it branch, or division, if you will. Built at a time when there was no schism in the Western Church, they clearly express the western conception of Christianity. As such they form fit subjects of study to the believing Christian not less than to the architect and the student. They are invaluable epitomes of the progress of the human mind and the growth of Christian ideas at a time of which we have few other memorials. And this is what I mean by the value of Christian thought in architecture, and why I venture to lay this aspect of the question before a company of theological scholars.

The indication of Christian thought in architecture is no fanciful product of the imagination. Christianity, its forms, doctrines, ceremonies, lay at the foundation of Christian church architecture; its influence upon the art was persistent and marked until the beginning of the Renaissance. It is not something that needs to be searched out, for it exists in the most evident manner. Christianity exercised quite as much influence upon the development of architecture as did progress in construction, or the social and political state of the builders. Apart from this, the study of architecture from this standpoint directs attention to the wonderful illustration of Christian ideas in the great churches of the XIIIth century, in which the architectural manifestation of Christianity reached its culmination. Yet it is well to remember the limitations; Christianity then received its most complete architectural form, but this was not because it had reached its highest stage of development as a religion or as a social factor. The era in which this point was reached was, as has been shown, an architectural one. The art quality was of unsurpassed refinement, but it was due to the nature of the time, to the especial things which occupied the minds of the people, and other characteristics that formed the distinctive civilization of the age. Christianity as a religion unquestionably inspired architects, sculptors, and painters to put forth their best efforts and eclipse all known ideals; but it was because art and religion both held a greater share of popular thought in the middle ages than at any other time, that Christian architecture of the form and style known as Gothic so thoroughly and completely illustrates Christian ideas.