

ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE

ITALIAN ROMANESQUE

To understand the historical factors which contributed to the Romanesque House of God, reference must be made to circumstances in Italy after the fall of the Roman Empire and the apparent break with the Roman building tradition. Romanesque means Roman. Last of the German invaders were the Lombards, who entered Northern Italy about A.D. 550. Earlier conquerors of Italy had been assimilated by Roman civilization or had departed without leaving any deep impression upon the peninsula. Such a leader as Athaulf, the successor of Alaric, seeing the folly of destroying the achievements of Rome, said,

“When I was young and eager in mind and body I at first eagerly desired to blot out the Roman name, and make all that was Roman the kingdom of the Goths alone. But, taught by long experience of the savagery of the Goths, and fearful of depriving the state of those laws by which a state alone existed, I chose to make it my glory to restore and exalt the Roman name through the vigour and strength of the Goths, so that posterity might know me as the renewer of Rome, since Fate would not allow me to be Rome’s remover”

Theodoric, too, was a patron of Roman art; his sons were taught Virgil and the elements of Roman law. The Lombard, however, refused to be tamed. He kept at once “his savageness and his ground.” In A.D. 553, when Narses drove the Ostrogoths from the valley of the Po, the Lombards were living in Pannonia on the Middle Danube. They advanced into Italy in 567. Pavia was taken in 574, and became the Lombard capital. Coming with their wives and children, the Lombards sought suitable settlement places. As each town was taken, troops were left behind as a military colony. Henceforward, Lombardy was inhabited by two peoples, acknowledging two systems of social custom. The Lombards, however, displayed a real capacity for government, and a sense of the need for compromise. They accepted Catholicism in place of Arianism; they intermarried freely with the Roman population. In Lombardy, unlike France, Germany and Britain, those who had known Roman rule lived side by side with those who had not. For this reason the Lombards tended to be patrons of Italian, rather than Byzantine, art. In Lombardy, it was possible to save a measure of the Roman building tradition, and here the Romanesque style developed, the word indicating a tendency to follow Roman models, and including the architecture of post-Roman times, before the Norman and Gothic styles were matured. Like Byzantine architecture, Romanesque developed under the influence of Christian worship and the requirements of Christian ritual. But whereas Byzantine architecture was Eastern, Romanesque was Western.

The credit for preserving the Roman building tradition would seem to belong to the gild known as the Comacines. When Alboin the Lombard overran Venetia in A.D. 569, many Romans took refuge on Comacina, an island in Lake Como. The derivation is convenient rather than certain. Accepting it, among the refugees upon Comacina were a party of Roman builders and sculptors. Under a Roman governor, Francione, the island held out for 20 years, when it was taken by Autharis, who seized the treasure stored there by

Narses. Having no building tradition of their own the Lombard conquerors were willing enough to employ the Comacines, and for a long time this Roman influence tended to stop the spread of the Byzantine building craft in Western Europe, and favoured the building of Latin basilicas rather than the domed churches of Byzantium. An edict of the Lombard King Rotharis, dated A.D. 643, recognised the Comacines as a gild with legally-defined privileges.

Master builders were not forced to work as serfs, as an edict of King Luitprand, dated 713, shows. The decree also fixed the price of various types of buildings. In the following centuries, bulls and diplomas from Popes and Kings confirmed these privileges and absolved members of the building-gild from local taxation and gave them freedom to travel. Painters, sculptors, carpenters who designed the scaffolding, metal workers and wood carvers, were members of the corporation, which, in course of time, included a *schola* for novices, a *laborarium* for the *operatori*, and an *opera*, or *fabbrica*, for the masters. Each lodge had a secretary and treasurer, and arranged for the initiation of novices and the discussion of craft affairs. *Fratelli*, meaning brethren, *magister*, meaning the architect or master of administration, *murarius*, any builder, and *operarius*, subordinate mason, are grades constantly mentioned in connection with the Comacini and kindred guilds. A lodge of freemasons might work upon a cathedral or put up churches or state buildings for a ruler, decade after decade. At Modena, a family of freemasons worked for 200 years upon the cathedral, son succeeding father, and nephew uncle. The sons and nephews of *Magistri* appear to have had the privilege of membership of a building-gild by heritage, and were spared a long novitiate. One contract tells that “the *Magister* and his heirs *in perpetuo* shall work at the said church of Modena, and either the said Master or any other Master, his descendant, shall receive each day eight imperials in the days of May, June, July and August, but six imperials only in those of the other months, for their recompense and their work.”



Since the publication of Leader Scott's fascinating record of the Magistri Comacini, there has been a tendency to exaggerate the influence of the Lombard builders. In truth, the troubled personal history of the Langobard kings did not encourage a vigorous art, as we may judge from the story of Theodolinda, through whom the Lombards were won from Arianism to Catholicism. After Alboin was poisoned by his wife Rosamund in A.D. 575, King Autharis succeeded to the Langobard throne. He was an Arian, but wedded

Theodolinda, a protégée of Pope Gregory the Great. In 590, Autharis was poisoned in his turn, and Theodolinda wedded herself to Agilulf, Duke of Turin. A tale of the courtship is well known. When the queen offered Agilulf a cup of wine, he kissed her hand, but she said with a blush, "He who has a right to the mouth, need not kiss the hand." Theodolinda and Agilulf founded the cathedral at Monza, near Milan, in 590, where early examples of Lombard art may still be seen. Gundeberg, a daughter of Theodolinda, married Rotharis and built San Giovanni in Borgo at Pavia, a church which was unfortunately destroyed in 1811.

This early Lombard art reached its climax about A.D. 725, in the time of King Luitprand, whose services to religious art are suggested by the fact that he brought the body of St. Augustine of Hippo to Pavia. St. Augustine was originally buried in the church of St. Stephen at Hippo, but, at the time of the Vandal invasion, the body was carried to Sardinia where it remained in the church of San Saturnino at Cagliari for 200 years. When the Saracens overran Sardinia, Luitprand proposed that the sacred relics should be brought to Pavia. The existing tomb-shrine was built about 1380 by the Eremitani di Sant' Agostino, with the aid of Gian Galeazzo, by Matteo and Bonino of Campione, pupils of Balduccio of Pisa, who carved the shrine of St. Peter Martyr in Sant' Eustorgio, Milan.

There has been so much rebuilding that it is impossible to point to any Lombard church as the undoubted work of the Comacine builders at the time when the Lombard kings directed the art fund in Northern Italy. The architectural characteristics in the age must be gauged from numerous buildings of very varied dates.

Among the characteristics were the rows of colonettes decorating the exteriors, which developed into a familiar feature of later Italian Romanesque. The overhanging cornice was another pleasant characteristic, as was the square bell-tower. Early Lombard decoration can best be studied at San Michele, Pavia. Much of the present church dates from the eleventh century, but the strips of ancient sandstone reliefs let into the façade come from the church which was in existence in the time of Luitprand. The church itself is cruciform, and is divided into a nave and aisles by pillars spanned by round arches. The short, raised choir, with its crypt, ends in an apse, while the church is vaulted with square bays. The symbolic sculpture is fully described by Leader Scott. A huntsman and his dogs serve as emblems of the Christian driving out heresies. A fisherman recalls the priesthood fishing for souls in the ocean of sin. The four beasts are emblems of the evangelists, the lion, the calf, the eagle and the man of Revelations iv.,7. The vine is Christ, the peacock with an olive leaf is the Church bringing peace; the six-breasted woman, veiled, carrying two pine-cones and wearing a long robe, is the world-mother, Cybele. The dragon ridden by a child is a symbol of Christ overcoming sin; the two sphinxes represent the knowledge of good and evil. The hippogriff, a combination of horse and eagle, represents the redemption of man. Of deep interest in itself, this symbolic decoration gains even richer significance when compared with the naturalistic sculpture of France in later Gothic times, when the entrance to a House of God became a library of Christian fact and theory. In the interval the symbolic and non-representational methods of the early Christians had given place to the human representation which the Greeks had exploited on their temples.



The leaders of the church were never in doubt as to the value of this symbolic art. Centuries earlier, Dionysius the Areopagite had said : “It is necessary to teach the mind regarding the spiritual hierarchies by means of material figures and formal compositions, so that by comparing the most sacred forms in our minds we may raise before us the spiritual and unpictured beings and similitudes on high.” Leader Scott, in *The Cathedral Builders*, also recalls a letter written by St. Nilus (A.D. 985). Writing to Olimpiodorus, St. Nilus said :- You ask me if I think it an honourable thing that you erect temples to the memory of martyrs as well as to that of the Redeemer.... You ask also whether it would be wise to decorate the walls on the right and left with animal figures, so that we may see hares and goats and every kind of beast flying away, while men and dogs follow them. Whether it would be well to represent fish and fishermen throwing the line or not; whether on the stone shall be well-carved images of all kinds of animals, and ornamental friezes and representations of birds, beasts and serpents of divers generations?” The reply of St. Nilus was “Yes.”

Desiderius (756) was the last of the Lombard kings. He quarrelled with Pope Adrian, who persuaded Charles the Great to dethrone Desiderius. The battle of Pavia ended 200 years of Langobardic rule. On Christmas Day, A.D. 800, Charles was crowned in the basilica of St. Peter at Rome, and hailed by Pope Leo III. as Augustus. The Frankish king and the Roman Pope formed an alliance which made Charles supreme in Central and Western Europe, with the exception of Spain. A time of strife followed the death of Charles until Otto the Great consolidated the German Empire and, in 962, was crowned Emperor at Rome, where Otto III. made his capital.

The Roman Empire was now divided into two parts, with different social customs and racial characteristics. In the East, Oriental influences were intermixed with Greek thought and craft, while, in the West, the Roman building tradition was dominant, though changing to meet the needs of the northern invaders, Franks, Germans and Normans. A result of the political system established by the Carolingian kings was largely to increase the art fund available for religious purposes in Western Christendom, as may be judged from the Saxon Capitulary issued in A.D. 782, the time of Charles the Great. Here are four clauses :

“If any man despise the Lenten fast for contempt of Christianity, let him die the death.

“If any man among the Saxons, being not yet baptised, shall hide himself and refuse to come to baptism, let him die the death.

“Let the men of every hundred give to their church a house, two hides of land, a male and female slave.

“Let all men, whether nobles, free, or serfs, give to the churches and the priests the tenth part of their substance and labour.”

By A.D. 800, after three or more centuries of chaos, there was a possibility of political security in Western Christendom. At the same time, the presence of an ample art fund and an exceptional supply of gifted craftsmen gave promise that Romanesque architecture and art might produce the unity of structure, ritualistic requirements and symbolic significance which Christendom had been seeking from the moment a Christian House of God became desirable. In connection with the development of the Romanesque church between the time of Charles the Great and the creation of Gothic architecture in the twelfth century, Italy was specially favoured in the supply of skilled craftsmen. Not only the Comacine builders of Lombardy, but Byzantine and even Saracen builders and decorators offered their services. The beauty of the Romanesque churches in Italy was largely due to the guildsmen trained in this eclectic school, who were responsible for a wonderful series of churches which arose in all parts of Italy at the time the Norman style was passing into Gothic north of the Alps.



Nowhere can Byzantine influence be seen operating more directly than in San Marco, Venice. The church was the chapel of the Doges and, perhaps, is more rightly regarded as a religious museum than a House of God of formal architectural beauty. San Marco, as we know it today, really dates from 829, when the Egyptian Moslems determined to pull down the church of St. Mark at Alexandria, and so made it possible for the chapel of the Doges at Venice to secure a relic which assured it a foremost place among the churches of Christendom. The reception of St. Mark's body in Venice is pictured in a mosaic above one of the doors in the façade, which also shows the church as it was in the middle ages. Since the Arab conquest of Egypt in 640, the relics of St. Mark had been the object of continuous insults, and, in 829 A.D., the Kaliph determined to despoil the church in which the saint was buried. Two Venetian traders, Rustico of Torcello and Buono of Malamocco, were advised of this by the priest Theodore, the custodian of the sanctuary, and we may believe that it was to satisfy no personal ambition that they determined to carry the body of the saint to their ship. To avoid unnecessary risk, they resorted to a trick. A picture in the Presbytery of San Marco is inscribed :-

Marcum furantur: Kanzir hi vociferantur (They steal the body of Mark, crying as they come, "pork, pork").

Pork, of course, was an abomination to pious Moslems, and in the picture the customs officials of Alexandria are seen turning away in disgust. In the early thirteenth century mosaic two churchmen are carrying the sacred body upon a bier into the church, in the presence of a princely throng, supposed to have gathered in Venice in honour of the

Evangelist, who, thenceforward, replaced St. Theodore as the patron saint of the Venetian republic. Spurred by the success of Rustico and Buono, every wealthy merchant-voyager felt under an obligation to search for treasure for the civic church. Now it might be a slab of alabaster, or a column of jasper, serpentine, or porphyry; now a pillar from the Temple at Jerusalem, or, treasure of treasures, the Pala d'Oro itself. Yes, San Marco was nearly akin to a state museum. The church itself was planned by the Doge Participazio, who was in office when the body of St. Mark was received, but a fire in A.D. 976 necessitated a partial re-building of Participazio's basilica, and the present church of St. Mark seems to date from A.D. 1063. The plan chosen was that of the church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, which had the form of a Greek cross, with a dome above the crossing and four other domes over the nave, transepts and choir. San Marco was finally completed with a Gothic façade.

In Apulia and Sicily, Byzantine craft influences were mingled with Saracen, while the art fund was directed by Norman dukes, who had established themselves in Southern Italy, particularly Robert and Roger Guiscard. Before the Norman conquest, Apulia, with Bari as its capital, belonged to the Byzantine Empire, which also ruled in Sicily until A.D. 827, when the island was taken by the Saracens. In 1090, the Norman dukes in Apulia defeated the Saracens, and for 200 years were the patrons of art in Southern Italy and Sicily. The churches built under their direction have characteristics derived from Byzantine and Saracenic art, as well as those due to the Romanesque traditions of the North. Domes, Arabesque mosaics and Saracenic "honeycomb" ceilings characterise Apulian and Sicilian architecture, the churches being also rich in furniture decorated with inlays of glass mosaic. In the twelfth century the surest craftsmen were working in the south, and it was to Apulia that Rome, Pisa and other North Italian towns sent for the builders and decorators, who decked their cities in the new White Robe of Churches, which replaced the Romanesque churches of the Comacine and Lombard building-gilds. The inlays of coloured stone and glass mosaic on their pulpits and pavements, or on the columns supporting the cloisters, were as beautiful as anything in Europe during the twelfth century, as may be seen in Dr. Arthur Bodington's photographs of the pulpit in Ravello Cathedral and the cloisters of the Abbey of Monreale. No less memorable is the mosaic work, such as the great mosaic head of Christ which fills the semi-dome of the apse of Monreale, and the doors, cast in solid bronze, such as those at Troja, Trani and Ravello. The decoration of ciboria, ambones, pulpits, choir enclosures and baldacchinos was largely Byzantine, though the Cosma family, which seems to have had its headquarters in Rome, executed some remarkable mosaic pavements and other decorative work between 1150 and 1300. By this time the interior wall paintings in the apse and elsewhere had lost the schematic character which was essentially Byzantine, and were developing the contact with naturalism which was Italy's contribution to mosaic and fresco painting.

The operation of these factors may be judged in the basilica of San Miniato, a church on the outskirts of Florence, which dates from 1013, and is one of the oldest in Tuscany. In San Miniato, there is the raised chancel of the early Christian basilica, occupying the whole space beneath the chancel with charming effect. The Roman custom of covering the walls with a thin veneer of marble has also been followed, doubtless owing to

Byzantine influence. The roof of the nave is supported by marble columns, taken from earlier buildings, as in San Lorenzo or San Clemente at Rome, but, in the case of San Miniato, piers have also been introduced and are connected by great transverse arches, which span the nave, a step in the direction of vaulting, though the roof of San Miniato is of wood. Of no less interest in the development of Italian Romanesque is the basilica of San Ambrogio, at Milan, which has already been mentioned in connection with that memorable church builder of the fifth century, St. Ambrose. The choir of San Ambrogio was rebuilt about A.D. 850, but the nave dates from the eleventh century. Unlike San Miniato, the nave of San Ambrogio is vaulted and has a large, open triforium gallery, and massive piers have replaced the classical columns, each pier being connected with its fellow on the other side of the wide nave by a great transverse arch. The sense of space and the impression of simplicity and restful power left by these churches are happily characteristic of Italian Romanesque at its best.



Interesting as were the developments in church decoration in Romanesque times, they are of minor importance. What really matters is structure, and it is structure which must be studied if the contribution of the Romanesque builders to the final unity, Gothic art, is to be understood. Moreover, these problems of structure are not to be studied fully in Italy. For many centuries Italian builders were hampered by a lack of the excellent concrete which the Roman builders had used in imperial times. Whereas the Romans had opposed the resistance of massive walls to the thrust of their great vaults and domes, the Lombard

builders had to work with light material which could be carried up a ladder on a man's back. Instead of big stones and first-rate mortar, the Comacini builders were forced to work with rubble and poor mortar. Unable to construct vaults of concrete, as the Romans had done, the early Italian builders constructed semi-circular barrel-vaults, an art in which they may have learnt something from Armenian example. The evidence for this mingling of Eastern and Western elements in Romanesque architecture is not yet fully accepted by scholars, and must not obscure the fact that barrel-vaults made of concrete were used by the builders of classical Rome. In any case, the Romanesque builders developed the science of vaulting. The name "barrel-vault" arose from the fact that the vault resembled the inner side of a barrel, cut in half, lengthways. Other Romanesque churches were built with semi-circular vaults in four sections, made up of two barrel-vaults which crossed one another. The weakness of these umbrella-like vaults is at the points where the sections meet, and here the Romanesque builders strengthened them with ribs of stone. The Romanesque builders were also interested in the problems arising from the necessity for making the semi-circular ribs cover spaces of varying size and at different heights from the floor. Arches of different curvature were necessary to vault an oblong space to those required for a square. When these problems of ribbed vaulting were solved the Romanesque builders had prepared the way for the triumphs of Gothic.

The Lombard guildsmen and their Byzantine and Italian associates made the initial experiments and inventions in Romanesque, but the full reward of their enterprise was denied them. For several centuries Italian masons, carvers and mosaic workers were acknowledged to be the best in Europe, and were freely employed in all parts of Christendom. Benefitting by the ampler art fund established under the Carolingian kings and profiting by the patronage of the Franco-German rulers, Italian builders travelled freely in the lands to the north of the Alps, bearing with them their knowledge of the Romanesque style with its heavy walls, its bulky piers and its barrel vaulting. Through the instruction Italian guildsmen gave to German and French builders knowledge of Romanesque spread by way of the Rhine valley to Normandy, where Romanesque was merged into the style Englishmen know as Norman. Instructed by Charles the Great, Italian masons, under Master Odo of Metz, built a church at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) which was at once a mausoleum for the conqueror, a church for worship, and a crowning place for the dynasty. The central octagon was covered by a dome and a sixteen-sided aisle surrounded this octagonal centre, the aisle itself being surmounted by a vaulted gallery. The plan of Charles the Great's church is manifestly inspired by that of San Vitale, Ravenna, on page 96. The altar was placed under the dome, though the church had a small apse. Classical columns and rare marbles were brought from Rome and Ravenna, and the dome was decorated with a mosaic of Christ and the twenty-four elders. Aix-la-Chapelle being a Northern town, the roof of the cathedral was more sloping than the flat roof of the Lombard buildings in Italy, so that, even at this early date, the style had affinities with the later Gothic architecture of France, with its pointed arch, steep gable and large windows. After the death of Charles the Great, Italy, France and Germany faced two dark centuries of stress and reshaping. The Germanic incursions had been checked, but there were invasions by Magyars, Slavs and Saracens, and the sea-raids by Danes and Norsemen continued until about A.D. 1000. Western Europe then entered upon an era of

expansion which afforded the building arts an opportunity they had not had since the times of Imperial Rome.

The year A.D. 1000 selects itself on account of the feverish anxiety with which Christendom awaited the end of the Millennium and the expected loosing of Satan. Those who made a will or executed a deed commenced with such a phrase as "Seeing that the end of the world is at hand." Terror was increased by the indefiniteness of the fears. Though the mystic year passed without any untoward happening, it was followed by a devotional impulse of vast extent. Radulf Glaber, who died in 1045, tells that so early as 1003 nearly all bishops' seats, churches, monasteries and even village oratories were being rebuilt by the faithful until "the world seemed to be doffing its old attire and putting on a new white robe of Churches."



THE HILDEBRANDINE CHURCH

Up to A.D. 1000 Christendom had been an agricultural community organised on a basis of feudalism. The typical man of substance, outside a few capital cities, was a franklin or landowner, whose chief desire was to farm his homestead and see his children farm the homestead after him. A body of kinsfolk made up an agricultural village, the grazing land being held in common. In course of time, however, certain of these agricultural villages on important trading routes became towns and a civilization developed very different from that enjoyed by the Romanised serfs, the German franklin, the rough feudal lord, the Benedictine abbot or the missionary bishop in the centuries which followed the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Trades and crafts became more clearly differentiated from each other. Monasticism no longer consisted of the Benedictine Order alone; new Orders

tended to arise, each having its own characteristics. The Benedictine system served during the missionary age, but it proved inadequate when the Catholic monks were required to act as a unifying factor in a country which included France, Germany, Britain and the greater part of Italy.

This weakness in the monastic system was, in part, righted when the Abbey of Cluny was founded in Burgundy in A.D. 909. The Cluniac Order was free from all control except that of the reigning Pope, but the several houses of the Order were under the close and continual jurisdiction of the Abbot of the parent monastery at Cluny. The chief aim of the Cluniac system was to do away with the autonomy which characterised an abbey under the earlier Benedictine rule. The Cluniac rule combined formal adherence to the strict "regula" of St. Benedict, with full control over daughter communities. Through her priories, the Cluniacs sent architects and builders to all parts of Western Europe.

The abbey church of Cluny, commenced in 1089, marked the culmination of the Romanesque style. Most of it is in ruins to-day, though the cathedral at Autun, a copy on a small scale, remains to recall the main features of the Cluniac design. The church of Cluny had double aisles in the nave, a long choir at the east end, also with aisles, and a chevet in place of the single apse, features which were developed in most of the later French cathedrals. The church at Cluny also had a narthex with three doors leading into the aisles and nave, a feature well suited for a church which made a special appeal to pilgrims. Meeting in the narthex, a band of pilgrims passed through one of the aisle doors, came to the ambulatory circling the altar and its shrine, whence they had a momentary sight of the relics before they passed from the church by the other aisle door.

The Cluniac system gave the Papacy trusty lieutenants, but, to understand the impulse which made Christendom put on the new white robe of Romanesque, Norman and Gothic churches, the ever-extending influence of the Pope at Rome must also be remembered.

Between the time of Charles the Great and the year A.D. 1000, the Papacy suffered many vicissitudes. At times the Pope was little more politically than the nominee of a ring of corrupt Roman nobles. It was the age of the dissolute Theodora and Marozia. With the coming of the Emperor Otto, a new conception of the relation between Church and State arose. The Pope at Rome secured his own position by assisting the Emperor against recalcitrant churchmen in Germany. Dimly realising that Christendom had taken the place of Roman Imperialism, Otto I. had dreams of a Holy Roman Empire which would serve as a unifying force in Western Europe. Aided by Sylvester II. (Gerbert of Aurillac in the Auvergne), who became Pope in A.D. 999, Otto III. built his palace on the Aventine Hill and made Rome the seat of the Empire of his dreams. Pope Sylvester, for his part, sought to make Rome the seat of a spiritual empire which should dominate Christendom and also built a vast palace on the Aventine Hill, secluding his sacred person from the world, after the manner of a Byzantine emperor. He surrounded himself with a body of officials and met Otto as an equal.

Pope Sylvester and the Emperor Otto passed away, but for many years Europe was influenced by the dimly-realised ideal of a Universal Empire working hand in hand with a

Universal Church. Men held the opinion that God had two vicars on earth, the Emperor who was supreme in temporal things and the Pope whose power was paramount in spiritual matters. With this belief went the dream of a vast European Empire ruled by two powers, to one of which God had delegated the temporal sword, and the other to which He had entrusted the spiritual staff.

It was not to be expected that such evenly-balanced powers as the Empire and the Papacy would long remain in alliance. Directly the Papacy found its privileges infringed by the Emperor's desire to confirm the election of a Pope, a counterclaim was advanced. "I am the source of the imperial dignity," said the Pope. Both Emperor and Pope agreed that the Papacy and the Empire were of divine origin. But was the temporal ruler in the last resort subordinate to the spiritual? That was in dispute.

The matter was of importance. During the two centuries after the reign of Charles the Great, the Church of Rome became increasingly secularised. Lay abbots arose, upon whom were bestowed the beneficium of the King. Monasteries were given as dowries to princesses. Moreover, churchmen were approximating closely to the great feudal lords. Early in the eleventh century the spirituality of churchmen seemed on the point of being lost in the depths of feudalism. Had this tendency persisted, humanly speaking, the spiritual power must have succumbed.

By A.D. 1000 the Catholic church was not only the largest landowner in Western Europe but the chief depository of capital. This tendency developed as the centuries passed. When feudal lords needed money, they mortgaged their land to monasteries. In the Middle Ages between one-eighth and one-quarter of the land was in the hands of the Church. It was plain that the Church could not maintain its spiritual attributes unless a strong central executive and a stern discipline counteracted the tendency to secularisation.

Leo IX. came to the Papal throne in A.D. 1048. He was a cousin of the Emperor Henry III., but he took a strong stand for the clerical rights. He insisted that he should be canonically elected by the Church, and would not agree that his election depended upon the will of the Emperor. Energetic and honest as Leo IX. was, the Church of Rome would have fared badly in the struggle with the Empire had Leo not chanced to call at the Abbey of Cluny on his way to Rome. Here he met a young monk named Hildebrand whom he took to Rome. Hildebrand duly came to man's estate, gained a man's experience, and, years later, Christendom found in him the gifts it required. Hildebrand was preaching the funeral sermon after the death of Pope Alexander in A.D. 1073- Overcome by emotion, he faltered and broke down. Then, on a sudden, the stillness of the crowd was broken by a voice crying: "Hildebrand for Pope; Hildebrand for Pope; He is the choice of Saint Peter." The College of Cardinals - only created in A.D. 1059 - bowed to the popular demand and Hildebrand became Pope Gregory VII.

Pope Gregory VII. was the real creator of the system which was primarily responsible for the new white robe of churches. The son of a carpenter, he was not a man of deep learning or spirituality. Damiani indeed called Gregory "My holy Satan." Far from withdrawing himself from the world Hildebrand lived in constant intercourse with the

secular powers. Fat, short of leg, low in stature and a stammerer, Pope Gregory VII was not a man who might have been expected to inspire the trust and enthusiasm of a vast community, but he had learnt the elements of clerical politics at Cluny, and his experience at Rome gave him astonishing driving force. The keynote of his policy was to withdraw the priesthood and the monks from the secular and feudal systems. Instead of paying homage to dukes or kings, he instructed bishops and abbots to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope and the Pope alone.

The first difficulty Gregory faced was due to the large part which the bishops played in the politics of Italo-Germany. The Emperor sought to bind his clerical administrators to his throne by granting to them their insignia of office. Thence arose the Investiture Quarrel, which was not settled until AD 1122, when the imperial claim to the right of investiture was abandoned. Henceforward, the only authority exercised by the Emperor depended upon the fiefs held by clerical lords upon similar terms to those held by lay barons.

Having enunciated his demands that the Papacy should rule its servants, the monks and clerics, Gregory VII raised the great leaders of the Church above the temptations of power, wealth and family affection. In 1073, priests as well as monks were ordered to take the Vow of Chastity. Thenceforward, a childless cleric could not be affected by the feudal desire to “found a house”.

Gregory VII's last claim on behalf of the Papacy can be summed up in a single sentence from one of his letters.

“Human pride has created the power of Kings; God's mercy has created the power of bishops. The Pope is the maker of Emperors. He is rendered holy by the merits of his predecessor, St Peter. The Roman Catholic Church has never erred and Holy Scripture proves that it can never err. To resist it is to resist God.”

Faced with Gregory's claim that the Pope was sovereign arbiter in all disputes, judge in every succession, “forming, instead of king or emperor, the coping stone on the feudal system,” it is not strange that the Emperor Henry IV determined to defy the Papacy. The astonishing thing is Gregory's complete victory at Canossa in January, 1077. The Emperor found that his subjects would not obey an ex-communicated man, and he was forced to throw himself upon the Pope's mercy. On the 21st of January, the Emperor left his wife and courtiers at Reggio and climbed the 15 miles of snow-bound roadway to Canossa, a mountain fortress in the Appenines. Gregory refused to receive the penitent Emperor. He said:

“Let him surrender his crown and the insignia of royalty into our hands and confess himself unworthy of the name and honour of King.”

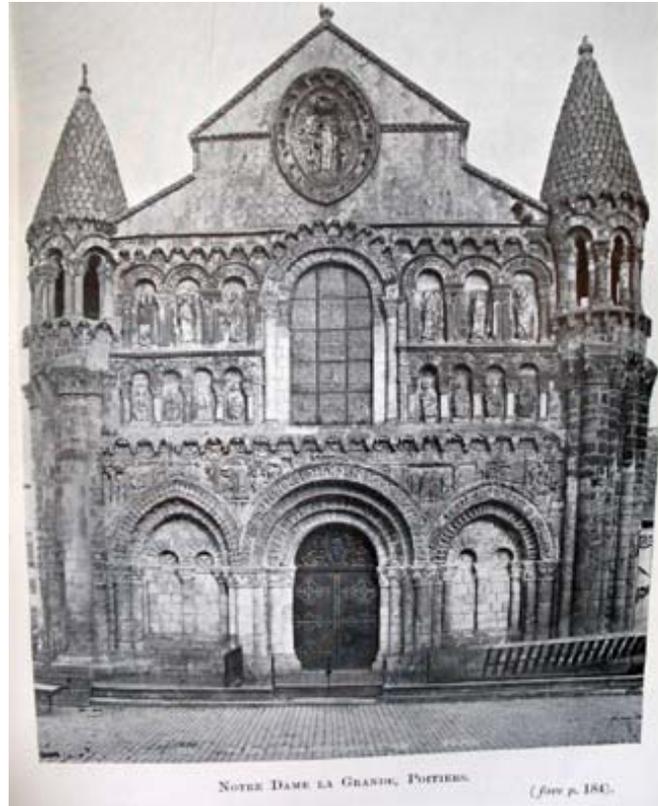
For three days Henry waited outside the inner gate of the castle, bare-footed and garbed as a penitent. On the fourth day, the Pope received him. Crying, “Holy Father, spare me!” Henry flung himself at Gregory's feet.

Gregory died in exile in 1085, but the memory of the penance at Canossa did not fade. The authority of the Pope had been established very surely. How surely was proved when Urban II. called Europe to the First Crusade at Clermont. "It is the will of God," cried his hearers in response. Later the Popes were able to divert the crusading zeal of France, Britain and Germany against heretics of all kinds, and, finally, against the political enemies of the Papacy, when the spiritual supremacy of Rome was threatened.

The religious system which found expression in a Romanesque House of God after A.D. 1000 was essentially that of an organised priesthood. The missionary age in Western Europe had passed or was passing. In place of individual enthusiasm, or the efforts of tiny communities of Benedictine monks or secular canons, came the organised efforts of men who constantly renewed their strength by the knowledge that behind any individual effort was the experience of a mighty central institution, the Papacy. The hierarchic spirit differentiated a Romanesque church from an early Christian basilica or the churches built by such pioneers as Martin of Tours, Wilfrid of York, or the Lombard and Franco-German kings. By A.D. 1000 the men of God, whether monks or priests, had secured a recognised place in national and international politics, and a major share in the available art fund was assured to Mother Church.

ROMANESQUE IN FRANCE

One other factor in the political organisation of Western Christendom calls for mention - the feudal lords. Though of less importance in connection with the Christian art fund, they were not without influence. After the reign of Charles the Great, Western Europe tended to be organised as a series of great fiefs, worked partly by serfs and partly by tenants, under the control of Lords of the Manor. These manorial lords were the liegemen of the Counts who led the militia, administered justice and collected the royal dues. The system gave the people some protection against barbarian raiders and set up local centres of jurisdiction, which, at any rate, were better than no justice at all. This social and economic system culminated in the holders of the great fiefs, who acknowledged fealty to none except the King. By absorbing their weaker neighbours, the great feudal leaders were preparing for the stable political system on which arose the great kingdoms of Central and Western Europe.



Among the feudal lords were the Counts of Southern France, who ruled at some distance from Paris and for a time escaped the unifying influences arising from the pressure of the French and English kings and, in a lesser degree, from the Dukes of Burgundy. The special characteristics of the Romanesque churches between Poitiers and Toulouse are in a large measure due to the peculiar political and social conditions in these minor principalities. At Poitiers is the church of Notre Dame la Grande, one of several which witnesses to the splendid court of Count William IX. (died 1127), whose followers included such a man as Bertran de Born. Notre Dame du Port, at Clermont Ferrand in Auvergne, is memorable as the place where the Church Council of 1095 was held at which Urban II. instituted the Crusade.

Before the doorway of Notre Dame du Port, the cry of "Diex el volt !" (sic.) was raised in response to the appeal of Peter the Hermit. Before the Black Virgin within, the first Crusaders made their vows. Notre Dame du Port has four apsidal chapels, a feature which gave rise to the chevet. As German Romanesque developed the tower, so French Romanesque developed the eastern chapels until they had an integral place in the Gothic House of God. First there was the rounded apse derived from the Roman schola; then altars were added on either side of the high altar, so that the apsidal ending tended to have a three-fold form. Finally, the chapels increased in number, and instead of being separated one from the other were united by an ambulatory, until at Le Mans Cathedral there were thirteen apsidal chapels, east, north and south of the high altar. The chevet never became popular in England, but there is a beautiful example at Westminster Abbey, where French planning was followed. There was a simple example of the chevet at

Croxden, a Cistercian abbey in Staffordshire, consisting of five chapels radiating from the sanctuary. The chevet is yet another example of the principle of unity in structure which the church builders of Christendom were seeking.

The Cathedral of St. Pierre, at Angoulême, is another well-known example of French Romanesque. St. Pierre is a Latin cross with four projecting chapels at the east end, but the four bays of the nave and crossing are domed, probably a Roman element which tradition preserved in Aquitaine from classic times. Even more famous among the domed churches of Southern France is St. Front, Périgueux, which appears to be Byzantine rather than Roman in origin, and bears a resemblance to St. Mark's, Venice. The resemblance has been traced to a colony of Venetians and Greeks in the neighbouring manufacturing town of Limoges. Périgueux, however, was a place of importance in Roman times, and the town contains some of the most remarkable Roman remains in France, including the Tower of Vesuna.

Christianity came to Périgueux early, legend says, through the intervention of St. Peter himself, who sent St. George and St. Front to the district in the apostolic age. On the journey St. George died, and St. Front made a grave for his companion by the roadside and returned to Rome to tell the apostle what had happened. St. Peter gave St. Front his own staff and sent him again to Gaul. Coming to the roadside grave Front planted the staff in the ground and the dead arose, St. George, to found the Cathedral at Velay, and St. Front to build his church in Périgueux, which was to become the centre of a great Benedictine community. St. Front was rebuilt, after a fire in A.D. 1120, with five domes, 40 feet in diameter, one over each arm of the square church and the centre one above the crossing. The decoration of these Romanesque churches in Southern France, such as the carving on the Corinthian columns, shows more finished craftsmanship than work of the same date in other parts of France.

The great domed pilgrim church at Le Puy, in the Auvergne, was the home of the miracle-working Black Virgin, which St. Louis bestowed upon the church as a thanksgiving for his release from captivity in Egypt. Legend told that the statue was carved by the prophet Jeremiah, though modern archaeologists suggest with greater probability that it was a statue of the goddess Isis, with her child. During the Reign of Terror, the Black Virgin was dragged from her shrine and burnt in the market place by the revolutionaries. Le Puy cathedral is entered by a great stairway with numerous flights of steps, which continue beyond the great triple porch until the interior is reached.

Beautiful, too, is the church of St. Trophime, at Arles, with its highly decorated porch and its charming cloisters. Trophimus was one of the early founders of the Gallic church. At his prayer, says legend, Christ appeared to consecrate the cemetery of the Aliscans, which was so holy in the eyes of the Faithful that poor folk placed the bodies of their dead in casks and committed them to the river in the hope that they would be saved as they passed the cemetery gates, and so find burial in a place which Christ himself had blessed.

An uncouth but labour-loving people were the Auvergnats, with more of Celtic blood than most Frenchmen, if only because their mountain fastnesses helped them to withstand

invaders, whether the legions of Caesar or the hordes of Goths, Burgundians and Franks. Much of the Auvergne is mountainous, but there are fertile districts on the banks of the Allier where volcanic dust has proved a fertilizer of rare quality. These were the economic factors which explain the flowering of the Romanesque in the Auvergne. The Aquitanian was a pleasure lover, and the sculptured doorways of Poitiers recall his characteristics by their wayward luxuriance of fancy, which seem the richer because of the strong light and shadow cast by the sun of Provence, which also adds significance to the shadowed porch and dark nave within.

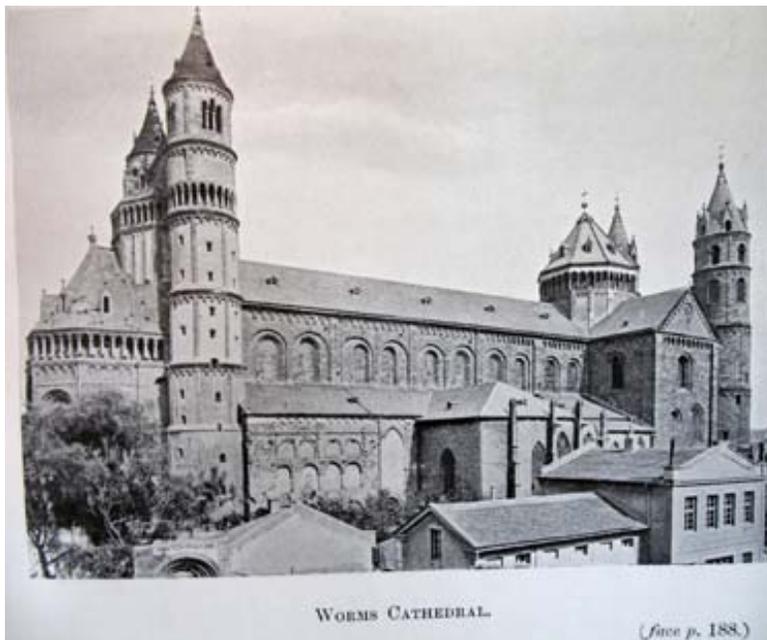
Even in Gothic times these churches of Southern France had characteristics which distinguished them sharply from those of the north, where the monarchy had already established its power. The Roman tradition persisted in the south, and the church builders preferred wide naves and large floor spaces. Here, too, the influence of the preaching orders, the Dominicans and Franciscans, was strong, and there was an urgent need to accommodate large congregations. Many of these southern churches were built during the crusade waged by the Dominicans and Franciscans against the Albigenses in the thirteenth century.

Indeed, it was at Toulouse, during the struggle to extirpate the heretics in the time of Count Raymond, that the Dominican Order came into being. In 1208 it chanced that Peter of Castelnau, a Cistercian monk, was murdered by Raymond's retainers, thereby precipitating the conflict with Simon de Montfort, which ended in the conquest of Languedoc. In 1213, just before the battle of Muret, in which Simon defeated Count Raymond, Dominic, who had come over from Spain, founded the Order of the Friars Preachers. The zeal which enabled Dominic to bring the Friars Preachers into being also showed itself in the Romanesque churches of the district. The cathedral at Toulouse, dedicated to St. Sernin, is the largest barrel-vaulted church in France, rivalling the ruins of Cluny Abbey in this respect. The cathedral at Albi has no transepts and is aisleless, the nave and choir being surrounded by chapels, a happy method of planning when the first requirement is space for a large congregation, and very different to the aisle and double-aisle designs of the northern builders. There are churches in Toulouse with a span of 50 or 60 feet, which consist of a nave and apse alone.



ST. FRONT, PÉRIGUEUX.

N. D. photo.



WORMS CATHEDRAL.

(face p. 188.)

The Albigensian wars between 1208 and 1229 deprived these Southern feudal lords of their wealth, and the leadership in the arts they had exercised passed to the kings of France, the dukes of Burgundy, and the kings of England, who were also dukes of Normandy. With the growth in power of these great royal houses came political stability, which enabled the Church to replenish the art fund from large, wealthy and ambitious communities. The province of Burgundy, on the German border, was nominally ruled by its dukes, but these temporal rulers really shared power with the abbots of Cluny, Citeaux and Vezelay. It was in the church at Vezelay, in 1146, that the French king, at the bidding

of St. Bernard, proclaimed the second crusade. Here, in 1100, Philip Augustus of France and Richard the Lion-Hearted of England inaugurated their march for the Holy Land. The enthusiasm which drove the Burgundian knights and their retainers to the Crusades had its architectural counterpart in the great church of Vezelay Abbey. The nave of Vezelay was consecrated in 1104 and is Romanesque, but the choir, dating from about 1180, is early Gothic. Great transverse ribs span the nave and form square compartments, within which are plain intersecting vaults in place of the barrel-vault of Cluny, and thenceforward the transition from Romanesque to Gothic can be followed in detail, as the choir at Vezelay shows.

The early Romanesque churches in Germany were built on Italian models, with a nave, and aisles and apse at the east end. Later a second apse at the west end became common in Germany, one apse containing the seat of the abbot and the other that of the bishop. The double apse, which was often accompanied by double transepts, adds greatly to the variety and interest of German planning. Open galleries in the walls of the western front were other happy features in German Romanesque. Much of the charm of German medieval churches is due to the fact that they are of brick, a material which the German builders exploited with much ingenuity, the grace and variety of the exterior towers and turrets being specially noteworthy. Having a double apse, there could not be a great west door, as in Italian or French churches; the principal German doorway was therefore on the north or south. Among the outstanding examples of Romanesque in Germany are Worms Cathedral (1125), with its twin circular towers to east and west, flanking the two apses. The red sandstone cathedral at Speier (1050), Mainz Cathedral (1100-1200), Laach Abbey (1100-1150), Lubeck Cathedral (nave 1175), and the Church of the Apostles at Cologne (commenced 1020, and rebuilt 1225), are other examples. Very beautiful, too, is the Romanesque Cathedral at Tournai, in Belgium, with its five towers and spires.

This generalisation does scant justice to the German builder, sculptor and decorator. Until the twelfth century the German builders equalled those of any nation, but when it became necessary to search for the final unity which would embody the enthusiasm aroused by the mighty influence of Mother Church, their architects and carvers ceased to strive after originality. They retained outworn forms and proportions when the times necessitated a change. When French builders were marching forward, the Germans were doing little more than "improving" upon what Frenchmen had done, and so they failed to discover the new and richer beauties which arose in France, England and Italy. At all times German artists have tended to be imitators rather than initiators. Endowed with great skill and abounding energy, they have chosen to exploit the art ideas of others, but the pricking desire to produce some new thing was absent. The Crusades and the growth of monkish power had their effect for a time, but, in so far as these forces expressed themselves in religious architecture, the church was usually a variation upon some Romanesque model or an importation of Gothic art from France. The nave of Strasbourg Cathedral (1265) was French in origin, and Cologne was a frank imitation of Amiens. Because the Germans never understood the essential differences between their round-arched Romanesque churches and the true Gothic, they added nothing of value to the work they strove to outdo. Cologne Cathedral was the largest Gothic cathedral in Northern Europe,

but it was too big. It lacks the sublime repose of the best French cathedrals just because the plan was beyond the capacity of its designers.

Full of interest as are the Romanesque churches of Germany, they are not in the main line of achievement which culminated in a Gothic cathedral. Circumstances brought it about that France should furnish the fullest expression of the genius of Western Christendom for religious architecture. In a Gothic work of art of supreme merit the subordination of many details to a dominant idea is the crowning beauty, and in Northern France this basic quality was exploited to the full. In essence, the problem of Gothic architecture was a problem of structure - how could Christendom find expression for its faith through the capacity of building stone to support a weight and span a space. But before the structural problem involved in the transition from Romanesque to Gothic is approached, it is desirable to have a general idea of the social circumstances in France between A.D. 1000 and 1350, the years in which secular and religious forces alike were seeking the support of Christendom. The results upon architecture are happily illustrated by the case of Normandy.



Exiled from Norway early in the tenth century, Rollo the Ganger, at the head of a pirate fleet, sailed into the Seine and seized Rouen. For 10 years he harassed the French king. Then Rollo extorted the cession of the French province of Neustria on condition that he became a Christian. He was baptized at Rouen, Neustria becoming the Northman's Land, or Normandy. After 912 Rollo and his followers settled down as feudal chiefs ruling the

Roman, Celtic and Frankish agriculturists. The Normans were more restless and ambitious than their neighbours in the region around Paris. In particular, they were quick to follow the religious lead given by the monks of Cluny; the Norman Abbey of Bec rivalled Cluny itself as a source of culture and art. The Normans came to France as robbers, they remained as organisers. True, they were ingenious rather than imaginative. But they had great powers of assimilation, and sought results of practical value rather than the satisfaction which arises from bringing the dreams of the spirit to earth. But this practical genius was just what was needed if the Catholic Church was to make itself felt as the central factor in resolving the chaos which had resulted from the downfall of the Roman Empire. The great round church of St. Benigne, at Dijon, built in A.D. 1001, recalls how the influence of the reformed Catholic Church spread through Western Europe through the alliance between churchmen and the holders of the great fiefs. St. William de Volpiano, Abbot of St. Benigne, was a Lombard. Born in A.D. 961, he was "well instructed in the local arts," and went to France with an Abbot of Cluny. Wishing to build a church at Dijon, St. William sent to Italy for "masters of divers arts and others full of science." As a result of his work at Dijon, St. William was invited to Normandy by Duke Richard II., and founded forty monasteries and restored many old ones. "He had many of his Italian monks trained to continue the work he had begun," says the Chronicler.

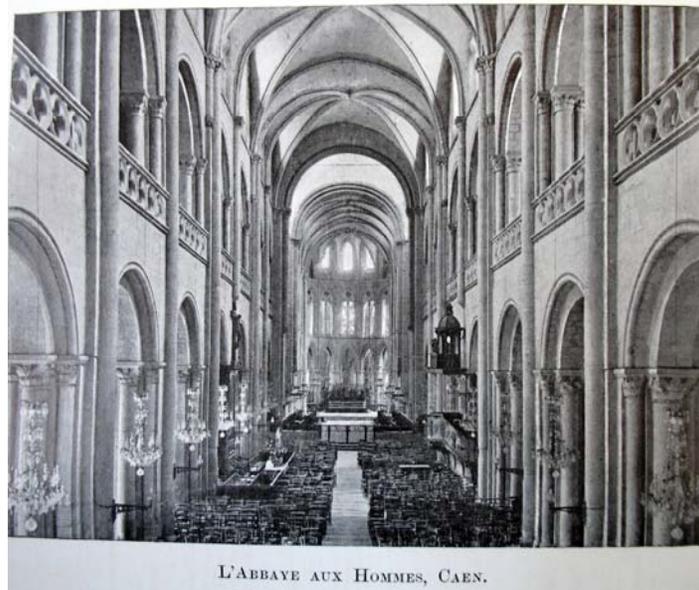
After William de Volpiano came Lanfranc, another Italian, born at Pavia in 1005. As a youth he was tempted to migrate to Normandy, about the time the Normans were finally abandoning the worship of Odin and Thor. By chance he came to the monastery of Bec, where he was made Prior. Lanfranc made the monastery at Bec a centre of learning to which students flocked from all parts of France. Later, Lanfranc became Abbot of St. Stephen's at Caen. His buildings in Normandy became a model for the great English churches which followed the Conquest. As William's chief clerical adviser, Lanfranc had much to do with the two great abbey churches built at Caen by the Conqueror and Queen Matilda, after their condemnation for marrying within the prohibited degrees. A dispensation was granted by the Pope on condition that two abbeys were built, one for men and the other for women. The results were St. Etienne, for men, dedicated by Lanfranc in 1077, and La Trinité for women, being the largest Romanesque churches in Normandy.

The Norman builders owed something to the limestone quarries of Caen, especially as the town lay on the river Orne, making water transport easy. The oolitic limestone of Caen was not only used in Normandy but in England. Canterbury, Winchester, and Henry VII's chapel at Westminster were built from it, as well as many English parish churches. Caen stone is a fine-grained, easily chiselled material of uniform colour, its chief defect being a tendency to decay in the open air.

Supplies of suitable building stone, the example of the Roman building tradition which persisted in Lombardy, the Norman genius for organisation and the urge of the hierarchic ideals coming from Cluny and Rome, might well have given to architecture the House of God which Christians had been seeking for a thousand years. As a fact, this was not done by the Normans of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but by the builders of Northern and

Central France, who followed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Enough has been said to suggest why massiveness and power, rather than grace and structural rightness, were the characteristics of the Norman style. The “will to power” was the dominant impression it sought to make, as we see if we recall a Norman cathedral or minster church, not as it is today, but as it presented itself to the men of the twelfth century.

Picture the rebuilding of a great Benedictine minster church in Norman England, as it arose at the instigation of Lanfranc or his fellow bishops and abbots. Centuries earlier, a band of missionaries had put up the first tiny church of twigs and osiers on some grassy islet set in a waste of moor and marsh. A village was added to the little monastery, as larger and larger stretches of corn or orchard land were reclaimed from the marsh under the direction of the monks. Then a church of ragstone took the place of the first praying-house; to give way, after the coming of the Normans, to a pile which was at once “a joy to the servants of God and a sure resting place in time of trouble.” Maybe the heavy masses of a Norman castle arose hard by, its polygonal keep standing at attention beside the massy nave of the abbey church. A frowning fortress of God - that was what the Norman intended when he built a minster church. Each stone roughly squared and no more. No effort after mere surface beauty. So far as the exterior was concerned, the native strength of the quarried stone was beauty enough. The double walled castle did not seem more secure than this fortress of the Faith. Only the sharply defined cruciform shape of the church, and the bells which sounded from the western towers, told that this was in truth a House of God.



L'ABBAYE AUX HOMMES, CAEN.



Within, the Norman church was very different. Of the exterior, its builder would have said “that is only the wrong side of the stuff.” Inside the church, all trace of the woven thread – the axe-hewn surfaces left by the mason - were hidden in a glow of colour and tapestry work. In early Norman times, the builders’ art was secondary rather than primary. The bare spaces of the walls were filled with pictures, some in monochrome, others in colour - red and yellow ochres and lamp black - each with its story written below in elegiac verse. The drawing was crude but the low-toned pictures were redeemed by the gorgeous distemper in which they were framed.

The memory of this crude picturing is only the first levy upon the treasure of colour which accumulated in a Norman minster church or cathedral. The pavement was made of many coloured tiles; above, a long wooden ceiling glowed with stars and the emblems of the Apocalypse. Beams and rafters were covered with chevrons and scrolls, rich in pigment and gold leaf. Lines of blue, scarlet and gold relieved the rafters of the wooden roof. In the splays of the windows were designs of flowers. On the retables above the altars were images of silver and gold, bronze and alabaster. Rich-dyed hangings served a decorative purpose, and also protected the shivering churchmen from the cold of winter; illuminated and embroidered screens; carved woodwork; a black basalt font. And, lastly, richest of all the colour treasures of the church, the windows with their deep-toned glass, small in comparison with the windows of later centuries, but each a mine of be-jewelled light.

A frowning fortress of God without, but, within, made splendid for the bride by a rich dowry of colour and ornament - such was the Romanesque House of God at the moment of the transition to the full glories of Gothic.

