

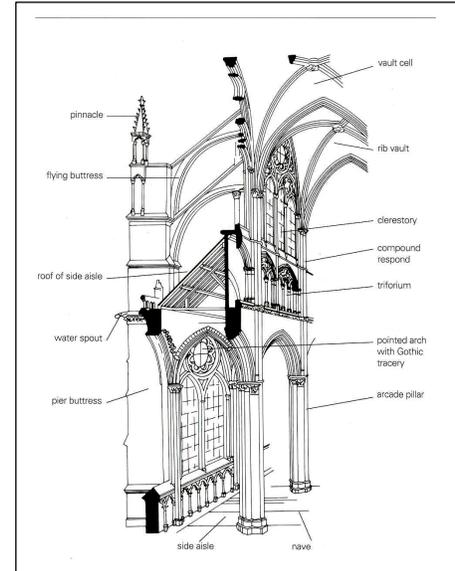
## Medieval History Through Artists' Eyes

### Class 4: The 12<sup>th</sup>-Century Renaissance and the Gothic Cathedral

November 15, 2022

#### The historical significance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance

- Catholic Capetian Kingdom – bishops and cathedrals
- Rise of Universities
  - Bologna (1088); Paris (1150); Oxford (1167); Cambridge (1209)
- Scholasticism and Reason
  - Peter Abelard, “Sic et Non,” 1120, 158 questions
  - Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologica,” 1265-1274, synthesizes Aristotelian philosophy with the principles of Christianity
- Cult of the Virgin – “Notre Dame” in Gothic spirituality: Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, Mediator, Bride of Christ, the Church
  - St. Bernard of Clairvaux, d. 1153; 86 sermons on Song of Songs
- Art & Spirituality
  - Abbot Suger of St. Denis on his new construction (1144)
  - Cathedral and liturgy



#### A New Way of Building: the Gothic cathedral

- Architectural/structural/technological experiments
  - Ribbed vaults; flying buttresses; bay system
  - Diaphanous wall: arcade, triforium, clerestory
  - Notre-Dame, Chartres, 1194-c. 1220 - 121 ft.
  - Notre-Dame, Reims, begun 1210 - 125 ft.
  - Notre-Dame, Amiens, begun 1220 – 139 ft

#### A New Way of Seeing: sacred history in sculpture and stained glass

- West façade of Reims; transept portals at Chartres
  - Sacred history and the kings of France
  - Abelard on redemptive love
- Chartres stained glass

#### New Purposes of Art

- Abbot Suger of St. Denis on mystical vision, mystical union
- Reason in service to spirituality

#### Consider Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christianity. Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000* (10<sup>th</sup> anniversary revised edition), 2013, p. 141:

“The Christian regions of the Mediterranean world – Spain, southern Gaul, Italy, and the Eastern empire – maintained and transformed legacies which they had inherited directly from Roman times. Further to the north, however, a significant break had occurred. A new world, with a new sense of the past, had come into being along the middle ground which had developed through the joining of Roman and barbarian regions along what had once been the northwest frontier of the Roman world.”

“...we are dealing with a subtle but decisive change. From Hadrian’s Wall to the Atlantic coast of Morocco and the Horn of Africa, the idea of Rome had shrunk to ever smaller dimensions. Rome and its history were no longer central to the imagination of the inhabitants of the former periphery of the empire. A sense of the Roman past was replaced by a different past – the past of the Old Testament. This past was brought close through the Holy Scriptures.”

### **Suggested Reading**

(besides innumerable recent books on individual cathedrals)

Michael Camille, *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions*, New York, 1996

Charles Radding and William Clark, *Medieval Architecture, Medieval Learning. Builders and Masters in the Age of Romanesque and Gothic*, New Haven and London, 1992

Philip Ball, *Universe of Stone: Chartres Cathedral and the Invention of the Gothic*, 2008

Georges Duby, *Art and Society in the Middle Ages*, 2000

Older in many respects but still invaluable and readable overviews:

Emile Male, *The Gothic Image*, (1913) 1972

Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 1951

Hans Jantzen, *High Gothic: The Classic Cathedrals of Chartres, Reims and Amiens*, (1957) 1984