

and weakened without injury to the Irish cause is as rational as the supposition that French soldiers fought as well under Bazaine as under the first Napoleon, or that an arch can stand when the keystone is removed.

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## CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN THE UNITED STATES.

### ITS DIFFICULTIES, ITS FAULTS, ITS NEEDS, AND THE REMEDY.

**I**N its accomplishments and in its possibilities architecture partakes of the nobility of its main source of inspiration. Had it been limited to the needs of mere utility, it would not have attained a high position among the arts. Had its aim been to meet only the common wants of man, it would never have become a noble art. Neither imperial palaces nor other civic buildings of great cities could have supplied the motive needed for sublime effort. In all ages, if not among all nations, religion has been the fitting and only true incentive; and, because of religion architecture has reared its grandest and most successful works. Religion caused uncivilized races, despite the rudeness of their arts, to form for the worship of their gods something worthy of admiration; it incited the early Egyptians to build temples which awaken our awe; it made the earliest Hindoos carve out of the natural rock, with slow, painful labor, elaborately ornamented buildings; it induced the Greeks to rear beautiful structures and the Romans to raise stately edifices; and it constructed for Christian Europe the lofty, decorative cathedrals, which are the noblest material works of impassioned genius. The highest aspiration of man is the worship of a Supreme Being; and, in obedience to that aspiration, man has created architectural works stupendous and sublime. Temples, synagogues, churches, and cathedrals are the tributes of finite beings to an Infinite Being; and, in their nature such tributes ought to have honest work and to avoid baleful sham.

Architecture has been defined "the art of ornamental and ornamented construction." The definition is logical, and not merely convenient; for a building may have an ornamental construction without being ornamented, or it may be ornamented without having an ornamental construction. In a Greek temple, the proportions

of length to breadth and of height to length and breadth, the arrangement of the porticoes, and the disposition of the peristyle belong to ornamental construction. In a Gothic cathedral, the ornamental construction is the proportion of length to breadth, the projection of the transepts, the different heights of the nave and of the aisles, and the disposition and the proportion of the towers. Even without ornament, an ornamental construction is beautiful. A building may be as devoid of ornament as a granary; but if the disposition of parts be good, as in the case of the older English abbeys, it is always pleasing, and, when large, it is imposing as an architectural work. When elegant ornament that is appropriate is added to an ornamental construction, the building takes rank with the great works of architecture. In a house for worship ornament without ornamental construction is a degrading deceit. The art which produces it is bad and has a bad effect upon the worshippers. When discovered, hypocrisy excites our disgust and causes a revulsion of feeling. Deceit in construction or in ornament is a lie in stone, in metal, in wood, in putty, or in plaster; but it is a hurtful lie, which is sure to be discovered and sure to excite contempt.

The principles of good architecture are not arbitrary; but they are the outgrowth of the study of means to an end. If they demand exact proportions, special materials for special purposes, and suitable treatment for the materials, these demands cannot be neglected without insecurity, without risk, and without deceit. At first sight, non-professional Americans may not know the difference between good and bad proportions, between stone and plaster which is made to look like stone, between marble and wood which is painted to look like marble; but after a while they will feel the difference, and in the end will suffer from the sham, if not from the peril of weak, fire-inviting roof or walls and the flame-food of putty ornament. The effect of bad, unworthy work is quicker and greater upon foreigners, even of the emigrant classes, who, being accustomed to the honest work of older countries, know the difference in stability and are hurt by the gairish deceptions of construction and of material. If sham be justifiable in churches erected to a God, why may not shams in our houses, in our furniture, and in our dress be defended? The preacher may decry sham and its vanity; but it must be with little effect if his pulpit, his altar, and his building be dishonest work and made to seem better than they are.

The quick increase of population in our large cities has necessarily multiplied churches of all creeds. Cathedrals are happily of slow growth, and consequently are likely to be relatively well constructed; but smaller churches spring up like fungi, though, unfor-

tunately, not as well suited for their ends. Pretentious plans make bad work. A church ought not to try to rival a cathedral; yet rivalry, vain imitation, and lack of both means and purpose make many of the churches glittering, insecure, unholy shams. The money that is wasted in spoiling European Gothic models would be sufficient to erect substantial symmetrical buildings worthy of their purpose; and yet the pointed style, the noblest order of architecture and the best outcome of Catholic influence, is improperly blamed for these bad, dishonoring counterfeits. The Gothic style has been sadly influenced by the modern Renaissance, which is a debased ornate style. True art never inclines to over-decoration. The hankering fondness for the ornate, or over-decorated, modern Gothic, which is by no means the best Gothic, has been the cause of much useless extravagance and of much dishonest work. In a new country new churches are needed; but it is not wise that every congregation should attempt a vast and lofty building. The propriety of ecclesiastical architecture requires that the churches should be as great as the means of those erecting them will permit; but the spirit of Christian architecture is imperious in its proper demand that there shall be no deception, no trickery. A building that is a trick and a lie might be used for a shop, for a theatre, or for a music hall; but it ought not to be used for the worship of a truth-loving God. Architectural lies in wood, in plaster, or in putty are not in the end cheap anywhere; but in churches they are as expensive as they are opposed to the spirit of religion.

Hurry is an evil of the country; and the hurry of church building makes dishonoring and expensive work. Before the cost is known, even to the architect, some churches are finished. If the plans and the designs be properly selected, the cost can be determined before the work is begun; and the style of building which honesty ought to choose need not exceed the means of the congregation. It is as wrong for a congregation to attempt too much in a church as it is for a man to build a dwelling-house beyond his means. Unless for a stated case, it is impossible to tell what is "too much." A church's future, it is thought, is longer and better than that of a private building, and thus justifies a proportionately greater risk; but in the common practice of "discounting the future," the prospective income of a new church in the United States seems likely to be rather extravagantly than properly computed. For any congregation that undoubtedly is too much which would entail an oppressive debt; but how difficult it is to determine correctly the prospective income, the corroding, hopeless debts of some expensive churches proclaim. A church ought to be better, more beautiful, and grander than a dwelling-house;

and it may be such, and the cost need not exceed the means, if the style be appropriate, and the construction and ornamentation be honestly simple. So great is the hurry to build, however, that churches are undertaken when the money is not sure; and long delays, deaths or removals of principals, and a dangerous system of obtaining money by mortgages make bad work and increase the cost beyond wisdom, propriety, or usefulness. Obtaining money by mortgage is often a method opposed to true economy. The borrower soon learns that the greater the cost of the proposed building the greater the amount which may be borrowed thereon; and this fact commonly becomes a strong temptation to incur greater expense. Before the church is begun the cost might be known and limited, with the results of honest appropriate construction and a building free from trick, free from sham, and, perhaps, free from debt.

The architect is not by profession a capitalist, and he cannot furnish both plans and means. He plans and builds as required and when required; but he never is a principal. Misplaced economy often reduces his pay to a gross amount which is insufficient to secure his proper supervision of the work. If a percentage be allowed, it is often so unwisely small that it is only natural that he should not be pained by an increase in the cost of the church. The parsimony which denies proper pay to the architect is fatal. If poverty prick him he has to consent, though he may respect his art, to many a change and many a deceit which he knows to be unworthy and in the end costly. In order to satisfy the principal's or the building committee's demand to make the greatest show for the money to be expended, he is often compelled to do what he knows is not good or right. The counterfeits and the tricks which he is thus forced to adopt may sorrowfully disgust him; and, in some cases, do drive him from the profession, when happily he has other means of a livelihood.

The so-called economy which does not seek to know or to limit the cost of the proposed church, yet which pinches the architect, grows bolder and more reckless as the walls become higher; and tricky, dangerous, but always showy, subterfuges are adopted in the vain hope of saving money. The imitation which "looks just as well" as the real is not truly cheap, even if it were not unworthy in a church; but, in the pseudo-classical styles, we find plaster columns and pilasters, plaster architraves, plaster friezes, plaster cornices, plaster balusters, and plaster sills; and in the Gothic, plaster columns, plaster arches, wooden columns with plaster capitals supporting plaster arches, plaster vaults, plaster ribs, plaster cusps, and plaster crockets are everywhere used. Inasmuch as they need the same designing by the architect as though they were

of stone, they are expensive; and they are as fragile as they are dishonest. To make even such unarchitectural counterfeits much labor is needed and at a cost of money which ought to be applied otherwise for safety. All such deceptive things are in opposition to the first principles of construction and of decoration, as well understood by Pagans as by Christians. The underlying rules of good taste in art are that a thing ought to be what it seems, and that a material ought not to be used for a purpose for which it is unfitted. These are rules of polite life; and they are rigorously applied by polite society to the matter of dress, as well as to houses and to furniture. If deceptions in our houses may not be defended, are deceptions in the churches of the living God defensible? Plaster forms made to look like stone are intended to deceive. It is the use of an unfit material; for, unless as a coating for walls, plaster in a church is a mean deception and an architectural absurdity. •

Probably every large city in the United States and in Canada has churches which are not only architectural absurdities but expensive shams. It is difficult to find a church wholly free from unworthy deception in construction or in decoration. The cost of these buildings, which are as unstable as they are dishonest, is enormous and often out of proportion to the revenue. The extravagance in expenditure is not for convenience, for security, for stability, for ventilation, or for good lighting; but it is for pretentious façades, for inartistic wall decoration, for badly-colored glass, for ornaments of deceptive plaster, and for tricks of paint. The money goes for some kind of gaudy ornament, which, even if well made, is not necessary and may not be advisable. A church should not have parts which are not necessary for convenience, for construction, or for propriety; and yet architectural features are loosely added to our churches with which the added features can have no connection. All ornament ought to be an enrichment of the essential construction of the building; and yet ornaments are often built up in an isolated way, instead of forming the decoration of construction. In modern churches, from floor to nave-roof and from façade to apse-wall, there is not a part which may not be a violation of the laws already given; and all violations are shams, expensive, belittling, and unworthy. However simple, honest work in a church ought to be as much a matter of obligation as it is more worthy than any unrelated gilded deception. In churches, the violations of the rules of good taste are more absurd than would be the fastening of an imitation gold watch-chain to the Apollo of the Vatican, or of a paste-diamond garter to the Venus de Medici.

The façades of churches are often the best work, but are always very costly and sometimes deceptive. If there be any honesty

about the building, it is likely to be in the façade; and many façades are unquestionably good in design and in work. A proper front ought to express the character of the church and to define the building; but it ought not to be a deceptive screen, with unpractical doors and wider or higher than the building. A false façade is a false face. Even if such a front were not needlessly expensive, no depraved taste can ever make it excusable that a building erected to God should seem larger and better than it is. When the façade is not false, it may be pretentious and partly dishonest work. Even as to its tracery, the common wheel-window is of wood, sometimes painted, but usually sanded. In construction, curved forms of arch and of tracery are unsuitable for wood and adapted only to stone. Wood has to be bent and held by concealed means; but stone can be so shaped and jointed that its own weight is the fastening. If the wooden window and wooden tracery, with mouldings' proper only to stone, be merely painted, it is the wrong use of material; but if they be sanded to look like stone, it is an intentionally dishonest treatment. The façade frequently has one or two towers. If the tower be of stone, the spire is commonly of wood sanded to look like stone; and thus the deception is carried up to the finial. If a spire straddle the roof, a few feet back of the pediment, as may be seen in small towns, it is an absurdity; for it is made to look like stone, which the roof could not support. When there is need of economy, the expense of towers for city churches might be saved; for the bells which they are constructionally intended to carry are now of no need in proclaiming the hour of service, and are little used for chiming, tolling, or warning. A tower not intended for bells must be architecturally and economically a foolish extravagance. False, dishonest, or with purposeless parts, the façade is always expensive, using money which might better be spent for strengthening the walls and the roof. A wall and a roof well-constructed are better than any ornamented front. If an honest façade cannot be afforded, it would be every way better to omit it. It is not necessary to have it; but in this country even the safety of the building is endangered and mean cheap deceptions stain all the interior in order to save money for an ostentatious façade. In Europe many a church of honest construction was built and used without a front; and subsequently, and only when the money needed for honest work was at command, was the omission supplied. The church of Sta. Maria dei Fiori, the cathedral of Florence, one of the largest and finest churches of the Middle Ages, was begun about 1298 and finished about 1444; but until 1876 no successful attempt was made to build the front. Without a façade and despite its extremely simple interior, the honest grandeur of its conception and execution made

it a wonder of architecture during nearly five hundred years. In the same city, the smaller church of Sta. Croce, called the Pantheon of modern Italy, was begun in 1294 and completed in 1442; but the façade was not attempted until 1857. Slow of growth is everything good. The churches free from deceit were built part by part; but they were used, and were honorably fit for use, long before they were completed. In the honestly constructed churches, which alone are suited for the worship of a God, the priests' voices alternated with the music of the masons' chisels; and the alternation, as long as it was necessary, was not inappropriate, irreverent, or accessory to sham.

The clerestory, through which the lighting of Gothic churches is effected, is commonly two tall, but dangerously thin, walls, with an interior coating of plaster, sometimes colored to imitate stone. These walls are frequently so thin and so weak as to need—what fortunately the fire-laws compel—an exterior covering of slate or of galvanized iron. Built in the flimsiest and cheapest manner, they are barely fitted to carry the roof; and, like the weak, tricky, plaster triforium beneath, are neither secure nor fire-proof. Indeed, they have to be flimsy, by reason of the cheap deceptive supports, consisting of wooden columns, sanded to look like stone, and plaster capitals, or of wooden posts made by wooden mouldings and sand to look like stone piers. The windows in such a clerestory are often as flashy and vulgar as elaborate and deceptive wooden mouldings and the poorest of colored glasses can make them. Bad, unworthy, unsuitable, and dangerous as is all this sham work, it is relatively high-priced. Unworthy work ought not to find a place in a church; and undoubtedly it ought to be avoided in favor of walls that are stable.

The nave-ceiling, in many of our churches, is groined, or divided into compartments by means of ribs springing from caps or corbels, and uniting in the centres of the compartments, or vaults. It is the glory of Christian architecture that, at great heights and across vast spaces, lofty vaults of stone may be thrown from the supports of slender shafts. It is an ornamental construction, admitting enrichment by ornament; but neither groining nor other vaulting is adapted to anything else than to stone or to brick construction. In any of our vaulted churches the observer looks up at vaults, not of stone, but of counterfeiting plaster or cement. A counterfeit vault would be an absurdity, even if, in a house of God, it were not an irreverent deception. The better the plaster be disguised, the more apparent the absurdity; for it is contrary to reason that thin weak walls could carry the great weight of stone vaults. If the carrying piers and the walls be of stone, then the plaster-vaulting is not only a cheap trick for a church, but is without the excuse of insuffi-

cient support. In a cathedral a stone ceiling is essential, both for durability and for security from fire; and it is advisable for conveyance of sound. Dishonest work increases the danger of conflagration. The roofs of some of the great cathedrals of France have been wholly burned, but the strength of the stone-vaulting saved the interiors. To the lack of a stone ceiling many great churches owe their destruction by fire. This explains why, in this country, so few churches take fire without being wholly destroyed. The effort to do something beyond our means makes many a church bad in construction, and causes the inexcusably dishonest use of plaster capitals on moulded marble piers and a cement ceiling on supports intended to carry stone groining. It would be honest work if the capitals were uncut blocks of stone, to be carved subsequently when the church could afford it. Such uncut capitals, awaiting sufficient money for completion, are to be seen in some good churches of Europe; and the rough stone is thought to be reverently honest work and far better than the unworthy trick of plaster lies.

The altar ought to be of the same style, period, and nationality as the church. The showiest Gothic altars frequently are erected at great expense in churches of the Romanesque or of the Renaissance style. In a Gothic church the altar, when Gothic, is often of a style belonging to an earlier or to a later period than the style of the church; or the altar and the building differ as to their nationality, as when a German Gothic altar is erected in a French Gothic church. This impropriety comes from carelessness, as often as from ignorance, but never from economy. The use of naked lights, artificial flowers, and hangings makes it necessary for security that the altar, and even the platform, be of stone. This fact and the wish to make a show give rise to another deception, and unworthy work unintentionally desecrates the altar. A wooden altar, trickily painted to look like marble, rests upon a wooden platform, which is concealed by a carpet. If the lower part of the altar be of marble, carved and panelled, the upper part, designed for marble, is often a sham of wood; and the lack of harmony is ignorantly, but absurdly, emphasized by paint and by gilding. Designs, too, intended only for metal, are partly or wholly carried out in gilded wood. Far more honest and far less costly would be some simple altar of stone, designed for stone, than such a panelled, carved, turreted, and crocketed altar, half truth, half lie, and wholly displeasing. If freestone be found to be too costly, there can be no objection, on the side of art or of honesty, to an altar of wood, however simple; provided it be treated as wood, and honestly proclaim itself to be wood. The dishonesty lies not in the use of wood, which may be merely the necessity of a pres-



ent poverty, but in making the wood look to be what it is not. When in good taste and honestly made, a new altar of marble may be an unwise expenditure, if it is to be placed in an insecure building; and the not uncommon contradiction is a misuse of money that ought to have been applied to making the church secure, if not fireproof. A large church usually has more than one altar; and then the deceptions, the tricks, the extravagance, and the waste are multiplied. Being afterthoughts, these side-altars are often placed like furniture in a show-room, and not in recesses, which should have been marked in the plan of the building. If the railed space in front of the high altar and forming the sanctuary be sufficiently large to permit of the beautiful ceremonies which have to be attempted, the furniture of the sanctuary is commonly out of harmony with the style of the church, or even of the altar. In Gothic churches, in which the furniture is more likely to correspond, ornaments, like cusps and crockets, are sometimes of plaster or of putty, painted to look like carved wood. All these make-believe marbles or metals and all the other deceptions, are as expensive as they are frail; and, even if they were economical, they are harshly inappropriate for an altar and for a sanctuary.

The wall decorations, demanding the most careful expenditure of money, are a source of painfully unwise outlay and, nearly always, of æsthetically dishonest and deceptive work. Elaborate or simple, interior decoration is not necessary; but, if the revenue permit it to be done, the decoration ought to be according to an artistic scheme and to be limited to the means. In the United States and in Canada the interior decoration of churches is everywhere attempted; and yet it is generally a matter of debt, of chance, of patchwork, of incongruous designs, and very rarely is according to a scheme. A scheme requires that all the interior parts that ought to have a color decoration be treated as to line and color after the design of a competent artist; and that his design be conceived with relation to the architecture and the lighting of the building.<sup>1</sup> The use of line and of color is to please the eye; but that it can never do by counterfeiting stone or wooden mouldings. If a wall, which every one knows to be a flat surface, be painted to represent colonnades, arcades, or porticoes, with attempted light and shade effects, it is an absurdity, because contrary to reason. Perspective in wall-painting is of questionable propriety. As to the use of human figures in relief, the examples of the great masters leave the question of propriety still debatable; but it is not debatable,

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<sup>1</sup> The apse of St. Thomas's Church, of New York city, and the whole of Trinity Church, of Boston, are good instances. The artist is a Catholic; the churches, Protestant. The decoration of St. Thomas's had to be treated for gaslight effect, as the construction of the building and the arrangement of the windows are such that sunlight sufficient for day-effect is impossible.

that poor imitations of the old masters' designs are in bad taste and expensive. Wall decoration, if it be honest, must be in grounds of harmonious—not stone-counterfeiting—tints, to be relieved by geometric patterns, or by other flat forms that cannot lie. Much of the present decoration is intended to deceive; as, when the only sill-moulding of a practical window is a painted one, or when a counterfeit window is painted where a window could not be placed, or when the plaster walls are painted to imitate ashlar. Such tricks may be permissible upon the theatrical stage; but in a church, even if they were not costly, they are contrary to sincere religion as well as to art. If the walls must be decorated, such expensive deceptions are not necessary; for the use of colored bricks forms a simple and honest means of interior decoration, and marble slabs or enamelled tiles, if dear, would at least be durable and not require renewal, like any decoration upon plaster. In point of injudicious use of money, the paintings are generally worse than the frescoes. Church paintings ought to be the work of undoubted artists, or they ought not to be attempted; but, usually, they are done by some cheap workman, more ambitious than able, and the result is disfigurement, dissatisfaction, and useless expense. Such paintings cannot excite devotion; but they cause distraction by teaching artistic, historical, and theological absurdities. The few American Catholic artists are not encouraged to picture devotional subjects, or to study Christian art. The foreign stencillers and the copiers of affected designs have surely spoiled sufficient wall surface; and it is full time to make a change. It would be far better, and true economy, to let the interior remain undecorated, as in many a European church, until sufficient money be obtained and the proper artist be found to make the interior harmoniously beautiful. A church without interior decoration or painting may be coldly severe; but still it may be grand in its proportions, imposing by its size and strength, and honest and honorable in its construction. The amount of money hastily, inartistically, and foolishly spent for frescoes and paintings is not in keeping with the parsimony that builds weak walls and dishonest ceilings, and endangers life and property. This so-called economy makes an observer believe that, were it not for our building laws, our churches would be built more insecurely, though decorated more gaudily, than other buildings.

The pews, the candelabra, the gas fixtures, the statues, and the organ offer chances—rarely avoided—for extravagance, deception, and inharmonious designs. As to material, the pews of today generally are what they seem to be; but the many needless, inartistic mouldings and carvings make them very costly without making them suitable, comfortable, or ornamental. Imi-

tations of bronze or of brass, and in styles different from that of the church, often make the candelabra and the gas-fixtures as painful as they are tawdry and expensive. Bad as may be the statues, they are never cheap; but the cheaper they are, the poorer and the less desirable they are. It often happens that their use is a violation of propriety; for, like the side altars, they are not provided for in the plans of most churches, so that they have to stand upon brackets fastened anywhere, and to look like trade objects in a neglected shop. Plaster statues are sculptural absurdities; but, like other absurdities and deceptions, they are to be found in every city. Imported from bad foreign workshops, they are often expensively and inartistically colored and gilded, without any knowledge of the style of the church or of the surroundings. When in place, sometimes better judgment goes to still further expense—which ought not to have been necessary—to paint them all white; and the poor plaster forms are made to counterfeit marble and to look like uneasy ghosts, fearless of dust, but fearful of some new desecration of color. The statues upon altars in honor of saints are usually as inartistic as the commonest trade figures; yet their gilding and colors make them costly without making them devotional. Statues are not necessary; but, if they be used, they ought to be good and honest. When art and economy are aided by the absence of statues, both may be injured by the organ. In city churches there seems to be a rivalry to have a showy, big-sounding organ, with as many stops as that at Freiburg has; but there is little concern that it should be within the means, in accordance with the worth of the building, or its face in harmony with the style of the church. A great organ is no more necessary for every church than is a spire three hundred feet high; and it may happen that the organ is relatively worth more than the building, and, like a grand piano in a faulty barn, sure of destruction by fire, or of injury by rain through the cheaply-constructed roof.

A lack of unity and a poverty of design in churches are to be seen everywhere. The lack of unity of design must be referred either to carelessness or to ignorance. It is not unusual to find the exterior and interior elevations of one style, the glass decoration of another style, the high altar of a third, the side altars of a fourth, and the pulpit and pews of a fifth. Instead of being made to agree with the design of the architect, the designs of the marble-worker, of the metal-worker, of the wood-carver, and of the carpenter, are spiritless copies of book drawings and differ as much as the workmen. The poverty of design, shown by the tiresome repetitions of exterior and of interior elevations, may come from insufficient study on the part of the architects, who, limiting their work to

their narrow pay, may find it easier and quicker to adapt the same form and design to varying dimensions than to create new designs.

Tricky, dishonest, insecure work disgraces and weakens almost all our churches, Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant; and the preceding statements are based upon an impartial examination. In some the tricks are few; but in many deceptive and bad, still always expensive, work creeps from foundation to spire finial. If the money expended be considered, the Protestant churches in the large cities make a good display; but some of the most costly are as bad as unwise expenditure of money could make them. Economically, the Catholic churches are, in general, failures; and, architecturally, a few are good, and the many are very bad, but not more so than are the many churches of other creeds. In point of honest construction and, occasionally, even of decoration, the Jewish temples and synagogues are commendable work; but some are offensive and not one is wholly free from the evils of the day and of the country. All these churches teach one great lesson worth the learning: that extravagant outlay is almost always for so-called ornament, and not for construction. The construction, not the ornament, is essential; but the practice of the day would seem to be that the ornament, not the construction, is important. The tricks, the shams, and the dishonest work have become so common that few clergymen question the propriety or doubt the worthiness; and yet, if clergymen or building committees undertake the construction of a church, are they not morally obliged to bring to their work the necessary fitness or knowledge? The laws of honest work, alone worthy of their God's church, and the laws of taste proper to a house of God, ought to be known to them; otherwise they are unfitted for the trust, and the consequent dishonest work is sure to make foolish the expenditure. A knowledge of the elementary laws of architecture and of taste is not intuitive; but it must be acquired by those needing to use it, if worthy work and prudent outlay be important. The common law does not compel an ignorant fisherman, for example, to build a steamship; but, if he assume the supervision of the work, the law will hold him responsible, even though he plead ignorance of construction. The negotiator between the congregation that furnishes the money and the architect that plans and builds is morally responsible for the bad work and useless expense following the meddlesome, culpable ignorance of primary laws. If an honest architect be chosen—and it is to be supposed no other will be employed—his judgment ought to command the respect of the non-professional agent. When the agent is the pastor there is no reason to suspect his intention to do right; but it is to be remembered that his executive

position demands knowledge as well as good will. When he calls beautiful a church that constructionally, is a sham and æsthetically is a deceit, the people may reverently assent; but his costly ignorance is not therefore excusable, or the building either secure or honorable. Whoever he be, the agent ought to have the needed knowledge; for then, and only then, can he fittingly and safely and thriftily advise, interfere, or order.

Churches here are built under circumstances different from those in Europe. There they have been built by cities' orders, or by gifts of princes, prelates, and private purses, as well as by willing contributions of the people: in the United States they are built mainly by a severe tax upon the poor. Here government or city aid is improbable; we have no princes, the prelates are not wealthy, and the rich men are not disposed to build monuments in the form of churches. The few Protestant churches that have been erected by large gifts from private purses are only exceptions to the common custom. Pastor, building-committee, and architect ought to reflect whence is to come the needed money. The architect alone can do nothing, on account of the wish of pastor and of congregation to surpass their neighbors and to equal foreign churches; yet pastors and people ought to learn that which, under the present circumstances, is not only morally necessary, but which forms the basis of mere "mercantile" honesty. In the condition of thought in the United States there is, too, a difference and a change which demand earnest consideration by clergymen. Freedom of speech, permitting every cobbler to be a public lecturer upon theology; the freedom of the press, which treats of every subject, even the holiest; and the free-school education, giving even polite knowledge to the poorest, make it necessary that the churches, also, should become schools of instruction, gratuitously imparting fuller knowledge and wiser guidance than are to be had elsewhere. If church-goers hear two sermons each Sunday, they do not hear as much religion as they every day may read of science, of art, of literature, of history, of scandal, in the pages of the newspaper, of the magazine, of the review, and of cheap books. With the present method, which is the old one, sufficient for the needs of a people three hundred years ago, the amount of given religious instruction, relatively to other kinds of instruction, is absurdly small. In numbers and in ability the secular press is far ahead of the religious; and in quantity, in quality, and in cheapness, the religious publications are far behind the profane. The "conflict" is unequally waged; and every day makes it more important that the inequality be not mistaken for inability.

The remedy for the present faults and needs of American churches

is that the buildings should be of some simple plan, so that they may be all that they seem to be ; and that they be made to contain the multitude, to whom religion may be taught as fully as are other matters elsewhere. In growing cities very expensive and not proportionately commodious churches are built for districts which the subsequent increase of population requires to be divided ; and the division makes necessary new churches. It is important that this division be foreseen ; and that simpler, more commodious churches be erected, the multiplication of which may not be an offence against economy or architecture. The preaching order churches of the Middle Ages—simple in plan and simple in construction—ought to furnish the needed suggestion ; for they have been religiously successful, and are architecturally honest.<sup>1</sup> For the ordinary churches the best plan, then, would be to go back to a simple building of a great nave, not divided into aisles to be shown in the façade, and without shafts or clerestory ; but with solid walls carrying a timber roof honestly showing its construction and treated after the tasteful manner of the Romanesque or the Gothic decoration. A timber roof is not fireproof, but it is good and relatively inexpensive ; and, when it is not concealed by a plaster ceiling, it may be moulded, carved, or simply decorated so as to be a thing of constructional beauty. With timber great height may be attained, and great distance spanned by means of a single spar reared on its base or supported at the ends, strength being obtained by bracing the pieces together according to geometric principles. Of such wooden roofs, there are many beautiful and astonishing examples in the churches of England of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. The proposed plan of building would reject the unsightly, deceptive, or dangerous galleries, from which no view of the altar can be had ; and it would give abundant wall space for suitable frescoes and devotional paintings, when sufficient means and good artists could be secured. For the exterior brick might be used. In Italy and in the Low Countries, brick has been employed with results satisfactory to art as well as to economy. With terra cotta, properly applied, or with stone, it is relatively inexpensive, very pleasing, full of character, and more lasting than many of the costly freestones used here ; but it ought to be tried only by those who understand its limitations. Some of the new buildings of New York city are examples of what may be

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, speaking of the Franciscans and the Dominicans, says, in "Mornings in Florence:" "Their churches were meant for use ; not show, nor self-glorification, nor town-glorification. They wanted places for preaching, prayer, sacrifice, burial ; and had no intention of showing how high they could build towers, or how widely they could arch vaults. Strong walls and the roof of a barn,—these your Franciscan asks of his Arnolfo. These Arnolfo gives,—thoroughly and wisely built."—*J. Santa Croce*, p. 14.

done with brick and terra cotta, though not equal to the admirable use of the same materials in the churches of Italy. For economy the façade ought to be plain; but it need not, therefore, be unattractive. How beautiful may be a very simple façade is shown in some of the older English and French churches. Be the exterior what it may, the interior is more important. The suggested plan would give an unbroken space which would accommodate more persons than many of our most costly churches, obstructed as they are by large columns or by larger piers, and darkened by galleries and aisle vaults. Such a building would be economical and could be well ventilated and well lighted. It would be simple; and all good art must be simple. It would be architecturally honorable, and could be imposing by reason of its proportions and of its simplicity; but it would not be an object of undue expense, of unsuitableness, of trickery, of distraction, or of fear. The fifth century Basilica church, too, with nave and aisles, but built throughout of brick or of stone, with simple mouldings and simple decoration, could be effectively used, if a different plan were desired; and it would be cheaper, better, roomier, and more honest than the expensive pseudo-classical and Gothic churches, which, as used by us, are little more than monumental deceptions. In these or some such churches severely plain in plan and in decoration, yet beautiful in their just proportions, the multitude may be adequately instructed; but in the most costly churches of the day the preacher's voice is lost amid the intricacies of plaster, and reaches but few of the small number that ever have the needed inducement of seats.

One need not be a pessimist to believe that religious art, like other arts, is in decay. The plaster mould and the iron mould multiply forms that are bad, and make easy many kinds of deception. German gold and paint make things seem better than they are; and all the world approves the lie. Churches seem to be called beautiful in proportion as their ornamentation is glaring and inartistic, and the weakness of their construction is concealed by painted plaster. In the large cities the theatres, the hotels, the coffee-rooms, and the shops have caught the disease; and nearly everything is plaster painted and gilded, or wood stained to look like anything but itself. The ornament and the decoration of the day are glittering cheats. In other countries the Church is yet the mother of architecture; but in this country the churches are costly and offensive deceptions. For every trick or deceit there is the ready answer, "It looks just as well;" but the argument applies as logically to character and to dress as it does to churches. A new style of simple, honest church, designed for the change in circumstances and in thought, is needed; and the sooner it is adopted,

the better for art, for people, for clergymen, and for religion. Places of worship are not built for speculative purposes, and they ought not, by reason of the sacredness of their character, to imitate the commercial tricks of buildings made to be sold; but, if they be worse than the trade structures, they cannot be honorable to God or serviceable to man, and must become, though not called, temples for the glorification of sham.

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## RELIGION AND LIFE.

*The Orthodox Theology of To-day.* By Rev. Dr. Newman Smyth.

*Old Faiths in a New Light.* By Rev. Dr. Newman Smyth.

*Philosophy in the Church of Rome.* By Thomas Davidson.

THE decline of religion as a dogmatic belief forms a topic upon which much has been said and written in the last few years. It is a phenomenon which naturally attracts the attention of all observant minds, since in the question of belief are bound up the most important issues of life. Morality, so the avowed atheist does not hesitate to admit, must fade away when the basis on which the code of ethics is built is once withdrawn. Society, as such, therefore, is as much interested in the issue as are the advocates of religion on the one side and their opponents on the other. This general interest accounts to a great extent for the endless number of opinions expressed on the subject. Yet while there is an immense discrepancy between the views advanced on each side, there are, nevertheless, some points on which there appears to be very general agreement; and these points are, therefore, well worth investigating.

First of all, it is apparent to any one who follows the religious movement in its surging to and fro as it is expressed in contemporary literature that a much more correct and much more definite understanding of the true meaning of the term "religion" has obtained. Not a few argue and seemingly not without good reasons that doctrinal belief as such is falling into discredit simply because a more correct conception of the office and mission of religion gains from day to day greater currency. This, it is maintained, explains why rationalism has succeeded in making such frightful