



The Gothic Cathedral: A Book in Stone

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It was not only architectural achievements, but it was full have made their way to the middle ages and ultimately of symbols that any modern initiate would recognize the creation of these cathedrals), but rather to explore including images of square and compasses together, the cathedrals themselves and examine what their true the point within a circle, rose crosses, Holy Royal Arch utility was. After all, if we get too focused on who built symbols, and many, many others. these great gifts, we may just be celebrating an author without having read his books! By exploring the esoteric aspects of these cathedrals, we can hope to gain a greater appreciation of what these Master Craftsmen were trying to pass on, and why it is important to the initiatic tradition of the western world that was to follow.

Visiting great cathedrals of Notre Dame of Paris, Chartres cathedral, Saint Sulpice, St. Germaine, and others, whenever a cathedral is in view, I will go there, for inside is sure to be found great mysteries that the profane have no concept of. Only the initiate, trained in the symbolic language, can appreciate what has been preserved. That being said even the modern architect

must be impressed with how the level of engineering that had to go into a massive structure that could amplify acoustics so well that a sermon could be heard in a day when there were no speakers or microphones. I will not get into the mechanics of the architecture in this article, but I will explore its utility, to an extent.

Even though we will focus on what is in these great cathedrals that makes them a storehouse of the esoteric tradition, a little bit of background history is also of value. First and foremost, we must remember that the cathedrals were a product of great community effort and resources that developed out of the Crusades. Even though the Crusades brought great atrocities to the world, there can be no doubt that when the people of Europe began their pilgrimages to the Holy Land, these pilgrims came across new levels of arts and sciences not found throughout the rest of Europe at the time. In particular, the city of Constantinople stood out as a highly sophisticated centre.

There was one group that had been stationed in these cathedrals were built, and few stop to appreciate the Constantinople throughout the entire duration of the Crusades, and who had their own massive building force, and this was the Knights Templar. In fact, Templars were buried on the grounds of the Hagia Sophia itself, and by some estimates, the Templars built over 1,000 chapels, churches, Commanderies, Preceptories, and other structures across Europe during the 200 years of them being an active force before their suppression in 1307. Likewise, we know that the great promoter of the Gothic cathedrals of Europe was Saint Bernard of Clairveaux, who also wrote the official Rule of the Templars, and who had declared that God is "Length, Breadth, Height and Depth." In fact, the Hagia Sophia itself was based off of an older church called the Little Hagia Sophia, which the Templars used as a Commandery, and which was built like a giant beehive. Not surprisingly, we also find the beehive being used by Saint Bernard of Clairveaux as his

personal emblem. The Little Hagia Sophia has, among other things, cymatic music designs carved into its ledges that are similar to the ones found at Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, thus possibly associating the two buildings since they are the only two known chapels with this unique feature. We later find images of Templar knights actually being carved into the Gothic cathedrals of France.

It is for these reasons, and many others, that many have sought to look to the Templars as the initial building force and financier of the first cathedrals particularly of France. Later building guilds who have been credited with the creation of the cathedrals - like the "Children of Solomon" and the "Children of the Master Jacques," all claimed to have come out of the Templars themselves. Likewise, the Templars were known to have had associations with the Druze in Lebanon, who have likewise claimed to be the original builders of Solomon's Temple at different points in history. The Druze lived in the area near Baalbek with its ancient megalithic ruins, thus possibly providing a reason why something like the cathedrals were deemed to be of value to build. We will explore this theme further as we progress.

The next thing to keep in mind is that the cathedrals were built to be books in stone. They contained images of the wisdom being preserved at the time - not only in the form of Biblical depictions, as is often surmised, but also in the form of the arts and sciences. In fact, at Chartres cathedral in France can actually be found depictions of the seven liberal arts and sciences as carved figures, along with images of great promoters of these ideas - like Pythagoras. However, even beyond this, there were esoteric ideas incorporated into the cathedrals in the form of symbolism. To cite only a few examples, there are images of the zodiac, of alchemical operations, of Qabbalistic ideas, and of Hermetic philosophy.

For example, even to this day scientists are unsure of how some of the stained-glass colours were made within the early cathedrals, as they have been unable to reproduce it. This suggests a secret alchemical doctrine was being passed down and utilized. Fundamental to this glass is the utility of Light as a symbol itself, since without the light the images on the glass would be useless. Likewise, the symbol of the rose window became important, and we would do well to remember that the rose has always been the symbol of secrecy and silence by the initiates, and to this day we say that something secret is sub rosa - under the rose. As a symbol, it represented the unfolding of consciousness, but beyond this, we actually find it as a symbol that was carried over from the east, and the same rose symbol adorned the great mosques of the east during this time. It had been a symbol in Islam prior to the creation of the cathedrals of Europe because the Arabic word for rose "werd," sounds very similar to the Arabic word for meditational prayer "wird," and, of course, this sounds very similar to the current English word for "Word"! Given this association, we may even muse that the "lost word" could be the lost meditational prayer that we need to find to raise ourselves up!

Beyond such symbolism, however, it is also important to recognize that the cathedrals of Europe were built as representing the tabernacle in the wilderness, but these later tabernacles were built using the science of sacred geometry. The difference between regular geometry and sacred geometry is that sacred geometry utilizes geometry to express the divine order of the thought forms of God. Sacred Geometry mimicked patterns found in nature that illustrated that there was a consciousness behind the construction of nature itself- thus proving that there was a Divine Mind that ordered the Universe. Sacred Geometry in the building of the cathedrals was done to capture this order and highlight it. Likewise, the cathedrals were

built to capture the Hermetic axiom of "As Above, So Below," as they became a literal human body in stone. In fact, we should not be surprised that the cathedrals of Notre Dame were called "our lady," as each cathedral represented the Madonna in stone, and were constructed accordingly. For example, when one enters these cathedrals, you will find that the baptismal font is at the area of the belly button, the choir is at the area of the lungs, the Priest speaks from the area of the heart, and the sacrament is kept at the area of the pineal gland of the human head. When one leaves the cathedral, you must therefore go through the arch, which is the birth canal, and be born as a Christ from the Madonna. The administrative functions of the church likewise occur in the arms of the church.

Beyond this, however, some have noticed the similarity between how the cathedrals of Notre Dame are laid out across France in direct relation to the layout of the stars of the constellation of Virgo - which is the Virgin, or the Madonna. Therefore, a symbolic device was being employed to unite the above and the below. It should also be mentioned that just as Christianity was born out of the zodiacal Age of Pisces - the fish, and, therefore, adopted the fish symbolism in many ways for the exoteric religion, for every age there was also its exact opposite Age which would be the Age on the exact opposite side of the Zodiac that represented the mysteries. During the Age of Pisces, the Age on the other side of the Zodiac was Virgo, and therefore the mystery traditions during the Age of Pisces would have celebrated Virgo. It should be noted that we are currently going into the Age of Aquarius, and therefore the Zodiacal Age on the other side of the Zodiac that the mystery traditions would emulate would be Leo - the lion, which may provide a meaning behind the lion's paw celebrated in Freemasonry. During the Age of Pisces when the cathedrals were built however, the mystery traditions would have perpetuated the symbolism associated with Virgo.

It should also be pointed out that the cathedrals were many times built on former pagan holy sites, and many of these sites had ancient dolmans, mounds, or henges on them originally. They were also aligned over vast distances across the landscape, over straight lines, which a Freemason named Alfred Watkins named "ley lines" in the early 20th century. Watkins believed that the rods that the Deacons use in Freemasonry originally came from surveying rods that were used to lay out not only monuments over vast distances, but also the laying out of a sacred construction itself, in much the way that modern surveyors use similar rods. A great example of cathedrals being laid out over a straight line across many distances can be found in the famous "rose line" that stretches across Paris, going through many cathedrals and monuments, and which later became defined as the "Paris Meridian". Some of the other areas on this ley line include: the ancient church at Dunkirk dedicated to a Merovingian bishop (who was also a patron saint of goldsmiths); the area of Arques where the tomb in the Rennes valley associated with Father Rosi-Cross once stood, and which the artist Poussin painted; Rennes le Chateau; prehistoric grave mounds at Amiens, where the first Merovingian, King Marovee, was crowned, and where Jules Verne wrote most of his stories and was later buried near the church of Saint Mary Magdalene; the churches of Saint Jacques, Saint Roch, Saint Remy, Saint Denis (where many kings of France are buried), the cathedrals of Saint Sulpice, Saint Germain en Laye, and the cathedral at Amiens; two towns named Sion; the Great Synagogue of Paris; the National Library with its seven million volumes; the royal palace; and the pyramid at the Louvre. The last area in France that the meridian touches is a Benedictine Abby at Santiago de la Compostela, which houses a relic of Charlemagne which he believed was capable of harnessing electromagnetic forces issuing from the earth. The cathedral at Santiago de la Compostela is also one of the specific areas that Nicolas Flamel

made a pilgrimage to in order to learn how to make the famed Philosopher's Stone in alchemy. Furthermore, this same place is the supposed burial place of Saint James, the brother of Jesus, who is credited with bringing the Grail to France with Mary Magdalene, and who has been called the Disciple of Adepts by the Gnostic tradition.

Since many cathedrals were built on former holy sites from the pagan world, they likewise retained symbolism in the cathedrals associated with these earlier cultures, and it is not uncommon to find pagan images like the famed 'green man' inside the early cathedrals. Likewise, during bombing or war in ages past, it was not uncommon for altars to break apart, and it was found that hidden within them were often times depicted early pagan statuary. So, the cathedrals retain an interesting mix of both Christian and Pagan ideas and imagery.

The ground plans of these cathedrals are also identical to many temples in ancient Egypt, suggesting they were very precisely and purposefully built with this idea in mind. There is nothing arbitrary about them, and there is no chance of coincidence in their similarity with ancient Egyptian temples, which likewise suggests that whoever designed them was organized and had traveled to faraway places outside Europe. Many of these cathedrals also contain, or have contained, the mysterious Black Madonnas. The Black Madonnas are statues similar to the typical Madonna and Child statues, except that Mary and the child are painted entirely black. These statues probably relate to the ancient Egyptian statues of Isis and the young child Horus, in which they were seated in the same position and were painted black. This would fall in line with the similarity of building design and layout with the ancient Egyptian temples, which almost always had a statue of Isis and the young Horus in them. It would also be consistent with the earlier pagan traditions of Europe, whose myths may very well have been remnants of the ancient

Egyptian myths. Between 1773 and 1784, Antoine Court de Gebelin wrote his popular historical book *Le Monde Primitif* analyze et compare avec le monde moderne, in which he proposed that Paris was formerly the center of an ancient Egyptian sanctuary. According to Gebelin, the very name "Paris" came from "Bar Isis" (the Barque of Isis), and he firmly believed that the location of the Notre Dame cathedral was once a sanctuary consecrated to Isis. His writings were some of the first to propose an ancient connection between ancient Egypt and the mysteries of France. Interestingly, when you view the cathedral of Notre Dame from the air, along with the island it is on, it does look like a giant person stretched out on a boat. Old maps of Paris likewise show a temple of Isis on them in the general location of where we now find Notre Dame cathedral. It may not be coincidence that Jacques De Molay, the Grand Master of the Templars, was burned at the stake in front of the Notre Dame cathedral in this regard. In the 14th century, an Augustine monk named Jacques le Grant, had also claimed that: "In the days of Charlemagne (8th century AD)... there was a city named Iseos, so named because of the goddess Isis who was venerated there. Now it is called Melun. Paris owes its name to the same circumstances, Parisius is said to be similar to Iseos (quasi par Iseos), because it is located on the River Seine in the same manner as Melun.

Other crafty symbolism was often employed in the cathedrals. As for example at Chartres cathedral the entire floor of the cathedrals is tiled with stones all facing the same direction except for one stone. The one stone in question has within it a brass peg, and it sits below a stained-glass window that is dedicated to Apollo - the sun. Within the stained glass there is a tiny hole, which was put there on purpose. On Saint John the Baptist day each year a beam of light comes in from the hole in the stained glass and lands on the peg on the floor, which sits in the floor tile that is not aligned with everything else. When it does this, it forms a 3-4-5 triangle between the floor, the wall, and the

beam of light. Obviously, it was constructed this way on purpose to pass on information.

Further symbolism along these lines can be found at Chartres cathedral. Near the entrance of the west door of Chartres cathedral can be found a giant labyrinth on the floor, which people walk through in imitation of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The labyrinth path formed in the stones of the nave of Chartres Cathedral is 666 feet, which has symbolic meaning, and has nothing to do with the devil.

The distance between the centre of the Chartres labyrinth to the west door is almost the same as that between the west door and the west rose window above it, thus forming an isosceles triangle, so that the hypotenuse is the distance between the centre of the rose and the centre of the labyrinth. Hence, if the west wall were laid upon the nave of the floor, the rose window would fall almost exactly upon the labyrinth itself. Interestingly, we know the origin of this particular labyrinth, as it comes from an old 11th century Alexandrian alchemical manuscript on gold making and said to have come from an alchemist named Cleopatra from the 4th century in Egypt. In the alchemical manuscript the labyrinth is called the "Labyrinth of Solomon".

The labyrinth is not the only element from old alchemical manuscripts however, as all of the cathedrals are covered with alchemical symbolism and depict the different stages of alchemy. For example, at Notre Dame cathedral, as you are going into the front doors, at eye level, are a series of images that depict all the stages of alchemy. They include everything from salamanders to alchemical ovens, to stars issuing forth essences. Therefore, before you go into the very cathedral itself, it is telling you that this book in stone is saving the secrets of the alchemical art. Not surprisingly, on the roof of Notre Dame cathedral, at one of the highest points, is not to be found an

image of Jesus (as one may expect), but rather a statue of an alchemist in a Phrygian cap looking down over the cathedral itself. Also, on the front of Notre Darné are images of St. Denis, with his head cut off, which is no ordinary saint. St. Denis was actually said to have been the initiate Dionysius the Aeropagite, and his head was said to allude to the "caput mortem" stage in alchemy, meaning "dead head". Freemasons would likewise recognize the many due guards and signs from the Masonic ritual tradition being utilized in the carvings of the figures on the cathedral itself. In a similar manner, at Chartres cathedral, can be found carvings of figures like Melchizedek, holding a Grail chalice, with a stone inside it that represented the "bread" of communion. Alchemists have looked to this as holding deeper symbolism related to the Philosopher's Stone, and it is for this reason that alchemists like Isaac Newton went to the cathedrals to study them in order to better understand the alchemical science.

At Chartres cathedral there is a crypt at the bottom of the cathedral that has within it images of the sun, the moon, and the hand of the mysteries associated with Mastery painted on the ceiling of the crypt. There is also a starry decked canopy throughout the crypt. This seems to be the seed of the cathedral itself, as the two towers that hover above the cathedral are called the "sun spire" and the "moon spire". The moon spire actually has a moon on it, and the sun spire, which is a different height, is the same length as the floor plan of the cathedral if you were to go from the front door to the sanctuary where the sacrament is kept. Therefore, this was done on purpose and certain important symbolism was being employed. One may be reminded of Hermes' Emerald Tablet in which it says of the Philosopher's Stone, "its father is the sun, its mother is the moon." We may also be reminded of the lesser lights in Freemasonry.

It is important to remember that these cathedrals were not just churches to the people of the middle ages, but rather they were community centres.

They were even used at times like the first shopping malls, and inside the structures would be storefronts. So, the people coming into these structures were using them for a number of purposes beyond just religious worship. That being said, they were built to be landmarks, so that secret sciences could be contained and studied by future generations. To this day, any initiate can still go to these wonderful books in stone and meditate on the wonderful symbolism being employed. With a little bit of study and meditation, it becomes clear that sacred sciences were being passed down from the ancient world and incorporated in the cathedrals themselves. Since so much alchemical symbolism was being employed at this time, it likewise raises many questions, because Europe as a whole had not had a widespread exposure to alchemical texts during the time of the creation of the cathedrals. The only people who were translating early texts on alchemy at this time were mystical Islamic societies like the Sufi. The only people who had associations with the Sufi in the Holy Land and who also had a building force was the Templars, thus lending further weight to the idea that Templars were involved in some of the design and construction of the cathedrals themselves. Perhaps this is why Freemasonry has preserved the idea that Masonic origins stem from not only the cathedral builders but from the Templars themselves? The subject is too broad to be captured in an article such as this, but there can be no doubt that much of the symbolism and philosophy found in modern Freemasonry can also be found preserved on the Gothic cathedrals themselves. These books in stone continue to stand as books of secrets for those who are willing to take the time to study them.

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