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*Review Article*

ART. I.—*An Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship, of the Primitive Church, that flourished within the first three hundred years after Christ; faithfully collected out of the Fathers and extant writings of those ages.* By Peter King, Lord High Chancellor of England. With an introduction, by the American Editor. New York. Published by G. Lane and P. P. Sandford, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 200 Mulberry street.

THE republication of this rare and valuable work, which has given us much satisfaction, is but a natural consequence, of the revival of the conflict, between free ecclesiastical principles and the exclusive claims of prelacy. Though it was hardly to be expected that such a book should owe its republication and introduction to the American churches to the publishing office of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Here is surely a verification of Samson's riddle: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." But the gift is no less acceptable for the seeming incongruity of the hand that conveys it. Indeed, this incongruity of the publication, is itself congruous with the authorship of the book. And we have in it not only a book against episcopacy, published by the Methodist Episcopal church, but also a book against episcopacy, written by a member of the English Episcopal church. We know,

dental statements, we have thought it best to confine ourselves at present to the occurrences in May, reserving those of later date to be the subject, if we find it necessary, of a deliberate review hereafter.

*A. B. D. C.*

- ART. VI.—1. *Remarks on English Churches, and on the expediency of rendering Sepulchral Memorials subservient to pious and Christian uses.* By J. H. Markland, F. R. S. and S. A. Third edition, enlarged. Oxford. 1843. pp. 274.
2. *A Glossary of Terms used in Grecian, Roman, Italian, and Gothic Architecture.* The third edition, enlarged. Exemplified by 700 wood cuts. Oxford. 2 vols. Svo.
3. *Anglican Church Architecture, with some remarks on Ecclesiastical Furniture.* By James Barr, Architect. Second edition. Oxford. 1843. pp. 216, 12mo.

THESE works are among the fruits of the increased interest which has been felt, within a few years, in the Architecture of the Middle Ages. The singular fate which the Gothic Architecture has undergone would warrant the inference that it gives expression to no general and permanent truth, were we not in a condition to account satisfactorily for the mutations to which it has been subject. Appearing in the early part of the twelfth century, it gave such a distinct and full utterance to some general sentiment of the age, that it spread at once over the whole of Christian Europe. So rapid was its transmission through Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and England, that it remains to this day, a matter of doubt where it originated, the most laborious and minute researches having failed to establish clearly a priority of date for the structures of any one of these countries.

Prior to the introduction of this style, there was no prevalent style of church architecture. The Roman architecture, in the course of its protracted dissolution, had assumed, in the East, the form of what has been termed the Byzantine style; in Italy and Germany it had degenerated into the Lombard, and in England into the Norman style. The churches erected in these several countries prior to the

twelfth century, involved no common principle. Indeed that which chiefly marks them all is the entire want of any principle. There was no other general likeness among them than what arose from a certain resemblance in the details, and from the entire absence of any general idea by which these details might be blended into unity. The church of St. Sophia at Constantinople, the duomo of Pisa, and the Durham Cathedral may be taken as the representatives of the Byzantine, the Lombard, and the Norman styles; and if these buildings be compared together it will be found that, although they resemble each other in the use of the semicircular arch as the principle of support and some other Roman elements, and hence may be classed together under the general term Romanesque, they are nevertheless exceedingly unlike in their general effect. Though they all employed substantially the same elements of construction, the round arch supported by columns fashioned in their proportions and ornaments after the classical architecture, pilasters cornices and entablatures borrowed from the remains of Roman art, openings in the wall whether for doors or windows that were small, comparatively few in number and subordinate to the wall, vaulted ceilings, and domes; yet as these constructive elements were subject to no law, bound together by no one principle which assigned to each its place and function, and formed them into one organic whole, it was inevitable that they should be mingled together in different combinations and proportions according to the capricious fancy of each builder. Hence each country had, with some general resemblance to others, its own peculiar style of building; and no one style was capable of transcending provincial limits, and giving law to the world, because no one rested upon any general principle of beauty or truth.

No sooner however did the Gothic Architecture appear than it diffused itself through all lands where Christian churches were built. This rapid and universal diffusion, however it may be historically accounted for, must find its ultimate explanation in the palpable truth of this style of architecture. Instead of being like the styles which preceded it, an aggregation of materials and forms of construction, associated and arranged upon no higher principle than that of building a commodious, shapely and convenient edifice, the Gothic style was a connected and organic whole, possessed of a vital principle which rejected every thing that

was heterogeneous, and assimilated all that it embraced. Hence its power and its popularity.

After prevailing for a period of about three centuries this style was displaced by the revived classical architecture of the Italian school. Then came the days in which such men as Sir Henry Wotton stigmatized the glorious fanes which had been erected in this style as Gothic or barbarous, and Evelyn condemned it as a "certain fantastical and licentious mode of building," and the son and biographer of Sir Christopher Wren sneered at the inimitable ceiling of Henry VIIIth's Chapel, as "lace and other cut work, and crinkle crinkle." The architecture nick-named the Gothic and ever since designated by that term, was then despised and cast out as whimsical, lawless and absurd, and men began to build after a fashion that was deemed the method of the ancients. This classical Architecture had its consummation as in the cathedrals of St. Paul's at London, and St. Peter's at Rome. It is distinguished, even beyond the Romanesque architecture, by the want of any general principle of unity. The Greek pediment or something which was intended to imitate that chief and crowning feature of the Greek temple, together with columnar ordinances fitted to receive and sustain vertical thrusts, is found in connection with round arches, domes, vaulted ceilings, cupolas and spires. That this style was capable, in the hands of such men as Sir Christopher Wren, and Michael Angelo, of producing an imposing interior effect by the expansive dome hung high over head, and by the picturesque combination of the other interior elements of an immense structure, we have sufficient evidence in St. Paul's and St. Peter's; but that it was utterly incapable of producing the higher effects of architectural excellence will be equally evident to any one who will take the several parts of either of those structures and attempt to establish the relation of unity between them. This attempt will inevitably lead to the conclusion that the different parts of the building have no mutual bond of coherence. They are held together by the law of gravitation, they are cemented by mortar, but there are no mutual relations which make them coalesce. The effects which they produce, are due, in chief part, to the purely sensuous phenomena of immense magnitude, and picturesqueness of combination and arrangement. The moment that we attempt to discover that unity without which no work of art can fill and satisfy the mind, we find only discrepancies and contradictions.

The age that rejected the Gothic architecture showed thus its incompetency either to condemn or to approve. Had their censure of the Gothic been founded upon any principles truly applicable as a criterion of excellence, we should have been compelled to admit that this style of architecture expressed something that was peculiar to the three centuries within which it originated and died. The fact of its death, if it could not be shown that it was inflicted in one of those freaks of fancy which whole communities and generations of men sometimes exhibit, would of course show that however fitted it may have been to give outward expression to the mind of Europe during the three centuries of its prevalence, it embodied no universal principles. But when we examine the reasons assigned for its condemnation, we find that they rest upon conventional and affected standards of judgment; and when we look at the buildings which were thought worthy to supplant the Gothic, we see that they are in every respect, whether of constructive art or ideal perfection, immeasurably inferior to their predecessors. We feel warranted therefore, in drawing the conclusion that the displacement of the Gothic architecture was perfectly analogous to those changes which literature has sometimes undergone, when partial and contracted hypotheses have for a season supplanted with their technical canons of criticism, a true and universal method.

It is a remarkable fact that the revival of the Gothic was contemporaneous with the restoration of the true principles of the Greek architecture; and that they both date from the period in which the re-action in the public mind from the mechanical philosophy and sceptical spirit of the last century begins to be distinctly marked. No sooner was the true spirit of the wonderful remains of Athenian art comprehended, then men began to turn to the cathedrals and other structures of the Middle Ages and find in them a transcendent beauty and power. It is now universally admitted by those who have taken the pains to acquaint themselves with the matter, that

“In those rich cathedral fanes,  
(Gothic ill-named) a harmony results  
From disunited parts; and shapes minute,  
At once distinct and blended, boldly form  
One vast majestic whole.”

As each plant in the vegetable world has its principle of unity, and this principle has its signature in the root, the

stem, the leaf, the flower, and the fruit, so has the Gothic architecture its vital principle infused into every part of the structure from the foundation stone to the summit of its towers and spires. The foliations of the arches, the tracery of the windows, and the scooped cells of the branched roof are efflorescences of the same germinating principle which casts out the massive buttress, and throws up the towering pinnacle.

But it is one thing to see and feel that the Gothic architecture possesses vitality, and a very different thing to define its principle of life. It is not our purpose, on the present occasion, to attempt any exposition of this matter. All that we desire, for the end we have in view, is that it should be admitted, on the grounds that we have assigned, or through faith in those who have studied the subject, that there is a true art developed in the Gothic architecture. This being admitted, we wish to show that Puseyism displays some of its most marked characteristics in its attempts to comprehend and practice this art.

A great impulse has been given from Oxford to the study of Gothic architecture. A society has been established there for promoting its study, and a number of works on the subject have emanated from the Oxford press. Some of these are curiosities in their way. But without dwelling on the peculiarities of any, we wish to point attention to that which is common to them all.

They exhibit, as might have been anticipated, an exclusive, narrow-minded bigotry, in favour of one particular style of architecture, in connexion with utter ignorance of every other. The author of the Glossary, which is an elaborate, and in many respects, a valuable work, professes to explain the terms used in Grecian and Roman as well as Gothic architecture; but he seldom ventures beyond his beloved Gothic without betraying the most surprising and often ludicrous ignorance. We refer, for illustration, to his definition of the term *cymatium*, in which no less than seven applications of this term are given, every one of which is not only wrong but so absurdly wrong that it is impossible to read them with a grave face. What is still more unpardonable than this, he confounds the *echinus*, the only curved moulding that entered into the structure of the Parthenon, with the tasteless *ovolo* of the Romans, and then confounds both of these with the egg and dart sculpture with which they were sometimes ornamented.

Nor have we been able to find a single article in the book upon any subject connected with Grecian architecture, which is not either grossly erroneous, or so defective as to be worthless, while upon all the details of the Gothic, it is full, clear, and for the most part, correct. The same character runs through the other works which we have placed at the head of our article. They are all one-sided. We have no right to expect that treatises on English Church Architecture, like that of Mr. Barr, should contain an exposition of the principles of Greek architecture, but we have a right to expect that in their allusions to it they should not betray such ignorance as to satisfy us that their devotion to the Gothic is a blind and unintelligent preference. He who commends to the world any particular style of architecture, and while in the act of doing so, shows that he has never appreciated the spirit of beauty that dwells in the temples of the Athenians, can scarcely hope to win the public confidence as an arbiter of taste. The exclusiveness which confines the attention of the architectural bigot to one style, must of course prevent him from fully comprehending even that one. Art is jealous of her secrets and they can be won from her only by a fearless and catholic confidence. The man whose mind is narrowed down to the interests of a party or a sect must be content to remain ignorant of them. He who despises the Parthenon, or looks upon it with cold indifference, can be nothing but a worshipper of stones in York Minster.

Hence we should expect to find, as is the actual fact, that these works betray an inadequate comprehension of the true meaning and spirit of Gothic Architecture. In describing the separate parts of a Gothic edifice and the actual construction of English cathedrals and churches they are sufficiently accurate, but it is evident that they have failed to seize fully the law which makes the parts members of a whole. The traditional authority of the fathers of English architecture, is their source of information and their ultimate bar of appeal. Thus Mr. Barr says, "when designing a church, it is by no means sufficient that we borrow the details of an old building, unless we likewise preserve its general proportions and canonical distribution." He does not here nor elsewhere venture to raise the inquiry whether the "old building" may not itself be faulty in some of its proportions; he nowhere hints at the possibility of our obtaining such an idea of the interior law of the

Gothic architecture in which its essence is comprised, as may enable us to discriminate between different old buildings, and without copying servilely any one combine the excellencies of several, or even originate a design in independence of them all. He who begs thus pusillanimously from the mighty masters of old, no matter how magnificent may be the gifts he receives, will show his beggarly nature through them all. It is not by copying the proportions of old buildings that we can hope to rival them, but by drinking in the spirit of those proportions, until a well-spring of living beauty is opened within us.

The faithfulness with which the appeal to traditional authority is carried out in these works, is truly remarkable. They talk in good set terms often of the Gothic style, and yet always return with undeviating uniformity to the authority of the fathers. Whether they recommend any particular disposition of the chief architectural members of the structure, or the use, among its minor adornments, of "the Cross, the Holy Name, the emblems of the Blessed Trinity, and other mystical devices," the reason given is not that these things flow cut naturally from the great idea which governs the structure, but they "adorned our old ecclesiastical edifices."

In describing the appropriate doorway of a Gothic church, Mr. Barr says, "In England the doorways of the cathedrals and other great churches are seldom features of that magnitude and importance which they are in the same class of ecclesiastical structures on the continent, and it is always advisable to preserve as much as possible the distinctive peculiarities of Anglican church architecture." This is a fair sample of the whole. The end aimed at is not to cultivate a true and vital architecture, but to preserve the peculiarities of English architecture. The true question at issue, in the case stated, was not, what was the practice of English architects, but what would best harmonize with, and assist in carrying out the general idea of the Gothic style. In France and Germany the doorways are of such an imposing height and magnitude, that they constitute a very important feature of the west front; in England, on the contrary, they are comparatively diminutive and insignificant. Which of these two different characters ought to be given to the doorway of a modern Gothic church in England or elsewhere? If the question is to be decided by the obvious impression on the feelings, let any man



compare the west front of York Minster, or Salisbury Cathedral, with that of the Amiens or Rheims Cathedral, and he will not hesitate a moment to decide in favour of the latter. But the only adequate method of deciding such a question, is to ascertain what there is common to all these structures that differ from each other in some of their details ; what is it which notwithstanding their circumstantial disagreements gives to them all a sameness of expression ; what is there in them that may be taken away, and what that may not be taken away without destroying their character. When these questions have been satisfactorily answered we shall be possessed not of English, French or German architecture, but of the essence of them all, and we shall then be at no loss to decide between the comparative merits of those features in which they differ. To decide, as Mr. Barr does, is to substitute authority for reason.

In like manner Mr. Markland in urging the pious and benevolent to bestow their gifts in the erection or improvement of some particular part of church edifices, cites with approbation, in illustration of his views, the Minstrel's column in the church of St. Mary's, Beverly. This column is a pier with clustered shafts, furnished with a double set of capitals placed at a sufficient distance, the one above the other, to contain a group of figures, with musical instruments, representing the minstrels who erected it. If the Gothic architecture be nothing more than a compendium of traditional teachings then it is only a waste of time to discuss any question connected with it ; but if it have any fixed and certain principles, then surely it ought to have been shown that this "Minstrel column" was in keeping with those principles before it was presented as an example to be imitated in the present age. We believe that the Gothic architecture has a real significancy quite other than that which is derived from any associations connected with it, and we are sure that for the expression of whatever may be its purpose, it is dependent chiefly upon its predominating vertical line. In the interior, which is of necessity the most important part of a Gothic edifice, almost its only means of manifesting this vertical tendency is through the pier shafts of the arches, and the vaulting shafts of the ceiling. To break the continuousness of these shafts for the purpose of receiving a set of statues is to destroy the only significancy of the shaft. Whatever may be its goodness in other respects, as a part of a Gothic interior, it

becomes, when thus broken, an unmeaning appendage. Such admiration as this, of the Gothic architecture, is very much akin to that of the good old lady who was so much moved by the peculiar eloquence of the word Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was a good old word, it belonged to the time of the patriarchs, and being delivered moreover in a truly unctuous tone, it imparted a savour to the whole sermon into which it entered.

As the Traetarians rest much in outward forms, which are no necessary or rational part of a spiritual system of religion, and which, being perfectly arbitrary and conventional, cannot but hinder the mind in its progress towards the perception of any great central truth; so, in art, the same disposition is manifested to divorce the form from the substance, the body from the spirit which animates it; and then, when the whole has been disintegrated, to assign a superstitious value to each separate part. Each doorway must be made to hint darkly at some mystery, the storied windows must deliver up their venerable traditions, and the shafts and arches, the pulpit, the altar and the font, the quaint carvings and mystical devices, must all be arranged in accordance with some dream or vision. As the religion of such men must be, in a good degree, made up of outward institutions and rites, which, having lost their only rational meaning through their disconnection from the inner truth of the system to which they belong, have a superstitious efficacy attributed to them, so their architecture is an assemblage of parts that having no inward principle of unity can only exist through some mystical meaning attached to them. Their art is no living reality, but an assemblage of holy relics.

For the same reason that we should be unwilling that any man should judge of religion by the form which it assumes in the teachings and practice of the Oxford Traetarians, we would desire also, to see the noble art of architecture rescued from their hands. Architecture, properly understood, is undoubtedly as Coleridge pronounced it, the most difficult of the fine arts, "it involves all the powers of design, and is sculpture and painting inclusively; it shows the greatness of man, and should at the same time teach him humility." It exhibits the greatest difference from nature, that can exist in works of art, and requires therefore, thoughtful, and earnest study for the discovery and appreciation of its principles. To build a convenient and ornate

edifice, whether for domestic or religious purposes is an easy matter; but to dispose building materials in such forms as shall be expressive of intellectual purposes and sentiments, this is a task that demands, for its adequate discharge, other attainments than technical rules, old traditions and the narrow dogmas of a sect. The living and life producing ideas of this art are to be acquired only through "the perception of those relations which alone are beautiful and eternal, whose prime concords can be proved, but whose deeper mysteries can only be felt."\*

The Gothic architecture is one of the most wonderful creations of the human mind. The more we study it, the more are we lost in admiration at the skill which has succeeded in employing such an endless multiplicity of details as enter into a Gothic structure, without sacrificing the essential unity of the whole. The idea which evolved it, seems to luxuriate in the greatest abundance of forms, all of which are animated and all in the same spirit. It is of course symbolical, as all true art must be. Any object which does not irresistibly lead the mind beyond itself, and inspire a feeling due not to the qualities of the object but to something far greater and better that is suggested by it, is no work of art. But the symbolism of Gothic architecture, as of all characteristic art, is dependent upon no accidental associations, or conventional appointments. It is not the work of a man, who, having agreed with his fellows, that certain signs shall represent certain objects or qualities. proceeds to use the power with which they have endowed him; but of one who having worshipped beside the fountain of primal beauty has drunk in those essential principles of harmony which must speak to the hearts of all men. The forms that enter into a Gothic cathedral are a figured language, but it is a universal language.

How preposterous then, to mix up with this natural symbolism, deriving its efficacy from that which is true as the human mind and permanent as the race, the purely technical symbolism of any particular creed or age! How absurd to break in upon the harmony that assimilating to itself the voice of each of its manifold parts, pours forth its choral symphonies from the whole, with the crotchets of a school or sect. The "mystic devices," for which Mr. Barr pleads, the sacred monogram, the *vesica piscis*, and other

\* Goethe's Works. Vol. xxxix. p. 339.

technical inventions, what have these to do in conjunction with those harmonious forms, and relations, that, partaking of the very essence of beauty, are endowed with natural and indefeasible power to awe, to subdue, to exalt, to refine the human mind.

It may easily be gathered from what we have already said, that we dissent utterly from the sentiment often expressed, that the Gothic architecture is a development of Papal Christianity. It is indeed a religious architecture, as every other true style has been; it is, in some sense, a Christian architecture, but further to limit its generality is to despoil it of its glory and power. Doubtless an architecture might be devised which would be an appropriate symbol of Romanism. So also we might construct a style which would fitly represent the Protestant Episcopal Church, as its doctrines and practises are expounded by the Oxford Tractarians; but it would be widely different from the Gothic. It would be a style which, acknowledging no infallible standards, except as they are interpreted by tradition, would copy "old buildings" without daring to aspire even so high as imitation. It would of course fix attention upon external forms, rather than upon the thought within. Hence also it would limit its views of mental expression to the ideas of power and grandeur through which the mind might be overawed and reduced to an unreasoning submission. It would discourage the robust and manly exercise of the human intellect, and would care little therefore for strict unity and severe harmony, if it might so manage the details as to produce an extemporaneous impression upon the beholder, sufficiently powerful to compel him to yield a slavish obedience to authority. The deeper mysteries of art which are to be felt only by those who have understood its "prime concords," would be altogether beyond its reach. But we feel little interest in tracing out minutely the *idea* of an Episcopal art. It will be exhibited in its concrete form whenever the teachings of such architects as Mr. Barr shall have been carried thoroughly into practice.