its basic plan is more like that of the Roman basilica. The west end, facing the baptistry rotunda, has a four-decked series of blind arcades and, like both Byzantine and Islamic buildings, makes use of polychrome marble. The Romanesque features would seem to be primarily in the interior and exterior decoration and the arch system. It is not a stone-vaulted structure but one roofed with timber beams and Roman coffered ceiling (as in the basilica style). Its famous leaning tower displays an exterior of several decks of blind arcades also. The Pisa Cathedral and its baptistry date about 1053 with some changes and remodeling (groined vaulting in the side aisles) completed in 1272.

The Romanesque world relied on the intercession of saints and dedicated churches and chapels in both towns and monasteries to them. This fact, coupled with the wealth of subject matter in scripture (which had become elaborately defined in monastic libraries), led to the resurgence of sculpture in the north. The art of large sculpture in stone, dormant since the collapse of the Roman Empire, was now beautifully integrated with architectural expression for the first time since the Greek Classical period. The Romans had utilized sculpture in conjunction with their architecture, but it was never really successfully integrated with architecture, and the stonecutter's art had not flourished in the early medieval period.

Among the most decorated areas of churches were the doorways and the blind arches above them called the tympanums. The capitals of columns were also carved and sometimes drilled in the Byzantine manner. Incidentally, the wide variety of designs on the capitals within any given church illustrates the eccentricity and non-conformity which was a characteristic of Romanesque. In the apse where niches had often been provided for patron saints, some fairly large sculpture in the round was often found.

The earliest examples of Romanesque carving show the strong influence of barbarian linear tracery reminiscent of tribal jewelry and of the linear styles of Irish medieval illumination. As a matter of fact, manuscript illuminations were models for both the styles and subject matter of much Romanesque sculpture. Not only did these sources bear the imprimatur mark of orthodoxy by Rome, but they also provided the only models the sculptor was likely to have access to. Very few, if any, models of Roman carving existed. It is a tribute to the sculptor, usually a monk, that he had the skill and imagination to project the manuscript examples into larger size and into working in the round. The technical knowledge of stone carving which the Romanesque sculptor acquired is difficult to trace but probably came through contacts with the Byzantine Empire. It is also quite likely that among the hundreds of skilled stone masons there were some with the souls of artists able to apply their knowledge to sculpting. The talents of the sculptor also found expression in richly carved wooden confessionals, choir stalls, and crucifixes. Doors were often carved or inlaid with wood. The ability to cast in bronze was rediscovered in the tenth century and although few sculptures were in bronze, doors, parts for doors, and other artifacts often were.

Romanesque sculpture is highly distorted for emotional expression, with the body often slender, elongated, and twisted to get the ecstatic effect that was greatly admired, but the figures are anatomically recognizable. Unlike classical or Hellenistic work, realism is always sacrificed for this emotional expressionism and for the sake of rhythm and pattern. Also, unlike much of the sculpture of antiquity, the sculpture is in harmony with the surface it adorns. The approach is strictly expressive and esthetic rather than intellectual and naturalistic.

This again recalls the erroneous interpretations of the art of the period by Renaissance and eighteenth century scholars. They most often made the assumption that the Romanesque sculptor was interested in imitating the classical style but, because of technical limitations, could not. This conclusion demonstrates a complete failure to understand that the whole frame of reference of the Romanesque world was different and that the calm balance and natural logic of classical forms would be inconsistent with this framework.

The sculpture of the period almost perfectly catalogs the character of the Romanesque mind and world--a world not so much concerned with the observation of outer reality as with imagination and inner reality, where the rationale of classicism had not yet intruded. The intellectual and scientific point of view that beauty and visual correctness are synonymus does not come until the Renaissance.

It seems clear that the sculptor was not interested in the human body in proportion or in the celebration of humanity but in making visual the various states of spiritual ecstacy which the body might be capable of expressing. Human distortion is often accompanied by supernatural beasts, devils, and demons--also borrowed from the pages of illuminated manuscripts.

Although, as previously indicated, sculpture is found throughout the church, the finest examples are found on the doorjambs, portal facades, and the tympanums. Of all monuments to Romanesque sculpture, four of the finest are St. Lazare of Autun, St. Pierre of Moissac, St. Madeleine of Vezelay, and St. Trophime of Arles.

In addition to the esthetic brilliance of its sculpture, St. Lazare of Autun is of particular interest because all of the carving was done by one sculptor, Gislebertus. Autun is the only known example in which a single artist was entrusted to do an entire church, a procedure quite atypical in that time. Gislebertus is known to have been apprenticed at Cluny, where many important artists were trained, and seems to have arrived in Autun in 1124. He labored for eleven years on the project with several apprentices and assistants carrying out his designs and doing the initial blocking. Most Romanesque sculptors are anonymous, but Gislebertus was well known and held in high esteem, a fact attested to by his being allowed to carve his name at the bottom of the tympanums over each doorway. It was the tympanums which gave Gislebertus an opportunity to display his real genius for stone carving and imaginative interpretation of subject matter. In the very different world of the Baroque period

(seventeenth century) the Last Judgment tympanum was considered to be so barbaric that it was bricked over and remained hidden until the restoration of the church began in 1939. Gislebertus chose various scenes from both the Old and New Testaments for the deep relief of the column capitals. Other panels include very ascetic depictions of saints, devils in various forms, and the fanciful beasts that were so popular in the Romanesque world.

St. Pierre Moissac and St. Madeleine Vezelay also contain outstanding examples of Romanesque expressionism. Figures are slim and twisted into almost impossible poses of religious ecstacy. The rhythms and counter-rhythms create extremely dynamic action. The carving of these churches was to become one of the primary influences on twentieth century expressionism in painting, especially in the Dresden school of the first decade of the twentieth century. Elements of Romanesque can be found in some of the work of both Gauguin and Van Gogh in the last part of the nineteenth century as well.

The arts of painting also flourished in the forms of manuscript illumination, enameled objects, and in a rebirth of the mural medium. These examples are equally expressive though somewhat overshadowed by sculpture. The finest murals were painted in Spain and, as we have noted in the case of other Romanesque art, have strong Byzantine and manuscript characteristics.

An outstanding example of the pictorial arts of the period is the Bayeaux tapestry, which was commissioned by Bishop Odo of Bayeaux, half-brother to William the Conqueror. The tapestry, which deals with the Norman Conquest of England in seventy-six scenes, is in the form of an early medieval scroll, 20 inches high and 231 feet in length. It is embroidered into heavy linen with eight colors and is a masterpiece of linear simplicity. The drawing is bold and harsh with an emphasis on expression rather than on visual correctness. It contains over 600 human figures, 500 animals, and 40 ships, with an abstracted landscape framework providing a setting. The borders, though sometimes broken, establish a containing format for the narrative itself. The tapestry stands alone as a brilliant narrative expression on a monumental scale during a time when, with the exception of sculpture, most art was in miniature.

Many Romanesque elements in art and architecture continued into the Gothic period. Some of the finest of the large Romanesque churches were constructed as late as 1200; and Durham Cathedral, built in England in 1104 and usually considered to be the earliest high rib-vaulted cathedral in Europe, contains many Gothic elements. In other words, Romanesque and Gothic overlap by at least a century. The significant differences between the architecture of the two periods will be discussed in the next unit.

R.W.N.
Rev. 1976

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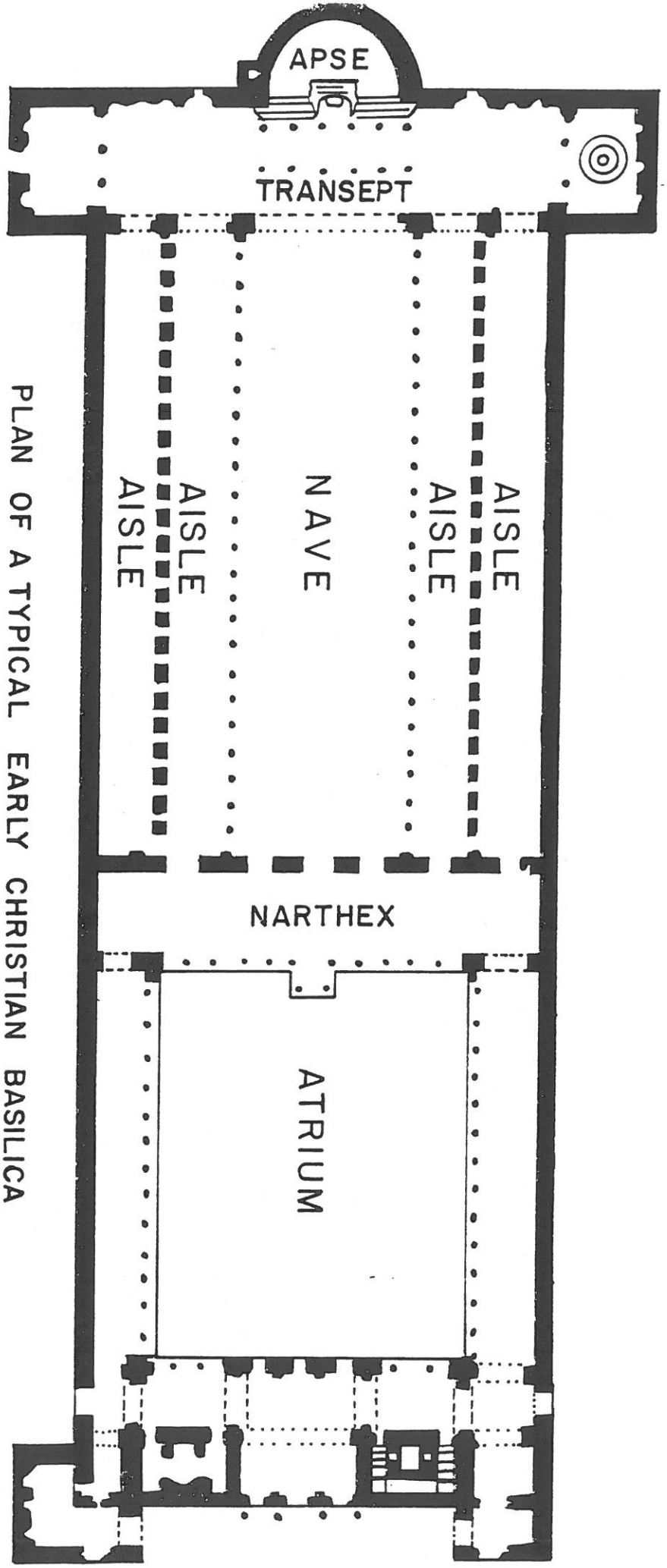
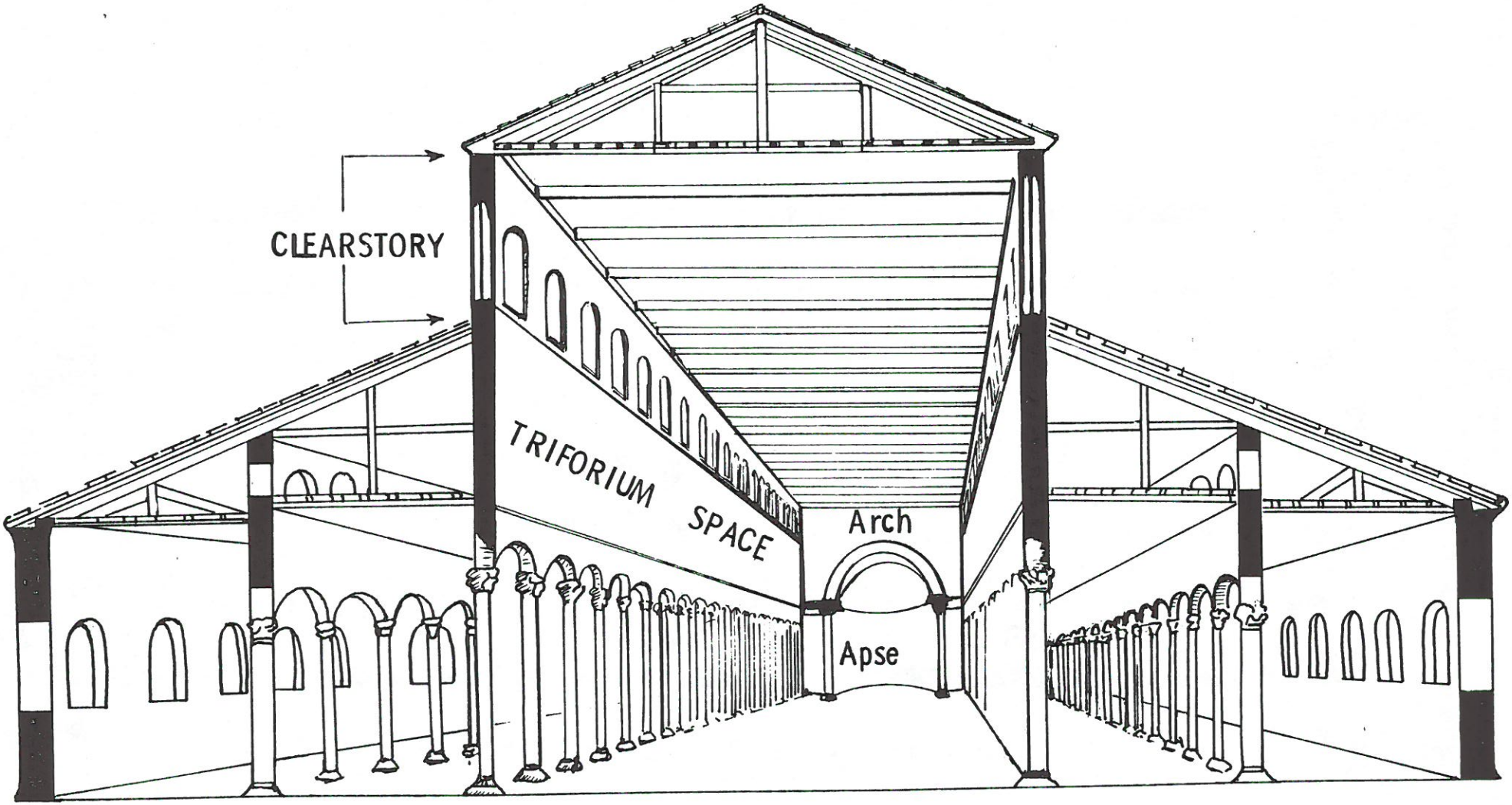
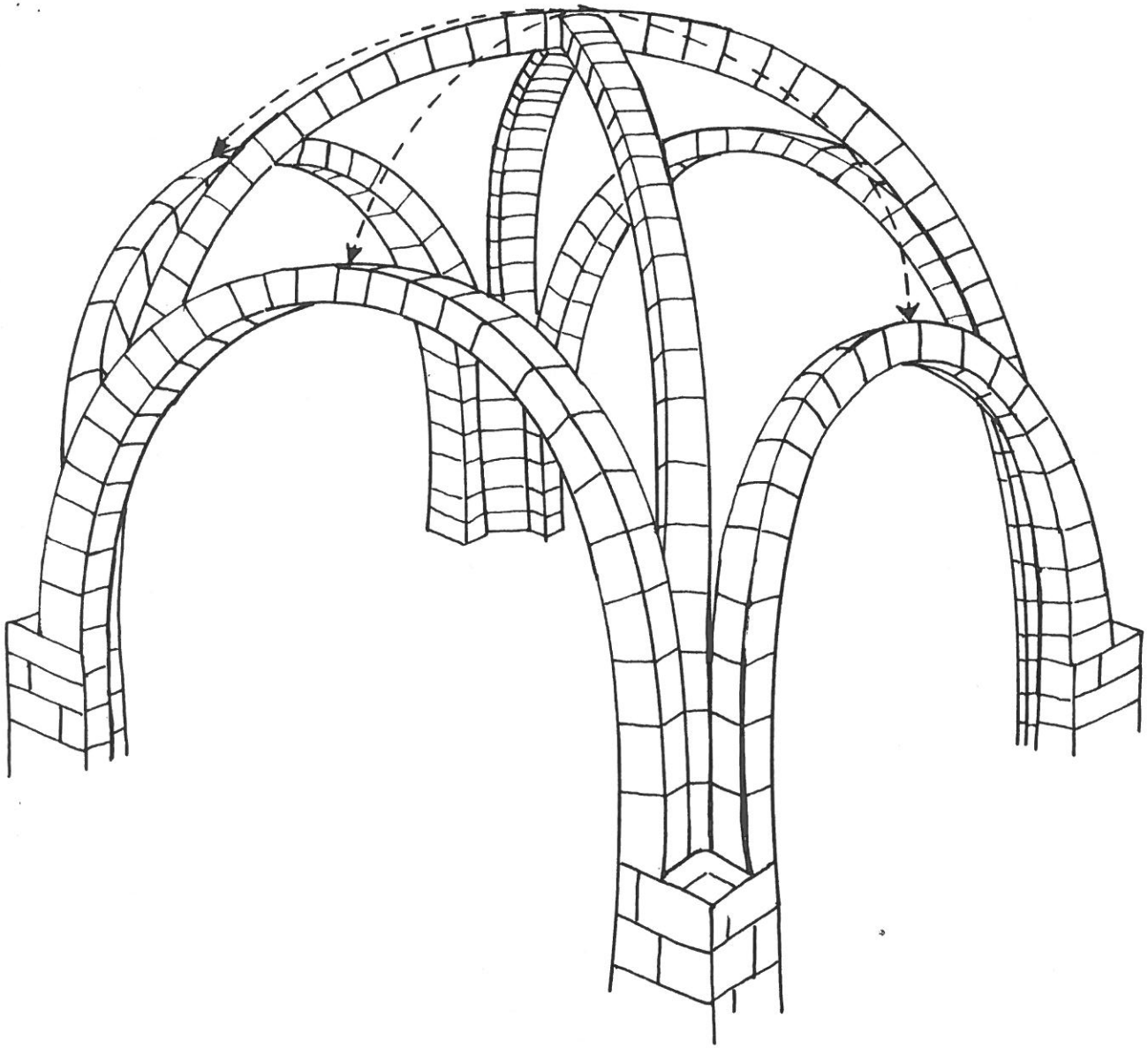


PLAN OF A TYPICAL EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICA

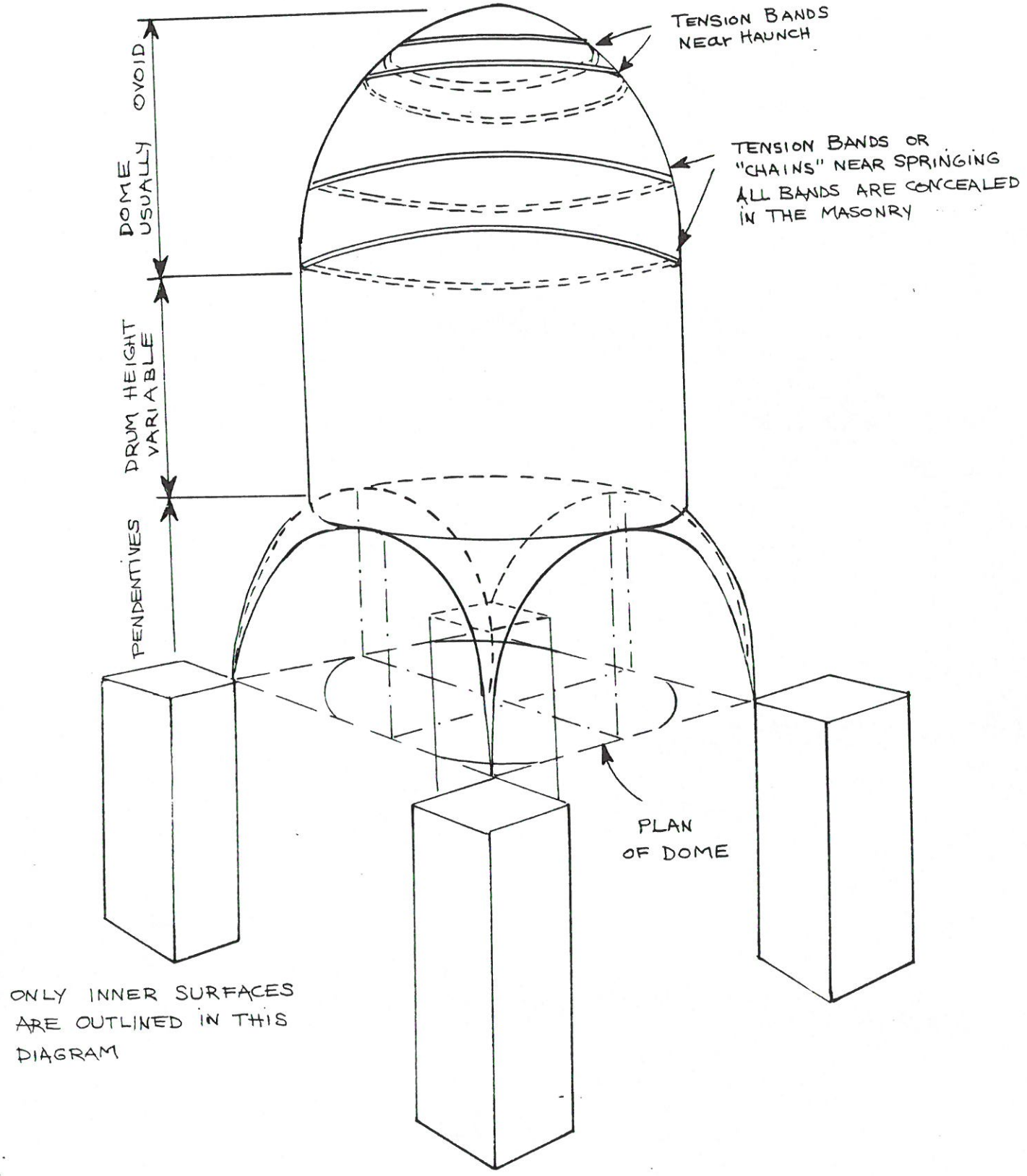


OLD ST. PETER'S, ROME



DOMICAL RIBBED VAULT

Framework of a single bay of ribbed cross vaulting. The dotted lines suggest the contour of the lightweight masonry which will later be constructed to close the interstices between the ribs.



Schematic drawing illustrating the component parts of an architectural fabric involving a dome raised on a drum above pendentives.

LITERATURE

> *In December of the year 406 A.D., in what is now West Germany, the weather turned bitter cold. It was a fateful cold, for it froze the watery barrier of the Rhine River into a convenient crossroad at the town of Mainz. There, on the last night of the year, about 15,000 barbarian warriors--along with their women and children and their farm animals--walked across the moonlit ice into the imperial Roman province of Gaul. Finding themselves virtually unopposed, the tribesmen spread out and headed south on a course of leisurely plunder and random destruction.* [1]

Thus a modern scholar describes the beginning of the early Middle Ages--a beginning that lasted for two hundred years of invasions by illiterate tribesmen from northern and eastern Europe who systematically destroyed much of the Roman heritage and camped on the ruins. When this "dark age" finally began to lighten somewhat, it was the emerging power of the Christian Church under the bishops at Rome that provided the pattern of medieval culture.

The invasions of nearer barbarians had already forced the Emperor Constantine to move his capital from Rome to Byzantium (renamed Constantinople) in 300, thus dividing early Christendom irrevocably. Even the Crusades of Western Christians, ostensibly intended to "liberate" their Eastern coreligionists from the Moslem threat (the first one began in 1095 at the urging of Pope Urban II), failed to unite Christendom. Europe, once united by government and diplomatic language under Rome, remained splintered and disparate, with new languages emerging as new cultures evolved.

The literature of the early Middle Ages is a reflection of the political scene to some extent, but very little literature was actually written down by the barbarians until nearly the end of the period. Greek remained the language of the Eastern Church; Latin was the language for most purposes in the West, including those parts of the decaying empire still claiming allegiance in Africa. The Church continued to use Latin for all communications and literature throughout the Roman world. In Gaul, Spain, and Italy, and in several other more remote areas, new languages were emerging, based on dialects spoken for centuries but grammatically

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[1]Gerald Simon, *Barbarian Europe*, Great Ages of Man Series (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), p. 11.

influenced by Latin. What would later be called "Romance" was the basis for Old French; Italian was probably the same language used by Cicero when he was instructing his slaves but certainly not the exalted literary Latin he used in the Forum. Spanish evolved from the Visigoths, early barbarian invaders. The various Germanic language familites emerging during this period included Gothic--written as early as the fourth century in a Bible translated by Bishop Ulfilas--Norse, and the Anglo-Saxon dialects brought to England by successive waves of invaders as early as the fifth century. Scandinavian languages, closely resembling the other Germanic dialects, contributed some very early literature in Icelandic. These are not all the languages, of course, but the earlier literature that has survived represents them. In the West, as we would expect, Latin continued to be the major language, while the vernaculars (both Germanic and Romance) are sparsely used for written literature until the very end of the period.

The earliest of the vernaculars to provide surviving documents seems to be Anglo-Saxon. As early as the seventh century, writings using a combination of the Latin alphabet and a few "runic" characters to express sounds absent in Latin indicate that a new culture was emerging. In the next century Latin writings were often glossed for half-literate clerks, and several notable centers of learning were reproducing manuscripts for monastic libraries, sometimes in the local area's language. All learned people were, of course, bilingual. When alphabets were finally adapted for the other dialects, a vast quantity of material long-preserved by oral tradition at last found a medium. Ballads, folk tales, stories to illustrate sermons, all the literary debris of earlier literate ages began to be recorded, often in the same manuscripts with the "serious" works in Latin. Beside a Gospel commentary we find a delightful lyric. Glossed in a songbook of Reading Abbey is the lyric "Sumer is i-cumen in," with its music, side by side with a Latin text (Harley manuscript, 978). Alfred (849-899), the scholar king of England, in spite of constant warfare with Danish invaders, did much to build a body of literary manuscripts for English readers.

In the Frankish kingdom of the eighth and ninth centuries, another "school" of literature continued to copy Latin manuscripts and contributed to the development of vernacular writings. Three centuries after Charlemagne's campaign against the Spanish Muslims at Roncesvals (778), the events were transformed by an anonymous poet in a *chanson de geste* (literally a "song of deeds"), *The Song of Roland*. Like the heroic exploits of Arthur, a British *dux bellorum* ("Leader of Wars") who campaigned against the Saxon invaders in the early sixth century, legends accumulated around Charlemagne and became the subject matter of the Romance literature from the twelfth century onward.

Classical literature also contributed to the subject matter of both poetry and prose, for Latin-reading clerks continued to copy manuscripts, sometimes translating, sometimes corrupting, but always preserving the heritage of the past if it was not scandalous to the Church. One author revered by all later readers was Vergil; he was never forgotten as stylist and master of epic narrative.

Only a part of what has survived from this period has much interest to us today. One cannot deal intensively with the whole body of writings merely because they still exist, by accident or deliberate preservation. The discussion following, therefore, is selective, not all-inclusive, and is based to some extent on the choices made by medieval scholars whose taste may not be the same as that of newer scholars to this field. Very few fragments of literature from this period are even readable unless translated, and only specialists can recreate the intention of authors in these ages, writing in fugitive languages.

MAJOR WORKS IN LATIN

At the end of the fifth century, barbarian conquerors had taken over the apparatus of the Roman state but continued to employ Romans from the older aristocratic families. The Gothic King Theodoric, who established his capital at Ravenna (c. 493) and created a splendid Byzantine-style culture, was the patron of both Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (founder of one of the earliest monastic houses devoted to teaching and copying manuscripts) and Boethius (c. 480-524), known to the later medieval Church as St. Severinus. *The Consolation of Philosophy*, written while Boethius was in disfavor with Theodoric and languishing in prison, is written in prose with verse passages interspersed. "Philosophy" is an allegorical figure who converses with the prisoner, helping him to understand and cope with his situation. The basic philosophical stance is Platonic and reflects Boethius' profound understanding of ancient learning. Though not specifically Christian, it is not exactly unorthodox; later Christian philosophers have disputed many of Boethius' tenets, and some have denied him the authorship of other works attributed to him. Nevertheless, later translators revered him; among them were King Alfred the Great, Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth I.[2]

The constant turbulence and intrigue of the Gothic kingdoms in the West signalled the last spasm of imperial power. By the sixth century no central government could maintain control. The social fabric was soon to be dominated by the various institutions of the Church, gradually growing in power and wealth for the next millennium. In c. 529 Benedict of Nursia, then a hermit for nearly thirty years, established the first "regular" monastic community at Monte Cassino. Thus began the oldest of the instrumentalities of medieval Christendom, the Benedictine Order of "black monks." They were missionaries all over Europe, founded monastic houses wherever they could, and directly influenced all other orders founded thereafter.

Benedict's biographer was Gregory the Great (540-604), who became pope

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[2]Charles W. Jones, *Medieval Literature in Translation* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1950), p. 45 *passim*. He reprints the first book of the *Consolation* in Cooper's translation of 1901.

in 590, just as another wave of barbarians, the Lombards, were threatening Rome (they had sacked Monte Cassino in 580). During his fourteen years as pope, Gregory instituted many changes that were to consolidate the power of the Church, advance the cause of monasticism, and establish missionaries (he sent Augustine to convert the pagan English in 597) as well as reform the liturgy and codify the music of the service. The biography is the second book of Gregory's *Dialogues*,[3] a four-book work published in 594. The dialogues concern the miraculous good works of contemporary saints, providing Gregory with the occasion to continue the tradition of hagiography already popularized by Athanasius, Jerome, and others. The purposes, if not the dialogue form, continued as the mainstream of didactic literature through the Renaissance. Gregory's works were also mined by later anthologists for sermon stories, references for authoritative statements, edification and education of all sorts.

One class of literature (since several compilations are included) dating from this period or perhaps earlier was the collections of folk tales on what might loosely be called "scientific" observation: the "Bestiaries." These tales concerned mythological beasts--not the ordinary barnyard creatures--never heard of on Noah's ark. No one has been able to trace the original manuscript sources, but conjectures lead to an anonymous compiler called "the Physiologus," possibly writing some time before the fifth century, perhaps in Egypt, and possibly writing in Greek.[4] Many later writers added their own curious specimens and rewrote the "moral instruction" as appropriate to their own times and tastes. Most of the Eastern and Western languages provided translations of one or more of these anthologies by the late Middle Ages, when the "basic" compilation had reached a more or less definitive form. The illustrations in the "Bestiaries" are lively and vivid: they probably furnished models for the most sumptuous manuscripts of the Irish school, such as the Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels, masterpieces of the eighth and ninth centuries.

From the seventh to the twelfth century, most Latin literature was in the hands of scholars; very serious and pedantic prose was also matched by dull and lifeless lyric poetry. The exquisite quantitative verse of the classical age of Latin was little understood. Lyric poets tried to develop accentual meter and rhyme to accommodate what subjects they felt were acceptable and appropriate in a world dominated by otherwordly concerns. The Church was systematically rejecting all things pagan, sensuous, or worldly, developing rigid patterns and new taboos. The mass was codified, along with its music, only occasionally allowing a variation, known as a "sequence," an extended melody without words. A few Latin hymns survive from various periods, however, beautifully translated

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[3]Jones reprints an abridged translation by "P.W." from 1608, pp. 59-78.

[4]T. H. White, tr., *The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts* (Cambridge University Library II.4.26 or Capricorn Books, n.d.), p. 232.