THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW

by

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This finely written and comprehensive book comes at a most opportune time. We are at the beginning of an era in new church building. The program to which American churches are committed in all departments of the work of the modern church has run far beyond the physical equipment provided to house and to facilitate the work of the church. One might hope that further church building could be halted until such a book can be read and its excellent treatment of the fascinating and important endeavor of building the House of God, absorbed by students of humanities, clergymen, teachers, architects, and the lay members of building committees. The type of American traveler who does not mistake the leaning tower of Pisa for a silo built by a drunken contractor, should read the book for its appreciative and sympathetic understanding of the deeper values expressed in art. The author expresses the need of foreign travel for culture and understanding.

The book is progressively constructed with proper warnings regarding fads that may reveal to later generations our lamentable lack of intelligence and stability. The use of new materials is welcomed, but only after testing. "The economy, solidity, and fire-proof virtue of the concrete roof may be accepted within a few years. Its plasticity and modeling are so fittingly organic for unity of the internal structure that noble designs may flood upon us with fascinating frequency."
The author earnestly calls our attention to the truth discovered and the teachings of the past. He feels that rather than abandon the findings wrought out through many centuries, we should learn from them and steadily but prudently advance.

Prof. Watkins is quite properly enamoured of the wealth of Ravenna and of the Italian Byzantine field. "The Italian-Byzantine field includes Venice as well as Ravenna. Venice is to the architect a city of dreams. In fairness he must approach it with the imagination free to enjoy its exquisite fancies. The world needs so charming a mecca of romance. There one finds an architecture that is full of beautiful fantasies which float between the blue of its waters and the fineness of its skies, making fitting the pink and gold of its marbles and the lacelike forms of its ornament. These would seem meaningless elsewhere." The tremendous values in Christian architecture developed before the 12th century, are well appraised.

The real purpose of the church is emphasized. The church building that neglects to minister to the emotions is a flat failure.

The book is decidedly readable. Many sentences are gems of expression as well as suitable text for elaboration. "The Gothic Cathedral looks fascinating in the sparkle of its solids, as compared with the heavy walls of the Romanesque plan." "The Church of Tomorrow will recover its majestic meaning in all things, and its emotional reality will be regained." "The light of the church should be of quiet, colorful, meditative character." "The Church of Tomorrow shall complete its interior with a living beauty."

The faults of the American church of today might have been treated even more severely but the author clearly indicates many
shortcomings of uninspired and unintelligent American church architecture. "The eye, tired of distractions due to lack of structural harmony and tired of the confusion of competing stained-glass windows, alights upon even more restful objects of furniture. Serenity of emotion is impossible."

In the range of a rather short book, of course only a very few modern architects could be named but along with Bertram Goodhue, the late M. B. Medary and others, we wish that the work of Walter H. Thomas of Philadelphia might have been mentioned; particularly his courageously new chapel at Girard College at Philadelphia and other examples that more closely follow the vertical expression but use rather bold and modern notes.

Every clergyman who hopes that the church of tomorrow will be a vital living force should read the book and candidates for the ministry ought to be compelled to read it.

E. M. Conover

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