

AUGUSTUS WELBY NORTHMORE PUGIN, *AN APOLOGY FOR THE REVIVAL OF CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE IN ENGLAND* (1843), (OXFORD: ST. BARNABAS, 1969).

The age in which we live is a most eventful period for English art. We are just emerging from a state which may be termed the dark ages for architecture. After a gradual decay of four centuries, the style—for style there was—became so execrably bad, that the cup of degradation was filled to the rim; and as taste had fallen in its lowest depth, a favourable re-action commenced.

The breaking up of this wretched state of things has naturally produced a complete convulsion in the whole system of arts, and a Babel of confusion has succeeded to the one bad idea that generally prevailed.

Private judgment runs riot; every architect has a theory of his own, a beau ideal he has himself created a disguise with which to invest the building he erects. This is generally the result of his latest travels. One breathes nothing but the Alhambra, another the Parthenon, a third is full of lotus cups and pyramids from the banks of the Nile, a fourth, from Rome, is all dome and basilica. . . . Styles are now *adopted* instead of *generated*, and ornament *adapted to*, instead of *originated by*, the edifices themselves.

This may, indeed, be appropriately termed the *carnival* of architecture: its professors appear tricked out in the guises of all centuries and all nations; the Turk and the Christian, the Egyptian and the Greek, the Swiss and the Hindoo, march side by side, and mingle together; and some of these gentlemen, not satisfied with perpetuating one character, appear in two or three costumes in the same evening.

Amid this motley group . . . the venerable form and sacred detail of our national and Catholic architecture may be discerned; but *how* adopted? Not on consistent principles, not on authority, not as the expression of our faith, our government, or country, but as one of the disguises of the day, to be put on and off at pleasure, and used occasionally as circumstances or private caprice may suggest.

It is considered suitable for some purposes—MELANCHOLY, and *therefore fit for religious buildings!!!* . . . such is the heartless advocacy which our national architecture frequently receives from its professed admirers . . .

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To advocate Christian architecture merely on the score of its beauty, can never prevail with those, who profess to think that all art and majesty is concentrated in a Grecian temple. We must turn to the principles from which all styles have originate. The history of architecture the history of the world: as we inspect the edifices of antiquity, its nations, its dynasties, its religions, are all brought before us. The belief and manners of all people are embodied in the edifices they raise; it was impossible for any of them to have built consistently otherwise than they did: each was the inventor and perfecter of their peculiar style; each style was the type of their Religion, customs, and climate. . . .

Will the architecture of our times, even supposing it solid enough to last, hand down to posterity any certain clue or guide to the system under which it was erected? Surely not; it is not the expression of existing opinions and circumstances, but a confused jumble of styles and symbols borrowed from all nations and periods.

Are not the adapters of pagan architecture violating every principle, that regulated the men whose works they profess to imitate? These uncompromising advocates of classic styles would be utterly repudiated by the humblest architect of pagan antiquity, were he now to return to earth. Vitruvius would spew if he beheld the works of those who glory in calling him master.

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Any modern invention which conduces to comfort, cleanliness, or durability, should be adapted by the consistent architect; *to copy a thing merely because it is old, is just as absurd as the imitation of the modern pagans.*

In matters purely mechanical, the Christian architect should gladly avail himself of those improvements and increased facilities that are suggested from time to time. The steam engine is a most valuable power for sawing, raising, and cleansing stone. . . . had the [medieval masons] been acquainted with a greater [mechanical strength than rotating wheels and gears], they would undoubtedly have used it.

The whole history of Pointed Architecture is a series of inventions: time was when the most beautiful productions of antiquity were novelties. *It is only when mechanical invention intrudes on the confines of art, and tends to subvert the principles which it should advance, that it becomes objectionable.* Putty pressing, plaster and iron casting for ornaments . . . are not to be rejected because such methods were unknown to our ancestors, *but on account of their being opposed in their very nature to the true principles of art and design, – by substituting monotonous repetitions for beautiful variety. . . .* We possess facilities and materials unknown to our ancestors, and which would have greatly added to the stability of the structures they erected. *We do not want to arrest the course of inventions, but to confine these inventions to their legitimate uses, and to prevent their substitution for nobler arts.*