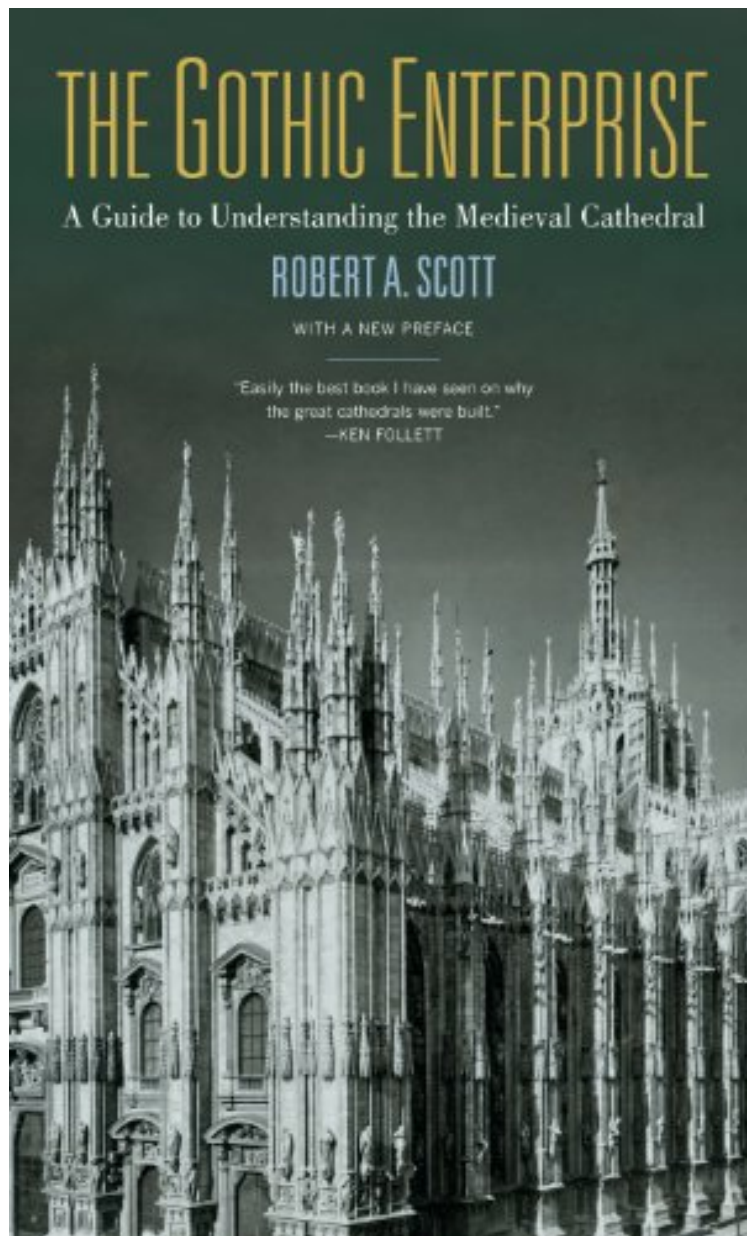


(Download) The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral

# The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral

Von Robert A. Scott

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**Von Robert A. Scott : The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Grand undertakingVon FrKurt MessickAuthor Robert Scott had much the same the experience at Salisbury Cathedral as I had - a sense of awe and wonder, and a desire to learn more about it, not just as a place, or as an architectural wonder, or as a place of worship, or as a cultural icon. Scott wanted to get at the heart of the idea of the Gothic enterprise as a whole - a trained sociologist, Scott knew that the bigger picture is sometimes lost by too narrow a focus on particular details to the exclusion of others. The sociology background also gave Scott a sense of wanting to understand the hearts and minds of the people involved. While the principal focus of Scott's travels started with Salisbury Cathedral (in full, the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Salisbury), Scott draws examples from the breadth of the Gothic cathedrals, churches and other buildings. There are literally thousands of such dotted across the European and European-influenced landscapes. Each building has its own unique characteristics, but they share a common spirit. Church building in particular was 'big business' in Christendom for a long time. Scott quotes estimates of that there are nearly 19,000 ecclesiastical buildings in England and Wales, nearly half of which date to the medieval period. The first Gothic church was the Abbey Church of St. Denis, just north of Paris, built under the direction of the 'founding father' of Gothic style, Abbot Suger. Scott's first major section looks at how cathedrals were built, in terms of materials, architectural design, settings, and workforce. With regard to the workforce, the numbers were large and the division of labour highly specialised. In the records of the construction of Westminster Abbey, there were fifteen different categories of workers listed in 1253. Workers were often local, but supplemented by those who traveled, particularly if special skills were needed. Construction was often suspended in winter months, not just because of the cold, but because the number of daylight hours greatly diminished (in England, there can be fewer than 8 hours of daylight in the winter months). Scott's second major section explores the history involved. The Gothic enterprise grew up out of the feudal system as it was trying to define itself in a sea of shifting political structures. It is no mistake that the Gothic ideal was born in an Abbey rather than a Cathedral; bishops had become increasingly involved in secular and political matters, while the monasteries remained closer to the common people and closer to the spiritual ideals of the church. 'Monasticism was a continuous effort to surmount sense perception and intellectual understanding to achieve knowledge of God, to experience communion with God, and by so doing to reveal the divine mystery and achieve special favour in the eyes of God.' Still, the particular abbey of Gothic's foundation, the Abbey of St. Denis, had a particular attachment to the French monarchs, and for a time the Abbey enjoyed a supreme reputation, 'from 1124 onward the Abbey Church of St. Denis became the religious and, in an important sense, the political capital of France.' From this place, the influence of Gothic style spread through the Paris region, then outward into France and beyond. In the third section, Scott highlights some of the classic details of what the Gothic look entails. There is a geometric symmetry involved, which, 'when followed consistently, gives Gothic cathedrals their characteristic organic unity.' There is a logic and harmony built into the design. High vaulted ceilings, flying buttresses, pointed arches are other features. However, the key element in Gothic design is light, and it is in aid of this aspect that the other elements are enlisted. Gothic cathedrals in comparison with the dimly lit Romanesque predecessors are flooded with light. Be it clear or stained glass, the incorporation of windows and lighting techniques hitherto not done makes the Gothic space a brighter surrounding. Heaven would be a place of light, and the Gothic cathedral is intended as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. The fourth section explores the religious experience in Gothic structures, and how liturgies and worship are carried out, how they serve as temples of the imagination in addition to being the centre of worship, and how they become a repository of history. Part of this history was the incorporation of the memory and power of the dead into the fabric of the cathedrals - many became pilgrimage sites or burial sites; royal and other notable society figures also became part of the structures of cathedrals and churches. According to Scott, the cathedrals provided the saints with a focal point of veneration, and the saints in return provided a steady income (from the pilgrims) for the buildings to be completed. The final section looks at the community that surrounded the Gothic enterprise, be they parish churches, abbey churches or cathedrals. Scott explores the living standards of the time, the stratification and specialisation of people in the different roles in society, and the questions not only of how the communities built the churches, but how the churches and cathedrals in turn built the communities. 'We might ...imagine that the long time required to build Gothic cathedrals added to the depth of the collective identity they engendered.' Indeed, in some regards, the building of a cathedral was never supposed to be completed. Spanning generations (sometimes, as in the case of Canterbury Cathedral, nearly 400 years) such enterprises defined the community in ways that no building project in modern times could approach. Scott ends with a small essay regarding Stonehenge, not too far from Salisbury Cathedral, showing some similarities and differences in the way people built and found identity then. Scott quotes Samuel Johnson as declaring Salisbury Cathedral 'the last perfection in architecture'; however, it is clear that there is much perfection to go around when it comes to all things Gothic. Scott's passion for the material and love of discovery is apparent on every page. A good writer, he serves as teacher, tour guide, and co-discoverer of ideas with the reader. This is a wonderful book.

**Kurzbeschreibung**The great Gothic cathedrals of Europe are among the most astonishing achievements of Western culture. Evoking feelings of awe and humility, they make us want to understand what inspired the people who had the audacity to build them. This engrossing book surveys an era that has fired the historical imagination for centuries. In it Robert A. Scott explores why medieval people built Gothic cathedrals, how they built them, what conception of the divine lay behind their creation, and how religious and secular leaders used cathedrals for social and political purposes. As a travelers companion or a rich source of knowledge for the armchair enthusiast, *The Gothic Enterprise* helps us understand how ordinary people managed such tremendous feats of physical and creative energy at a time when technology was rudimentary, famine and disease were rampant, the climate was often harsh, and communal life was unstable and incessantly violent. While most books about Gothic cathedrals focus on a particular building or on the cathedrals of a specific region, *The Gothic Enterprise* considers the idea of the cathedral as a humanly created space. Scott discusses why an impoverished people would commit so many social and personal resources to building something so physically stupendous and what this says about their ideas of the sacred, especially the vital role they ascribed to the divine as a protector against the dangers of everyday life. Scott's narrative offers a wealth of fascinating details concerning daily life during medieval times. The author describes the difficulties master-builders faced in scheduling construction that wouldn't be completed during their own lifetimes, how they managed without adequate numeric systems or paper on which to make detailed drawings, and how climate, natural disasters, wars, variations in the hours of daylight throughout the year, and the celebration of holy days affected the pace and timing of work. Scott also explains such things as the role of relics, the quarrying and transporting of stone, and the incessant conflict cathedral-building projects caused within their communities. Finally, by drawing comparisons between Gothic cathedrals and other monumental building projects, such as Stonehenge, Scott expands our understanding of the human impulses that shape our landscape.

**Pressestimmen**"Offers an intriguing study of the historical creation of the medieval cathedral in Europe. . . . provides a fresh eye and an engaging entree to how and why, for a 300-year period, Europeans created these lasting monuments. . . . Recommended particularly for public libraries with an interest in art and architecture."--"Library Journal"

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