

Bernd Rohrmann

Essay about sacred architecture buildings



- ? What triggered this essay?
- ? When did I first time visit a church?
- ? Which main types of sacred architecture exist? ? What was the begin of sacred buildings?
 - ? Which were the earliest religious buildings?
 - ? Which are eminent religious temples?
 - ? Which are eminent synagoges
 - ? Which are eminent churches & cathedrals?
 - ? Which cathedrals are in Melbourne?
 - ? Which are eminent mosques?
- ? Which are eminent stupas, hindu temples, pagodas? ? Which are the most unusual religious buildings?
 - ? What were the impacts of fires and wars?
- ? Which sacred buildings were essential in my life? Which church will once be the most immense ever?
- ? What is the cultural significance of these buildings?

July 2019



Bernd Rohrmann July 2019

Essay about sacred architecture buildings

? What triggered this essay?

This whole story began with the grave fire desaster of the cathedral in Paris.

Message C0

My starting message about "sacred buildings" was about the badly burning Paris cathedral, which I had visited several times in earlier years, not for religious reasons, much more for its distinctive building design - because architecture is a never-ending interest of mine.

FRANCE, Paris, Notre Dame cathedral:

Size: length 126m, width 48m, towers 69m, nave height 35m.

Message C1

While living in Mannheim/Germany, I went quite often to Paris, by train, to experience all its uniqueness, to look both at historic and at modern architecture, to enjoy the great food, even to listen to Parisian music. And yes, I visited the cathedral several times, for cultural rather than religious reasons.

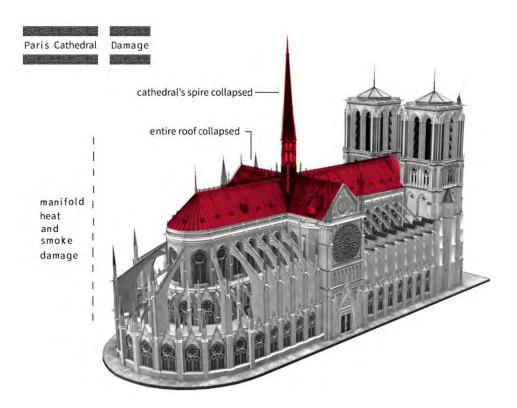
Yet now a huge fire almost destroyed it? No, fortunately not - but surely to rebuild it will be a big task!.



Message C2

I had said: "The Paris cathedral - A huge fire almost destroyed it?" No, fortunately not - - but surely to rebuild it will be a big task! Meanwhile much more is known about the extent of damages, and what is completely trashed.

So, rebuilding is indeed truly complicated.



Message C3

I had stated about the damaged Paris cathedral that "rebuilding is indeed truly complicated" Why?

One reason is the enormous size of this building: It is 126 m long, and the nave is 35 m high. Yes, several French cathedrals are substantially larger, namely Reims, Amiens, Rouen, Chartres - yet the Paris building is nevertheless a very big one.

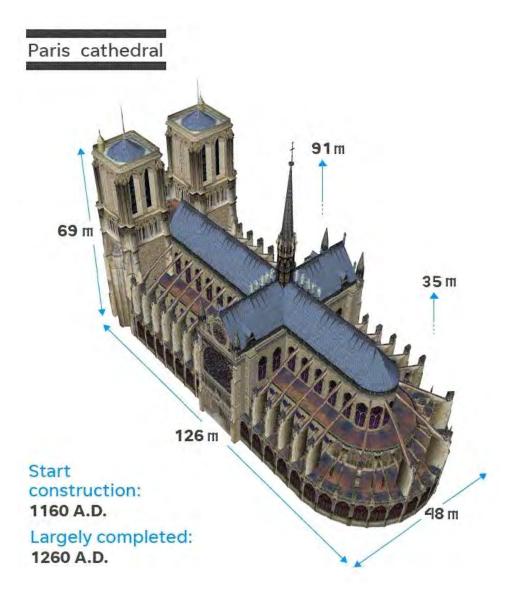
A further reason is that the facades may have lost stability, because of the extreme heat the stones were exposed too, so architects worry about their remaining strength.

And a third reason is, how to rebuild the destroyed roof? It is/was almost 90 m long. One would think of an iron instead of a wooden roof - yet experts say the walls can't carry such a heavy roof.

So yes, the task will be really really complicated. Architectural rather than financial matters are essential.

Postscriptum:

On 16-07-19 the French Parlament has cleared the legal background for the cathedral repair within 5 years, in time with the Olympic Games 2024.



Message C4

In my previous message I had not mentioned this: How about the stunning and certainly famous colour glass windows?

A grand example is shown below.

Reports say that the exquisite stained glass windows remained in place, appearing to be almost immune to the flames.

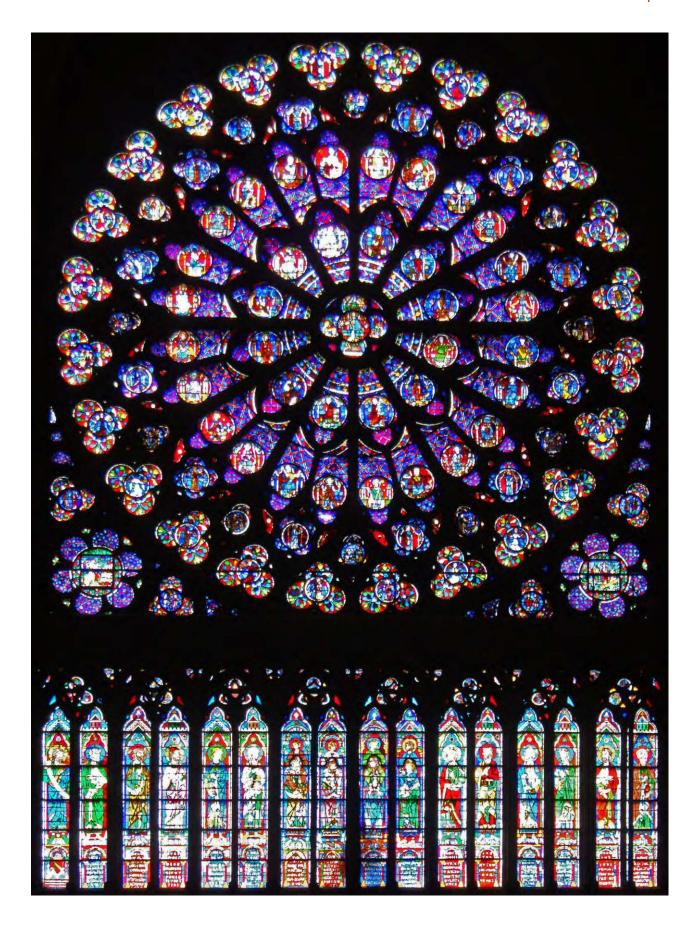
There are two troubles though:

At some places the lead which holds the glass pieces in place has melted, and that could destroy the structure of the window pieces - because lead is more vulnerable than glass.

And some stone setting which are the frame of the glass windows seem to have been weakened when the cathedral's roof collapsed.

Nevertheless, all damages to the glass windows can be repaired by stone maisonry work.

And will, so I assume.



Widened perspective:

While creating the four e-mails about the Paris cathedral, I became aware that I find other cathedrals much more impressive. And of course I also

realized that churches are not the only sacred architecture, temples and mosques and stupas are so as well.

Then I began to look for examples - e.g., holy temples were built in Egypt, Greece, the Roman empire, Japan, and also in American realms, such as the Mayas. And I grasped that a mausoleum, such as the extremely wellknown Taj Mahal, will deserve attention as well.

Eventually, after several revisions & extensions, and based on my personal viewpoints, I had set up a list of 52 unique sacred buildings, urghhh, the last of which is actually a not-yet-completed one, the "Familia Sagrada".

All these shall be presented in this essay. I will include many of my pertinent e-mail messages. (They are named "C1", "C2" and so on. The numbers were based on my data access and thereby incoherent).

Plus, for almost all buildings several pictures are shown - if feasable, the photographs I made when visiting the place.

INFO ABOUT TIME MARKERS:

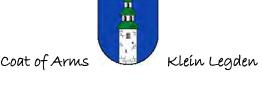
Unfortunately it is not fully standardized how to label history years. The proposal of "CE", meaning "Common Era" or "Current Era", and "BCE", meaning "Before the Current Area", using the common understanding of the year "0" as marker, was not widely accepted.

Therefore I have to use the conventional labels, namely "AD" = "Anno Domini" and "BC" = "Before Christ", a notation which was introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XII, called Gregorian Calender, a Christian system. which is used worldwide since then. The link to "Christ" is a bit funny though, as the year "0" is neither in line with his birth nor his dead.

Some countries or regions still have different systems, including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, and some Arabic states.

? When did I first time visit a church?

Well, that's long long time ago - I reckon it was 1946 when my family lived in a mill-plus-farm settlement, in the area of little Village Klein Lengden, near Goettingen.



That's where my mother (a Norwegian) ended, after a long flight from Slesia (East Germany) at the end of WW-2. I was then 6 years old.

GERMANY, **Klein Lengden**, village church St Johannes Size: 1 tower, length ~45m.

My parents were Protestants, and so was this church. As far as I can remember, my father went there most sundays, with family.



In 1948 my family left Klein Lengden. In 2016 I visited this place - and noticed that the church is still there.

? Which types of sacred architecture buildings are essential?

Religious buildings have a very long history, at least 6000 years. They are the places of a community devoted to the god, or more likely gods, to which they adhere. All pertinent buildings are called "sacred architecture" in this essay.

Message C16

Given my Christian background, as first step I have tried to inform myself about the history and meaning of "church", and I wanted to know which other buildings are seen as "sacred architecture".

And indeed, there are very many types of buildings which have a religious rationale, and this is valid for about every culture in the world.



Main types: Ziggurats in Mesopotamia, temples in Egypt, Greek temples, temples in Rome, synagoges, churches in Europe, Maya temples, mosques, stupas, Hindu temples, pagodas. I intend to cover all of these with at least one example.

? What was the begin of sacred buildings?

Religious architecture is designing and creating places of worship for the residents of a settlement. This started within the Neolithic architecture, the time span of which is about 10000 to 3000 BC, and was followed by the Sumerian and the ancient Egyptian epoch, and then, from 500 BC onwards, temple building from many other religions.



Sacred buildings were believed to be the "dwelling place" of the gods. There all essential religious activities, including sacrifices, had to happen.

Most cultures allocated significant resources into their sacred buildings. Prior to modern skyscrapers, they were the largest buildings in the world. And they were also, for thousands of years, at the forefront of architectural and artistic principals and competence.

? Which were the earliest religious buildings?

Message C17

Here is the oldest still existing sacred building - the Ggantija temple on the Gozo ísland of Malta. It ís a megalíthíc temple, and erected around 3600 BC - whích means, it's older than all religious constructions in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The basic features of this building have rather well survived - possibly because Gozo was rarely exposed to military actions, contrary to Malta's central island.

MALTA, Gozo Island, Ggantija Megalithic



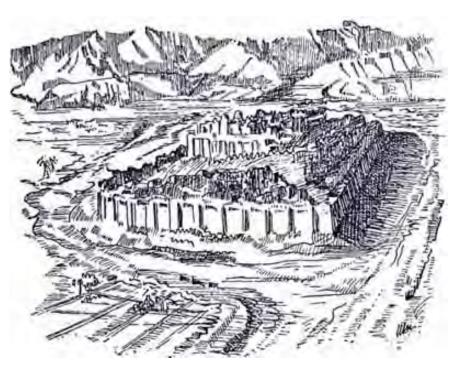


Message C19

Some basic religious buildings based on several high platforms, roughly like a step pyramíd, are called zíggurats. Very long staircases are a crucíal element. They were created in historic Mesopotamia. This ended around 500 BC.

The oldest ziggurat, the Sialk ziggurat in Iran, was built around 2900 BC. Thus it is an older sacred building than all temples in Egypt. It had 3 platforms. Only a rough 'mud-mountain' survived until today. Early documentation: see painting.

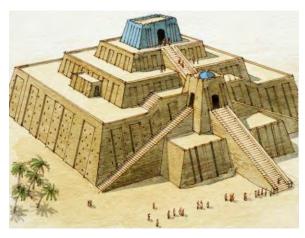
IRAN, Kashan, Ziggurat Sialk



The best preserved, and partly renovated, ziggurat is in Ur, south Iraq. This was a city where, in historic times, the Euphrat reached the Persian Gulf. Founded around 3500 BC, and once a mighty place within the Sumer and later the Akkadian realm, it perished around 500 BC.

Its ziggurat was built in 2100 BC. Size: 64 m length, 46 m width, 32 m height. It got several times re-built. Major parts of it, with both proper and inproper renovations, are still there today. Its design: see painting.

IRAQ, Ur, Ziggurat Ur

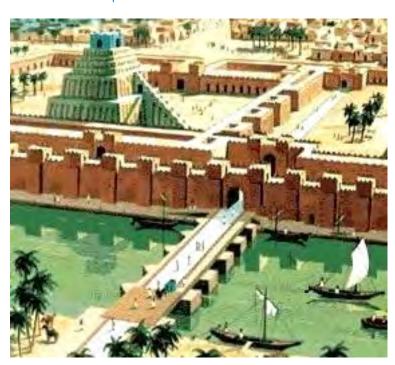


Which are eminent religious temples?

The early temples in Gozo-Malta and the ziggurats in Mesopotamia are seen as the oldest religious buildings.

And there is the legendary -- now dead -- Babylon city, located in current Iraq, south of Baghdad.

BABYLON, Etemenankí Temple



Message C47

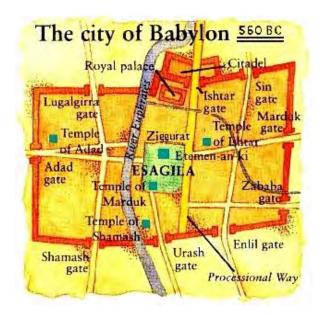
This temple is/was very famous, as was the city of Babylon in which is was the religious center - - yet it does not exist anymore, for about 2500 years.

When has Babylon been founded?

It happened in the 23rd century BC., by the Akkadian Kingdom.

Power of it?

It seems that Babylon was at least twice the largest city in the world: 1770-1670 B.C., and 612-320 BC.



When was the temple built?

This building, called Etemenanki, and later also "Tower of Babel", was built several times, as well as razed repeatedly. It is not clear when it was first erected.

First speculation: Sargon the Great) ruled 2334-2279 BC and claimed to have built temples in Babylon.

Second speculation: Famous king Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC) transformed the city into one of the most powerful and influential in all of Mesopotamia.

Third speculation: King Esarhaddon (681-669 BC) re-built Babylon and returned it to its former glory.

How about its design?

It was a ziggurat, and about 90 m high. Archaeologists have created models of it (one is below).

<mark>#</mark> Alexander's influence?

In 331 Babylon surrendered to the Macedonian king Alexander the Great, who confirmed its privileges and ordered the restoration of the temples, including Etemenanki. He had even planned to eventually make Babylon his imperial capital.

Yet in 323 he died there.



Final fate?

In the Muslim conquest of the area in 650 A.D., whatever remained of Babylon was swept away and "buried beneath the sands". In the 10th century it died completely; only rough ruins are left.



#Remains of the Babylon temple? Nothing, except of some signs of its former shape in the landscape (see pic).



When I walked along there - long time ago, in 1978 - I couldn't see anything of this once so celebrated temple.

Why was the Babylon temple so famous?

Mainly based on many citations in the Christian bible, it was always seen as a symbol of mighty architecture, as well as a symbol - until today - of multi-cultural perspectives, beyond the religious purpose of it.

Since about 1400 A.D., a lot of artists created paintings of what they believed to be the appearance of the Babel Tower. The most famous one is by Breughel the Elder.



The collapse of the temple was also several times modeled.



All this was of course just phantasy - none of the artists had ever seen this temple which perished around 400 BC, they couldn't! Yet their paintings are the reason that this sacred building remains unforgotten.

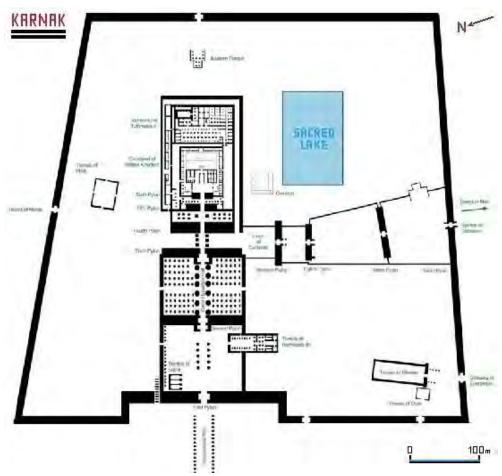
Actually is was Egypt were the 'temple culture florished.

Message C35

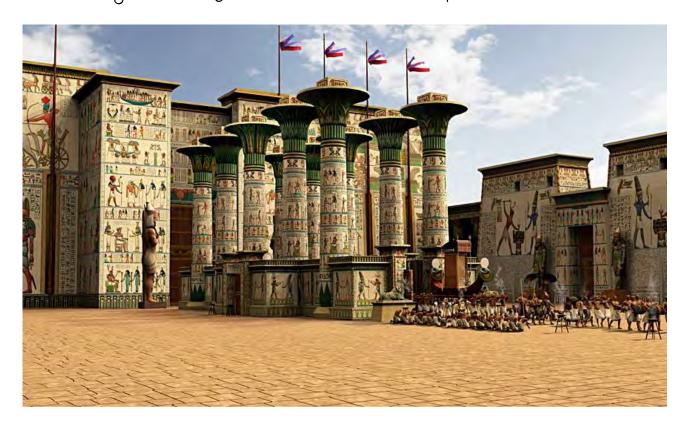
From 2000 BC onwards., it ultimately reached very high levels. The center was Karnak, a large historic area near the town of Luxor in southern Egypt, were Theben was located, which was the capital city and the cultural 'heart' of the unified Ancient Egypt.

EGYPT, Luxor, Karnak Temples





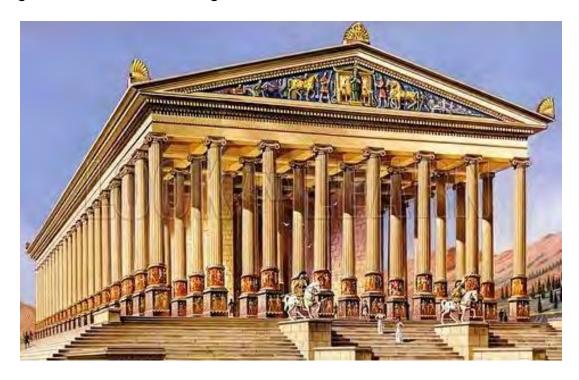
The map shows one of the historic areas, and there is a sketch of Egypt temples. For about 1000 years nothing could match the excellence of this sacred architecture.



At a much later time, most temples in the big Roman empire were based on the design of Greek temples.

Message C31

These were built in Greece itself and in areas settled by Greek colonists, e.g., in Turkey's west-coast or in Sicily. All temples were allocated to a god or goddess.



The prime time was 500 to 200 B.C. The attached sketches show the model of an high-class temple, and a goddess at a temple center, Athena.

GREECE, **Ephesos**, Temple Artemis

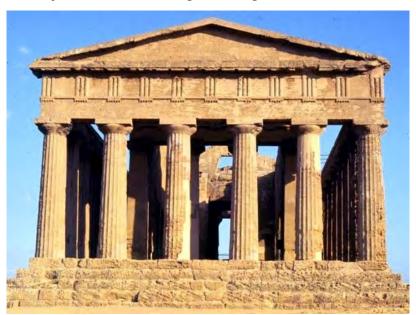
Note: Ephesus is a former Greek city in Turkey



The best survived Greek temple buildings can be seen in Sicily.

GREECE, Agrigento, Temple Concordia

Note: Agrigento is a former Greek city inSicily



Very different designs and architecture has been used for American temples.

Message C33

In this message I look at Meso-America, where two empires florished before they were annihilated by Spanish concistators in the 16th century.

The Maya empire was mainly located in today's Guatemala. Many religious temples survived in an area near the town of Tikal. I was certainly stunned when seeing how well-maintained these sacred buildings are.

GUATEMALA, Tikal, Aztec temple

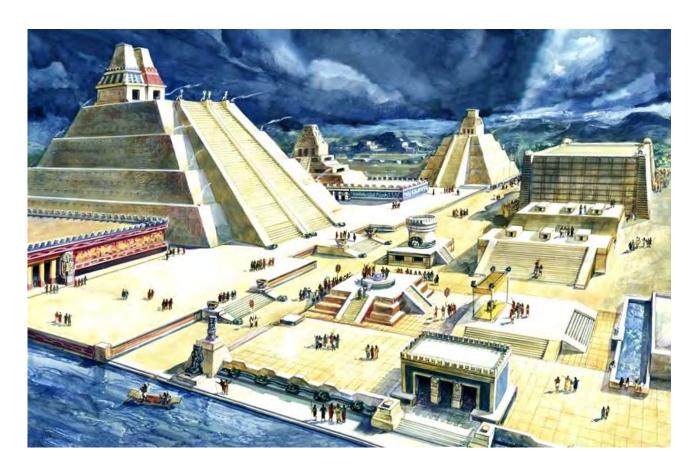


The Aztec empire was centered in today's Mexico. It's capital, Tenochtitlan, doesn't exist anymore - it was over-built by Mexico's new capital.

However, after intense research, archeologists created a painting about how it was, with the grand temple in its center.

Mexico, **Tenochtitlan**, Great Aztec temple

Note: Sketch by archaeologists



In order to complete this chapter about temples, the essay goes back to Europe, and to a much earlier epoch, to the Roman empire.

Message C30

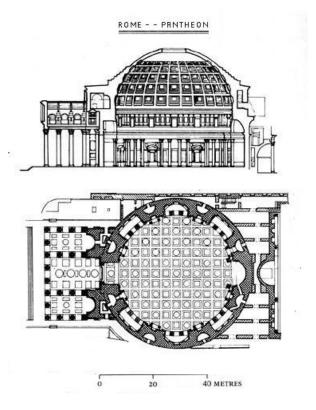
Today I deal with a famous sacred building which is not at all a cathedral, nor even a 'typical' temple - the Pantheon in Rome/Italy. This name, a classical Greek one, stands for "temple of all the gods".

It was built 113-125 AD under the emperors Trajan and Hadrian as a Roman temple. In the 7th century it was made a christian church, and still is that.

The real sensation of this building is the dome. The height to the oculus (the opening at the top of the ceiling) and the diameter of the interior circle are the same, 43 metres.

When walking through the vestibule (see attached plan) and then reaching the rotunda, the impression of this huge dome is truly overwhelming - it was certainly to me!

ITALY, Rome, Pantheon







After almost 2000 years, the Pantheon is still the largest "unreinforced solid concrete" dome in the world, and still standing in its might.

For those interested in architecture data, here is a comparison to the domes of four other eminent religious buildings:

Hagía Sophía (ex-) Constantinople, built 563, dome díameter = 32 m, Blue Mosque, Istanbul, built 1516, dome diameter = 23 m, St Peter Basílica, Vatican, built 1626, dome diameter = 42 m, Taj Mahal, Agra/Indía, built 1641, dome diameter = 18 m.

P.S.

By the way, regarding Melbourne - the State Library (no, that's not a church), built 1913, has a large dome ceiling, 35 m wide.

? Which are eminent synagoges

Now it's due to introduce again a different type of sacred buildings, the Jewish synagogues.

Message C23

Their uniqueness is more a religious than an architectonic matter. Like at all sacred buildings, the core aim is to provide for the people of a community a place of worship.

Synagogues have been built since more than 2000 years (similar to Buddhist temples), so, for a longer time than Christian churches.

The attached sketch from Jerusalem of a classical synagogue shows that the Jewish icon is essential.



Countless synagogues have been destroyed during political and religious wars in Western Asia (especially Palaestina and Syria) and in quite a few European countries. This was worst during the Nazi era of Germany.

After WW-2, many Jewish buildings were rebuilt or restored, such as the very large "New Synagogue" in Berlin, which was erected 1859-1866 and heavily renovated 1988 to 1993.





Finally, there is a symbolic device in every synagogue - the seven-armed lamp.



? Which are eminent churches & cathedrals?

In this chapter, the focus will be the sacred architecture in Christianity.

Message C45

Well, I'll violate my own rules, namely to present essential religious buildings in a rather compact style, when now talking about the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Why?

Because this building is an absolutely essential piece of the history of sacred buildings --

and of novel and ingenious architecture as well.- this will be outlined in the following descriptions.

TURKEY, Istanbul, Hagia Sophia

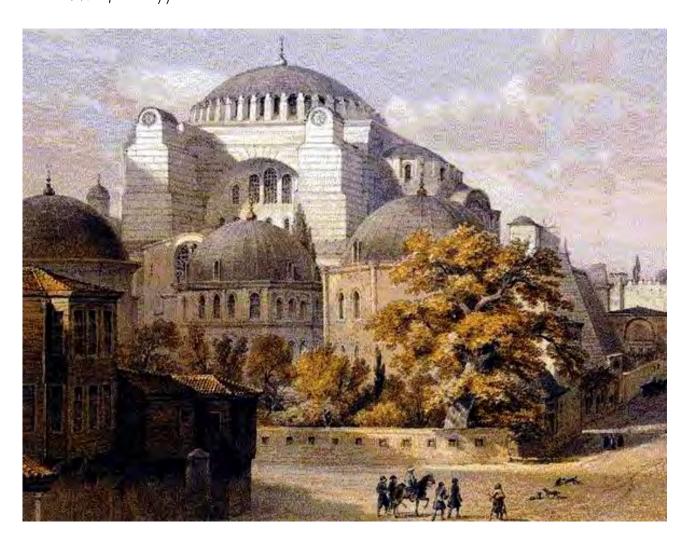
::: WHEN WAS IT BUILD?

In 532 to 537 AD, by East-Roman emperor Justinian and his wife, empress Theodora.

Because of significant earthquake damages, it had several times to be rebuilt, e.g., in 558, 969, 1344 - yet maintained for 1000 years to be the world's largest cathedral

Because of the earthquake risk, eventually four kind-of plumb yet functional buttresses were added.

The following two pic's show the Hagia Sophia around 1000 (?) and then around 1200 (?), after supported with the buttresses.





::: PURPOSE

Fírst:

Byzantine Christian Cathedral (537-1054)

Greek Orthodox Cathedral (1054-1204, 1261-1439)

Roman Catholic Cathedral (1204-1261, 1439-1453)

Then:

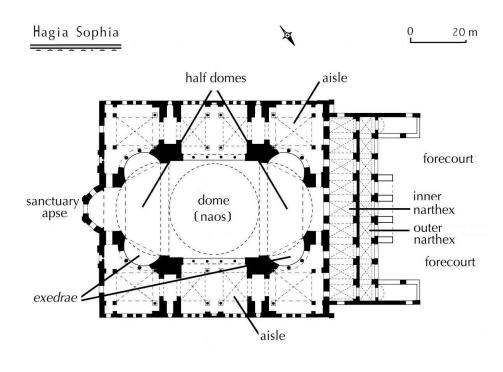
Ottoman Mosque (1453-1931)

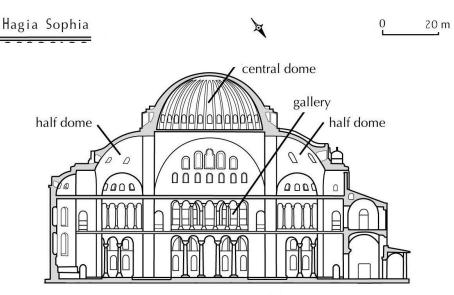
Nowadays:

Museum (1935-present)

::: DESIGN

The building's design was a longitudinal basilica, focused on the dome, a very large one, flanked by two half-domes - see the two sketches.







40 windows cover the outside of the dome.

Overall size: Length 82 m, width 73 m, height 55 m. Dome diameter: 33 m.

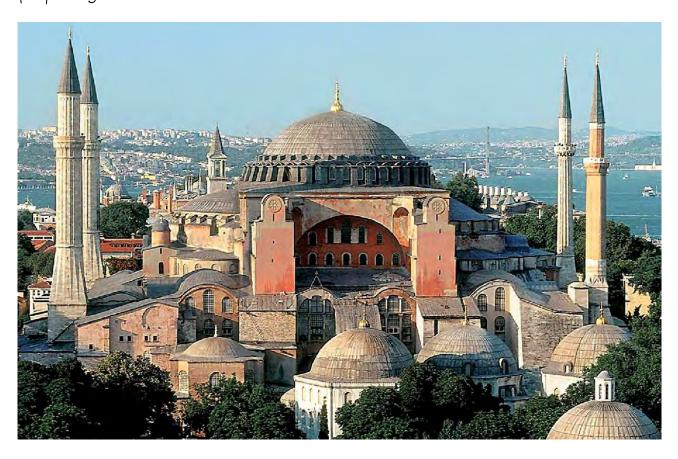
After 1453, when Istanbul was taken over by the Ottomans, four minarets were erected.

Also, multiple Islamic facets were added, while most Christian features and images were removed or hidden.



::: VIEW OF THE HAGIA SOPHIA

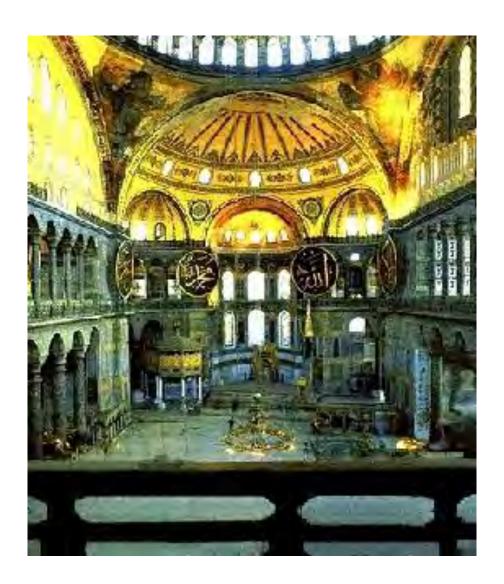
It is placed on the highest section of the (ex-)Constantinople city area, clearly so for prestige reasons.

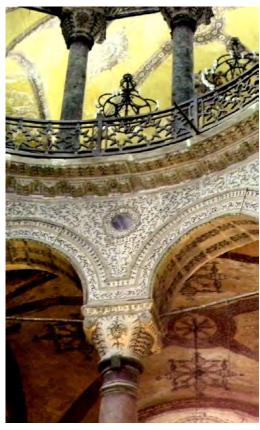


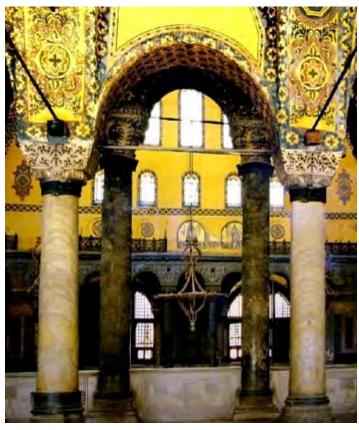
::: FEATURES INSIDE

The perspectives are certainly stunning (in spite of the many damages over 15 centuries), especially the domes, yet also the mighty columns, about 100.







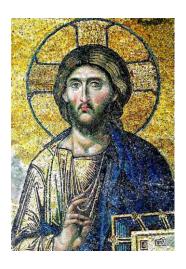


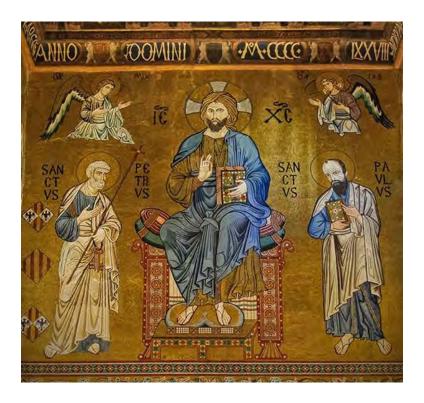
Many Christian mosaic frescoes, made by Byzantine handicraft artists, have survived - they provide stunning views.











Even though the Hagía Sophía is now a museum, it stills contains the copious Muslim mirhab.



::: WHY IS THE HAGIA SOPHIA SO FAMOUS

Here are the main reasons:

- // This building stands since more than 1500 years.
- // Its copious central dome was for a long time the largest in the world.
- // Eventually Michelangelo's dome for the St. Peter's Basílica did 'beat' it.
- // More than a millennium of time it was Constantinople's cathedral.
- // until 1520 it stayed to be the largest cathedral in the world.
- // For 500 years it was the essential mosque of the Ottoman Empire.

And it is a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1985.

Regarding its name: "Sophia" is the Greek word for wisdom. The full name is "Shrine of the holy wisdom of god".

A wildly held view is that this, at its design in 537 very modern building, has fundamentally changed the history of architecture, even in some current literature.

P.S.: It wasn't easy to visit the Hagia Sophia and photograph there, because at that time it was in renovation and partly blocked.

Now, for further eminent cathedrals: back to Italy.

Message C44

I had announced that messages about nine examples of sacred architecture are still to come. Here is one of them, a very famous one - the St Marco cathedral in Venice. It's usually called Basilica di San Marco.

ITALY, Venice, St Marco cathedral

This very unique building is the best example of the "Italo-Byzantine" architecture. It is located on the Piazza San Marco, beside the Doge's palace. It was originally built 978 to 1092.



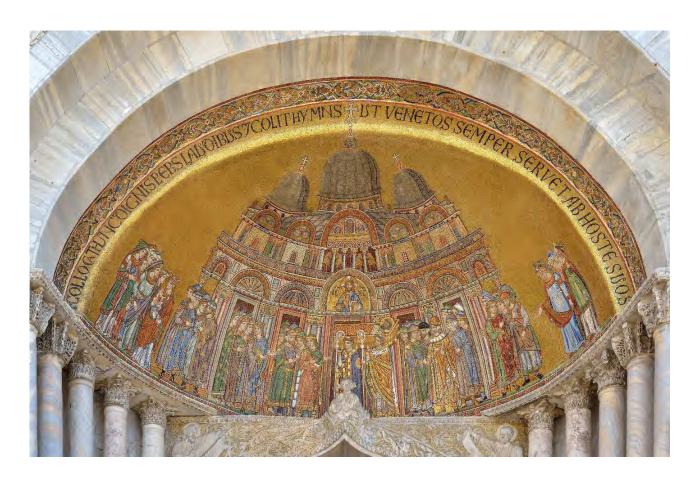


The design is based on 5 domes, the highest of which is 43 m. Overall size: 63×77 m, the immense facade is 50 m wide.



The most special feature is the use of mosaics, on almost all walls, floors and ceilings. Dominating are golden mosaics - so much that this church got named Chiesa d'Oro \sim church of gold.





The (in-)famous four horses, on the front façade, were actually stolen from Constantinople by Venetians army forces in 1204, during the 4th crusade. Much later, in 1797, Napoleon looted them, for Paris - yet in 1815 they were returned to Veníce's St Mark's basílica. The ones shown nowadays are copies, while the originals are stored in the cathedrals museum.



By the way, I spent around 3 hours in this fabulous building - - not enough though to inspect all its grand features!

Message C13

After presenting "a very modern", and then "a very un-modern" cathedral, one person remarked that they are indeed impressive, yet that the real liking would be for classical gothic cathedrals.

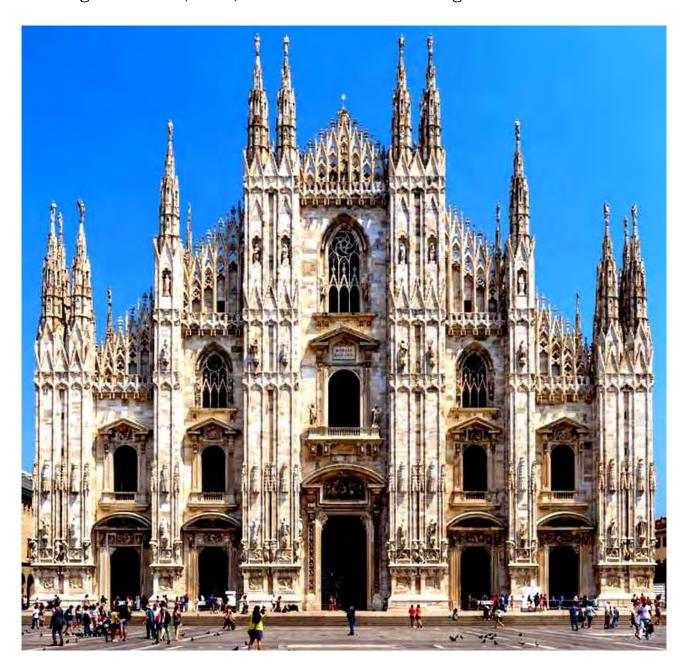
Okay, here is one!

ITALY, Milan, cathedral

That's the last one I've visited, in December 2018.

It is one of the largest ever built. Design: 1 tower, 1 cupola, 159m long, 92m wide, 108m high.

The facade of this mighty building is almost overwhelming, as is the nave, the height of which, 45m, is record. So is the timing: 1386-1965.



Its two organs were reshaped and merged in 1984, containing 16000 pipes, and being the 2nd-largest church organ after Passau.

A rather unusual feature of this building is that you can go up on the roof and walk there - the view of all the statuettes, as well as of the city, is stunning.



Finaly, regarding Italy - here is one which is prominent for a different reason!

Message C28

May be this cathedral, in Siena, is just perceived as one of the many great sacred buildings in Italy? Well it's more! Why?

Because it contains high-class paintings in the Piccolomini Library, which is linked to the cathedral.

Most eminent are the frescoes painted by the umbrian Bernardino di Betto. They are probably based on designs by Raphael.

The visual impact of these very colourful frescoes is absolutely stunning.

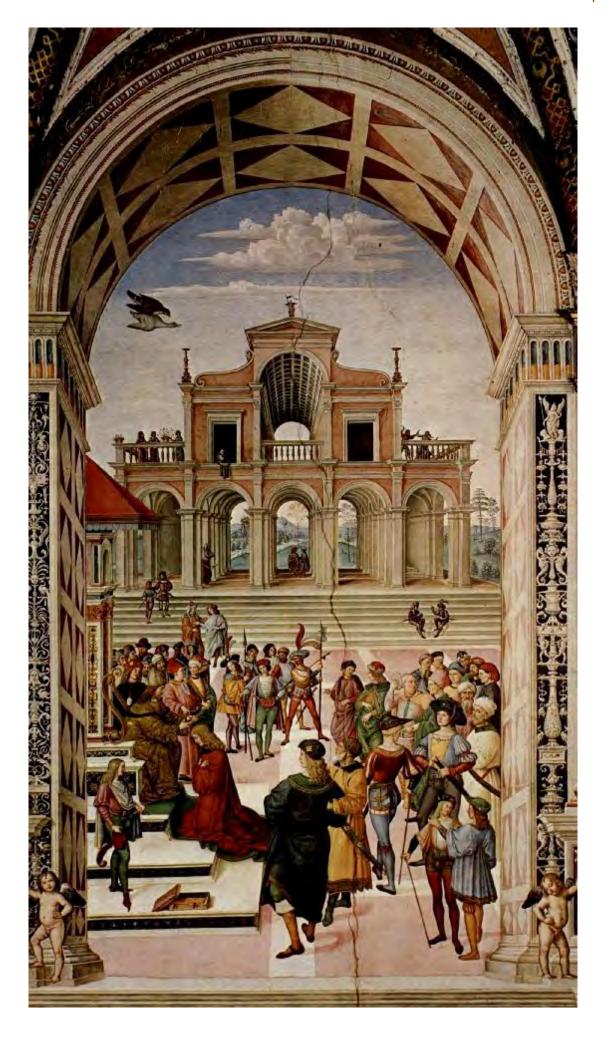
ITALY, Siena, cathedral

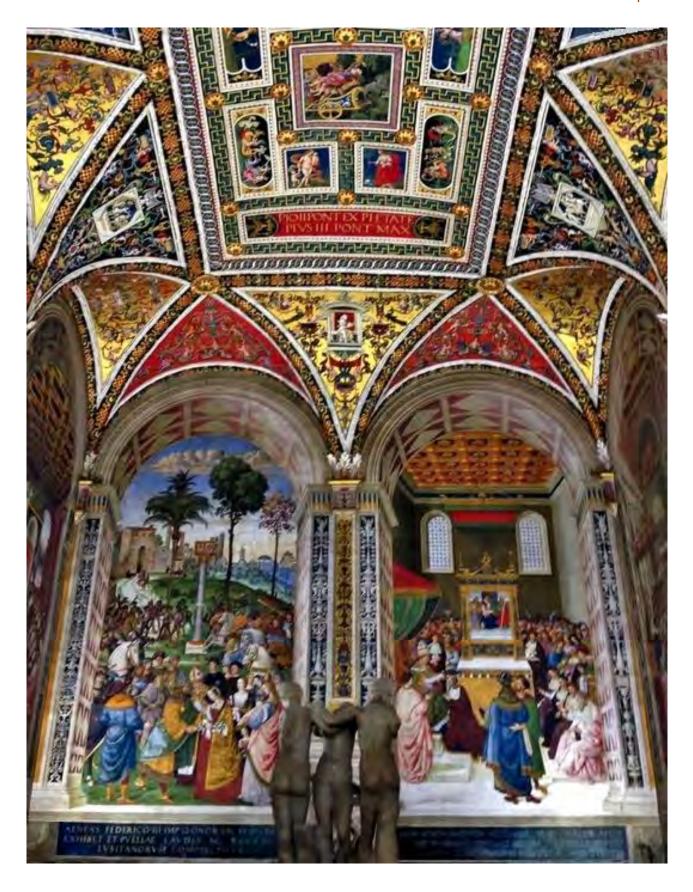
The building itself was originally designed and completed quite early, between 1215 and 1263 AD. It is 89m long, exceptionally wide, namely 86m, 77m high, and the dome's height is 56 m.

Its bell tower (only one, not the usual two) is placed beside the nave and is 102 m high. The black-white-black style is reflecting Siena's symbolic colours.









Both the paintings at the walls and the ceiling provide significant information about the culture of Siena.

Furthermore, they are quite 'tricky' in providing unusual perceptions. This varies with your position in front of a picture.

All unique cathedrals in Italy are meanwhile presented in this essay - so it is time now to deal with at least some of the many special churches in France, beside the sad Paris cathedral.

Message C5

The Paris cathedral (length 126m, width 48m, towers 69m, nave height 35) is not the largest one. These French cathedrals are substantially bigger in size:

Amiens: 145m long, 70m wide, 113m high, 42m nave height. Bourges: 135? m long, 40m wide, 66m high, 37m nave height. Chartres: 130m long, 46m wide, 113m high, 37m nave height. Reims: 149m long, 63m wide, 87m high, 38m nave height. Rouen: 144 m long, 60? m wide, 151m high, 28m nave height. Strassbourg: 112m long, 51m wide, 142m high, 32m nave height.

And there is something I didn't dare to say so far - - in aesthetic terms I am not overly impressed by the Paris cathedral's design. It doesn't matter that it is not the largest, yet - in my view at least - it's not the most beautiful cathedral either.

So - - which one do I rate the most impressive one?

May be hard to believe: Reims!

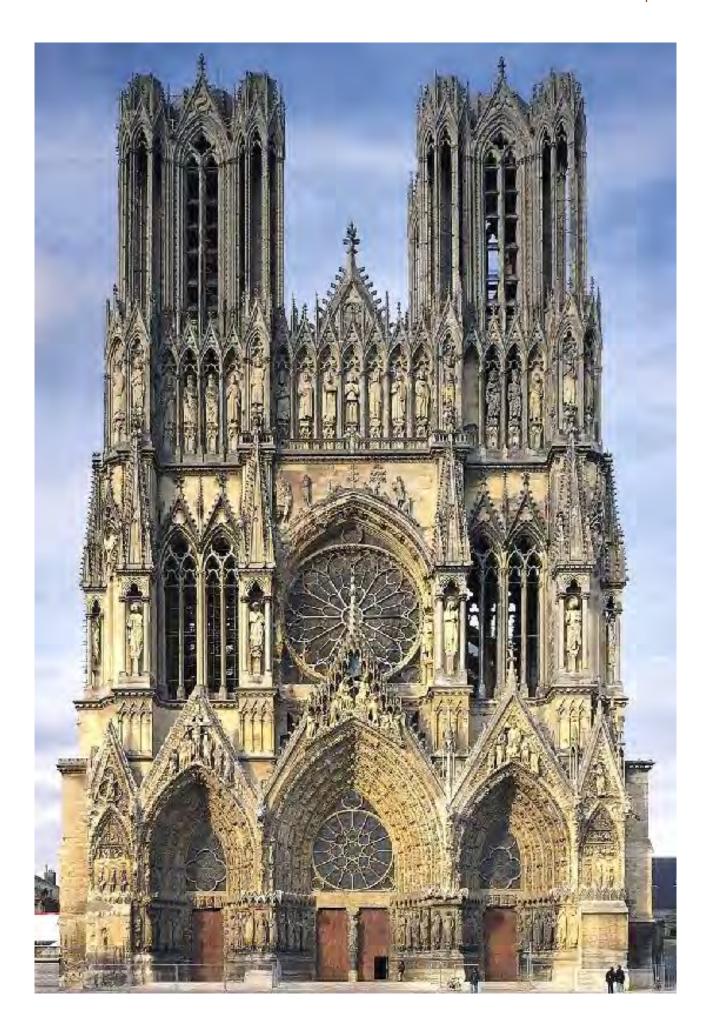
FRANCE, **Reims**, cathedral

Here are two images of its incredible facade.



Why do I evaluate it that highly?

Well, it's not the enormous size of this church, nor, that is was, until 1825, the place where French kings were crowned. Rather, it is the stunning beauty of architecture and sculptures, as well as the amazing glass windows and rosettas.



Plus, the two towers are rather subtlely than coarsely designed.

In terms of art, especially sculptures, the finest work appears as having been realized at the Chartres cathedral.

Message C25

"Which is the most beautiful christian cathedra?" is an endlessly discussed question. Frequent views are: Cologne, Milan, Reims, Salesbury. All these are described in my "C" messages.

Yet some authors say, don't just go from the outside view, consider the inside as well, and especially all the art facets of a cathedral, such as sculptures and glass windows.

And then indeed another church comes to the front - the cathedral in Chartre. So I will now present this one, located in northern France.

FRANCE, Chartres, cathedral

It was constructed and built relatively early, from 1194 to 1220. Design: 2 towers, 130m long, 46m wide, 113m high, 37m nave height.





The main views all show a disappointing feature: The second tower isn't quite right. See also the sketch of what was planned.







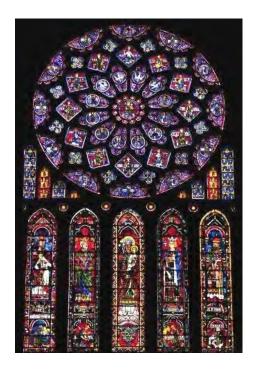
Why did this happen? Lack of money of course.

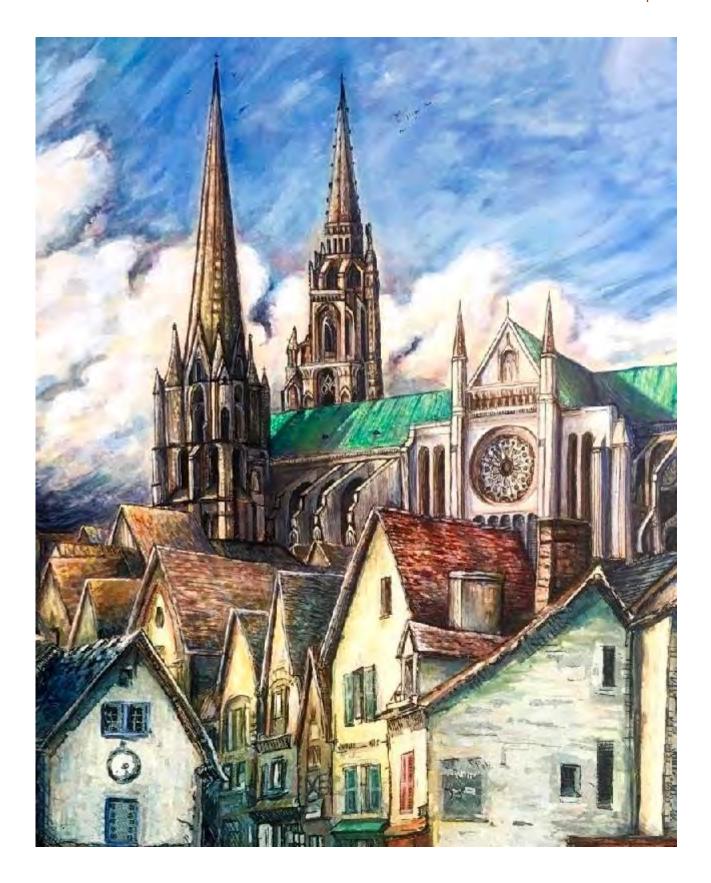
Yet almost all of the other attributes of this cathedral are truly stunning. I remember that I needed much more than one hour to inspect them.

The following pic's show the main doors. Then the tremendous colour glass windows are displayed. Finally: A painting of this church and its environment. I think these images provide significant evidence why Chartre ranks so highly.









Note:

Not presented in this essay are: The large-scale French cathedrals of Amiens, Bourges, Rouen, and of Strassbourg.

Instead - -

A rather modern church in Paris, the large basilica named "Sacred Heart".

FRANCE, Paris, Sacred Heart

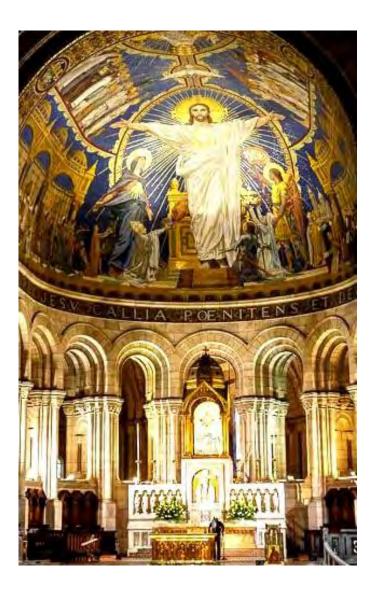
It was built 1875-1914, on the highest spot in Paris. Its design: 1 cupola 55m high, length 85m, width 35m, tower (separate building) 83m.







Because of its location, the basilica can be seen from about everywhere. Inside, on the cupola's ceiling, is a huge religious painting



In the next sector of "eminent churches & cathedrals", Germany is treated. First location: Trier.

Message C24

Historians have discussed for decades which the oldest christian church is. Most of the suggested buildings were erected around 300 AD. This includes churches, standing or ruined, in Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Italy, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Vatican - and Germany!

These are two buildings in Trier, from the time that Trier was a significant city within the Roman empire, and Constantine its emperor.

GERMANY, Trier, cathedral

One is the Cathedral Trier. It has 4 towers, is 113 m long, 41 m wide and 76 m high. It's by far the oldest church in Germany, in use since 340.





The other one is the Aula Palatina, also called Basilica Constantine. It was built around 310. Length: 67 m, width: 26 m, height 33 m.

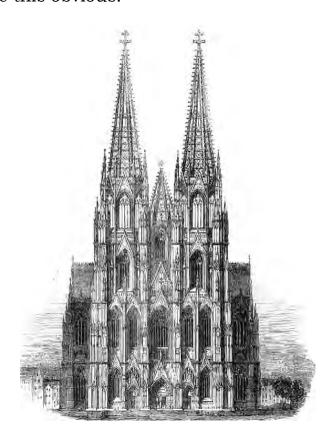


Both have been maintained ever since, repeatedly renovated, and are still in service today. Both are ranked as World Heritage Site.

Message C10

GERMANY, Cologne, cathedral St Peter

The St Peter cathedral is huge - 2 towers, 145 m long, 86 m wide, 157 m high, 43 m nave height. Building it began in 1248, and took hundreds of years - completion only in 1880. The might of this church is overwhelming, outside as well as inside - it's one of the largest in the world. Even the sketch below make this obvious.







Personal remark:

For quite a long time I was not interested in cathedrals or churches at all. Whatsoever, when I in 1965 started my job life, I had research meetings in Cologne. And when you come out of the railway station, which is quite large, you right then and there see the cathedral - a much larger and of course far far higher building...

So yes, I got clearly curious, and even went in - the first cathedral I explored!

GERMANY, **Ulm**, minster

Message C18

Here is a further classical church - the minster of Ulm in Germany. It's not a cathedral, nor a famous one - yet it is nevertheless very prominent.

Why?

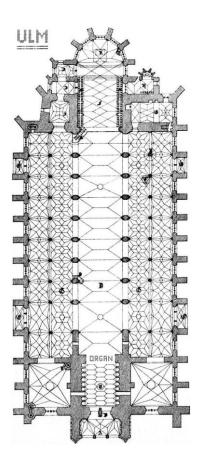
Here are the data: 1+2 towers, 124 m long, 49 m wide, 162 m high (see design below).

So it is indeed the highest church in the world, and the second-highest religious building (behind the Hassan-II-mosque in Casablanca/Marokko).

The inner design is also very impressive - the central nave is 42 m high and realized in a coherent shape. The organ is large.

A further feature is the massive use of bricks when building it.









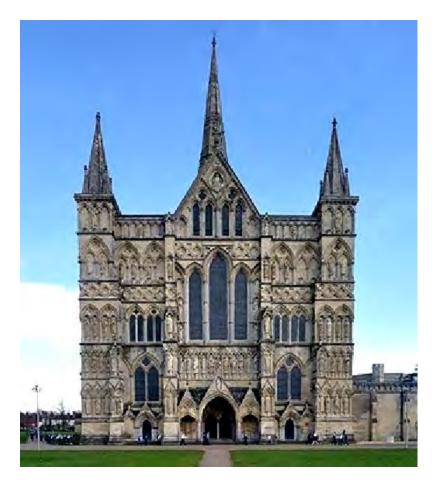


ENGLAND, Salisbury, Cathedral

The very large cathedral of Salisbury is seen as an excellent examples of early English buildings. It is praised for its coherence, because it was built in just 38 years, from 1220 to 1258.

Its architecture: 1 tower, 123 m high, 158 m long, 78 m wide, 26 m nave height. Except of the nave, it is indee a very large cathedral.

A significant cloister is part of the design.





Again further countries, all in Europe -

CZECHIA, **Prague**, Tyn church

Message C8

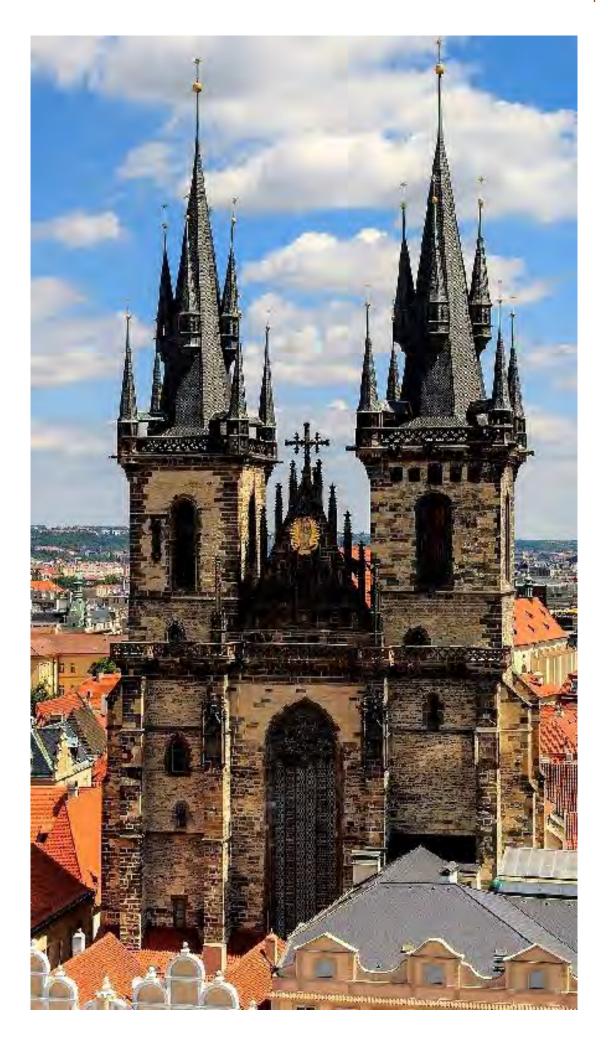
For my 'churchy' essays, I have obviously quite a few temples amd cathedrals and mosques and stupas in mind - those in different countries, those exceptional in style or plainly in size,, and those which are plainly my personal favourites.

Along these viewpoints - - there is Tyn in Prague, built in the 14th century, the by far cutest one! It's not huge, "only" 52 m long, 28 m wide, 80 m tower - the nave is 42 m high though.

This church has actually 2 towers, and they are truly enchanting - have a look! Tyn is located on Prague's central place, behind a row of center buildings.

What makes the towers so unique: They have 4 + 4 mini-towers on them. In fact, when I visited Prague, I certainly enjoyed to see such a weird curiosity!





Several cities in eastern Europe have built rather mighty cathedrals as well

BULGARIA, **Sofia**, Nevsky Cathedral

Message C34

So, here is another big christian cathedral, the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. It's actually a 'young' one, built 1882-1912, and it belongs to the Orthodox church.





Design: Cross-domed; size: 74m long and 52m wide; height is 53m. The interior is very richly decorated, and the cathedral's dome is gold-plated!

NORWAY, **Heddal**, Stavkirke

Message C22-A

Here is again an 'un-classical' church - the Heddal Stavkirke in Norway's province Telemark, in the Notodden municipality. It is classical though, as the largest and most imposing of all the Norwegian churches assembled completely with timber. "Staves" means: thick timber posts.

The design: 1 tower, 3 nave sections, 20 m long, 26 m high, 17 m wide. Over time, it fell into poor condition, yet at first in 1849 and then in the 1950s it was. thoroughly renovated. It is now a Cultural Heritage site.



Personal remark: As you will know, I am 'half-norwegian'. Given this, and that my mother grew up in Telemark, the Heddal Stavkirke is certainly significant for me, and just this year I visited it again.

NORWAY, Trondheim, Nidaros cathedral

Message C22-B

The Nidaros Cathedral is the largest and most important church of Norway. It was built from 1070 to around 1300, based on the burial place of king Olav II. Yet the cathedral was badly damaged by fires in 1327 and 1531.



ills. In 1719,

In 1708, the church burned down completely except for the stone walls. In 1719, after lightning, it was again ravaged by fire. Major rebuilding and restoration of the cathedral started only in 1869 - so, all what can be seen today, in romanesque and gothic style, is rather new.

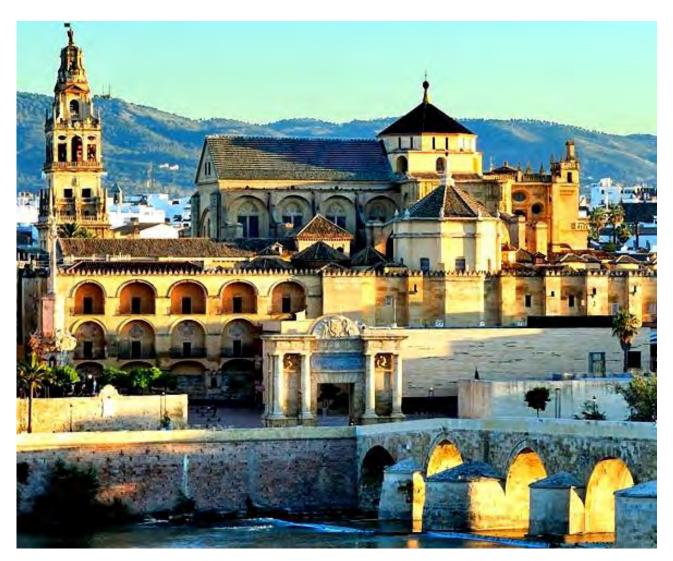
Design: The cathedral is 100 m long, with 50 m wide transepts, and has three towers. The central tower is 98 m high.

This church was was historically used for the coronation of the kings of Norway.

Break -- here is a truly unusual one - an ex-mosque-now-cathedral.

Southern Spain, including the city of Cordoba, was for hundreds of years part of a Muslim empire.

SPAIN, Cordoba, Cathedral



Message C41

Now I present again a very unusal sacred building - unusual because it is a cathedral which was not designed and built as a cathedral, it was a mosque.

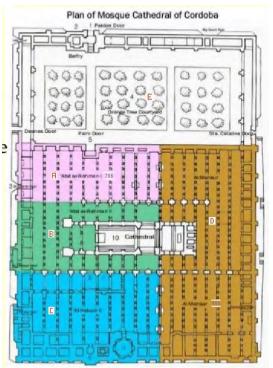
In fact a very large one, erected from 786 to 988 by the Muslim empire reigning n southern Spain. This had over-built the Visigothic Catholic Church from about 600.

The mosque was muslimic from 786 to 1236, and then became 'christianized' when the Muslim control of Spain fell apart.



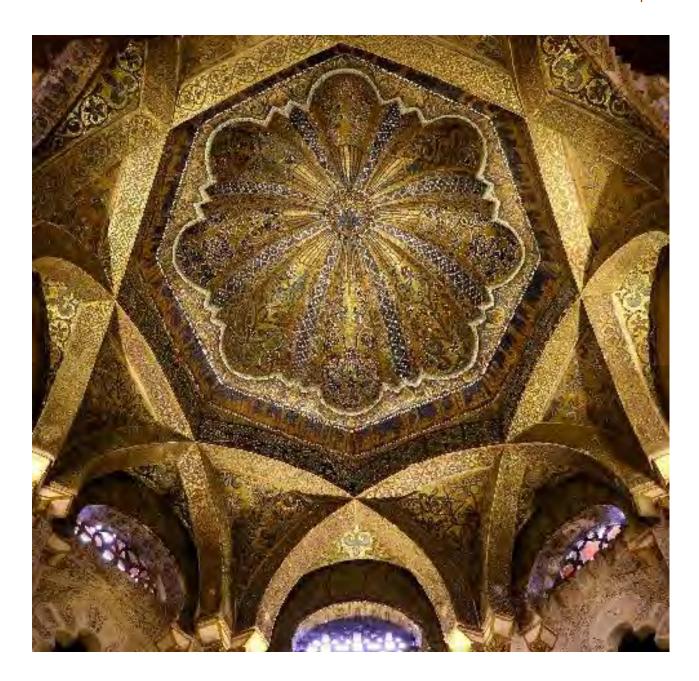
The christian church and a new tower were built on top of the mosque, rather awkwardly.











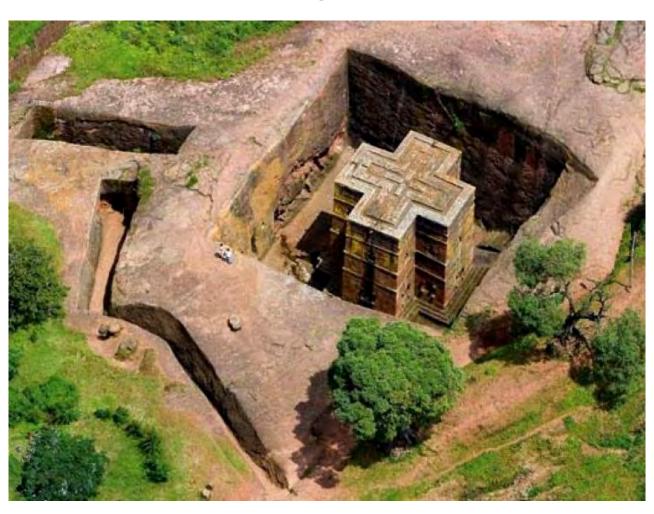
Yet the historic main hall was never changed - so the incredible beauty of the former mosque is visible until today, and very impressive indeed.





And now this essay makes again a big jump - to Africa!

ETHIOPIA, Lalibela, Church St George:



The church I describe in this message is the most unusual sacred building I have ever visited. It is located in the northern part of Ethiopia in north-east Africa.

That church, "St George", was cut out of rock, in the late 12th or early 13th century AD.

The square building is 13 m high, and the religious facilities are inside of it. The long pathway to reach it is also cut out.

This was done under King Gebre Lalibela. During his reign, eleven churches were built in his realm. Supposedly he sought to reflect and almost recreate Jerusalem.

This absolutely unique building - by some referred to as the "eighth wonder of the world" - is now a World Heritage Site.

The next considerable jump - now to South America!

BRAZIL, Rio de Janeiro, Metropolitan cathedral

Message C39

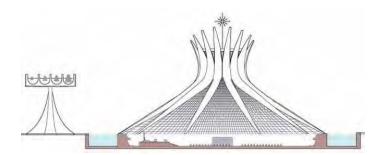
This cathedral looks spectacular indeed, because - - why?

Because it is a powerful and very unique architecture. It was designed by a 'grandmaster', the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, in 1970.

Design: Cupola, 75 m high, 106 m long & wide (square)

This building is the metropolitan cathedral for the capital of Brasilia, and seat of the archdiocese of Brasília.





The huge windows are very colorful, mainly blue. As the graph (above) shows, the circular hall of the cathedral sits a bit deeper in the ground. And its large bells are mounted in a separate construction..





In the final section of "eminent churches & cathedrals", Vatican City is the focus, for clear reasons - that's the center place of Christianity.

Vatican City, a legally independent country, is located in the middle of Rome, the capital of Italy. It is for a very long time the center of the Christian Catholic Church, and thereby the seat of the pope. The crucial church in the Vatican is the St Peter Basilica.



Vatican, St Peter Basilica

Message C49

This is the largest church in the world. The measures are 220 m long, 150 m wide, dome 137 m high, and nave height 45 m. The interior is of vast dimensions when compared with other churches.

It was built from 1506 to 1626, designed by Bernini, Bramante, Maderno and Michelangelo. Given the time of its creation, it is rated as the most renowned renaissance architecture.





A brief history note.

It is recorded that one of Jesus' twelve disciples, Simon, known as Saint Peter (in Latin: St Petrus), took a leadership position and was of great importance in the founding of the Christian Church.

Catholic tradition holds that Peter, after a ministry of thirty-four years, traveled to Rome and met his martyrdom there, along with Paul, in 64 A.D., during the reign of Nero, who was the Roman Emperor at that time

He was crucified, executed, and then nearby buried. Around 300 years later, the "Old St. Peter's Basilica" was built right there.

The entire interior of St. Peter's is lavishly decorated with marble, reliefs, architectural sculpture and gilding, and the basilica contains a very large number of tombs, which are allocated to important people to the church's history.

Yet the dominating impression when standing in this immense have seems to be for many visitors its vastness.





The St Peter Basilica is the by far most visited church in the world. It can host more than 10000 people, and further 70000 can stand on the adjoining St. Peter's Square.

Vatican, Sistine Chapel

Message C48

The Sistine Chapel — Cappella Sistina is not a church, it is a chapel in the Apostolic Palace, the official residence of the pope of the Catholic Church, in Vatican City. It was built from 1473 to 1483.



Many authors rate the Sistine chapel as the most beautiful Christian building in the world - not because of its architecture, rather because of the frescoes which cover all walls and the ceiling. The painters included Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Rosselli, and above all Michelangelo who created the whole ceiling and the wall with the Last Judgment.



The frescoes at the walls contain paintings of temples, of the Last Supper, and of ordinary people. Very passionate is the Last Judgment, including the hell.









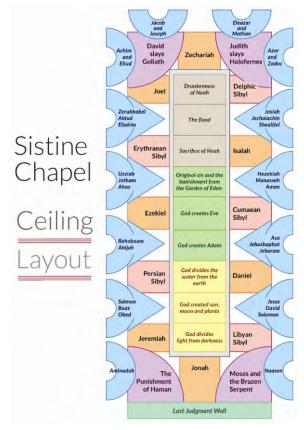




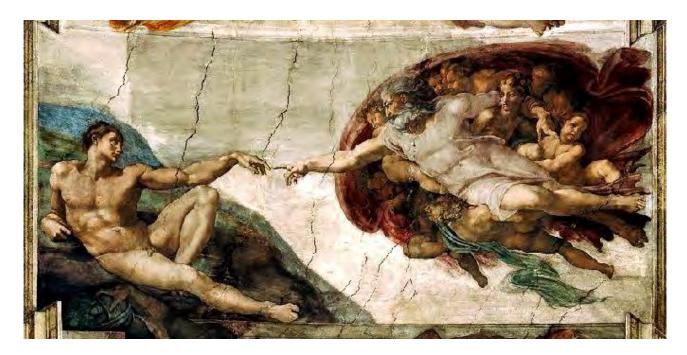


The largest creation is the one on the ceiling (its content list is below)..





The most mentioned picture is "The creation of Adam".



The Sistine Chapel still serves for religious procedures - and it is also the place where the cardinals of the Catholic Church meet to elect a new pope!



BY THE WAY:

The christian church, covering about 2.4 2 billion people, is not one, rather, there are several 'corporations'. The split-up started in 431 AD. Main ones:

Catholic (western) church, center: Rome, by far the largest one,

Orthodox (eastern) church, center was Constantinople,

Protestants (worldwide, including Australia), no center,

Anglican (english), center: Canterbury.

These institutions are independent of each other. The pope rules only one of them.

? Which cathedrals are in Melbourne?

Melbourne, Australia' largest city, has three main prominent buildings: The townhall, the Anglican cathedral (not the Catholic one), and the Flinders railway station.





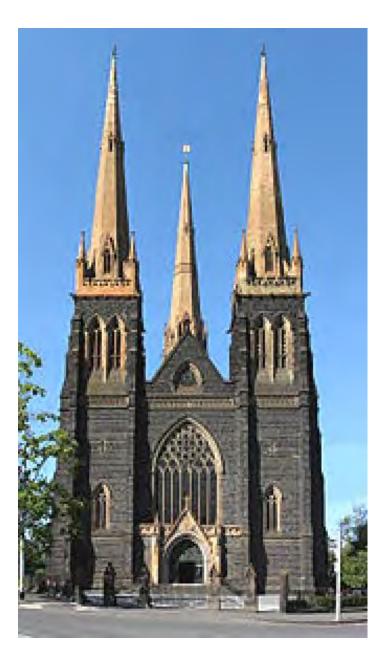


Message C6

After speaking several times about the burned cathedral in Paris, plus, about the main other cathedrals in France, I got curious - - how about the cathedrals here in Melbourne?

AUSTRALIA, Melbourne, St Patrick's cathedral

It is very young, built from 1858 to 1939, named St Patrick's cathedral. So, yes, young it is, but certainly not little: It's 104m long, 56m wide, 105m high, 29m nave height, and has three towers.



Compare this to the Paris cathedral: Length 126m, width 48m, towers 69m, nave height 35 m

The inner parts of St Patrick's cathedral are all well designed, and that includes a considerable organ. This cathedral is the seat of the Melbourne archbishop. And it is indeed the largest church building in Australia.

Message C7

Some days ago I compared Melbourne's St Patrick cathedral with the now in-famous Paris cathedral, pointed out that it is quite a big church - and also stated that I would visit it once more. This I did today, when I was in the city, at about 10:00. So, what did I notice?

the city, at about 10:00. So, what did I notice? Firstly, this cathedral, Australia's tallest and largest church building, was very very empty, just 4 visitors. Compare that to Paris, where thousands turn up every day!

Secondly, this morning I perceived this church as kind of boring - yes, it's well-done architecture, but no real 'spirits'... Completed in 1939, it may be just too young, and still too 'orderly'?

Gosh, I got asked "why did you present Melbourne's St Patrick cathedral, which is widely ignored - Melbourne's essential cathedral is another one?"

Message C20

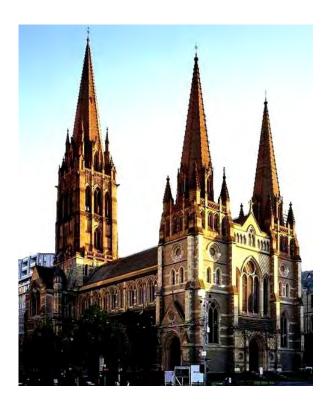
Ooops... So now I shall talk a bit about St Paul's. This is the cathedral of the Anglican church, and therefore well-known.

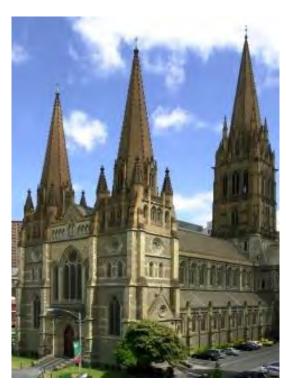
AUSTRALIA, Melbourne, St Paul's cathedral

It sits in the center of Melbourne city - however, there are three landmarks buildings beside each other, Flinders Station, St Paul's (the largest building), and the Townhall. At least the Flinders Station building is far more popular though than the cathedral, urghhh...

Architecture: 3 towers, 84 m long, 46 m wide, and 96 m high - smaller than Melbourne's St Patrick cathedral, yet never the less "a big thing". It was opened in 1891; its style is neo-gothic. Inside, St Paul's has a lot of religious decorations and also a large organ.







Sidestep: The 'real' grand organ is not in St Paul's cathedral though, nor in any other church, it is located in Melbourne's Townhall! This one has more than 10000 pipes, and it is played with 5 keyboards. Musicians can create about every sound, from a delicate whistle to deafening thunder - it is indeed "grand".



Sidestep 2: In all churches music is an essential part of most procedures there.



? Which are eminent mosques?

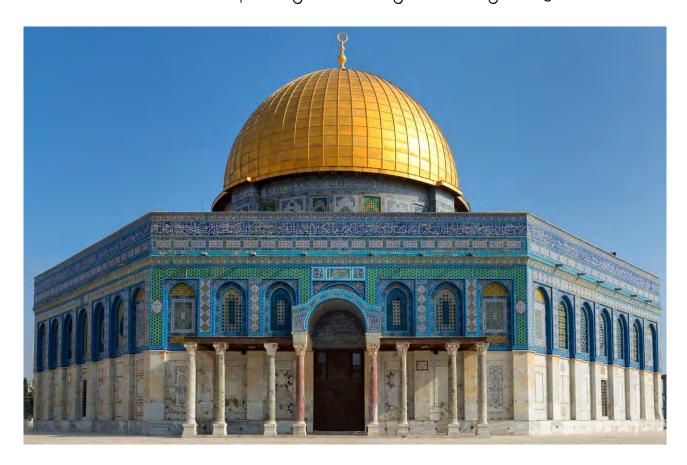
No question, quite a few! So this chapter begins with a very special one.

Message C37

It is the "Dome of the Rock", an Islamic shrine (not church, nor mosque) located on the temple mount in Jerusalem (which is claimed by Israel and by Palestina).

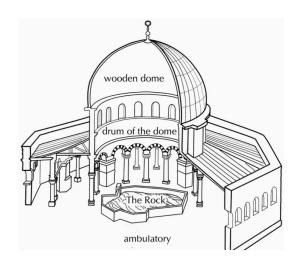
ISRAEL AND PALESTINA, Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock

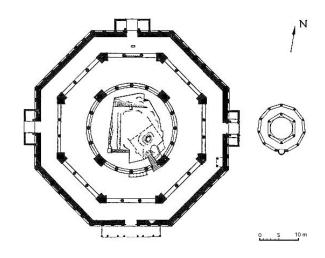
It was originally built 688-691 A.D. at the order of the umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik, and at later times repeatedly renovated, yet not really changed.



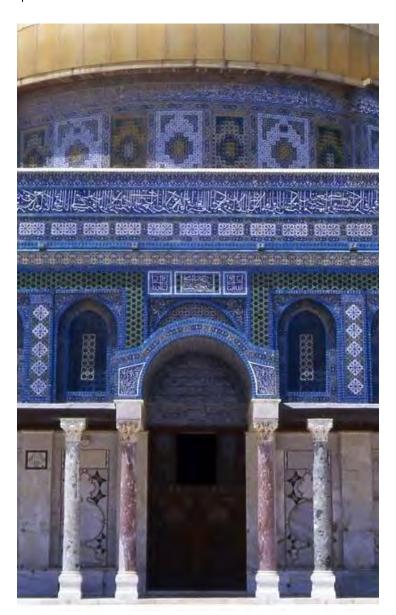
Actually the rock over which the Dome of the Rock stands is a holy feature for both Judaism and Islam, and handled extensively in many religious documents.

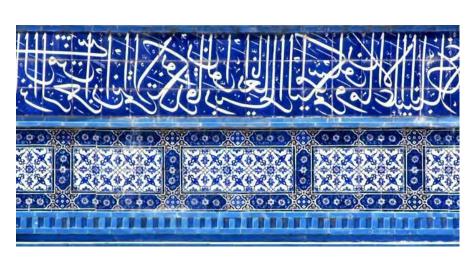
The buildings architecture (see attached design sketches) is a octagonal plan, 53m long and wide, 35m high The dome at the center: Diameter and height are 20m. It is mounted on an elevated circular drum standing on 16 supporting columns.





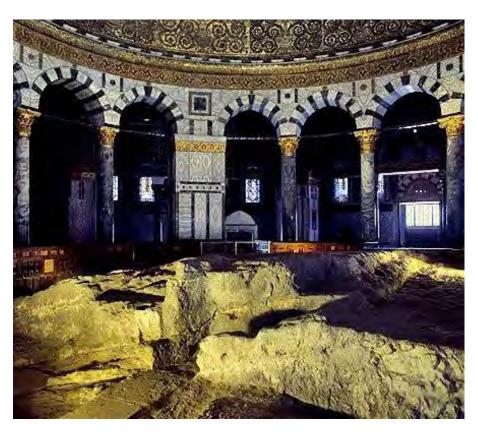
A special feature, beside the golden dome, are the fields with blue mosaics, which include arabic texts. They were crafted by artisans who had been involved in Byzantine churches and palaces, and are beautifully executed. To fully appreciate the unique building one has to stand both nearby and in distance - both is feasible on the temple mount.











By the way, when I visited this terrific building, many years ago, I could easily inspect it, outside and inside; in current Israel this is not possible anymore.

The first mosques were build around 620 A.D., in Mekka and Medina (both Saudi-Arabia) and in Massawa (Eritrea) and Negash (Ethiopia). The one in Mekka is definitely the holiest institution; it's also by far the largest, and has 9 minarets.

A further historic, very old one mosque is the umayyad Mosque in the city of Damascus in today's Syria.

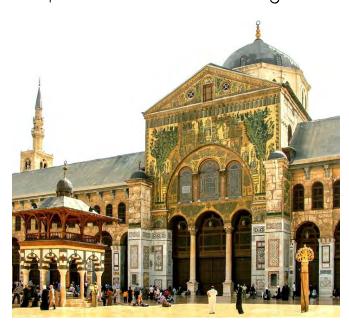
SYRIA, Damascus, Umayyad Mosque



Message C32

The umayyad Mosque was originally built 635-715, in the area which was the Jupiter temple in Roman times, then a christian basilica in the Byzantine empire.

The building has a big courtyard and 3 minarets, the highest is 77m. Many of the original very artful mosaics at the central building, which depict both architecture and landscapes, have survived until today.





By the way, when I visited this mosque (long time ago), I was somewhat confused because it got extended and changed countless times during the last thousand years!

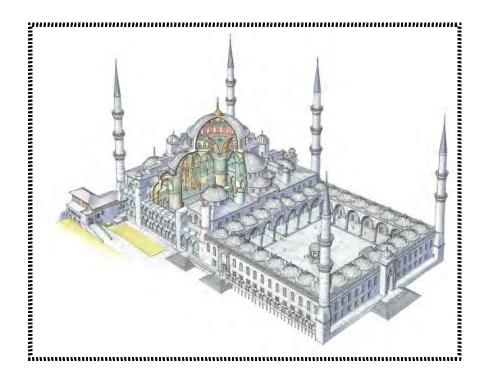
Which is the most impressive mosque? It's widely thought that it is the Sultan Ahmed ~ Blue mosque in Istanbul.

TURKEY, Istanbul Blue mosque

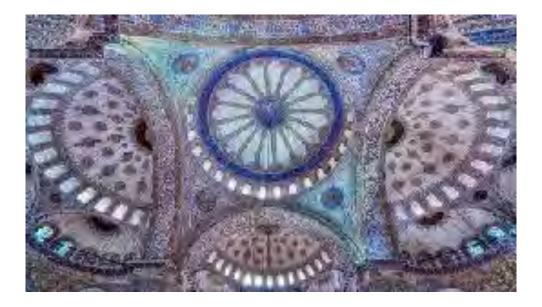
Message C14

This enormous building has 5 domes, 6 minarets (64 m high), is 73 m long and 63 m wide (see plan). It was erected from 1609 to 1617.





The inside is so very impressive because of the use of blue tiles, 20000 of them. Therefore it is usually named the Blue Mosque.



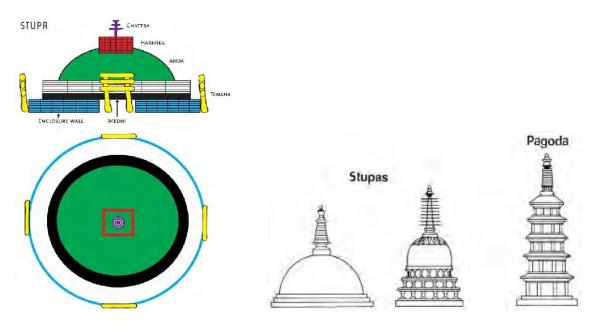
By the way, in my view it's a narrow perspective to believe that only christian cathedrals can present might and beauty at highest level - some mosques do this in a tremendous style, and their splendour is overwhelming.

? Which are eminent stupas, Hindu temples, pagodas?

First part: Stupas. These are buddhist religious buildings, meant to contain relics, and usually include a pathway around them. They were built since about 100 BC.



The architecture of stupas is different to another East-Asian building type called pagoda.



INDIA, New Dehli, Stupa Vishwa Shanti

The Vishwa Shanto building in India's capital town New Dehli is a classical stupa, in elaborated style, it is well maintained and an important religious place.



Second part: Pagodas. These are tiered towers with multiple levels, in south and east Asía, originally derived from classical stupas.

Message C29

Here are sacred buildings in a different country and of a very different style - in Japan. From the seventh century onwards, Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples were built as religious facilities. Some consist of a high tower. For these, or the whole building, the common name is pagoda. Their complex construction uses mainly timber. All sacred institutions are thoroughly taken care of.

JAPAN, **Kyoto**, Pagoda temples

Many Japanese temples have one or more tall gates, usually painted in bright red color.











Third part: Hindu temples. Hinduism is an ancient confession, started in India around 500 BC, still fully valid, and significant in many other countries.

Message C26

Again a different topic - the Hindu temples. In this essay just one is shown, the Sri Mahamarianman Temple in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, devoted to the Hindu religion. It opened in 1873, so, it's not old, yet the oldest in this capital city. Hindu temples like this one are different from any other religious buildings, in that they are very richly colored, and that a large number of figures is presented, which all have a link to aspects of hinduism. Furthermore, musicians are shown who play indian instruments.

People unfamíliar with Hindu art may think that a building like this looks like an opera, but this does not grab all the underlying religious and societal notions.

MALAYSIA, Kuala Lumpur, Hindutemple









The largest pagoda is the Schwedagon temple in Myanmar.

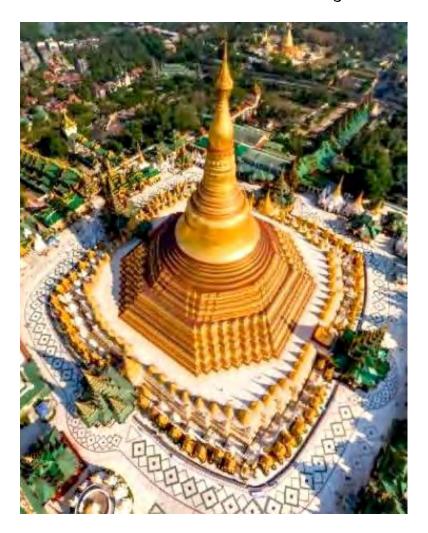
Message C43

Contrary to the Vishwa Shanto building in New Dehli, I have not seen this sacred building myself (because traveling to Myanmar is difficult).

MYANMAR, Yangon, Schwedagon temple



The 'golden' pagoda in Yangon is indeed huge. It is erected in the middle of a temple quarter, and meant to be the religious center of Myanmar.



? Which are the most unusual religious buildings?

The topic of this chapter: Sacred architecture examples which are not at all conventional.

Message C40

Now I present a very unusal sacred building - the "Salt Cathedral" in the Colombian town of Zipaquira. This town has a 'normal' cathedral - -



yet also an *underground* Roman-Catholic church, built within the tunnels of a salt mine, 200 m deep.

COLOMBIA, Zipaquire, Salt Cathedral

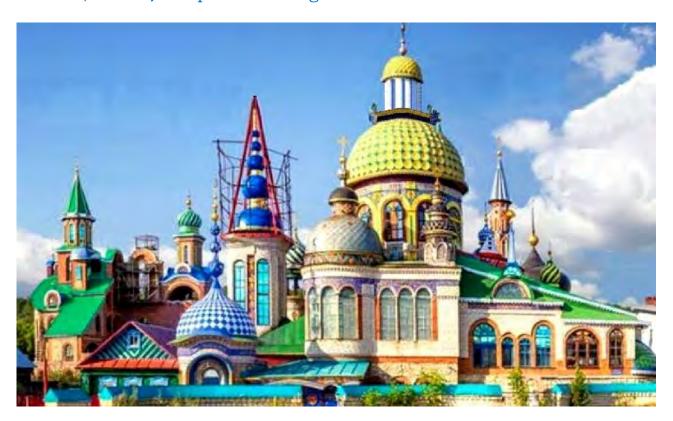
It was created 1991-1995, replacing an older church in the salt-mining area. It is a functioning church, with thousands of visitors on sundays, yet has no bishop and therefore no official status as a cathedral.







RUSSIA, Kazan, Temple for all religions



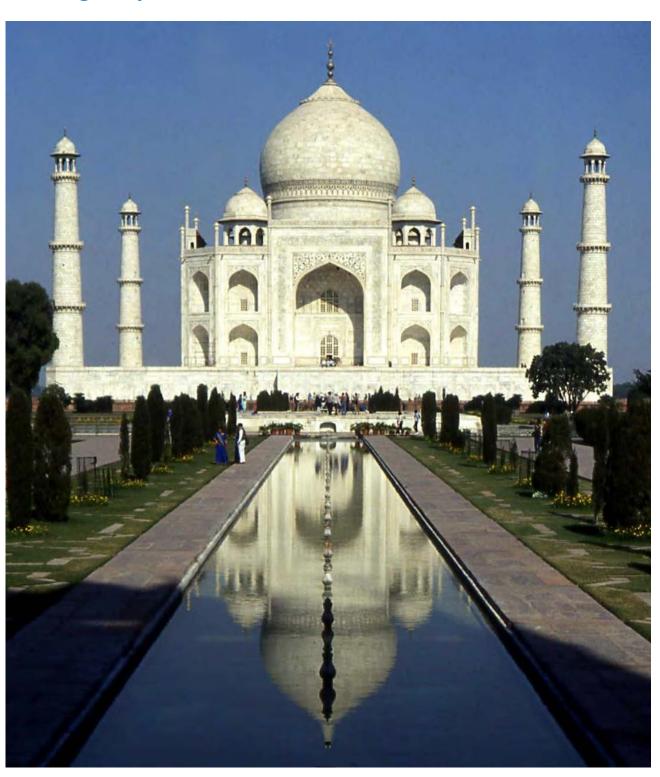
Message C46

This one is obviously very different, function-wise and style-wise - a sacred building created deliberately as "temple for all religions"!

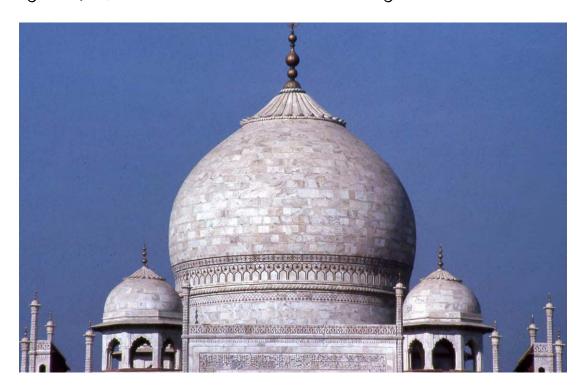
It's design is very colorful and expresses quite unusual features - - to look at it is certainly a joy, at least for tolerant people...

And now, at last, I can present a very very famous building - the Taj Mahal in Agra/India.

INDIA, Agra, Taj Mahal



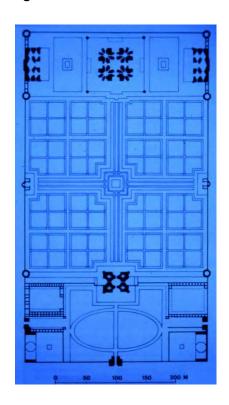
The Taj Mahal is not a mosque, rather a mausoleum. It is presented here because of its truly unique features - there is nothing like it anywhere else.



Message C50

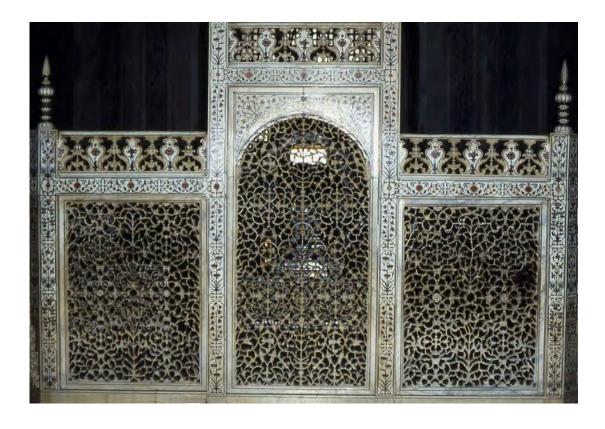
The main building is $55\,\mathrm{m}$ long § wide, the dome is $73\,\mathrm{m}$ high, and there are four small towers beside it. Around it are four high minarets.

As the map shows, this area, including two separate Mughal buildings beside it, is 60x300 m; it is part of the very large 550x300 m T.M. palace district. The entrance is a further imposing structure.





It was built 1632 to 1653 by Shah Jahan as grave for his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, a Persian princess who died in 1631. Both were buried there.



Every piece of the Taj Mahal is of highest quality, especially the precious white marble stones and all the inscriptions.



In 1983 the Taj Mahal was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as "the jewel of Muslim art and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage".

The Taj Mahal is widely rated as the "most beautiful building in the world", certainly by me. For many years I was actually not sure about the validity of my assessment - yet when I finally could visit it, in 1990, I was just overwhelmed by what I saw.

My final example for an "unusual religious buildings" is that for quite different reasons... It's also a very 'un-modern' church.

RUSSIA, **Moscow**, St Basil's cathedral

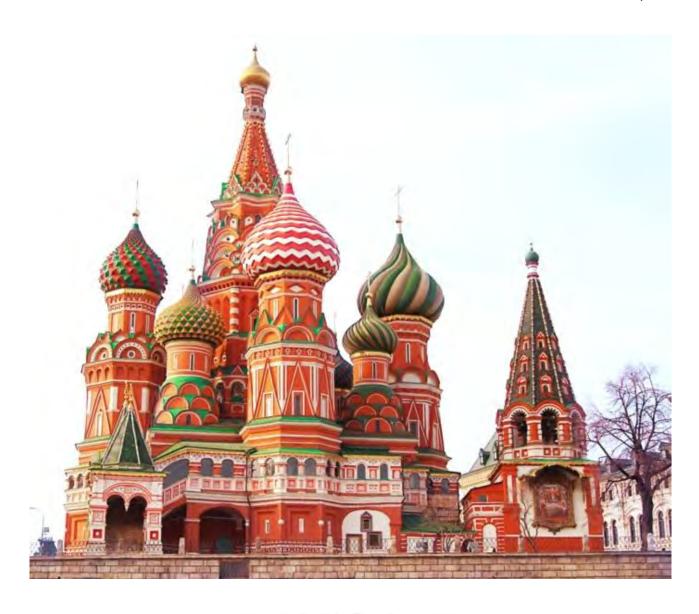
Saint Basil's in Moscow, Russia's capital, is located right in its center, beside the Kreml.

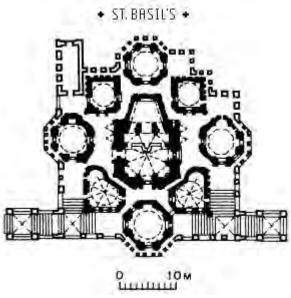
Message C12

It is certainly a unique design: One central tower plus 8 further towers around it, 50 m long, 30 m wide, and 48 m high. It was erected 1555 to 1561 - a surprisingly short timespan. I attach a graph of the plan, which shows the complexity of the layout.

The most distinctive feature of this cathedral is its extremely colourful configuration -

There is no church in the world to match this extraordinary design.





Currently St Basíl's is mainly used as a museum, visited by lots and lots of sightseers.

Yet sometimes it's still utilized for services by the Russian Orthodox Church.

? What were the impacts of fires and of wars?

This essay started with the huge fire of the Paris cathedral, which almost destroyed it.



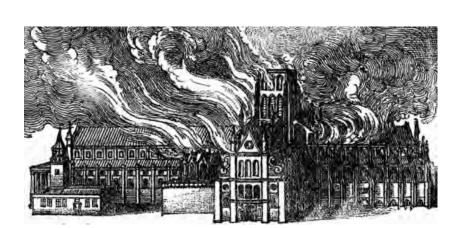
That wasn't a new event though - - fires have hit churches and mosques and stupas and pagodas since the time they were built, demolishing and sometimes annihilating them.



Ironically, the Paris and the Reims cathedral - the one which is in my view much more impressive, as outlined above - share a very stressing event: both suffered a burning roof!

In Reims that happened in WW-1. Twenty years later, in 1938, the cathedral was completely restored.

Here are just two more examples - the Old St Paul Cathedral in London/England and the TrinityCathedral in StPetersburg/Russia..





There is another, truly gloomy reason why countless sacred buildings got destroyed, namely wars. And this too has happened for thousands of years.



In the following, examples of crashed churches from World War 2 will be presented, mostly from Germany which was "bomded to death" from 1942 onwards.

Here is the St Nikolai church in Hamburg/Germany - before and after:





Church Santa Maria in Milano/Italy - before and after:





Church Frauenkirche in Dresden/Germany - before and after:





Most-known seems to be what happened with the "Kaiser Wilhelm Church". It was built 1891 to 1906, with a large design, including a tower of 113m, and became a symbol for Berlin as Germany's capital city.

It was very badly damaged in a huge bombing attack of Berlin in 1943. After the end of the war it became obvious that a full repair was not doable. Instead, a modern church was erected, and the ruin of the Kaiser Wilhelm church was left to stand there, as a symbol of horrendous war impacts.







Sometimes trashing religious buildings was actually the primary aim of a military aggression, in order to break the spirits of the enemy. Yet it also happened again and again that these buildings were rebuilt as soon as feasible after the war's end.

? Which sacred buildings were essential in my life?

Above all, that's a church in Swidnica in Poland. Why?? That's a longer story - - a story which won't fit into just a few lines of this essay! So, I'll tell it in portions, in line with my

Message C51

POLAND, **Swidnica**, Peace Church = Friedenskirche

"1"

It is assumed that Swidnica ex-Schweidnitz in Silesia ex-Schlesien became a town in 1250. Until Worldwar-2, it was predominantly a German city, yet in 1945 it was taken over by Poland, and German residents were pushed out.

The by far most important building in Swidnica is the evangelical (protestant) "Friedens-Kirche", "Church of Peace", now a unesco heritage site.



"3"

This church was built from 1656-57, and its architecture is exceptional. As the city was mostly catholic at that time, for this protestant church very harsh rules were set up:

It had to be outside the city walls, no stones were allowed for building it, and erecting a bell tower was also forbidden.

So the Church of Peace was completely made from timber.



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However, it was abundantly painted inside, all walls, and even including the church's ceiling. At a later time many art pieces were added, and eventually two full-scale organs have been installed as well.





"4" One of the two organs is still working, and when visiting this church we got honored by an organist who played a concert on it!



"5" The historic map of Schweidnitz (see below) shows the location of the hospital ("Krankenhaus") were I was born, in 1940. Urghhh.



"6" In December 2015 I visited Slesia-Schlesien, and Swidnica-Schweidnits was the core target.

"Ŧ"

The map also contains the Church of Peace. And while visiting it, together with a Polish historian, a big surprise came out - - it was there where I was baptized in 1940!



Of course I was absolutely stunned to learn that I had been there - 75 years before!

The other ones essential for me were the minster in Banteln, where I ended my church attachment, and the cathedral in Cologne, where I first realized what amazing architecture is shaping sacred buildings. Both were described in an earlier chapter.

What I also learned when visiting these churches, and step-by-step informing myself about what's behind religious structures, was that other religious have different concepts for relevant facilities - - and that I need to travel and thereby to inspect myself mosques and stupas and pagodas.

That's what I have done for decades now, and that enables me to write this essay!

? Which church will once be the most immense ever?

How can I know this?? Of course I don't!! However, I have not only investigated countless *existing* buildings, I also studied those in *construction* or in *planning*.

And this led me to -- to the "Familia Sagrada" facility in Barcelona, the only one which is actually not yet completed.

SPAIN, Barcelona, Basilica Familia Sagrada

In my final e-mail message about sacred buildings,

Message C52

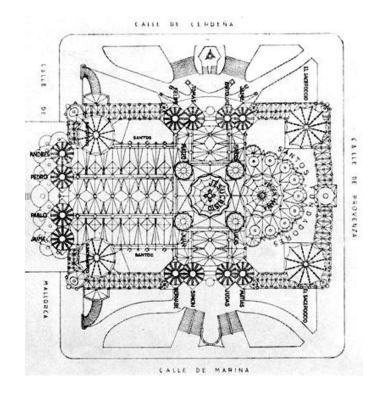
I had outlined my considerations. Here are the essential viewpoints:

<> The "Familia Sagrada" in Barcelona/Catalonia/Spain is in construction since 1882, and expected to be finished sometime between 2026 and 2032.

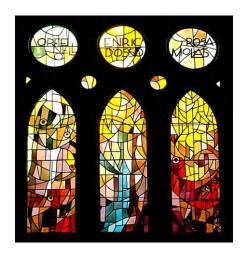


- <> My rationale is the architect, the highly esteemed Antonio Gaudi (1852-1926), who designed an absolutely unique and absolutely stunning configuration.
- <> He shaped the project with his personal architectural and engineering style, combining Gothic and curvilinear Art Deco features, as well as Catalanian traditions. He had devoted the remainder of his life to this, and he is buried in the crypt, after his death in 1926.





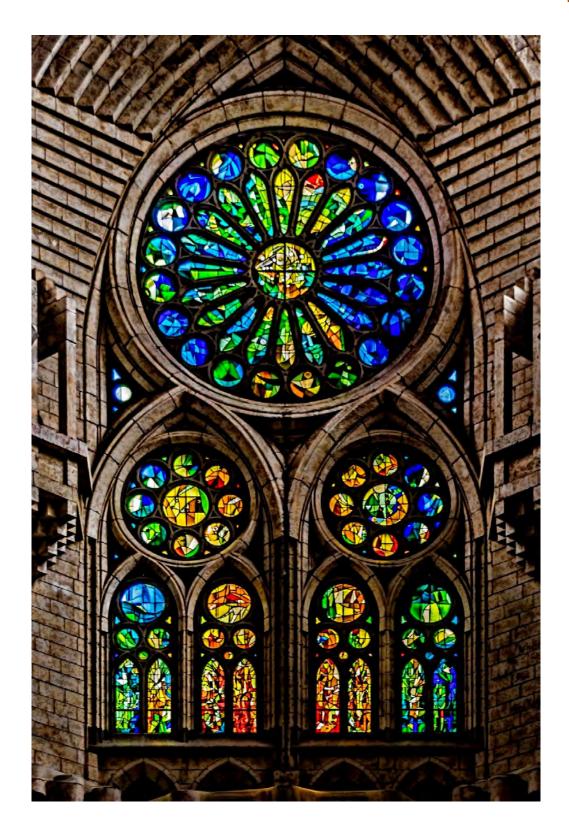
- <> Yes, his plan states that it will be the largest ever-built cathedral length 90 m, width 60 m, nave width 45 m, 18 spires (of which 8 have been done so far), and highest spire (planned) 170 m.
- Suilding it goes for 137 years now, and predictions about when it will be fully realized vary from "in 8 years" to "never", given the mere size and the complexity of Gaudi's conception.



<> The presented pictures (based on my visits in 1970, 1999 and 2008) show four large towers (finished ones), two highly decorated spires, and also the already done colorful glass windows.







Meanwhile it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and in November 2010 Pope Benedict XVI consecrated this church, as a basilica.

The appreciation of the building is immense - one review says in strong praise "it is probably impossible to find a church building anything like it in the entire history of art".

> The final pic is a painting of how the "Familia Sagara" will look when completed.





? What is the cultural significance of these buildings?

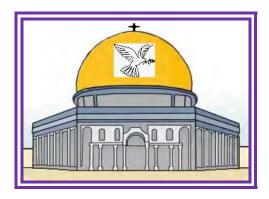
Firstly, all people devoted to a religion will go there regularly, to participate in religious actions, such as a mass or other worship services. In religions like Islam this is strongly prescribed.



Secondly, even those who are not formal members may go into a church or mosque or stupa or pagoda to think, to reflect, to experience quietness.

Thirdly, some religious places were (and occasionally are) where aggression and violent agendas got created and supported, such as the christian crusades or the muslimic power brawls - sadly so.

Finally, all sacred facilities may be, and can be, where peace is provided, or at least strived for.



And this is indeed the hope I connect with temples and churches and mosques and stupas and pagodas - - to be a harbour for humans and a shipyard for peace.