# Varia

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# Columns, Ribs, and Beautiful Bodies: Building Churches of Living Stones

## Columnas, nervios y cuerpos bellos. Construir iglesias de piedras vivas

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Abstract
The essay addresses living stones, a topic frequently discussed in patristic and exegetical literature but hitherto without a basic knowledge of whether – and if so, how – this allegory manifested itself in Christian pictorial and architectural iconography in the Middle Ages. It provides an overview of the topic by presenting a selection of European monuments linked to this metaphor by inscriptions and other examples where the same connection can be assumed. In doing so, it attempts to open up a pathway to a better understanding of the allegory, including changing our view of what is now generally regarded as mere decoration in medieval churches.

Keywords: Living stones, *lapides vivi*, churches, columns, ribs, Europe, Middle Ages, symbolism

Resumen
El ensayo aborda el argumento de las piedras vivas, tratado con frecuencia en la literatura patrística y exegética, pero del que sigue faltando una comprensión básica sobre si –y, en caso afirmativo, cómo– esta alegoría se manifestó en la iconografía pictórica y arquitectónica cristiana de la Edad Media. La obra ofrece una visión general del tema presentando una selección de monumentos europeos vinculados a esta metáfora por inscripciones y otros ejemplos en los que cabe suponer la misma conexión. De este modo, intenta roturar un camino que conduzca a una mejor comprensión del tema, incluyendo el cambio de una visión

contemporánea que tiende a considerar esos elementos como mera decoración en las iglesias medievales.

Palabras Clave: Piedras vivas, *lapides vivi*, iglesias, columnas, nervios, Europa, Edad Media, simbolismo

## I

The medieval cathedral, the greatest wonder of European architecture, resembles a living organism. Myriad leaves sculpted in stone grow out of all its parts, from the capitals of columns and piers, the tops and edges of towers and turrets, pinnacles and gables, the tips of tracery and from the windows, canopies, arches, flying buttresses, corbels, and bosses. Scrolling tendrils are carved into the wooden stalls or painted on the webs of the vaults. Are they mere decoration, or did they have some meaning, and if so, what was it?[1]

We will be disappointed if we hope for enlightenment about this ubiquitous phenomenon by writings of the period. The most detailed surviving treatise on the significance of medieval church buildings is silent on the subject. The first book of William Durandus's *Rationale divinorum officiorum* (1286) offers a symbolic exposition of the individual parts of a church,[2] but not of the *viriditas*. Does this mean, then, that it had no other significance than the purely decorative, or was it that William considered it comparatively marginal issue as, for instance, demonic sculptures, another feature of cathedrals that he passes over unnoticed?

William's contact with the contemporary master-builders appears to have been limited and the miracles of his era such as Beauvais Cathedral (choir completed in 1272) seem to have had no influence on the content of his writings. William's vision of the church conformed to a tradition defined centuries before him, but this was also true of cathedrals. They had common sources. One of them was the interpretation of the allegory of living stones, *lapides vivi*, to which we should now turn.

William works his way to this allegory through an introductory explanation of the meaning of the word "church": "The word church hath two meanings", he says, "the one, a material building, wherein the divine offices are celebrated: the other, a spiritual fabric, which is the collection of the faithful […]." The assembled community is essential because

[1] For *viriditas*, see Peter Dronke, "Tradition and Innovation in Western Colour-Imagery", in Adolf Portman, Rudolf Ritsema (eds.), *The Realms of Colour* (= Eranos 41), Leiden, 1974, pp. 80–88; Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown. Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170-1300*, New Haven-London, 2004, pp. 87–101; Guido Siebert, "*Aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possesio* – Sinnbildung und Naturstudium im Pflanzendekor des Rayonnant", in Guido Siebert (ed.), *Der Naumburger Meister. Bildhauer und Architekt im Europe der Kathedralen*, 3 vols., Petersberg, 2011, II, pp. 301–309; Frank Richter, *Die Pflanzenwelt der gotischen Kathedralen*, Petersberg, 2019; Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, 2. ed. rev. by Paul Crossley, Yale, 2000, p. 358, note 164A. See also Herbert Kessler's essay in this volume.

[2] John Mason Neale, Benjamin Webb, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum Written by William Durandus*, 3rd ed., London, 1903. For William's treatise, see Stephen Mark Holmes, "Reading the Church: William Durandus and a New Approach to the History of Ecclesiology", *Ecclesiology*, 7 (2011), pp. 29–49, and Herbert Douteil, Rudolf Suntrup (tr.), *Vilhelm Durandus: Rationale divinorum officiorum*, 4 vols., Münster, 2016, I, pp. xvii–xlviii.

"as the material church is constructed by the joining of various stones, so is the spiritual Church by that of various men".[3] William develops this idea further, asserting: "For the material church, wherein the people assemble to set forth God's holy praise, symboliseth that Holy Church which is built in heaven of living stones."[4] In addition, when he meditates on the meaning of mortar as a bond between stones, he returns to the allegory and writes that "those living stones are knit together in the bond of peace".[5]

What are living stones and what form could they take in medieval churches? If the material church is an image of the spiritual church, we should find them in any ecclesiastical edifice. Although scholars have debated these questions,[6] no clear answer has emerged.[7] Nor is the present essay more than a contribution to the discussion, but it is one that is important if we are to address the ultimate question, which is whether there is anything at all in medieval churches that can be regarded as mere decoration.

In the patristic and exegetical commentaries, living stones are a frequently employed and discussed architectural allegory, in which they form a part of the living Church, with Christ as its cornerstone. The allegory is based on the scriptural passage in which St Peter calls members of the Church *lapides vivi* (1 P 2:1-9):

> Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected by men but chosen and made honorable by God. Be you also as living stones built up a spiritual house (*domus spiritalis*), a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore it is said in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious. And he that shall believe in him shall not be confounded. To you therefore that believe, he is honor: but to them that believe not, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner.

Peter then points out that rejecting Christ leads people to fall, while those who accept him will be brought out of the darkness.

In the context of Christ's teaching and promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven, this initiated a chain of thought in the pages of the Church Fathers and medieval

[3] Neale, Webb, *The Symbolism*, p. 10.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 14.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[6] Josef C. Plumpe, "*Vivum saxum, vivi lapides*: The Concept of the "Living stone" in Classical and Christian Antiquity, *Traditio*, 1 (1943), pp. 1–44; Peter Wallmann, "*Lapis vivus*. Die Adalwig-Inschrift (11. Jh.) aus der Abteikirche Essen–Werden", *Westfälische Zeitschrift*, 146 (1996), pp. 25–38; Jennifer O'Reilly, "Introduction", in Seán Connolly (tr.), *Bede: On the Temple*, Liverpool, 1995, pp. xlvi–li; reprinted in Jenifer O'Reilly, Mairín MacCarron, Diarmuid Scully (eds.), *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, London, 2019, pp. 96–103; Megan Welton, "All Manner of Precious Stones: Civic Discourse and the Construction of the Early Medieval City", in Els Rose, Robert Fierman, Merel de Bruin-van de Beek (eds), *City, Citizen, Citizenship, 400-1500: A Comparative Approach*, Utrecht, 2024, pp. 367–395.

[7] See, for instance, Michel Lauwers, "Des 'pierres vivantes.' Contruction d'églises et construction sociale dans l'Occident medieval," in Stéphanie Diane Daussy et al. (ed.), *Matérialité et immatérialité dans l'Église au Moyen Âge. Actes du Colloque organisé par le Centre d'Études Médiévales de l'Université de Bucarest, le New Europe College et l'Université Charles-de-Gaulle Lille 3, Bucarest, 22–23 octobre 2010*, Bucharest, 2012, pp. 359–378. On the topic, see also Janusz Nowiński, "*Lapides vivi, Deus est lux, ecclesia est paradisus* – kościół cysterski w średniowieczu nośnikiem znaczeń symbolicznych / *Lapides vivi, Deus est lux, ecclesia est paradisus* – the Cistercian church in the Middle Ages as a carrier of symbolic meanings", *Architectus*, 46/2 (2016), pp. 25–39.

exegetes. And it has inspired some attempts to link medieval monuments to the idea of living stones. Karl Möseneder, for example, argued that a cycle of more than a hundred portraits of saints in the chapel of the Holy Cross at Karlstein Castle derived from this notion.[8] Ilka Mestemacher and Stephan Trinks shared the opinion that the allegory was instrumental in the imagery of the Carolingian canon tables.[9] And, finally, Erik Thunø argues that the mosaic of the heavenly Jerusalem in Santa Prassede in Rome was created with this metaphor in mind.[10] Altogether, these suppositions are not conclusive evidence, and the imbalance between the paucity of the monuments adduced and the intensity of the theological discussion lends some weight to the doubts about the translation of the allegory into the buildings that have been expressed by Günther Binding who has addressed the metaphor in the most detailed research to date.[11] Fabio Barry, too, has assumed that it had only a marginal influence in his excellent work on 'painted stones'.[12]

Indeed, many sources warn us not to confuse the stones of material churches with living stones, i.e. the Christian community.

When Emperor Henry IV wished to adorn the cathedral of Speyr in 1101, he stated that "the most excellent ornament of the church are living stones, that is, learned clerics".[13] St Bononius (d. 1026) was praised for building the Benedictine monastery of Lucedio (Vercelli, Italy) out of "living and insensible stones", meaning his brethren and the building material respectively.[14] When the church of Notre Dame in Thérounne (Pas-de-Calais) was in a state of disrepair, Bishop John commissioned a "wise master builder" to construct a new edifice consecrated in 1133. Having laid the foundations and finished it from the outside, the architect turned "the insensible stone and wooden material" into the opposite, because he restored the church "much more reasonably and usefully with living stones and wood

[8] Karl Möseneder, "*Lapides vivi*. Über die Kreuzkapelle der Burg Karlstein", *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 34 (1981), pp. 54–64.

[9] Ilka Mestemacher, "Matter of Life and Death? The "Living Stones" and Medieval Gospel Books", in Isabella Augart, Maurice Sass, Iris Wenderholm (eds.), *Steinformen: Materialität, Qualität, Imitation*, Berlin et. al., 2019, pp. 179–189; Ead., *Marmor, Gold und Edelsteine, Materialimitation in der karolingischen Buchmalerei*, Berlin-Boston, 2021, pp. 140–149; Stefan Trinks, "*Saxum vivum and lapides viventes*: Animated Stone in Medieval Book Illumination", in Alessandro Bausi, Bruno Reudenbach, Hanna Wimmer (eds.), *Canones: The Art of Harmony*, Berlin, 2020, pp. 193–207.

[10] Erik Thunø, "'Living stones' of Jerusalem. The Triumphal Arch Mosaic of Santa Prassede in Rome", in Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, Hanna Vorholt (eds.), *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, Turnhout, 2014, pp. 223–230; Id., *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome: Time, Network, and Repetition*, New York, 2015, pp. 159–171.

[11] Günther Binding, *Der früh- und hochmittelalterliche Bauherr als sapiens architectus*, Cologne, 1996, pp. 327–336.

[12] Fabio Barry, *Painting in Stone: Architecture and the Poetics of Marble from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, New Haven-London, 2020, pp. 154–157.

[13] Franz Xaver Remling (ed.), *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Bischöfe zu Speyer*, 2 vols., Mainz, 1852, I, p. 74, no. 72: […] *ecclesiam Spirensem in honore ipsius a nostris parentibus, avo videlicet Conrado et patre nostro Heinrico imperatoribus augustis in eadem ecclesia consepultis devote constructam et dotatam nos quoque ditare sublimare prediis familiis ornamentis diversisque operibus magnificare in honore dei et sancte Marie devote studemus. Quoniam autem excellentius ecclesie ornamentum in vivis lapidibus, id est in clericis litteratis morigeratis discretis religiosis esse scimus ipsosque in nulla ecclesia sine cotidiane stipendio prebende stabiliter deo in divini officii constitutione posse servire videmus* […].

[14] *Monumenta Germaniae historica* […], *Scriptorum* 30/2 (*Vita sancti Bononii abbatis Locediensis*), Leipzig, 1934, p. 1029: *At cum multo tempore ad construendum domicilium Dei vivis et insensibilibus lapidibus laboraret et in omnibus inreprehensibilem se exhibiret et iam tempus immineret, ut remunerante Deo sui agonis bravium reciperet, consumato opere fratribus valefecit et spiritum Deo reddidit.*

inside".[15] Like St Bononius, the master builder created a space for the local community, i.e. living stones, for which he was hailed.

In addition, commenting on the construction of the Cistercian abbey of Sylvanès (Languedoc) in 1136-1161, Hugo Francigena explicitly disclaimed an interest in making any link between the new structures and the living stones. "I have actually considered it superfluous to say anything about material buildings," he states, "since every day they are renewed, the old ones destroyed and the new ones built, and, God willing, continually changed for the better. On the other hand, one must know about spiritual buildings because this house is founded on a firm bedrock, which is Our Lord Jesus Christ […]. In it, great stones, living stones, precious stones are hewn, squared and polished, from which the heavenly Jerusalem is built so as to ensure the participation of the citizens in its own self".[16]

In an account of work commissioned by Geoffroi of Montbray in Coutances Cathedral and other buildings around 1049, Geoffroi was acclaimed as a "wise man and well presiding over his house, who built his house of living and elected stones and supported it with marvelous columns".[17] The text thus associates the living stones with spiritual columns and Gerald of Wales in the *Life of St. Hugh* (c. 1210-1214) provides another instance of such a link. He praises Hugh's rebuilding of Lincoln Cathedral (1192-1210) and stresses that the church was not made only of insensible white and black marble but of living stones:

> Nor did he brighten the place only with lifeless material in this way, but from living stones, more precious and far more excellent and admirable than all marble and all gold, silver, and ivory, [that is] from the more learned and virtuous persons of England, he constructed sound and reliable columns for this church.[18]

It was not so much the cathedral's pillars as the pious clerics that held up the structure.

This narrative was soon picked up in the *Metrical Life of St Hugh* (c. 1220), but its message differs considerably because the author conceded that the material stones may actually reflect the living stones. It seems as if we are witnessing a shift towards another approach to

[15] Oswald Holder-Egger (ed.), *Vita Johannis episcopi Teruanensis*, in *Monumenta Germaniae historica* […], *Scriptorum* 15/2, Hannover, 1888, p. 1145: *Ecclesiam beate Mariae Teruanensis, quam, uti prelibavimus, interius exterisque miserabiliter dissipatam* [Johannes espiscopus] *invenit, mox primis ordinationis suae temporibus biformi structura sapiens architectus reparare preparavit; et de insensibili quidem lapidum lignorumque materia fabricam eius a fundamentis magna ex parte incipiens, laudabiliter extrinsecus consummavit, sed vivis intrinsecus lapidibus lignisque rationabilibus eam multo utilius instauravit* […].

[16] Hugo Francigena, *Tractatus de conversione Poncii de Larazio et exordio Salvaniensis monasterii*, in Victor Mortet, Paul Deschamps (eds.), *Recueil de textes relatifs à l'histoire de l'architecture et à la condition des architectes en France, au moyen âge, xi^e^-xiii^e^ siècles*, 2 vols., 2nd ed., Paris, 1995, II, pp. 45–48: *De materialibus etiam edificiis dicere superfluum judicavi, cum cotidie renovantur, veteran destruuntur, et nova edificantur, et Deo propitio, in melius assidue commutantur. De spiritualibus autem sciendum est quia domus hec fundata est supra firmam petram, id est Dominum Jesum Christum* […]. *In ea lapides magni, lapides vivi, lapides pretiosi dolantur, quadrantur et poliuntur, de quibus Hierusalem celestis edificatur ut civitas cuius participation ejus in idipsum.* Trans. by Barry, *Paining in Stone*, p. 156.

[17] Mortet, Deschamps, *Recueil*, I, pp. 71–73: *O virum prudentem et domui suae bene praesidentem, qui de vivis et electis lapidibus domum suam composuit, et mirabilibus columnis eam sustentavit.*

[18] Richard M. Loomis (ed., tr.), *Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis): The life of St. Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln 1186–1200*, New York-London, 1985, p. 19 (Book I/5): *Nec solum ex insensibili materia locum illum sic illustravit, verum etiam ex vivis lapidibus, omni marmore omnique auro, argento et ebore preciosioribus, longe excellentius et laudabilius, ex eruditioribus et honestioribus Anglie personis, firmas et fidelissimas ecclesie sue columpnas erexit.*

the allegory in relation to the material church: "Thus do unfeeling stones enclose the mysteries of living stones, a building made by hands represents a spiritual building, and the double form of the church blazes forth embellished with twofold art."[19] Could this shift be related to the 'living' Gothic cathedrals?

This short introduction gives us a glimpse of the ideas embodied in the allegory of living stones and paints a picture of the double-formed church with two types of stones, one consisting of apostles, saints, doctors of the church, clerics, and ordinary believers, and the other of "insensible" building material. Given that the aim of this essay is to explore whether this powerful image was imprinted in the material church, we will concentrate on the link between living stones and columns mentioned in the accounts, which has the potential to help clarify the question. In addition, the ribs (of the late Romanesque churches) will also be a focus of research.

## II

The notion of living stones or rocks was already known in antiquity. It was believed that stones and minerals such as marble or lead grew in the quarries and could regenerate once the mines had been exhausted. This myth was probably of prehistoric origin and survived well into the modern era, nourished by empirical observation of what chalky water can produce in caves and conduits.[20]

To Virgil and Ovid a living rock grew out of earth or water. If life is everywhere and in everything on Earth, it must also be in stone, they thought, and particularly in natural, uncut, unquarried rock. The vivid and variegated structure of rock of volcanic origin, in particular, reinforced this belief.[21]

The idea of living rock/stone was commonplace in the Renaissance. Sebastiano Serlio (1544), for instance, described the Sphinx of Giza, cut from the rock, as a work made of living stone (*pietra viva*).[22] A few surviving literary sources attest that this was not simply a revival, and the ancient tradition had persisted its various forms throughout the Middle Ages. We hear, for example, that Richard the Lionheart's splendid Castle Gaillard in Normandy (begun in 1196) was surrounded by a moat cut "in living stone" (*in vivo lapide*).[23] Similarly, in the *Lamentatio Viterbiensis* (before 1196), the chronicler Godfrey of Viterbo describes his city as beautiful, fertile, and pleasant, with "foundations that do not fail, since they are of living stone".[24] This was certainly because the town was built on a hill.

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[19] *Ibidem*, pp. 91 and 95: *Sic insensibiles lapides mysteria claudunt Vivorum lapidum, manualis spiritualem Fabrica designat fabricam; duplexque refulget Ecclesiae facies, duplici decorata paratu.*

[20] Barry, *Painting in Stone*, pp. 49–67.

[21] Plumpe, *"Vivum saxum"*, pp. 1–8.

[22] Sebastiano Serlio, *Il terzo libro di Sabastiano Serlio bolognese, nel qual si figurano, e descrivono le antiqvita di Roma, e le altre che sono in Italia, e fuori de Italia*, Venezia, 1540, p. 94: *Poco discosto da la piramide è una testa di pietra viva con parte del busto, tutta d'un pezzo* […].

[23] Mortet, Deschamps, *Recueil*, II, pp. 172–173: *In illa igitur rupe preexcelsa edificavit arcem et circumcinxit muro altissimo et fossis profundissimis in vivo lapide excisis* […].

[24] Georg Heinrich Pertz (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae historica, Scriptorum* 22, Hannover, 1872, p. 374: *Iam video ipsam civitatem pulcram et fertilem et amenam. Et fundamenta ipsius deficiunt non, quia sunt de vivo lapide.*

A twelfth-century description of the basilica of St James in Santiago de Compostella, too, can be associated with the classical tradition, which stresses the specific quality of the material. "With these and other very beautiful works", its author writes, "the basilica of the Blessed James shines most gloriously. It is totally built of the strongest living stone, brown, that is, and hard as marble, and decorated within with various forms […]".[25] Given the church is constructed entirely of granite, and its surface is thus very coarse and grainy, it was as 'vivid' to medieval beholders as volcanic material to the ancients.

Also 'vivid' was a marble called Rosso Ammonitico Veronese, rich in fossils and ornamented with pronounced red veining, which is why it was called living stone in medieval Verona. Columns made from this marble adorned the cloister of the Abbey of San Zeno Maggiore in Verona (begun in 1138), which served as model for the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena in Campo Marzio in the same town. A contract signed in 1293 specified that the cloister of the latter monastery should be lined, according to San Zeno, with "four columns of living stone of the red rock of Santo Zorzi [i.e. Rosso Ammonitico] with forty paired collonnetes of the same living stone with their bases and capitals with arches of the stone of Avesa", a yellowish limestone.[26] Although the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena was destroyed in 1812, the colonnades at San Zeno still give us an idea of the appearance of this space made of 'living stones'. Beautiful stone of this kind was also planned for the basilica of Santa Anastasia in another part of the town. In 1428 it was detailed that the planned (but never built) façade was to be done "in a more beautiful, decent, and better fashion and work, and especially out of living stone and with figures".[27]

Living stone seems to have been a synonym for marble and hard stones in medieval Milan too. Galvano Fiamma, a Dominican, and chronicler of Milan (died 1344), famous today for mentioning America long before Columbus, estimated that there were two thousand sepulchral monuments in the town's churches made of marble, silex "or any other sort of living stone".[28]

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[25] Paula Gerson, Annie Shaver-Crandell, Alison Stones, Jeanne Krochalis, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, 3 vols., London, 1998, II, pp. 76–77: *Hic ceterisque operibus pulcherrimis Beati Iacobi basilica obtime gloriosa refulget. Est etiam tota ex fortissimis lapidibus vivis brunis scilicet et durissimis ut marmor facta, et deintus diversis speciebus depicta* […].

[26] Giambattista Biancolini, *Notizie storiche delle chiese di Verona*, 4 vols., Verona, 1752, IV, p. 662: *Ibique frater Antonius prior monasterii sanctae Mariae Magdalenae stipulatione solepni promisit dare, et solvere magistro Jacobo, cui Gratasoia dicitur quadragingentas, et quinquaginta libras Veron. parvorum, pro quibus quadrigentis, et quinquaginta libris Veronen. parvorum ipse magister Jacobus, cui Gratasoia dicitur pactum faciendo cum dicto domino priore stipulante promisit eidem domino priori Antonio facere unum claustrum in dicto monasterio sanctae Mariae Magdalenae ita altum quod bene cooperiri possit suis propriis expensis ipsius magistri Jacobi exceptis expensis calcinae, acquae, et sabuli cum quatuor colonis de lapide vivo de petra rosa sancti Zorzi cum quadraginta paribus de colonellis de eodem lapide vivo cum suis basibus, et capitellis, cum voltulis de lapide de Avesa, et hoc ad exemplum claustri laborerii sancti Zenonis de Verona, promittens se non intromittere in aliquo laborerio nisi istud expleverit primo*. See, Fabio Coden, "Il chiostro di San Zeno Maggiore e le sue trasformazioni fra età carolingia e gotica", *Annuario Storico Zenoniano*, 25 (2018), pp. 22–34.

[27] Paola Marini, Christian Campanella, *La Basilica di Santa Anastasia a Verona. Storia e restauro*, Verona, 2011, pp. 25–28: […] *in pulcriori, decentiori ac meliori modo et opere, et presertim de lapide vivo et figuris* […].

[28] Giorgio Giulini, *Memorie spettanto alla storia, al governo ed alla descrizione della città e campagna di Milano ne' secoli bassi*, 4 vols., Milano, 1855, II, p. 786: *Inveniuntur etiam urnae marmoreae, aut ex silice, aut alio quocunque lapide vivo MM, et est talis, quae constitit ultra XX marchas argenti.*

The commission of such a monument is documented in Treviso. When Dante's son, Pietro Alighieri, died in 1364, it was specified that the consoles with lion's heads supporting his tomb (*archa*) in the church of Santa Margherita were to be made of "living or Istrian stone".[29] Although the tomb has not survived in its original form and location, it is clear that the stone required differed from that of Verona or Compostella, but was still consistent with the idea of the living character of its structure. White Istrian limestone is fine and usually has no distinctive texture, but it can have grey veining, and this was certainly what those who commissioned the work had in mind.

Unlike for the late Hellenistic poets and the tradition they represented, for Christians living stones meant regular, perfectly dressed 'ashlars', which was understood as ideal building material for the spiritual edifice of the Church, not for any material structure. As mentioned above, if observed in a material church, they would be a mere reflection of the real living stones, i.e. members of the Christian community. To distinguish between the two types of stone, medieval authors used the singular (*vivo lapide, lapide vivo*) for the building material, although not always, and the plural (*lapides vivi*) for the Christian allegory. This appears to be a subtle boundary and one has to ask whether it was impermeable. Would it have been impossible to 'switch' from *living stone* to *living stones* if the columns of cloisters made of vivid marble were associated with pious monks and nuns, the true *lapides vivi*? Could these two meanings have intermingled and influenced each other?

Although probably aware of classical 'geology', the original author of the allegory, St Peter, based his conceit on the Old Testament metaphor of the cornerstone that "the builders rejected". The apostle was referring to the prophecy in which God announces to Isaiah his intention to lay the precious cornerstone of a new Jerusalem in Sion (Isa 28:16), and in doing so he made the combined qualities of a stone that is perfectly squared, precious, and living the heart of future theological reflections. What follows is a selection from a plethora of these patristic and exegetical commentaries, mostly of early origins.

The earliest known interpretation of Peter's words already emphasizes the link between the living stones and the heavenly Jerusalem, a key image that will inspire many others. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, which is also the oldest Christian exegesis of the New Testament (c. 231-242 AD), Origen of Alexandria poses the following question: "And what else would the city of the great king, the true [i.e. heavenly] Jerusalem, be than the Church that is built of living stones?"[30]

The Church was young, her foes ubiquitous and the ongoing fierce fight invited the exegetes to build up a contrast between the spiritual abode of the living stones and the shrines of their opponents. In his panegyric on the dedication of the church at Tyre delivered in 314

[29] Gerolamo Biscaro, "La tomba di Pietro di Dante", *L'Arte*, 2 (1899), pp. 417–431; Ruth Wolff, „Tombs and the *imago doctoris in cathedra* in Northern Italy, ca. 1300–1364", in Anne Leader (ed.), *Memorializing the Middle Classes in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, Berlin-Boston, 2018, pp. 141–146. For the document, see Antonio Bruno, "La Tomba di Pietro di Dante in Santa Margherita", (https://www.academia.edu/49212512): […] *archa dicti domini domini Castellani, de lapidibus infrascriptis, videlicet mudiglonos magnos cum capitibus leonum de lapide vivo sive Istriano, fundum dicte arche de lapide vivo cum rotundo retorto.*

[30] Ronald E. Heine (tr.), *Origen, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 13–32*, Washington, 1993, p. 85 (Book 13).

or 315, Eusebius of Caesarea distinguished between Jewish and pagan temples and those constructed of living stones, which he detailed as follows:

> God looks down on this ensouled temple comprised of all of us and sees the building made of living but firm stones, well and securely founded upon a foundation comprised of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone that the evil architects of evil things rejected – not only the architects of that old structure which no longer exists [i.e. the Temple in Jerusalem], but also of that which in the present is comprised of most of humanity [i.e. the pagan temples].[31]

St Augustine adopted the pattern and introduced the contrast between living stones and "dead stones", *lapides mortui*. When commenting on Psalm 96:7 he stated in his *Expositions on Psalms* (c. 392–422 AD) that

> all nations now confess the glory of Christ: let those who worship stones be ashamed. Because those stones were dead, we have found a living stone; indeed those stones never lived, so that they cannot be called even dead; but our stone is living, and hath ever lived with the father, and though he died for us, he revived, and liveth now, and death shall no more have dominion over him.[32]

In Sermon 24 he furthermore pictures them as fallen men:

> By dead ones I do not mean those of which these buildings are constructed, or those worked by stone-masons' chisels, or those sculpted by men to be gods, or rather sculpted by men to be called gods, not to be them. I am not calling the stones themselves dead, which is what the gods are like, it is the people I am calling dead stones.[33]

Important on the matter of the living stones is Sermon 37, in which Augustine interprets Proverbs 31:10 and describes the Church as a woman bejeweled with precious stones, which are called living stones:

> What is so great about this woman being more precious than precious stones? If you are thinking in terms of human cupidities, if you are taking 'precious stones' literally, what is great about the Church being found to be more precious than any stones you can think of? There is really no comparison. But there are precious stones in her. So precious are these stones that they are called living ones (I Petr. II, 4, 5). So there are precious stones adorning her, but she herself is more precious still.

He added that some stones have gone astray from the jewelry of the Lady and lie now in darkness.[34]

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[31] Jeremy M. Schott (tr.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: The History of the Church. A New Translation*, Oakland-California, 2019, p. 467.

[32] Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* […] 37, Paris, 1865, col. 1244; Philip Schaff (tr.), *Saint Augustin: Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, New York, 1917, p. 477.

[33] Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* […] 38, Paris, 1841, cols. 162–163; Edmund Hill (tr.), *The works of Saint Augustine: A translation for the 21st century* III: *Sermons* II: *Sermons 20–50*, New York, 1990, pp. 72–73.

[34] Migne, *Patrologiae* 38, cols. 225–226; Edmund Hill (tr.), *The works of Saint Augustine: A translation for the 21st century* III*: Sermons* II: *Sermons 20–50*, New York, 1990, pp. 186–187.

Shortly afterwards, to shape and promote Augustine's thought, the theologian and poet Prosper of Aquitaine included in his *Liber epigrammatum* (c. 455) an epigram entitled "On the building of the house of God" (*De aedificatione domus dei*). He described the living Church as a perfectly constructed spiritual structure consisting of a Christian community:

> *claret opus domini, qui totam construit aulam effectusque piis dat studiis hominum, quorum perpetui decoris structura manebit, si perfectam auctor protegat atque regat.*
>
> When the living stones are joined by the bond of peace, and by equal numbers all things are harmonized, then shine the work of the lord who built the entire hall, and gave pious effect to the studies of men, to whom the structure of perpetual beauty will remain if the founder protects and governs the completed edifice.[35]

He was successful in his task because his book was widely read and one of Charlemagne's scholars, either Alcuin or Angilberth, used the epigram verbatim for the inscription in the Palatine Chapel at Aachen,[36] one of Europe's most celebrated medieval buildings.

The epigram also seems to have inspired the opening lines of the widely used hymn composed for the office of the dedication of churches, which emphasized living stones as the building material of the heavenly Jerusalem. Originating between the seventh and eighth century, the *Caelestis urbs Jerusalem* (or *Urbs beata Jerusalem*) likewise begins by picturing the radiant celestial city as a place of peace, which opens through splendid gates and is made of perfectly dressed living stones:

> Jerusalem, heavenly city, blest vision of peace! Built from living stones, you are raised on high to the heavens and attended, like a bride, by countless thousands of angels. […]. In this city the gates of glittering pearls stand open for all to enter; for every man that follows the path of virtue must come to those gates – every man that endures suffering here for love of Christ. Its stones are fashioned by many a stroke and blow of the Savior-mason's hammer and chisel. Thus shaped they go to the making of this mighty structure, each being fitly joined to each and finding its appointed place in the whole building.[37]

The Venerable Bede, too, commented on the allegory in his exposition of Solomon's Temple. Starting from Ambrose's (c. 339-397) brief characterization of the Temple as a structure that evolves into a spiritual building formed of living stones,[38] Bede developed

[35] Albertus G. H. Horsting (ed.), *Prosper Aquitanus: Liber epigrammatum*, Berlin-Boston, 2016, no. 36, p. 102: *Cum lapides vivi pacis compage ligantur inque pares numeros omnia conveniunt, claret opus domini, qui totam construit aulam effectusque piis dat studiis hominum, quorum perpetui decoris structura manebit, si perfectam auctor protegat atque regat.* Trans. by Anna Bryson.

[36] Clemens M. M. Bayer, "Die karolingische Bauinschrift des Aachener Domes", in Max Kerner (ed.), *Der verschleierte Karl. Karl der Große zwischen Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Aachen, 1999, pp. 446–450; Story, *Charlemagne*, pp. 296–309.

[37] Joseph Connelly (ed., tr.), *Hymns of the Roman Liturgy*, London, New York-Toronto, 1957, pp. 158–161: *Caelestis urbs Jerusalem, beata pacis visio, quæ celsa de viventibus saxis ad astra tolleris, sponsaeque ritu cingeris mille angelorum millibus.* […] *Hic margaritis emicant patentque cuntis ostia; virtute namque praevia mortalis illuc ducitur, amore Christe percitus tormenta quisquis sustinet. Scalpri salubris ictibus et tunsione plurima, fabri polita malleo hanc saxa molem construunt aptisque juncta nexibus locantur in fastigio.*

[38] Jennifer O'Reilly, "Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan genealogy", in Felicity O'Mahony (ed.), *The Book of Kells*, Aldershot, 1994, pp. 355–369, 383–388.

the metaphor in a treatise devoted solely to this celebrated building. Written c. 729-731 as the first of this kind, *On the Temple* presents Solomon's structure as the prefiguration of the Church:

> The house of God which King Solomon built in Jerusalem was made as a figure of the holy universal Church which, from the first elect to the last to be born at the end of the world, is daily being built through the grace of the king of peace, namely, its redeemer. […] If, therefore, he became the temple of God by assuming human nature and we become the temple of God through the Spirit dwelling in us [Rm 8:11], it is quite clear that the material temple was a figure of us all, that is, both of the Lord himself and his members which we are. But (it was a figure) of him at the uniquely chosen and precious cornerstone laid in the foundation [Is 28:16], and of us as the living stones built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, i.e. on the Lord himself [Ep 2:20; 1 P 2:5–6].[39]

This paved the way for applying Solomonic references in every Christian church.

## III

Having considered the manifold meanings of living stone in the Middle Ages, our next step will be to examine selected monuments, starting with those that refer to living stones through inscriptions.

Since it was St Augustine who developed the allegory significantly, his thought naturally echoed throughout the Middle Ages. It was elaborated by clerics such as Garnerius de Rochefort, Abbot of Clairvaux, who in his commentary on the sermon *In dedicatione ecclesiae* (c. 1190) stated that the walls of the City of God were constructed of living stones, which he associated with precious stones:

> Hence the strength of the walls must be made of living stones; from the sardius through humility, from the emerald through the greenness of faith, from the topaz through the brightness of wisdom. For it is a bright stone, as well as gold, in which the brightness of wisdom is marked. Therefore the City of God was built of them […].[40]

Augustine's edifice built of living stones is appealingly illustrated in the manuscript of the *City of God* created for St Vitus's Chapter library at Prague Castle (c. 1200). It shows a fortified city ruled by Christ in Majesty seated on a rainbow throne at its center (Fig. 1). "This city is built of living stones",[41] reads the uppermost text band, with Christ being the most illustrious living stone and others portrayed below him. They include the apostles, prophets, and martyrs in one register and a group of confessors, virgins, and Bohemians (pictured without a halo) in the register underneath. The accompanying inscription tells us what has

[39] Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, pp. 5–6.

[40] Garnerius Lingonensis, *Sermones in festa Domini et Sanctorum* 38, in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* […] 205, Paris, 1855, col. 814C: *Unde de lapidibus vivis munuri debet fortitudo murorum; ex sardio per humilitatem, ex smaragdo per fidei virorem, ex topazio per sapientiae claritatem. Clarus enim lapis est, et auro similis: in quo sapiantiae claritas annotatur. His igitur aedificata est civitas Dei* […].

[41] *Hec urbs ex vivis constat constructa lapillis.*


Fig. 1. City of God. Prague, Archiv Pražského hradu, Knihovna Metropolitní kapituly sv. Víta, MS A 7, fol. 1v. Around 1200, based on the lost original of c. 1150

ensured the selection of that particular nation: "Hope, love, and faith place the righteous Bohemians here". In addition, the closing lines at the bottom sum up what makes this place so delightful: "Here are peaceful homes and a thousand joys".[42]

The Book of Kells (c. 800, fol. 202v) reveals an older version of this imagery, which, as Jennifer O'Reilly has pointed out, pictures Christ as the eternal priest in the new Temple,

[42] *Spes, amor atque fides iustos locat hic Boemenses.* […] *Hic sunt tranquille sedes et gaudia mille.* Alexandre de Laborde, *Les manuscrits a peintures de la Cité de Dieu de Saint Augustin*, 3 vols., Paris, 1909, I, pp. 225–226; Stephan A. Hurlbut, *The Picture of the heavenly Jerusalem in the writings of Johannes of Fecamp De Contemplatiba Vita and in the Elizabethan hymns*, Washington, 1943, I, pp. 18–19; Peter Springer, "*Trinitas-Creator-Annus*. Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Trinitätsikonographie," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 38 (1976), pp. 17–45; Anežka Merhautová, Dušan Třeštík, *Ideové*

Fig. 2. Book of Kells, illustration with Temptation and the Temple, c. 800. Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS A. I., fol. 202v

epitomized by his own body. The new structure stands firm thanks to Christ as the living cornerstone while plentiful living stones, whose heads are turned up to him, are portrayed under the Temple (Fig. 2).[43]

References to the new Temple, the heavenly structure constructed of living stones, were also embodied in an edifice that was contemporary to the Book of Kells and stands at the dawn of European medieval architecture, Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen.

*proudy v českém umění 12. století*, Prague, 1985, pp. 47–60; Id., "Spezifische Züge der böhmischen Kunst im 12. Jahrhundert," in Friedrich Möbius, Ernst Schubert (eds.), *Architektur des Mittelalters. Funktion und Gestalt*, Weimar, 1983, pp. 106–122; Charles R. Dodwell, *Pictorial Art in the West, 800–1200*, New Haven, 1993, pp. 313–314; Susanne Wittekind, "Die Illustration von Augustinustexten im Mittelalter", in Wilhelm Geerlings, Christian Schulze (eds.), *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter*, Leiden, 2004, pp. 2: 115–118. The illumination was probably based on a lost work created in Prague around 1150. *Jindřich Zdík (1126-1150). Olomoucký biskup uprostřed Evropy*, Jana Hrbáčová (ed.), Olomouc, 2009, cat. no. 56, pp. 118–125 (entry by Dalibor Havel and Pavol Černý).

[43] O'Reilly, "Exegesis", pp. 358–361 and 366–368.

Constructed between 796 and 804,[44] the chapel's splendid octagonal interior was lined with verses (originally painted, renewed as a mosaic in the early twentieth century) unfolding between a sturdy ground-floor pillared arcade and upper gallery, which opens into the central space through a double row of pillars and columns (Fig. 3).[45] As mentioned above, the verses repeat Prosper's epigram except for the added closing lines praising Charlemagne for the building of the chapel: "Thus God wants this temple that Charles, the prince, founded, to be of a stable foundation".[46]

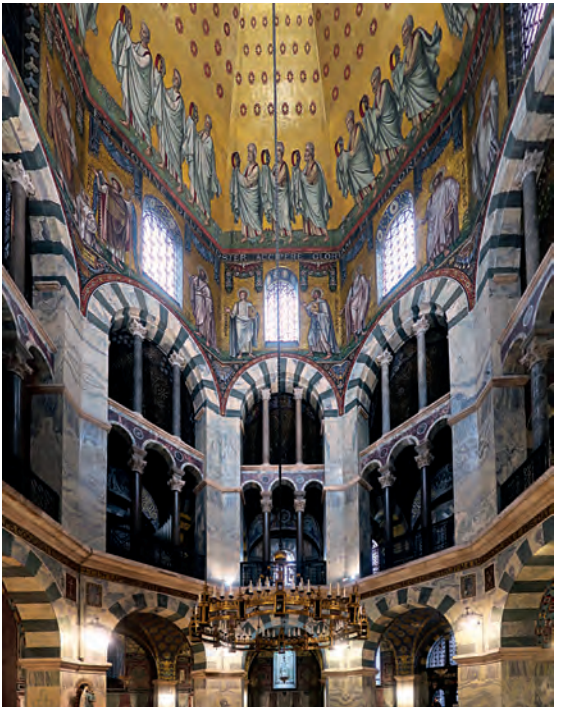

Fig. 3. Aachen, cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, octagon, c. 796-804. Photo Petr Uličný

[44] For the dating, see Ulrike Heckner, "Der Tempel Solomons in Aachen – Datierung und geometrischer Entwurf der karolingischen Pfalzkapelle," in Ulrike Heckner, Eva-Maria Beckman (eds.), *Die karolingische Pfalzkapelle in Aachen: Material, Bautechnik, Restaurierung*, Worms, 2012, pp. 25–43.

[45] Nicoletta Isar, "*Celica Iherusalem Carolina*: Imperial Eschatology and light Apocalypticism in the Palatine Chapel at Aachen", in Alexei M. Lidov (ed.), *Новые Иерусалимы. Иеротопия и иконография сакральных пространств / New Jerusalems: Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces*, Moscow, 2009, pp. 313–337.

[46] Ernst Dümmler (ed.), *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* 1 (= *Monumenta Germaniae historica* […], *Poetarum latinorum medii aevi* 1), Berlin, 1881, p. 432: *Cum lapides vivi pacis compage ligantur, Inque pares numeros omnia conveniunt, Claret opus domini, totam qui construit aulam, Effectusque piis dat studiis hominum, Quorum perpetui decoris structura manebit, Si perfecta auctor protegat atque regat: Sic deus hoc tutum stabili fundamine templum, Quod Karolus princeps condidit, esse velit.* Helga Giersiepen (ed.), *Die Inschriften des Aachener Doms*, Wiesbaden, 1992, pp. 6–7. Translation adapted from Vedran Sulovsky, *Making the Holy Roman Empire Holy: Frederick Barbarossa, Saint Charlemagne and the sacrum imperium*, Cambridge-New York, 2024, p. 208.

Given that, except for the last line, the text was not written in the context of the chapel's construction (as previously assumed), the question arises of how the epigram and the structure were linked. Was the chapel conceived according to the verses, was the text selected ad hoc because it corresponded to the intended allusion of the structure, or was it placed in the chapel to add a new meaning? These are important issues, but probably of no interest to the chapel's visitors in the following centuries would have known nothing about the design process. They would have perceived the inscription and the building as one and this may have played a considerable role in the development of European medieval architecture.

The panegyric refers to the heavenly city called an *aula* inhabited by living stones, i.e. apostles, saints, doctors of the church, learned clerics, and other pious men. Can we see them in the church? Is there anything there that appears to be made of living stone? Today we may observe them in every gilded tessera of the dome's mosaic,[47] but we should keep in mind that this is a nineteenth-century product and it is unclear whether the earlier mosaic, destroyed in the eighteenth century, was actually created in Charlemagne's time.[48] On the other hand, the perfectly dressed and glittering columns are – at least partly – original and make the main contribution to the striking appearance of the church.[49] Their shafts are topped with foliated capitals that seem to gush like fountains of life from each column.

There is sound evidence that these columns would have been perceived as made of living stone in material sense. If we assume that this tradition as documented in Italy and Spain is of earlier origin, then Charlemagne's contemporaries would have seen the painted columns richly decorated with veining in the Carolingian canon tables in the same way (Fig. 4). If we cross the boundary between *lapide vivo* and *lapides vivi*, we can discern the representation of spiritual living stones in these illuminations, as suggested by Ilka Mestemacher and Stephan Trinks.[50] By extension, we may suppose that the chapel's columns had this meaning too.

If Prosper's epigram was selected ad hoc, and not as an initial inspiration for the chapel, it may have been the equally telling *Caelestis urbs Jerusalem* hymn, mentioned earlier, that was in the mind of the architect and patrons when the building was designed. Echoing both Revelation and St Peter's allegory, it describes the radiant city opening up through splendid gates made of perfectly dressed stones. This is an imagery observable in the chapel's interior where the double-height columnar openings recall marvelous gates. There are eight of them, which does not match John's description of the heavenly Jerusalem, but this does

[47] This was suggested by Thuno, *The Apse Mosaic*, pp. 161–162.

[48] The earlier mosaic replaced paintings dated to the Carolingian period. Ulrike Wehling, *Die Mosaiken im Aachener Münster und ihre Vorstufen*, Köln, 1995, pp. 12–39. Sulovsky, *Making*, pp. 225–228, advocates the Carolingian origin of the mosaic.

[49] After 1794, the columns had been shipped to Louvre, but in 1815, most of them were moved back to Aachen. During the reconstruction, which took place between 1844 and 1847, only 23 columns were put back, while 15 new ones were installed. Originally, the columns were mostly of grey and red granite, two of them of green-black porphyry. Mestemacher, *Marmor*, pp. 185–194.

[50] Mestemacher, "Matter of Life", pp. 179–189; Trinks, "*Saxum vivum*", pp. 193–207. See also Robert Deshman, "The Imagery of the Living Ecclesia and the English Monastic Reform", in Paul E. Szarmach (ed.), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, Kalamazoo, 1986, pp. 261–282.

not undermine the identification,[51] for the octagon, in its turn, became the source for future representations of the heavenly city. This is evidenced by the Barbarossa crown chandelier, which has been hanging in the chapel's central space since c. 1170 and has a meaning revealed in the opening lines of the engraved inscription, recalling the *Caelestis urbs Jerusalem* hymn: "Symbolized by this image is the heavenly Jerusalem, the vision of peace, where the hope of certain peace awaits us".[52] Contrary to the detailed description in Revelation it is again octagonal, or more precisely eight-petal in plan and fortified with sixteen towers.[53]


Fig. 4. Lorsch Gospels, c. 810, Alba Julia, Biblioteca Documentară Batthyáneum, MS R II 1, fol. 13r: Canon I. Biblioteca Naţională a României

[51] The length of the chapel (from the portico to the east wall of the chancel) was 144 Carolingian feet (Heckner, *Der Tempel*, pp. 46–48), which corresponds to the length of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:17). The perimeter of the chapel thus symbolically defines the limits of the celestial city.

[52] Clemens M. M. Bayer, "Die beiden grossen Inschriften des Barbarossa-Leuchters", in Clemens Bayer, Theo Jülich, Manfred Kuhl (eds.), *Celica Iherusalem. Festschrift für Erich Stephany*, Cologne, 1986, p. 225; Sulovsky, *Making*, p. 198.

[53] For the close affinity of the chandelier to the chapel, see Isar, Celica, pp. 325–326; Arno-Lutz Henkel, *Celica Ierusalem. Studien zur mittelalterlichen Lichterkrone*, Ph.D. thesis, Philosophischen Fakultät, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, 2021, pp. 152–196; and Sulovsky, *Making*, pp. 194–235, who argues that the chandelier was purposely made of 144 parts.

This elasticity in biblical interpretation enabled other layers of meaning to be added, allowing the creation of a 'typological' architecture, which combined more than one models. Bede's treatise *On the Temple* may have provided a theoretical matrix for such a marriage by presenting Solomon's Temple as a prefiguration of the Church. Insofar as architects responded to it, it would have invited them to unite different sources so that the resulting structure would offer a complex chain of meanings.

The Palatine Chapel at Aachen seems to be a case of this kind. As Notger claims in his *Gesta Caroli*, it was built "after the model of the most wise Solomon"[54] and called the "Temple of the most wise Solomon" by Alcuin who spoke about Aachen as Jerusalem during the construction of the chapel (798).[55] Typically, there is hardly any direct visual link to the biblical Temple (1 Kings, 68; 2 Chronicles, 3-5) except for the high portico flanked by two winding stairs. If the Temple was the source for the chapel, only a fraction was translated into the actual structure from detailed description in Scripture. But this did not matter. The form of the chapel chiefly derives from the centrally planned church of San Vitale in Ravenna (532-547),[56] akin to the octagonal Dome of the Rock, a shrine built on the site of the destroyed Solomon's Temple c. 691.[57] By the ninth century, Christians had (mistakenly) identified this Muslim memorial structure commemorating Mohamed's ascension into heaven as the *Templum Solomonis*, and it is possible that this was the prevailing belief at Charlemagne's court.[58]

The second focal point of Jerusalem was the Rotunda-Anastasis on the western side of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, constructed by Constantine the Great (c. 335) on the site where Christ was supposed to have risen from the dead. Since this was likewise a centrally planned memorial building, it would not have been difficult to design the Aachen chapel in such a way as to embody both Jerusalem edifices.[59] The relics of Jerusalem origin assembled in the chapel during Charlemagne's life strengthened this link.[60]

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[54] Hans F. Haefele (ed.), *Notker der Stammler: Taten Kaiser Karls des Großen* (= *Monumenta Germaniae historica* […], *Scriptorum rerum Germanicarum*. Nova Series 12), Berlin, 1959, p. 38.

[55] Ernst Dümmler (ed.), "Alciuni sive Albini Epistolae", in *Monumenta Germanie historica* […], *Epistolae Karolini aevi* II, Berlin, 1895, no. 145, p. 235; Günther Bandmann, "Die Vorbilder der Aachener Pfalzkapelle", in Wolfgang Braunfels, Hermann Schnitzler (eds.), *Karl der Grosse. Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, 5 vols., Düsseldorf, 1965, III, p. 452.

[56] *Ibidem*, pp. 439–442.

[57] *Ibidem*, pp. 452–453; Gustav Kühnel, "Aachen, Byzanz und die frühislamische Architektur im Heiligen Land", in Birgitt Borkopp, Barbara Schellewald, Lioba Theis (eds.), *Studien zur byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte: Festschrift für Horst Hallensieben zum 65. Geburtstag*, Amsterdam, 1995, pp. 39–57.

[58] Mentioned as such by Bernard the Monk in 870. John Willkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, Warminster, 2002, p. 266. For this, see Kühnel, "Aachen", pp. 51–57.

[59] Bandmann, "Die Vorbilder", p. 459; Judith Ley, ""Warum ist die Aachener Pfalzkirche ein Zentralbau?" Der Neue Salomonische Tempel als Vorbild herrschaftlicher Kirchenstiftung", in *Die Aachener Marienkirche*, pp. 102–103.

[60] Bianca Kühnel, "Jerusalem in Aachen", in Mariëtte Verhoeven, Lex Bosman, Hanneke van Asperen (eds.), *Monuments & Memory. Christian Cult Buildings and Constructions of the Past. Essays in honour of Sible de Blaauw*, Turnhout, 2016, pp. 95–105.

By interpreting the chapel as a piece of 'typological' architecture that refers to more than one model, we can better understand a wealth of the meanings that it embodies and the role played in it by the living stones. As we have noted above, medieval authors linked *lapides vivi* to spiritual columns. Since St Paul called his fellows James, Peter (Cephas), and John *columnae* in the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal 2:9), columns (or piers) had been principally associated with the apostles. In his speech at the Council of Nicaea in 325, Constantine the Great visualized the Church as a façade of twelve columns and made this concept one of the cornerstones of Christian architectural iconography.[61] Constantine's biographer Eusebius tells us about the circular structure that the emperor then built over the Tomb of the Lord in Jerusalem, "ringed with twelve columns to match the number of the Apostles of the Savior".[62] In Constantinople, Eusebius adds, the emperor built the church in honor of the Apostles and chose to be buried there surrounded by twelve "sacred monuments" representing the disciples.[63] The link between columns and apostles is also recognized by St Augustine in his letter to Honoratus (411 or 412) in which he asks himself: If "the body of Christ is the Church, who are the Church's props, then, but the apostles who are elsewhere [Gal 2:9] also called columns?"[64]

If columns were associated with human beings, this would also be true of the living stones. We have cited both Geoffroi of Montbray and Gerald of Wales and they were not alone in their opinions. Adalwig (c. 1065-c. 1080), the abbot of the Benedictine church of St Ludgerus in Essen-Werden, commissioned a reliquary chest for the body of the local saint St Ludgerus. He placed it behind the main altar on two columns that allowed the faithful to pass under the relics. The reliquary is no longer extant but the surviving columns tell us about Adalwig's deed. On the gilded copper strips mounted on the upper and lower ends of the shafts, the following commendatory inscription was engraved, emphasizing the role of the columns: "O God, grant a resting place in Paradise to Adalwig who has completed the work that makes this place shine. Give him, O Christ, a place among living stones, columns united by the bond of faith".[65] Since his monastery was not far from Aachen (120 km), Adalwig probably had the columns of the Palatine Chapel in mind when placing two in the church.

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[61] Günther Bandmann, *Early Medieval Architecture as Bearer of Meaning*, trans. by Kendall Wallis, New York, 2005, pp. 62–64, 75–83; Bruno Reudenbach, "Säule und Apostel. Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Architektur und architekturexegetischer Literatur im Mittelalter", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 14 (1980), pp. 310–351; John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning: The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1988, pp. 70–90; Günther Binding, *Vom dreifachen Wert der Säule im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, 2003; Paul Binski, *Architecture and Affect in the Middle Ages*, Oakland, 2024, pp. 21–42. See also Deshman, "The Imagery", pp. 261–262.

[62] Averil Cameron, Stuart G. Hall (ed., tr.), *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*, Oxford-New York, 1999, p. 136.

[63] *Ibidem*, p. 176.

[64] Alois Goldbacher (ed.), *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* XLIV: *S. Aureli Augustini operum sectio II., s. Augustini epistulae* III. ep. CXXIV-CLXXXIV A, Vienna-Leipzig 1904, p. 185: […] *quid sunt ossa nisi corporis firmamenta? corpus autem Christi ecclesia; firmamenta ergo ecclesiae qui nisi apostoli, qui etiam columnae alibi appellantur?*. Translation adapted from Roland Teske (tr.), *The Works of Saint Augustin. A Translation for the 21st Century* II: *Letters* 2: *Letters 100–155*, New York, 2003, p. 263.

[65] *Confer Adalwigo requiem Deus in paradiso, qui peragebat opus, quo nitet iste locus inter coniunctas fidei compage columnas vivorum lapidum da sibi Xriste locum.* Peter Wallmann, "Zur Neuausstattung der werdener Salvatorbasilika unter Abt Adalwig (um 1065–1080)", *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 54 (1993), pp. 24–25; Id., "*Lapis vivus*. Die Adalwig-Inschrift (11. Jh.) aus der Abteikirche Essen–Werden", *Westfälische Zeitschrift*, 146 (1996), pp. 25–38.

Aachen's panegyric was probably known as far away as Basel, inspiring its pious citizens to express their hope to become living stones in the heavenly city. Two of them, probably an architect and patron of Basel Cathedral, commissioned (c. 1200) an epitaph articulating this hope. Sculpted inside a columnar aedicule, their heads turn towards an angel descending from the celestial city pictured above them. The city's towers flank an inscription that reads as follows: "In the heavenly hall, these two are called living stones for they serve the building of this temple" (Fig. 5).[66] It conveys that these men did not yet consider themselves worthy to be counted among the living stones but hoped this standing would be secured through the work they had done on the cathedral. As at Aachen, the heavenly place they planned to reach was called an *aula* and their terrestrial material church a *templum*. In the spiritual dwelling, they would have seen themselves as the columns depicted next to them.


Fig. 5. Basel, cathedral of Sts Henry and Kunigunde, epitaph, c. 1200. (Photo Alejandro García Avilés)

In Aachen, the association of the Palatine Chapel's columns with the apostles was demonstrated at that time (before 1207) by inserting the relics of the apostles Simon and Jude under the capitals of two columns flanking the royal throne in the gallery.[67] John Onians has connected these columns with the theology of Hraban Maur, Alcuin's pupil and one of the most prominent scholars of the Carolingian era,[68] but that theology can also be regarded as the theoretical formula for the whole structure.

[66] *Aula celesti lapides vivi titulantur hi duo templi huius quia structure famulantur.* Peter Kurmann, Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz, "Memoria und Porträt. Zum Epitaph des Hans von Burghausen an der Martinskirche zu Landshut", in Stefan Bürger, Bruno Klein, Katje Schröck (eds.), *Werkmeister der Spätgotik. Personen, Amt und Image*, Darmstadt, 2010, pp. 49–50; Hans Rudolf Sennhauser, Hans Rudolf Courvoisier, *Das Basel Münster. Die frühen Kathedralen und der Heinrichsdom. Ausgrabungen 1966, 1973/74*, Ostfildern, 2018, pp. 112–114; Hans-Rudolf Meier (et alii), *Das Basler Münster* (= Die Kunstdenkmäler der Schweiz: Kanton Basel-Stadt 10), Bern, 2019, pp. 284–288. The epitaph was originally placed in the narthex between the towers on the western side. As for the depicted figures, many variants have been considered: two patrons, two architects, two clerics, including a director of the minster's *fabrica*. Its two-towered architecture is often seen as the representation of Basel minster.

[67] Theodor J. Lacomblet, *Urkundenbuch für die Geschichte des Niederrheins oder des Erzstifts Cöln, der Fürstenthümer Jülich und Berg, Geldern, Meurs, Kleve und Mark, und der Reichsstifte Elten, Essen und Werden* II, Düssledorf, 1846, Nr. 19, p. 12: […] *locumque eidem destinavi intermedium duarum columpnarum, que elevate ante regalem cathedram in sui summitate sub ipsis capitellis eorundem apostolorum* [Symonis et Jude] *corpora dicuntur felici pondere sustinere reclusa.*

[68] Onians, *Bearers of Meaning*, p. 76.

When developing Bede's thought on Solomon's Temple, Hraban specifically discussed Jachin and Boaz, the two columns that had stood in front of the Temple. In his encyclopedia *De universo* (c. 840), he first asserts that the bases of columns "can be mystically understood as the books of the divine Testaments on which rests all the doctrine of the holy preachers. For the columns are the apostles and the teachers of the Gospel". He also points out that "these persons were prefigured in the two columns that we read were erected by Hiram when building the Temple of the Lord".[69] Jachin and Boaz are then considered to be a prefiguration of columns that ensure the salvation of men. Hraban's thesis may thus shed more light on the concept of typological architecture, i.e. an architecture conceived with reference to the Temple and Heavenly City, and the role that columns played in it.

## IV

We will now return to the heavenly city and examine one early medieval monument, which has recently been associated with living stones, and may help us to read other similar monuments.

Created around 822 by Pope Pascal I, the mosaic in the church of Santa Prassede in Rome adorning the arch opening from the transept into the nave was a novelty in Rome. Its iconography focused on the image of the heavenly Jerusalem and invited association with classical structures since it was perhaps the first time in Christian architecture that such a setting was called a triumphal arch (Fig. 6).[70]

The mosaic reflects John's description of the celestial city made of gold, with walls of jasper, twelve gates of pearls, and foundations made of twelve different precious stones (Rev 21, 18-21). This vision was projected into the imagery of an earthly city with walls constructed of ashlars, but in Santa Prassede these are made of gold and encrusted with precious stones of different shapes and sizes, all in a dark green color (the color of jasper), while the blue joints are filled with pearls.

In line with St Peter's words, Herbert Kessler associated the multitude of saints approaching the city with living stones.[71] In addition, the focus on ashlars in the imagery has led Erik Thunø to suggest that the city's walls refer to them as well.[72]

Indeed, medieval exegetes pointed out that the heavenly Jerusalem was built of living stones in the same way that any other earthly city was built of insensible material. St Bruno

[69] Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* […] 111, Paris, 1852, col. 404A: *Bases autem mystice possunt intelligi libri Testamentorum divinorum, quibus innititur omnis doctrina sanctorum praedicatorum. Columnae enim sunt Apostoli et doctores Evangelii.* Onians, *Bearers of Meaning*, pp. 75–76.

[70] For the mosaic, see Rotraut Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm von S. Prassede in Rom: Ikonographie und Ikonologie*, Münster, 1990; Marchita B. Mauck, "The Mosaic of the Triumphal Arch of S. Prassede: A Liturgical Interpretation", *Speculum*, 62 (1987), pp. 813–828; Herbert L. Kessler, Johanna Zacharias, *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim*, New Haven and London, 2000, pp. 107–116; Thunø, *The Apse Mosaic*, pp. 164–170. For the triumphal arch, see Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture", *Art Bulletin*, 24 (1942), p. 34, reprinted in Id., *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art*, New York, 1969, p. 233.

[71] Kessler, Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, pp. 114–115.

[72] Thunø, *Living stones*, pp. 223–230.

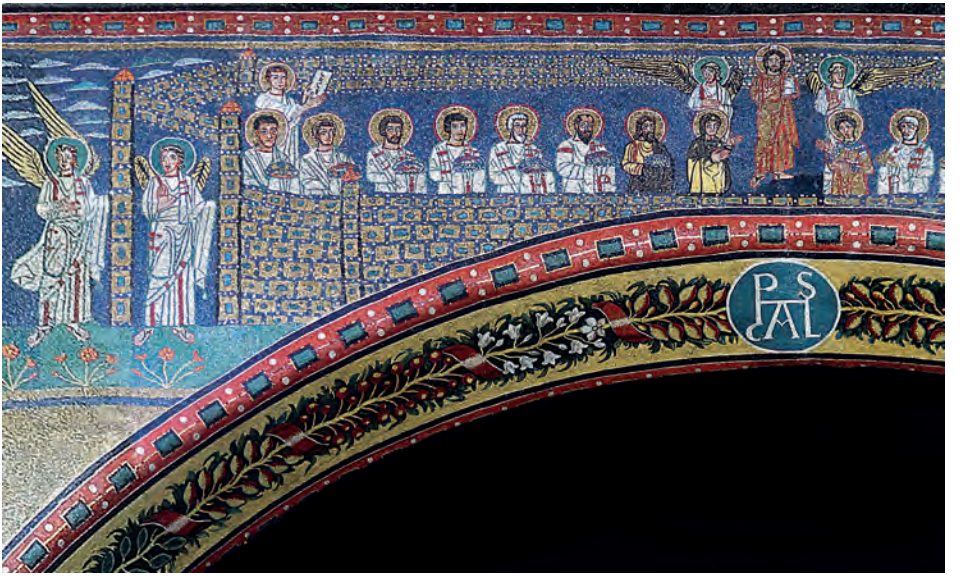

Fig. 6. Rome, church of Santa Prassede, triumphal arch, detail of the mosaic with the heavenly Jerusalem, c. 822. Photo Petr Uličný

in *Expositio in Psalmos* (c. 1080), for instance, writes that a new Jerusalem "is being built every day by God out of the faithful departing from this world, existing not really as a city but as a city called a city because of its likeness to that which is made of living stones as a city is made of lifeless stones."[73] Rupert of Deutz in the *Commentaria in Apocalypsim* (1119-1121) writes that the walls and gates of the heavenly city are built of "living stones (1 Pet. 2) in a certain likeness to the material stones that are bonded together by a glue in a structure made by hand.[74] Finally, Aelred of Rievaulx claimed in his *Sermones de tempore* (c. 1160) that the living stones of which the heavenly Jerusalem is made took the shape of ashlars (*lapidibus quadris*).[75]

While Kessler's interpretation is persuasive, Thunø's argument is supported by the fact that the identification of precious stones with living stones was commonplace in the eyes of late classical and medieval beholders. A somewhat later but telling example is one of the two crown chandeliers that illuminated the abbey church of St Maximius at Trier. Only the inscriptions have come down to us from this lost piece of work, which reads as follows:

[73] *Sancti Brunonis Carthusianorum institutoris Expositio in psalmos*, Montreuil, 1891, p. 581: *Jerusalem, dico, quae quotidie aedificatur a Deo ex fidelibus de hoc mundo migrantibus, existens non revera civitas, sed ut civitas, scilicet dicta civitas per similitudinem, eo quod ex vivis lapidibus fiat, ut civitas ex lapidibus inanimatis.*

[74] Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* […] 169, Paris, 1894, col. 1199: *Murus namque cujus et portae et fundamenta sunt, universitas est electorum, qui tanquam lapides vivi super fundamenta haec super aedificati sunt (I Petr. II), ad quamdam similitudinem lapidum materialium glutine congruo sibimet in structura manufacta cohaerentium.*

[75] Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* […] 195, Paris, 1855, col. 262 (Sermon IX).

> Behold the perfect work, O Maximine, the priest, which adorns your temple. It consists of the supreme crown that glitters to the glory of faith in the beautiful form of the heavenly Jerusalem, which John had seen led by angelic hands over the steep mountains embellished with glittering living stones. Jasper, sapphire, hyacinth, beryl, sardius, chalcedony, chrysoprase, topaz, chrysolite, emerald, sardonyx, and amethyst are in their midst and give their vibrating light to those who are born of a mortal body.[76]

There were many ways of picturing the walls of the heavenly city but in the Bishop's Chapel in Gurk, Austria, the imagery harks back to the prototypes represented by Santa Prassede. Painted around 1260, the vault of this elevated chapel wedged between the western towers of the cathedral figures two typologically related worlds: Paradise and the heavenly Jerusalem. The painted ribs in the eastern bay epitomize the four rivers of Paradise, while in an effort to integrate this imagery with the western bay there are four gigantic towers rising up across the heavenly Jerusalem as the symbols of the evangelist.[77] The towers protrude from the wall in a form reminiscent of Santa Prassede, but the pattern is adapted so that each ashlar is ornamented with four or five gems (Fig. 7).

With further modifications, the pattern would look like 'dice', and this is the way that it is applied, for instance, in the archivolt above the northern portal of Bourges Cathedral (partly sculpted c. 1160 and finished in the thirteenth century).[78] Traces of the original paint reveal that the 'dice' were done in green, the color of jasper, recalling the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem.[79] As is common in Romanesque portals, they alternate with a foliaged arch referring to Paradise and eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven (Fig. 8).

Alternating foliaged and patterned archivolts likewise appear above the left doorway in the twelfth-century western façade of Rouen Cathedral (c. 1200, Fig. 9).[80] Here, too, the precious-living stones seem to be displayed in an unusually designed archivolt penetrated by à jour quatrefoils, crescents, and other forms.[81]

A different design can be found in the church of St Maria zur Höhe in Soest, Germany (c. 1220). Its vault is one of the most striking late Romanesque church interiors in the region, although what we see now is largely a nineteenth-century replica based on

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[76] Franz Xaver Kraus, *Die christlichen Inschriften der Rheinlande. Von der Mitte des achten bis zur Mitte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, Freiburg i. Br.-Leipzig, 1894, p. 183: *Aspice perfectos o Maximine sacerdos ornatus operis templum tibi condecorantis exhibet hanc rutilam fidei sub honore coronam summae Iherusalem speciosa more micantem altipetens vates quam viderat ille Iohannes angelicis manibus montis super ardua ductus quam vivi lapides exornant arte micantes iaspis saphyrus hiacinthus et inde beryllus sardix calcedon crispassus et ipse topason crisolitus schmaragdus sardonix ametistus has inter medius est emicat ille choruscus dans lumen cunctis mortali carne creatis.* Henkel, *Celica Ierusalem*, pp. 215–218.

[77] Ernst Bacher, "Monumentalmalerei", in Günter Brucher (ed.), *Geschichte der Bildenden Kunst in Österreich* II: *Gotik*, Vienna, 2000, pp. 399–401; Waldemar Posch, Josef Wilfing, *Die Fresken der Bischofskapelle in der Westempore. Dom zu Gurk*, Passau, 2001; Rosmarie Schiestl, *Die Wandmalereien der Westempore des Gurker Domes*, Graz, 2011, part. 93–136.

[78] For the portal, see, Willibald Sauerländer, *Gothic sculpture in France 1140–1270*, London, 1972, pp. 48, 399–400, pl. 34–35.

[79] Jasper is described as green in all medieval biblical commentaries. Hana Šedinová, "The Symbolism of the Precious Stones in St. Wenceslas Chapel", *Artibus et Historiae*, 20/39 (1999), pp. 81, 83–84.

[80] Sauerländer, *Gothic sculpture*, pp. 470–471, pl. 182.

[81] The pattern remotely resemble the jeweled bands of Roman mosaics.

a fragmented and poorly documented original.[82] Trees, animals and stylized 'fruits' painted on the vaults in the nave and aisles represent Paradise. Occupying a distinct position among the various vault patterns is a large cross arching across the eastern bay of the south aisle and consisting of multiple small 'tiles' of varied, mostly foliaged forms. One of the arms of the cross rises from the rainbow mandorla presenting us with Christ in Majesty seated on a columnar aedicule framing the window (Fig. 10). Stylized faux-marble ashlars in its archivolt add significantly to its striking appearance and the painted aediculae highlight other windows in the church. Faux-marble ashlars also appear in the west bay of the nave in the painted ribs terminating in a roundel with a multi-petal 'flower', with differently colored leaves that are 'stitched' together (Fig. 11).

Fig. 7. Gurk, cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Bishop's Chapel, western bay with the heavenly Jerusalem, detail, c. 1260. After Waldemar Posch and Josef Wilfing, Die Fresken der Bischofskapelle in der Westempore. Dom zu Gurk, Passau, 2001, p. 33

Fig. 8. Bourges, cathedral of Saint-Etienne, north portal, c. 1160. Photo Petr Uličný

[82] Eva-Maria Bongardt, *Die Kirche St. Maria zur Höhe in Soest und ihre Bildausstattung*, Regensburg, 2021.

Fig. 9. Rouen, cathedral of Notre Dame, west façade, left doorway, c. 1200. Photo Petr Uličný

Fig. 10. Soest, church of St Maria zur Höhe, vault in the eastern bay of the south aisle, c. 1220. Photo Petr Uličný

The south-eastern bay recalls the apocalyptic cross found in churches outside Bourges. Dated to the second quarter of the twelfth century, the murals on the vault in the church of St. Sylvain in Chalivoy-Milon feature twelve prophets standing in the arcaded architecture of the heavenly city. They flank a large cross resembling a *crux gemmata* that has arms growing

Fig. 11. Soest, church of St Maria zur Höhe, vault in the western bay of the nave, c. 1220. Photo Petr Uličný

out of the medallion with the apocalyptic Lamb, but are decorated with quatrefoils instead of gems.[83] As stated by the tenth-century hymn *Cives celestis patrie*, for instance, the precious stones may represent men and the colors their various virtues: "These precious stones stand for human beings of flesh and blood; the variety of colors is their multiplicity of virtues".[84] Thus the quatrefoils might have been regarded as men/gems representing precious and living stones, the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. To mimic the myriad qualities of the gems, the foliated 'tiles' were given different colors and multiplied in Soest.

The same meaning seems to have been attributed to the faux-marble ashlars in the aediculae framing the windows. Interestingly, its design probably derives from the canon tables in the illuminated Gospel manuscripts such as the Harley MS 1775 in the British Library whose canon tables are flanked only by one pair of columns (Fig. 12). Produced in Italy in the middle of the sixth century, probably in Rome, the late classical architecture of this volume harks back to the Greek-Syrian manuscripts. Significantly, Tironian notes on

[83] Marcia Kupfer, *Romanesque Wall Painting in Central France. The Politics of Narrative*, New Haven-London, 1993, pp. 81–83; 167–168, pls. 56–58.

[84] Peter Kitson, "Lapidary traditions in Anglo-Saxon England: part II, Bede's 'Explanatio Apocalypsis' and related works", *Anglo-Saxon England*, 12 (1983), p. 119: *Hi pretiosi lapidem carnales signant homines; colorum est variatas virtutum multiplicatas.*

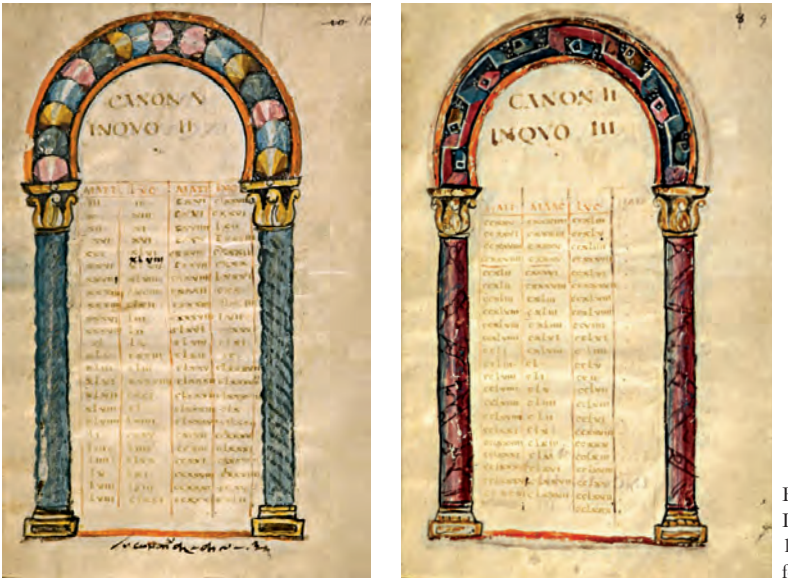


Fig. 12. British Library, Harley MS 1775, canon tables, fols 9r and 11v

the parchments reveal that the volume was kept in France in the eleventh century,[85] further supporting the theory of French influence in the murals.[86]

Marble or limestone with a variegated texture of this kind would have been called living stone in medieval Italy. Again, we face the question of a possible shift from *lapide vivo* to *lapides vivi*, and the way faux-marble is used in St Maria zur Höhe allows us to suggest that the distinction between the two was permeable.

The faux-marble ribs in the western vault of the nave were probably painted with such permeability in mind. They culminate in a medallion representing the heart of Paradise, and may recall the four rivers of Paradise. Four additional ribs rendered on the webs and resembling stylized columns are likewise sources of life since they nourish fantastic paradise animals. Small 'furry' discs growing from the limits of Paradise's enclosure and 'floating' on the webs stand for the fruits of Paradise. Instead of one continuing stream (as in Gurk), the principal ribs are composed of individual patterned ashlars. They thus probably represent living and precious stones, which are also found in the roundel, 'stitched' together by love and faith, in the form of multi-colored leaves, the building material of a new Jerusalem.

[85] Carl Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln. Kunstgeschichtliche Studien über die eusebianische Evangelien-Konkordanz in den vier ersten Jahrhunderten ihrer Geschichte*, Goteborg, 1938, pp. 209–220, pls. 84–102; Vladislav Popović, "Sur l'origine de l'évangéliaire latin de la British Library, Harley 1775", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l année – Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 134/3 (1990), pp. 709–735.

[86] On the other hand, Bongardt, *Die Kirche*, pp. 223–227, hypothesized that the painted aediculae are derived from the mosaics in the choir of the church of San Vitale in Ravenna.

The medallion recalls the Creation mosaic in the first dome of the atrium of San Marco in Venice, dated to the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Ringed by a strip of gems and pearls as a reference to the celestial city, it offered image of heaven composed of individual stars/souls bounded with a golden fish-scale grid.[87] This prefigures the imagery in the western bay in Soest, which gives us a glimpse of a new Paradise situated in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem (Jn 22).

Variety in patterns was a characteristic feature of such imagery. It is also evident in the case of the Capilla de Talavera or Capilla del Salvador, Old Cathedral, Salamanca, which will be our last destination (Fig. 13).[88] Formerly a chapter house located on the east side of the cloister and constructed c. 1180, its charming Mozarabic vault is made of four sets of parallel ribs, which, unlike ordinary vaults, do not culminate in a keystone but run across the width of the space. Here, the keystone was the divine light, i.e. Christ, which originally shone through a small opening in the center of the vault (now walled up). The ribs cross each other in such a way as to create a small eight-pointed star around the opening. No rib repeats the

Fig. 13. Salamanca, Old Cathedral, Capilla de Talavera (Capilla del Salvador), vault, c. 1180. Photo Petr Uličný

[87] For the medallion, see Herbert L. Kessler, "Response: Astral Abstraction", in Elina Gertsman (ed.), *Abstraction in Medieval Art Beyond the Ornament*, Amsterdam, 2021, pp. 329–354.

form of another; they differ in either profiling or the applied pattern. Here we look into a heaven formed by diverse Christian souls, precious and living stones, surrounding the most precious living stone of all, Jesus Christ.

Others hope to join them. Each rib springs from a colonnette with a foliaged capital that refers to the eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven promised to everyone by the Savior. Those portrayed below, ordinary men and women, diverse in appearances and gestures like the ribs, aspire to join the celestial community.

## V

On the basis of the examples presented above, this essay can conclude that the allegory of living stones was indeed translated into the imagery of medieval churches. In particular, it found expression through columns, the 'beautiful bodies' made of marble, porphyry, granite, and limestone that adorned many edifices, and from the twelfth century onwards through the richly decorated or painted ribs of the vaults. In most cases, these features were located inside churches, and the question of whether the allegory was imprinted on the cathedrals' impressive exteriors remains unanswered.

Our research has revealed the hitherto unsuspected complexity of the subject in which the ancient tradition of living stones met the Christian interpretation. It appears that despite great differences, the boundaries between them were not impermeable. These observations may thus add to broader discussion leading to a better understanding of medieval architecture.

[88] For the chapel, see Carl K. Hersey, *The Salmantine Lanterns: Their Origins and Development*, Cambridge, MA 1937, pp. 181–186; José Camón Aznar, Leopoldo Torres Balbás, "La bóveda gótico-morisca de la capilla de Talavera en la catedral Vieja de Salamanca", *Al-Andalus: revista de las Escuelas de Estudios Árabes de Madrid y Granada*, 5 (1940), pp. 174–178; José Luis Hernando Garrido, "Catedral Vieja de Santa María de la Sede", in *Enciclopedia del Románico en Castilla y Léon: Salamanca*, Aguilar de Campoo, 2002, pp. 283–284; Antonio Ledesma, "La capilla del Salvador en el claustro catedralicio salmantino, ¿evocación hierosolimitana? Reflexiones para un debate", in María Lucía Lahoz Gutiérrez, Manuel Pérez Hernández (eds.), *Lienzos del recuerdo: estudios en homenaje a José Mª Martínez Frías*, Salamanca, 2015, pp. 117–134.