

Research on the Evolution of the Architectural Style of Catholic Church in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance

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Abstract. Architects and artists in the Renaissance believed that Gothic architecture was a symbol of Christian theocracy, while ancient Greek and Roman architecture was non-Christian. With the impact of humanism and Protestantism on Catholicism during the Renaissance and Reformation, the architectural style of the Catholic Church changed dramatically. From 1500 to 1700, the style of the church also changed from the original Gothic style and the Latin cross to the Greek cross, and even integrated the Baroque style. From the perspective of the time axis, this paper mainly adopts the method of literature analysis, combined with the social background, the evolution of artistic style and other factors, trying to explain and analyze the changes in the architectural style of the Catholic Church during this period. After analyzing the historical trend of Catholicism and the literature at that time, it is not difficult to find that the pursuit of humanism in the Renaissance, the change in the style of the mainstream of art, and the anti-Renaissance movement directly affected the change in the style of the Catholic Church, becoming more secular and popular; this change also reflected the spirit of Florence and other places where the Renaissance originated at that time.

Keywords: Renaissance, church architecture, religious reform, Catholicism, Baroque style

1. Introduction

As the study of architecture in human society has gradually entered into modernism and the establishment of contemporary aesthetic buildings, people's understanding of medieval Gothic style architecture and Renaissance architecture, which deeply affect the architectural styles of Central and Southern Europe, has also entered a new stage with the enrichment of research literature and the diversification of perspectives. From the Gothic architecture born in the early Middle Ages to the conflation and fusion of the Latin Cross and the Greek Cross during the Renaissance, the trend of dome design and Baroque art, and the style, layout, and decoration of Catholic church buildings have been constantly changing in the trend of the times, among which the Renaissance is an important historical node. This article will try to analyze the factors of the religious, social, and cultural revolutions surging behind the change from the perspective of the time axis, combined with the social background and the architectural characteristics. Specifically, from the introduction of Gothic churches and spiritual themes, to the changes in the characteristics of religious architecture

in the early Renaissance represented by Peter's Cathedral and the influence of the social mainstream culture behind it, the rise of baroque style in the late Renaissance and the imprint left on the architectural style of cathedrals. The purpose is to see the big from the small, try to see the spirit of Italy and other places in the Renaissance from the change of church style, and provide reference value for the architectural research at that time.

2. Gothic

In 1137, Suger, the abbot of Saint Denis Monastery in France, was invited by King Louis VI of France to rebuild the church of Saint Denis Monastery, which promoted the birth of the first Gothic architecture in the Middle Ages, Basilica of Saint Denis. At the same time, this monastery also adopts the same masonry structure as the previous Roman style church buildings, while adopting a revolutionary style opposite to the former traditional semicircular dome: pointing arches with light lines, flying buttress, slender pilots, tall and straight pinnacle and stained glass lattice windows [1]. In 1144, at the ceremony to celebrate the completion of the renovation of Saint Denis, bishops of various countries were deeply attracted by the unique charm of this building. So 25 years later, Gothic churches appeared in all parts of Europe. Since then, Gothic style architecture has spread throughout Europe, developing with local cultural characteristics in different regions and reaching the pinnacle of its architectural status at that time, at the peak of the Middle Ages and the late period.

In fact, at the beginning, Gothic architecture was originally called "French" in the Middle Ages. Later, due to its excessive and complicated decoration, it was ridiculed as ugly as the Goths who destroyed Rome. It was named "Gothic" in the late Renaissance [2]. The following factors may explain the birth of Gothic architecture: First of all, in the 12th and 15th centuries of France, the seeds of capitalism had sprouted - urban handicrafts and commercial guilds were quite developed, a certain degree of democracy was practiced in cities, and citizens built churches with great enthusiasm to express their cities by competing with each other. In addition, for the public, the church is no longer a purely religious assembly place. It has become the center of urban public life, a public hall, a public auditorium, and even a market and theater. Therefore, it is urgent to design a new church style in order to cater to people's preferences and change the depressing feeling of Roman architecture due to insufficient lighting. In addition, with the transformation of medieval religious culture by scholastic philosophy based on the ideas of theologians such as Saint Augustine, and the introduction of classical Greek philosophy such as Plato, and the completion of actions led by the Holy See such as the Crusade, the authority of the Catholic Church has been further enhanced, and its ideas have had a profound impact on all levels of society. As Augustine said, the world is divided into two cities: the city on earth and the city in heaven [3]. People should go to pursue the city of God, which belongs to the glory of God, not the nihilistic city of the world. The thought of "avoiding the world" generated in religious circles at that time undoubtedly had an impact on ordinary people. The ample lighting and spacious space provided by the Gothic church were the fairy tale shelters created for medieval people under the cruel life and the threat of the Black Death, which belonged to their spiritual homeland. On this basis, the church's adaptation of Aristotle's "the idea that human beings are born unequal" is also reflected in the layered sense of structure of Gothic architecture.

3. Early Renaissance Architecture

However, as Marx pointed out, "the huge images are shocking... These behemoths like naturally generated entities affect people's spirit and spirit and feel oppressed under the weight of materials. The sense of oppression is the starting point of worship". Although Gothic architecture is closer to

the life of ordinary citizens than Roman architecture, the Catholic Church denies the secular life. The pursuit of "heaven life" inevitably led to the heavy religious atmosphere that dominated the church [4]. At the same time, in the early Renaissance, the handicraft industry and commerce of the residents in Italian cities continued to develop. In the face of pressures and contradictions from outside and inside, it was difficult to reconcile the contradictions and opposites among the citizens of different autonomous cities [5], and Gothic churches could no longer meet the standards of citizens' pursuit of secular happiness. Artists also want to take this opportunity to pursue more diversified art and aesthetic enjoyment. However, the Catholic Church, which has experienced great divisions and many "heresies" (the sprout of Protestantism), has been unable to make greater concessions to secularization. Thus, the architecture of the Renaissance was born in the collision between the social ideal and the conservative religious order - and the process of its development is also the process of these social contradictions from emergence, intensification to compromise.

The collision of Latin cross and Greek cross styles is an important part of the contradiction of Renaissance architecture. This feature is not only the confrontation between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Catholic doctrine, but also the struggle between humanism and theology, which was vividly reflected in the construction of St. Peter's Cathedral. The Greek cross is an equal arm cross composed of a central dome and a cylindrical arch or small dome on four sides. In the early period, it was mostly used in martyrdom churches and tombs. Later, due to the centralized shape, it had a centripetal and upward spatial orientation. Therefore, it became the mainstream form of the Orthodox Church. The Latin cross is an unequal arm cross composed of a vertical basilica and a horizontal basilica hall, which is consistent with the upward and forward spatial orientation of the Catholic Church [6]. As one of the most famous cathedrals in the Vatican, St. Peter's Cathedral has experienced twists and turns in its architectural process, from the plan of Bellamont to the plan of Raphael, Paruzzi and Little Sangalo, and finally to the plan of Michelangelo and Madonna St. Peter's Cathedral not only inherits the centralized design keynote of ancient Greek architecture [7], but also adopts the huge retro dome structure. These neglect the functional design of St. Peter's Cathedral as a Catholic church, which just reflects the attempt of humanism to pursue formal aesthetics and unity. Finally, the three span Basilica Hall designed by Madonna also reflects the fact that religious forces still prevail in the repeated struggles between capitalist religious reformers and Catholic anti reformers within the Catholic Church [6].

4. Baroque

In the late Renaissance, the anti religious reform movement launched by Catholicism became a direct factor in the prevalence of baroque style in the interior decoration of cathedrals. In fact, as a term of performing arts that has long existed with Italian drama (meaning a sudden stimulus in depression), its sudden popularity can not be separated from the promotion of the Catholic Church in central Italy (Feilengcui and Rome City). In order to counter the religious concept of "simplifying religious ceremonies and practicing simple love" proposed by Protestant sects, especially Lutheran sects, the Vatican stipulated in the Trento Conference that true Catholics should not be ashamed of luxury, but proud of it; All Catholics should visualize the beauty of God through extreme enthusiasm, and compare it with the simple Protestant artworks through its extreme beauty of modeling, carving and representation. Only in this contrast can more people be attracted to join Catholicism, and the original Catholics will be more convinced that their own teachings are the truth. Therefore, the Baroque style is largely decorated with sculpture and murals, and marble and gold are used everywhere. It is characterized by magnificence and the pursuit of luxury - even though many artists believe that these designs undermine the integrity of the architecture, and even go against the standards of classical art in order to pursue a free and unrestrained style [8].

Then, although baroque art was essentially a tool used by the Catholic Church to fight against reform, its popularity also deeply reflected the social change in Italy at that time. The popes in the 16th and 17th centuries, who regarded themselves as "cultural defenders", actively sought out artistic talents at that time - but these talents were already full of creativity and enterprising spirit brought about by the high Renaissance. In addition, with the breakthroughs in science and technology, architects have also broadened their horizons. Even the pope himself was influenced by the secular world outlook and actively pursued magnificence and pleasing decorations, which highlighted that the contradictions within the Catholic Church were not alleviated at that time, but became more acute with the development of capitalism - in a sense, baroque art, a "deformed pearl", also represented that believers were liberated morally, although they were not liberated ideologically [9], It was the embodiment of the extravagant but energetic social spirit at that time.

5. Conclusion

Every innovation, from Gothic style to Roman style, to Gothic style reform in early Renaissance architecture, to the rule of Baroque style, is the result of social system reform and dominant cultural change. Even the baroque style, which seems to be a "hodgepodge of self display"[10], represents the pursuit of wealth and secularity, which is actually an extreme transitional period of capitalism's negation of Italian feudal religious tradition at that time, and a short painful stage of the spiral rise of the historical process.

In general, the change of Renaissance architectural style is the process of constantly breaking through the shackles of traditional church ideas, pursuing humanism and equality, and seeking universal happiness and aesthetic rights. In this long process, the art giants led by Bramont and Michelangelo have been trying to pursue breakthroughs in their own ways. Whether it is the pursuit of classical columns, the re opening of the Greek cross, or the application of new technologies in the construction of Santa Maria del Fiore, it is a continuous attempt of humanism to break the spiritual shackles, so that architectural art can truly become an art serving the secular world and promote architectural art to move forward [11].

This article mainly focuses on the reasons behind the changes in social architectural style, but it may lack an analysis of the origin of architectural landmark features, such as the social and technological promotion behind the Latin Cross and the Greek Cross. The following research hopes to continue to collate and analyze the literature related to these specific characteristics.

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