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London Churches of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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LONDON CHURCHES OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES.

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"BEFORE the great and dreadful fire of 1666, here stood the Parish Church of ——." This inscription, which is to be found in one or two places within the boundaries of the City, at once arrests the attention of the thoughtful passer, and takes him back to those few awful days of September, a little more than two centuries ago, when that whirlwind of flame swept over nearly the whole area within the walls, and the largest and most magnificent cathedral in England, together with ninety-three parish churches and chapels, the Guildhall, the Royal Exchange, fifty of the City Companies' Halls, and thirteen thousand houses, went down before it, like so much stubble, leaving nothing but ruined and blackened fragments to tell of what the piety, the freedom, the accumulated wealth, and the private enterprise of past generations had established there. Truly, such an awful catastrophe, unequalled even by the conflagrations of modern American cities, might well be termed "the Great and Dreadful Fire of 1666," destroying, as it did, property to the value of ten millions of money, at that time. Far beyond this, the loss to the Art of this country was irreparable; yet it was instrumental in giving us handsome public buildings, well-lighted and airy churches, with wider streets, and houses built of less inflammable material, in exchange for the narrow tortuous thoroughfares, lined with wooden and plaster houses of several projecting storeys, and the small, low, dark, and half-buried churches of the preceding ages.

The ground had been well prepared; for a complete *tabula rasa* had been made of all that had hitherto adorned the City, and there was ample room for new ideas, new projects, and a complete emancipation from all the trammels which had hitherto fettered and bound men's minds by the associations and traditions of the past. But these new ideas, these magnificent projects, were never to be realised in their entirety; the old traditions proved too strong; they could not be lightly thrust on one side; and the New City arose from its ashes very much on the lines of the old, so far as the direction of the streets and lanes was concerned: the improvements effected being only with regard to the extra width of the streets, and the better material of the buildings.

The old historic names of the streets survived, and the great part of the old City churches were rebuilt exactly on the same sites, and, in most cases, utilising the old foundations. In almost every instance, where one of them has been removed, the process of demolition reveals this fact: St. Dionis Backchurch, St. Michael Queenhythe, St. Benet Gracechurch, St. Benet Fink, St. Olave Jewry, St. Mildred Poultry, St. Mary Magdalene Fish Street Hill, St. Antholin Budge Row, St. Mary Somerset, St. Matthew Friday Street (partly), St. Christopher-le-Stocks and St. Bartholomew Exchange, are all cases in point; while the various reparations which have taken place, from time to time, in the following churches, Christ Church Newgate, St. Mary-at-Hill, St. Stephen Walbrook, St. Magnus London Bridge, St. Stephen Coleman Street, St. Vedast Foster, St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, St. Martin Ludgate, etc., reveal the fact that the old walls have been made use of, and in many cases only faced with Portland stone. At St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, in removing the oak panelling in order to repair and strengthen it, the whole of the south wall was found to be ancient; and in making a converter station for the Electric Light Company, about two years ago, a large obtusely pointed arch was found, existing below the

present level, and too wide for a doorway. Unless it was the archway of a porch, with steps leading up to the church (for the difference of levels has always been very marked), it is difficult to say what could have been the use of it: the arch and jambs were plainly chamfered, and it had been walled with rough masses of chalk and stone rubble. The north and east walls of the same church were partly ancient, with fragments of mouldings, and broken Purbeck shafts built in; the presence of the latter indicating that the old church, consumed in the Fire, must have been early thirteenth century work. When the unfortunate demolition of St. Michael's Bassishaw, and All Hallows the Great Thames Street, is completed, the same conditions will probably be found in these cases. Some of the larger churches, as St. Dunstan's in the East, St. Mary Aldermary, St. Sepulchre Snow Hill, are known to follow exactly the old lines, as does also St. Alban's Wood Street. In Christchurch Newgate Street, erected on the site of the choir of the old Franciscan Friary Church, the old buttresses exist just below the ground, and still mark the modern divisions of the present church. These instances are adduced to show that the churches rebuilt after the Fire occupied the identical positions of the ancient structures, and that the plan of the rebuilt church was more or less influenced by these walls and foundations. How Wren effected this in most cases is shown hereafter, and it will be seen that, although fettered by the boundaries of the ancient churches, he departed in most cases from the ground plan and arrangement of them, and in his own particular style gave us buildings which in many cases we may well be proud of.

Prior to this date, most churches had followed one particular plan; a nave separated from its aisles by columns and arches, sometimes with only one aisle north or south. A structional chancel was rare in London churches, most of which had been rebuilt in the fifteenth century without a chancel arch, the aisles being usually prolonged to the

extreme east end, and their eastern parts screened off with oak parcloses, separating this part from both nave and chancel; the position of the chancel arch being occupied by the rood screen. In most of the London churches this screen had been removed, together with the rood, in consequence of religious troubles; they mostly possessed towers, placed either at the west end of the nave, or at the west end of either the north or south aisles. Most of these towers were low, with an octagonal turret at one corner, carried up above the embattled parapet and finished with a vane; but some of the larger churches had more stately towers, with fine high corner pinnacles, as at St. Sepulchre's, St. Michael Cornhill, St. Mary Aldermary, etc., while St. Mary-le-Bow possessed one which was unique, so far as London was concerned, for here the four corner pinnacles were connected by flying buttresses supporting a central pinnacle.[1] Spires were comparatively rare; St. Lawrence Pountney had a very fine one, and, according to John Stow, the Austin Friars church possessed one, of which he speaks with great admiration. The types of these ancient churches can still be seen in a few which fortunately escaped the flames. Of the larger of these, All Hallows Barking, St. Andrew Undershaft, and St. Mary Aldermary (rebuilt by Wren in the ancient form), St. Giles Cripplegate, St. Olave Hart Street, St. Ethelburga Bishopsgate, and St. Peter's in the Tower, show us exactly what they all were like; while others which also escaped, but have since been rebuilt; St. Peter-le-Poer, St. Botolph's Aldersgate, All Hallows Staining, All Hallows in the Wall, and St. Martin's Outwich, closely resembled them. St. Helen's Bishopsgate (happily also still standing) was only partly parochial; the church of the Benedictine Nunnery was attached to it, and formed a nave and choir parallel to the parish church, only separated from it by an arcade.

This multiplicity of churches (which numbered a hundred

[1] Sir Christopher Wren used a modification of this in his well-known spire of St. Dunstan's in the East.

and thirteen, besides the Cathedral) was essentially English, for in all our cities the parishes were very small in extent, which is observable at York, Bristol, Exeter, and Chichester, and, apart from the large conventual churches, the parish churches were necessarily small; such vast and roomy churches as one sees in many continental cities were conspicuous by their absence. Architecturally, this was a distinct loss; but very few foreign cities could show such superb structures as St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, the great priories of the Austin Canons, Christchurch, or Holy Trinity Aldgate, St. Bartholomew's Smithfield, St. Mary Overie, each as large as a cathedral, the great Friary Churches of the Dominicans, Franciscans, Austins, Carmelites, Hospitallers, Templars, Crutched Friars, Minoresses, St. Katherine's, and the Abbey of Grace (the last belonging to the Cistercian Order), all within the City walls, or not far from them.

Although some of these structures had disappeared, an idea can be formed of the ecclesiastical appearance of London in the reign of Charles I., when Inigo Jones was in full practice as an architect, and he would naturally have been called in to erect any new church in London, if, in consequence of delay, any one of the numerous old ones had become ruinous, and required rebuilding. Tradition points to two churches in the City of London as coming from his hand, one remaining, and the other having been rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire, in the same form as Inigo Jones had rebuilt it in 1632. The first is St. Katherine Cree or Christchurch, and the second, St. Alban Wood Street. The traditional plan is followed in both these churches, but Classic details invest them, especially the first mentioned, with an architectural interest, indicating those coming changes, which, in the next half century, were to be so fully developed under Sir Christopher Wren. Little beyond tradition can be adduced to show that Inigo Jones was the architect of either of them; and it is indeed difficult to imagine how the man who designed a

façade of such Classic purity as the Banqueting House, Whitehall, or the church of St. Paul's Covent Garden, could possibly have been the author of this peculiar blending of Classic detail on Gothic forms, especially when he had publicly evinced his known contempt for the latter, by adding the Corinthian portico to the west front of Old St. Paul's, and disguising the Norman work of the nave (externally) under a Classic skin. Yet, on the other hand, it is a known fact, that he did design the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn, where the same mixture of the two styles is apparent, as it also is (or was) at the old church of St. Paul's Hammersmith, built for his friend Sir Nicholas Crispe. If he designed these he surely could also have designed the others; and it may be asked, who was there at that time (1625 to 1640) who could possibly have been their author but Inigo Jones?

Nor does this seem improbable, when one considers that William Laud, afterwards the martyred Archbishop of Canterbury, then filled the see of London, and administered the diocese with no uncertain hand; he had clearly foreseen the rising torrent of Puritanism, and attempted to stem that torrent by leading men back into the old paths, by setting before them their true inheritance in their own Church of England. He had revived many old customs and ceremonies, which the statecraft of Elizabeth and the weak apathy of James had allowed to fall into desuetude; and in this matter of architecture, although he may have had no wish to interfere with the fashionable taste for Classic details, he was determined that the buildings, so far as plan and arrangement were concerned, should follow the old models, and Inigo Jones worked accordingly; but when the latter could throw off the trammels of ecclesiastical tradition, he did so, as at Whitehall, and at the Queen's Chapel, Somerset House. Here he had to reckon with the King and not the Bishop, and he was free to follow his own bent. Again, at St. Paul's Covent Garden, it was a private patron, Francis, Earl of Bedford, who only

wanted a "barn," with whom he had to deal. Although commenced about 1632,[1] it was not consecrated until 1638, by Juxon, who had succeeded Laud in the see of London, a difficulty having arisen with the rector of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, out of which parish St. Paul's Covent Garden was taken. This church clearly departed from ancient tradition; it was a parallelogram 99 feet long, 48 wide, and 38 high; the roof was unsupported by columns, and from Hatton's description it had galleries on all the four sides, that on the eastern, he observes, "much obstructs the view of the new altar-piece." The roof was originally of red pantiles, and the portico at the east end was used as the polling place for the City and Liberty of Westminster. Hogarth's well-known print familiarises us with its then outward appearance, and there is an earlier view by Hollar. Horace Walpole's strictures were singularly correct; he could find nothing to admire in this church, although the sum spent upon it (£4,500) was a large one for those days. If, architecturally, it was a failure, it is interesting as being the first church on the new model, in which galleries were to form an important part. St. Paul's, Shadwell, built in 1656, by an architect unknown, was originally without galleries, but they were added in 1683. The design was Classic, and the camerated roof was supported by columns. It was taken down and rebuilt in 1817, from the design of John Walters. These churches were the recognised models of ecclesiastical art in the two or three decades preceding the Great Fire.

Immediately after the Restoration, in 1661, Charles II. proposed certain works to be commenced, the most important being the reparation of the Old Cathedral Church of St. Paul, for the repairs which had been commenced by Inigo Jones, had of course been completely stopped by the Puritans, and the Cathedral was in a worse state than ever threatening ruin in several places; and it is in connection

[1] Hatton, in his *New View of London*, says in or near 1646, and not made parochial until 12 Car. II., 1660.

with this fabric that we find Sir Christopher (or rather "Dr.") Wren's name first associated with architecture in London. At Oxford he had already a considerable reputation, and this fact influenced the King to appoint him Assistant Surveyor General to his Majesty's Works, a post then held, oddly enough, by Sir John Denham, the poet, to whom the reversion of the office had been promised in the lifetime of Inigo Jones. Denham, on the evidence of Evelyn, knew nothing about architecture, and, to quote the latter's diary with regard to the new palace at Greenwich: "I knew him to be a better poet than an architect, although he had Mr. Webb, Inigo Jones's man (his son-in-law), to assist him." It is not only possible, but highly probable, that Evelyn had mentioned Wren's name to the King. He was then only twenty-nine years of age, was the son of Dr. Christopher Wren, Dean of Windsor, and nephew to the famous Dr. Matthew Wren, Lord Bishop of Ely. It is a curious fact that his father the Dean seems to have possessed some knowledge of architecture, for among the Clarendon papers is an estimate for a house for the Queen Henrietta Maria, which Dr. Wren had designed, so that the son's taste and skill in this particular art was evidently inherited. But we have no evidence that he had studied the art as Inigo Jones had done, by going abroad and seeing Palladio's works; certainly not at this period of his career, for he did not travel abroad until 1665. "Poeta nascitur non fit" is an adage applicable to him as an architect, as it may be to others, for no amount of "examinations" can discover artistic skill where it is not inherent!

It is not necessary to go into the question of what Wren proposed with regard to the old Cathedral, for the Great Fire swept all before it, and rendered the various schemes useless. Immediately afterwards we find Wren hard at work on a scheme for rebuilding the City, on an entirely new plan, but the necessary interference with the rights of private property prevented this form being carried out, and the new City arose from the ashes of, and on the same lines as, the old.

In Longman's *History of the Three Cathedrals of St. Paul*, a full account is given of the various ideas held as to the rebuilding of it at this period, but not until nine years had elapsed was the first stone of the new Cathedral laid (June 21st, 1675). During these years Wren had not been idle; the rebuilding of the City had been going on at a rapid rate, and it is marvellous to observe that such awful calamities as the Plague, which swept away over one hundred thousand of its inhabitants, and then the Fire which followed so quickly upon it, proved insufficient to utterly demoralise the remaining citizens. But such was the case; no gloomy views as to London being a "doomed city" seem to have prevailed, and although the nation was actually at war at this period, the spirit and energy of the people were undaunted, and not even the "law's delay" and the necessary delicate and nice adjustment of boundaries, consequent upon the ancient lines of streets, and lanes, and properties, being buried beneath piles of rubbish, stopped the rapid progress of the rebuilding. It may or it may not be a matter of regret that Evelyn and Wren's plan for the rebuilding of the City on an entirely new plan, was abandoned, but it is certainly deplorable that the quay, forty feet wide, from London Bridge to the Temple, for which two Acts had been obtained, was never carried out; the loss to London has been incalculable, and it seems now that the realisation of this idea is more utterly hopeless than ever, owing to the increase of the value of property, and that this magnificent opportunity has been lost, must we say, for ever!

To have rebuilt, not only the Cathedral, but also some fifty or sixty parish churches, would have been absolutely impossible if private enterprise and private munificence had had to be depended upon entirely, to raise the necessary funds. Accordingly in 1670 we find an additional Act was passed to raise two shillings additional per chaldron on coals, one shilling having already been levied, and this was to be divided into certain moieties, of which the rebuilding

of the churches was to take three fourths, and that of St. Paul's Cathedral one fourth; and there can be very little doubt that the rebuilding of the City had proceeded so rapidly, that some such provision was necessary.

The first church to be rebuilt was St. Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside, and this was commenced in 1671,[1] but was not completely finished, with its tower and spire, until 1680. There was a special fitness in this precedence, for this church had always been, after the Cathedral, the most important ecclesiastical building in the City, and might justly be termed the "Citizens' church." It was from the curious tower, surmounted by a central and four corner lanterns and carried by flying buttresses, that the curfew was rung nightly, and so anxiously expected by the prentices, as commemorated in the well-known distich and reply:

"Clarke of Bow Bell with the yellow locks,
For thy late ringing thy head shall have knocks.
Children of Chepe, hold you all still,
For you shall have Bow Bell rung at your will."

With funds thus provided from the public exchequer, the work of rebuilding the City churches on the old sites proceeded rapidly; provision seems to have been made for divine worship in many of the parishes, if not in all, by the erection of "tabernacles," a sort of temporary building, which was licensed, not only for the services, but also for the celebration of marriages. In the archive chamber of St. Paul's Cathedral, there is a volume entitled *Schemes of Tabernacles*, quoted by Dr. Sparrow Simpson in his account of St. Matthew Friday Street.[2]

A good portion of the expense of the rebuilding was

[1] The repairs to St. Sepulchre Holborn, and St. Christopher Threadneedle Street, were commenced in 1670, but in neither case was rebuilding necessary.

[2] *Transactions, London and Middlesex Archæological Society*, vol. iii., p. 334, and in vol. iv., *idem*, p. 305, in the minutes of the vestry of St. Peter, Cornhill, 31st December, 1672: "Ordered that the churchwardens do present Dr. Wren with 5 guineas as a gratuitée for his paines and furtherance of a Tabernacle for this parish."

defrayed by private subscriptions (£2,375 being collected in this way), which is mentioned here only to draw attention to the fact that these churches were not entirely rebuilt from public moneys, but that the private munificence of church-people largely contributed to their erection. The next church taken in hand was St. Stephen's Walbrook, which, after the Cathedral, is very justly looked upon as Wren's masterpiece. The rebuilding of this church took place in 1672, and was followed in the same year by that of St. Michael Cornhill, and St. Mary-at-Hill. This group of four churches is therefore important in the history of Art, as it gives us representative types of plan and arrangement, and thoroughly exemplifies the fertility of Wren's genius. In St. Michael Cornhill we get the ordinary basilican plan, by which is meant a long parallelogram divided into a central nave and side-aisles, by columns and arches. In St. Mary-le-Bow we get a modification of this, by a wide central nave of three bays only, divided from rather narrow aisles by arches; and the vaulting over the aisles is concentric with the arches and groined over the transverse arch. St. Mary-at-Hill is nearly square in plan, with a central dome carried by four arches and pendentives; these four arches open into four compartments with plain barrel vaults, and the four corner spaces have flat ceilings at the level of the impost—a very simple but most effective arrangement. The last example, St. Stephen's Walbrook, has a more complex treatment, combining the basilican plan, with a central dome, carried on an octagon; the ceilings over the chancel and nave, and short transepts, are barrel-vaulted, and those of the aisles, which in this case are double, have flat ceilings. This is only a rough description of one of the most beautiful interiors imaginable; the plan is very simple, and the proportions most harmonious, and, so far as internal beauty is concerned, Wren never surpassed this church, which is one of his earliest works.

In quick succession to these four churches came, in 1673, St. Olave Jewry, and St. Benet Fink; in 1674, St. Dionis

Backchurch, St. George Botolph, and St. Michael Wood Street, the latter finished in 1675; in 1676, St. Magnus London Bridge, St. James Garlick Hythe, St. Mildred Poultry, and St. Stephen Coleman Street; in 1677, St. Lawrence Jewry, St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, St. Mary Aldermanbury, and St. Michael Queenhythe. Of these churches, St. Magnus and St. James are basilican in type, but the last-mentioned has a sort of transeptal arrangement. St. Magnus has a very fine tower and spire, almost rivalling in beauty and harmony of outline, the spire of Bow Church, but this fine campanile was not added until long after the church was completed—indeed, not until 1705. St. Lawrence Jewry is a simple parallelogram, with a broad aisle on the north side, only partially occupied by the area of the church, the upper part forming a gallery with roomy vestibules below, very useful for purposes of civic state, as this church became the Corporation Church, on the destruction of the Guildhall Chapel on the opposite side of the yard. The chief beauty of this church is its unusually rich woodwork. At the west end is a very stately vestry, superbly panelled in oak, with a painted ceiling. St. Nicholas Cole Abbey is a simple parallelogram, without aisles, and with a flat trabiated ceiling, but the west end is treated in a very original manner with three lofty arches, which contain organ and side galleries; the lower part is screened off from the church, and forms a vestibule and vestry, and the north-west arch opens into the tower, the lower part of which, with the spiral staircase, seems to be the ancient tower re-cased. St. Olave Jewry was a simple parallelogram in plan with a west tower, and was remarkable for its irregularity, being almost coffin-shaped in plan; the east end being much narrower than the west.

St. Dionis Backchurch had a short and broad nave and aisles. St. Stephen Coleman is a parallelogram without aisles. St. Mildred Poultry was nearly square without aisles, but had a tower breaking awkwardly into the area. St. Michael Queenhythe was oblong without aisles. St.

Mary Aldermanbury is basilican with a west tower. St. Michael Wood Street is oblong without aisles. St. Benet Fink had a very curious and interesting plan, the most remarkable of all this group, for it consisted of an elliptical dome in the centre, carried by six columns and pendentives, and surrounded by a decagon with a western tower; each of the six arches opened into recesses, of which two on the south and two on the north were parallel, and the east and west at right angles, the four triangular spaces having flat ceilings. Of this group of churches, all built between 1673 and 1677, no less than five have already been destroyed, and another (St. George Botolph) is threatened.

From 1678 to 1688 (the year of James II.'s forced retirement from the throne), Wren was exceedingly busy. One would have thought that the Cathedral alone would have been sufficient to occupy his time, but he designed in rapid succession St. Michael Bassishaw, St. Swithin Cannon Street, and St. Bartholomew by the Bank, in 1678; St. Bride Fleet Street (one of his largest and finest churches), in 1679; St. Clement Danes and St. Anne and St. Agnes Aldersgate, in 1680; St. Peter Cornhill, another fine handsome church, in 1681; St. Antholin Budge Row, a very curious domed plan, elliptical, like St. Benet Fink, but carried on eight columns and pendentives, with a finely proportioned stone western tower and spire, in 1682; All Hallows Thames Street, called generally All Hallows the Great, St. Augustine and St. Faith Watling Street, St. Clement Eastcheap, St. Benet Paul's Wharf, St. James Piccadilly (a large and fine church), St. Mildred Bread Street, in 1683; All Hallows Bread Street, and St. Martin Ludgate, in 1684; St. Alban Wood Street (Gothic in style), St. Mary Magdalene Old Fish Street, and St. Matthew Friday Street, in 1685; St. Mary Abchurch, in 1686; St. Andrew Holborn (the largest of all his churches), Christ Church Newgate Street, and St. Margaret Pattens, in 1687; and St. Michael Crooked Lane, in 1688. Eight of these have been destroyed, or, more correctly speaking, seven (as St. Michael Bassishaw is

still in process of demolition), the most deplorable losses being the churches of St. Antholin Budge Row (with its fine spire), and St. Mary Magdalene Old Fish Street,[1] with its remarkably fine oak carving, probably by Grinling Gibbons, as it is so much more delicate and light in character than the carving in most of these churches. In this group are included some one or two churches of the most original design and conception. St. Swithin, which is an octagon contained within a square, carries an elegant and well-proportioned dome, the square being prolonged to the west so as to include a tower at the south-west corner, and a deep west gallery, with a flat plaster ceiling over it. St. Mildred Bread Street, which is exceedingly simple; a plain parallelogram without aisles, but broken up internally by a shallow circular dome, on pendentives, and two arched recesses on the east and west sides. St. Mary Abchurch is another domed church, similar in plan and arrangement to St. Swithin, but that the tower occupies the north-west corner, while the dome (painted by Sir James Thornhill) is carried on semicircular arches or groins, and has lucarne lights. St. Anne and St. Agnes Aldersgate, and St. Martin Ludgate, are both similar as to plan, but not in arrangement. The plan is a square, divided by four columns, into four nearly equal arms, which are arched and meet in a groined vault over the central area, while over the four angle squares the ceilings are flat and lower. Both churches are separated from the street on the west by a central tower and flanking vestibules. St. Martin's Ludgate, with its graceful lead spire and gallery, forms a splendid contrast to the overpowering mass of the Cathedral in the background, and makes the view of the latter wonderfully picturesque when approached from the west—a view which has been completely ruined by the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company's hideous iron bridge (bristling with griffins), built right across the thoroughfare, so that the winding street and the little

[1] The loss of this church was attributable to an unfortunate fire in a neighbouring warehouse, and not to wanton destruction.

spire have lost all their poetry. All Hallows the Great, now demolished, was chiefly remarkable for its splendid high screen in oak, which has recently been placed in the church of St. Margaret Lothbury. All Hallows had already been shorn of its north aisle and tower, and with singular incongruity the site has recently been purchased by a firm of brewers.

Although during the next year (1689) no new church seems to have been commenced, the work of rebuilding and finishing progressed rapidly, and Wren was fully occupied with many large and important works, including the College of Physicians, Chelsea Hospital, and Hampton Court Palace, the latter for William and Mary, who both entertained for Wren a warm regard. During the next decade we find him again busy on the churches: in 1690 the fabrics of St. Edmund the King Lombard Street, St. Margaret's Lothbury (begun in 1686), St. Andrew by the Wardrobe (finished 1692). In 1694 were built All Hallows Lombard Street, St. Michael Royal, and in 1695 St. Mary Somerset. In the latter year towers and spires were added to St. Augustine and St. Faith Watling Street, and to St. Vedast Foster. In 1696 St. Christopher-le-Stocks was further embellished, and a painted monument placed to the memory of Mary II., then lately deceased.

On December 2nd, 1697, the choir of the new Cathedral of St. Paul was formally consecrated for divine service, which has continued uninterruptedly ever since. The occasion was the Peace of Ryswick, and Wren was then sixty-five years of age. In 1699 the very beautiful spire of St. Dunstan in the East was finished by him. It is Gothic in form and outline, reminding one somewhat of the departed glory of the old spire of St. Mary-le-Bow or St. Nicholas Newcastle, yet differing from them both in that the central lantern is carried up much higher, as a perfect spire. In this year he also repaired the body of the church, which had only been hastily patched up after the Fire, and he was then busy with the Collegiate Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, which from the decayed nature of the external

stonework demanded immediate attention. Whether he was really responsible for the design of the western towers is a moot point. In his report to Dr. Atterbury, then Dean, he strongly urges that the towers should be carried up above the roof to a uniform height, and that the west gable should be completed and the west window strengthened, and mentions that he has made a design for the central tower and spire, but adds nothing as to having made a design for the western towers. Possibly the model still preserved in Westminster Abbey was made from his design. In 1704 he completed the towers of St. Andrew Holborn and Christchurch Newgate Street, and in 1705 the spire of St. Magnus.

In 1708 the Act for building fifty new churches in the neighbourhood of London, was passed, and Wren was appointed one of the Commissioners. He made a long report to his brother Commissioners as to many points he thought very necessary to be observed, in the erection of the proposed churches. This report is curious, and very valuable, but it is too long for insertion here. It presents the ideas of a man who, having built many churches, knew perfectly what he was talking about. There are important points observable in all Wren's churches, which it is a pity his successors did not profit by. They were eminently Christian ; he never attempted huge columns, porticoes, and pediments borrowed from heathen temples ; he was not afraid of good honest brick, and the introduction of galleries, sometimes unfortunately rendered necessary, was never objectionable in his works, and in his report he recommends that the "churches should not be filled with pews," which, to his honour, he much disliked. His words are : "It were to be wished there were to be no pews, but benches ; but there is no stemming the tide of profit and the advantage of pew-keepers." Another remark strikes us in these days as curious : "That the poor may have room enough to *stand* and sit in the *alleys*," a fatal mistake, which the Church has suffered from, and is suffering from to this day, and which led to the alienation of the lower classes.

In 1710, Wren, being in his seventy-eighth year, assisted by his son Christopher and Mr. Strong, the Master-mason to the Cathedral, laid the top stone. Although old, he was still as active and vigorous as ever, and in 1711 he built the beautiful Gothic church of St. Mary Aldermary upon the plan of the old church as it was before the Fire. In 1721 (two years before his death), he completed the new Gothic tower to St. Michael Cornhill, nearly fifty years after he had built the body of the church. Half a century! and what a half-century of work! Truly it may be said of him, "Whatsoever his hand found to do, he did it with his might," and no more appropriate epitaph, or one more touching in its very brevity, could be written, than that which is found on the simple stone covering the place where he sleeps after life's fitful fever:

CHRISTOPHORUS · WREN
QUI VIXIT ANNOS ULTRA · NONAGINTA
NON SIBI SED BONO PUBLICO
LECTOR · SI MONUMENTUM REQUIRIS
CIRCUMSPICE.

From the foregoing remarks it will be noticed that these churches of Wren may be roughly grouped into five distinct types: first, the basilican, of which there are eighteen, and which have the nave and aisles with towers generally at the west end of the nave, but occasionally at the north-west or south-west corner; secondly, the plain parallelogram with one aisle, either on the north or south, of which type there are seven; thirdly, the plain parallelogram without aisles, of which there are thirteen; fourthly, those in which the principle of the dome predominates, of which there are six; and, fifthly, the Greek cross, of which there are three. But in no single case are these plans copies of one another. There is a distinct individuality about each; local considerations of site, relation to leading thoroughfares, the position from which the tower and spire could best be seen, were all points which he carefully considered. The internal

fittings were of the best; the oak used for the seating and panelling was well selected, the plaster work rich and varied, and the carving admirably executed.

Wren rarely built constructional chancels, but almost invariably marked the division between nave and chancel by a low screen of carved work placed on the top of the very high pews. The pulpits were always admirably designed and carved, and many had highly enriched sounding-boards, but the altars were generally very low and small in size—a fashion which he introduced, for during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I., they were rather large. Marble and stone altars were not uncommon. St. Antholin, St. Mary Aldermary, and All Hallows the Great, St. Clement Danes, St. Andrew Holborn, and several others possessed them; but the altar at St. Stephen's Walbrook is of oak and is semicircular. Some of these oak altars have their carved supports, taking the form of angels and cherubs, as at St. Vedast Foster, and they were invariably raised on a foot-pace of marble. The fonts, always of marble, were small basin-shaped vases, supported on baluster shafts, and usually provided with a rich oak cover. Many of these are very beautiful works of art, notably those at All Hallows Barking, St. Margaret Lothbury, St. Stephen Walbrook, and St. James Piccadilly; in the last-named church the font itself is very beautiful. Wren generally placed the organ in a west gallery, also occupied by the choir; for choir-stalls in the chancel did not exist in his time, except in large cathedral or collegiate churches, or in the old parish churches, where the ancient arrangement had not been disturbed. Many of his City churches did not possess organs until long after his time; the most prominent feature in all of them was the lofty carved oak altar-piece, which, in obedience to the Canon, displayed the Decalogue, flanked by the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and by figures of Moses and Aaron, surmounted by the Royal Arms, and sometimes the seven golden candlesticks (with sham tapers and gilt flames), in allusion to the Book of Revelation

of St. John the Divine, were to be found. Real candlesticks decorated the altars of St. Benet Gracechurch and All Hallows Barking, these being placed on the altar itself. In these churches the galleries formed an integral part of the design, and the approaches to them were easy and commodious. The passages between the pews were wide; altar-rails were generally returned at the sides, and very handsome metal work in the shape of brass branches or chandeliers, and wrought-iron sword-rests of most varied design, were to be found in nearly all. Stone spires were not so general as those of timber covered with lead, which Wren also used largely in roofing.

Perhaps it will not be out of place here to allude to the services which were held in these churches at this time. Prayers were said twice daily (morning and evening) in many, and, in almost all, there were services on Wednesdays and Fridays and Holydays, besides the ordinary Sunday services, which were generally three in number; while the large and important churches had always two, and on Wednesdays and Fridays three services daily. Our forefathers must have been earlier risers than we, for morning prayers were often said at six or seven o'clock.

Nicholas Hawksmoor, the most original of Wren's pupils and successors, was born in the year of the Great Fire, and was articled to Wren in 1683, so that he was associated with the great master in many of his most important works. His style is not so graceful as Wren's, but partakes more of the heaviness of Vanbrugh. His finest works are Christchurch Spitalfields (1715), which has a remarkably fine interior, St. George's Bloomsbury, St. Mary Woolnoth (1719), which had only been patched up by Wren after the Fire, St. Anne Limehouse (1724), and St. George's in the East (1728).

Christchurch Spitalfields is a parallelogram with aisles and western tower and spire, and in many ways shows a marked divergence from Wren's plans. Its western entrance and spire are entirely different from anything which preceded them, the latter resembling the upper part of a

Norman or Early English spire. This peculiar original treatment by Hawksmoor is still more marked in St. Mary Woolnoth, the interior of which is like the atrium or covered hall of a classical domestic building, in which a heavy baldachino with twisted columns, and a sort of imitation tester all in oak (a faint sort of reminiscence of St. Peter's at Rome) almost fills the eastern recess. This church formerly possessed galleries, but when the alterations were carried out by Mr. Butterfield these were removed, and their fronts stuck upon the side walls in a very meaningless manner. As in all Hawksmoor's churches, the floor is raised on vaults, considerably above the street level. The interior, in spite of the alterations, remains a very fine arrangement, and if the central square had been covered with a small dome on pendentives, it would certainly have been one of the most original and effective church interiors in London. The baldachino is very curious, and it is worthy of note that Wren contemplated placing one in St. Paul's Cathedral. Neither St. George's in the East or St. Anne's Limehouse, finished in 1728 and 1724 respectively, call for any particular remarks, but they are both large and spacious churches. Hawksmoor had his imitators, and in that most extraordinary building, St. John the Evangelist, Westminster, Archer, who was the architect (although Sir John Vanbrugh has usually the discredit), tried to imitate the solidity and massiveness of Hawksmoor's peculiar style, but failed lamentably. In so far as the internal arrangements are concerned, St. George's Bloomsbury has been so greatly altered that really nothing of the original remains, and the altar, which stood in its correct liturgical position, in an apse on the east side, has been transferred to the recess on the north side, while the old oak pews have been cut down and made to face north. Hawksmoor was rather given to the use of a depressed or elliptical arch which one finds in nearly all his churches; his towers and spires were certainly original, perhaps more original than beautiful. St. Mary Woolnoth has a most extraordinary

western façade, the upper part of which breaks out into what may be described as a twin tower arrangement, and St. George's Bloomsbury has a remarkable pyramidical steeple of diminishing steps, which is surmounted by a statue, not of St. George, but of King George I. Hogarth's well-known print of "Gin Lane" gives a view of this steeple, seen above that awful rookery which then existed and was only cleared away when New Oxford Street was formed. The following well-known lines refer to this remarkable spire:

> "When Henry the Eighth left the Pope in the lurch
> The Protestants made him Head of the Church;
> But George's good subjects, the Bloomsbury people,
> Instead of the church made him head of the steeple."

Another prominent church architect during the first two decades of the seventeenth century was James Gibbs, whom we find completing one of Wren's churches, the upper part of the tower and spire of St. Clement Danes being his work. His own contributions to the architecture of London were of no ordinary merit. They possess an amount of originality in treatment which makes them distinct both from Wren's graceful conceptions and from Hawksmoor's heavier productions, while in the use of the Orders he certainly showed greater knowledge than the last-named architect.

Gibbs was born about 1674 at Aberdeen, and after taking his degree of Master of Arts there (about 1700), when he was in his twenty-sixth year, he went to Holland, where he studied architecture; afterwards, by the help of his patron, the Earl of Mar, he went to Italy, where he studied under an architect named Garroli, in Rome. On his return to England he was, through the influence of the same nobleman (then in the Ministry), employed by the Commissioners as one of their architects for building the fifty new churches. His principal work in London is the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, which was commenced in 1720. This church shows how thoroughly Gibbs was imbued with the Classic spirit, for we here find the regular Classical portico attached

to a church, a feature much affected by succeeding architects; but the first three examples of which are St. Martin's, by Gibbs, 1720, St. George's Hanover Square, by John James, 1724, and St. George's Bloomsbury, by Hawksmoor, 1731, all satisfactory and stately enough. Another well-known London church from Gibbs' hand is St. Mary-le-Strand, a very beautiful specimen of architecture, the contrast between which and St. Mary Woolnoth shows the extraordinary divergence between the styles of the two men—Hawksmoor, vigorous and bold almost to coarseness, and Gibbs, over-refined and delicate almost to fussiness. Some may feel inclined to give the palm to St. Mary Woolnoth, not for its beauty, but for its extreme originality. St. Mary-le-Strand is certainly most advantageously placed in a very wide part of the Strand, on the site of the old maypole which Pope, in the "Dunciad," alludes to in the well-known lines:

> "Amid that area wide they took their stand,
> Where the tall maypole once o'erlooked the Strand;
> But now, so Anne and Piety ordain,
> A church collects the saints of Drury Lane."

The church is still most needed, not so much for the saints, as for the sinners who may yet be found in its neighbourhood.

Gibbs was equally successful in his civil architecture, as witness the Radcliffe Library at Oxford, the new buildings at King's College, Cambridge, and the great quadrangle of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, the gateway of which however, towards Smithfield, was not his work. He died in 1754, and in grateful recognition of his patron, the Earl of Mar, left both money and estates to his lordship's son.

St. Giles-in-the-Fields, the work of Henry Flitcroft, may justly be described as a poor copy of St. Martin's, but there is considerable merit about the spire, which is original in treatment. Flitcroft built another church, St. Olave's Southwark, which is but a poor production, and the same may be said of most of the churches which

followed. They seemed to get worse and worse, and one has only to point to such buildings as St. Luke's Old Street, St. John's Westminster, by Archer, St. Leonard's Shoreditch, by Dance (the spire of which, however, is both graceful and original), St. Botolph's Aldgate, and St. Botolph's Bishopsgate, by James Gold, to see to what utter bathos ecclesiastical architecture could descend, were it not that beneath this lowest depth, there was still a lower. The last shreds of ecclesiastical arrangement and tradition were finally abandoned, and the closer externally a church could be made to resemble a Greek temple the better was the *critical* taste of the period satisfied.

I do not intend to discuss these later buildings, of which in London we unfortunately possess so many examples. In many cases the interiors have been remodelled in an entirely different style to the exteriors, and some of them very cleverly; in one or two instances the Greek temple remains externally, while the pewed and galleried interior may be Romanesque or Byzantine, or anything else. Nothing surely could make them worse than they were originally. Unfortunately this mania for altering the interiors of old churches did not stop short at those built in the reigns of the two Georges, but has extended with disastrous results even to the works of Sir Christopher Wren, and several of his churches have had to bear the indignity of stone tracery inserted in their windows, and of flimsy Gothic woodwork replacing the old wainscot fittings, with Birmingham brass gas standards and staring tile pavements, and other gewgaws of the latest "correct" medieval taste, including stained glass of wretchedly "poor" Gothic drawing and colouring. Good in themselves, they have been tricked out in a meretricious fashion utterly repugnant to the style in which they were originally designed, and now present such a pitiable appearance that one can only hope we have seen the last of this fashion, and that in future they will be left in peace, secure alike from the hand of the destroyer, and the equally fatal touch of the renovator with a Gothic craze.