

Arthur Henry King

VISIT TO A CATHEDRAL AFTER A TRIP AROUND THE WORLD

In the west door for kings alone swung wide,
the leather-padded wicket, left behind me
stifling a gasp, expired.

No more fresh air:

I had entered the dim, mouldy, hollow hush
of a dead church — the silence of the 'grave
and reverend' sirs ghosting it in their gowns —
to penetrate the nave, transgress the transept,
stumble the steps up, dive through a cervical rood-screen,
steal past the vacant Gibbonsry and across
more steps, and teeter at the altar. No
postern, no thoroughfare;
no lady-chapel, paradise ovarian,
or cloister to produce an Easter egg
fusible with a faltering tongue of fire
for second reformation: only a stone
apse with a roof of stone; and no way out
but birth or rebirth by return.

Return?

Why send yourself to Coventry? They dispence
a 'longing, lingering,' backward, westward, modern
conspective trick, a summary pastiche
unrealized as you wander up their nave:
your history and mankind's all out of date

But, though not through the body of a cathedral,
I found an eastward way out west, a western
route back east, in time or place, travelling
from the past-future's predeterminate tense
to a future through a past, from the Levant
of Greeks, Jews, Muslims, India, Japan,
to a temple between the desert and the Rockies,
the route of the great trek, the site of Eden,
the wood south of Palmyra where by faith
a fourteen-year-old lad saw Father and Son,
the white board farmhouse in whose upper room
Joseph translated and in the room below
my church was founded; and the Susquehanna
whence, on a mid-May morning, from the swirling
water the priesthood once again returned
to earth, as the river blazed with prophecy,
the leaves rejoiced, blessed, and a pima dove
quietly in this east of the New World,
orient in occident, end with beginning,
alighted.

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