

Column

“Architecture may express: unity in a skyscraper, service in a bridge, efficiency in a factory, but in a church, architecture symbolizes man’s up-reach for God.”

I don’t know to whom to attribute this quote, but it is a good one. Churches, buildings no less than those who attend them, should remind those who view them that getting and spending is not the sum total of life. Lift up your eyes to something, actually Someone, greater!

Without a doubt, those who embrace the Gospel of Christ and live it out in the world are primary, but the buildings we call churches should not be despised. They might be thought of as silent witnesses.

Some have spires, and atop these spires can be found a number of symbols. Each is instructive in its own way.

By far the most common is the cross. Its appropriateness is unmistakable. Jesus Himself, referring to the manner in which He was to die, said: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). A cross atop a church does just that. It draws men and women to look up, see God’s love in action and to respond.

The cross may be the most common symbol employed for this purpose, but it is not the only one. The most unusual that I have seen is a giant golden index finger pointing up to heaven. It is found on the spire of a Presbyterian church in Port Gibson, Miss.

What might this giant finger be saying? Well, it is giving a call. That call, in the words of Isaiah 45:22, is: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

A still third symbol sometimes found on church spires is a cockerel or rooster. Like the two previous ones at which we have looked, it is full of significance.

It reminds us of an incident in the life of Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples. Following Jesus’ arrest, Peter denied he even knew His Lord, not once but three times. What brought Peter to an awareness of what he had done was a cock crowing. Immediately, he remembered the words of Jesus: “Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice” (Matthew 26:34). Tears of sorrow followed.

The lowly bird, whether found atop a church spire or in a neighbour's fence row, remains a powerful symbol. He reminds those who have not as yet come to Christian faith of the urgency of the hour. Wake up to your need, receive Christ, the cock says.

For those who are already believers, the cock is likewise God's alarm clock. He says: Today is God's day. New opportunities and adventures await you. Go forth in His strength to love and serve the Lord.

GRANT, we beseech thee, merciful God, that thy Church, being gathered together in unity by thy Holy Spirit, may manifest thy power among all peoples, to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

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