



# Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)

*Emile Mâle*

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The art in medieval cathedrals, in addition to its profound aesthetic appeal, told unlettered churchgoers a series of morality tales. From divine creation to the lives of the saints, the stone sculpture and stained glass windows provided dramatic illustrations of the key elements of Christian doctrine. Unfortunately, the true meaning of these religious artworks was gradually obscured by time. In 1913, however, this brilliant study appeared, clarifying and illuminating the original ideas and concepts behind the sacred art of the Middle Ages. The book was hailed by Bernard Berenson as "the most illuminating, the most informing and the most penetrating book on the subject."

Focusing on the 13th century as the apotheosis of the medieval style, Mâle, a noted art historian, explains that the decorative features of French cathedrals served as testimonials of religious faith. His topics include medieval iconography, bestiaries, illustrated calendars, representations of the virtues and vices, symbolic windows, saints, the gospels, secular history, and many other aspects of medieval religious art. This groundbreaking work, enhanced with 190 illustrations that buttress the points made in the text, remains unsurpassed in its style and brilliant synthesis of many disparate elements of the topic.

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