Foreword

A series of public lectures given in New York in 1961, as the Charles T. Mathews Lectures, under the joint auspices of Columbia University and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, gave me the opportunity of first presenting in this form my view of the historical development of French Gothic architecture in the age of its beginnings and of its major creations. Many parts of the original text have been expanded, and sometimes largely rewritten, but the leading thread has remained unchanged and I have tried all along to preserve something of the tone of the spoken word.

In the material presentation of this book a few points should perhaps be explained. The graphic illustration has been treated as an integral part of the reasoning, and it is as such that plans of buildings are most often given as ‘original reconstructed plans,’ with all the elements of hypothesis that such reconstructions entail. Plans placed side by side or in close proximity have been established on the same scale, but the differences of actual size between buildings ruled out as unrealistic the use of a single, consistent scale for all plans throughout the book. Sections and elevations, when used, are of a rather diagrammatic nature. The maps, on the other hand, have been made to hold elements of information not to be found in the text or even in the notes; for it has been thought that, when plotted on a map, series should appear as complete as possible, to transmit an image of their geographical distribution. The outlining of specific areas on the maps may of course seem a questionable mode of simplification; but the risk has been taken of offering such schemas, if only to strike the eye and invite reflection.

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A travel grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation enabled me to revisit a number of essential buildings in France in 1970, and for this my special thanks go to Miss Mary M. Davis, Vice-President of the Foundation. Assistance has come over the years from the Regents of the University of California through their programs of support for research, providing me with periods of time in which to carry out revisions and assemble additional documentation.

The extensive illustration of this book could not have been put together without help from many quarters. Kind consideration from the Archives Photographiques and Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris, from the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, and from the National Monuments Record (England) has greatly aided me in the task. Quite a few items of illustration, belonging to the Clarence Ward Medieval Archive have been supplied by courtesy of the Photographic Archives of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Shirley Prager Branner has put at my disposal photographs from the collection of the late Robert Branner. Mr. Sumner McKnight Crosby has made a series of photographs of Saint-Denis available to me. Mr. Neil Stratford has been kind enough to give me prints of his photographs of Saint-Martin-aux-Bois. Monsieur Pierre Bougard, Directeur des services départementaux d'archives du Pas-de-Calais, has provided me with photographs of rare drawings of the destroyed cathedral of Arras. Monsieur François Hébert-Stevens has supplied me with photographs of Troyes and Strasbourg cathedrals from the archives of the Editions Arthaud, Paris. Monsieur J.R. Haussser of the Oeuvre Notre-Dame at Strasbourg has sent me a photograph of an engraving of the Cathedral by Isaac Brunn. Monsieur Henry Gouin has granted me permission to take photographs of the remains of Royaumont Abbey. The right to freely make use of photographs from their collections has been accorded me by Walter Horn, Virginia Jansen, Vivian Paul and Sarah Pearson. And the aid of Mademoiselle Jeanne Vinsot of the Service des Monuments Historiques in the compilation of photographic documentation has been a positive element in the achieving of this book, to be acknowledged with much gratitude.
In the matter of graphic illustration, I have debts of a very special nature. Mr. C.L. Wysuph has made the most generous gift of his time and skill in the preparation and drawing of reconstructed plans of Saint-Denis, Notre-Dame and Bourges and in the reproducing of a set of diagrams. Mrs. Margaret Burke has executed a great number of drawings with an expertise and a care for exactness going far beyond her duties as illustrator—to which she has added the outright gift of a splendid piece of draughtsmanship, an isometric reconstruction of Laon Cathedral. The many maps, most demanding in their detail, have been transcribed by Mrs. Adrienne Morgan, with an attention and a technical virtuosity which greatly enhance their usefulness.

Mr. August Frugé, former Director of the University of California Press, gave me great encouragement by his unstinting approval of my aims in this work. It has been my good fortune to have in Lorna Price an editor of uncommon understanding and capabilities, who has clarified many problems for me; and in David Comstock a designer of great sensitivity to the presentation of architecture. And my wife, Mary, has given me the most precious collaboration at every stage in the making of this book.

The advice of fellow medievalists, especially Robert Branner, Sumner Crosby, Louis Grodecki, Pierre Héliot, Peter Kidson and Robert Mark, has been of the greatest help to me. Finally, and most fundamentally, the director of this series, my colleague and friend, Walter Horn, through his critical judgment and constant interest, has made a reality of this long-standing enterprise.