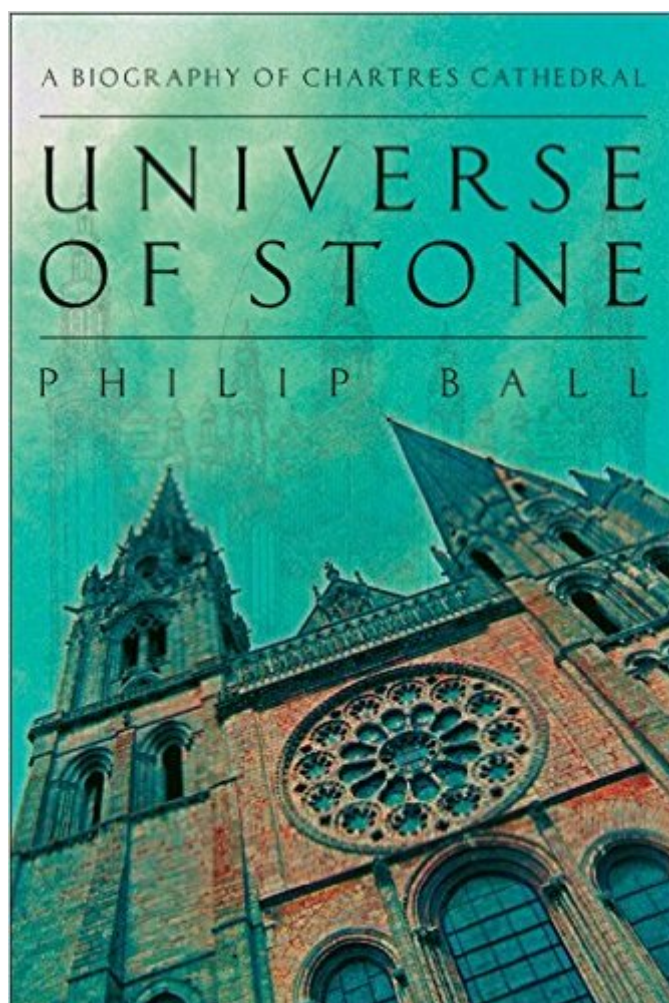


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Universe Of Stone: A Biography Of Chartres Cathedral



Synopsis

A well written study of Gothic architecture, and Chartres Cathedral in particular, looking at the theological and philosophical ideas on which it was founded, and the practicalities of its construction to ultimately aim to show what it may have "meant" to a medieval viewer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For anyone who has stood in awe of the splendid architecture of Notre Dame de Paris, Saint Denis, or Chartres itself, this is a delightful book. In his engaging and smooth prose, Philip Ball guides the reader through the religious, social, and philosophical milieu that produced the quintessentially Gothic cathedral at Chartres. The essence of Gothic architecture is hotly disputed (Ball navigates neatly through the variety of scholarly opinion), but it certainly incorporated into a unified whole a number of different elements that had previously existed--all for the purpose, it seems, of achieving a soaring height and lightness inside, heaven on earth. Contrary to what the name suggests, Gothic was really a French style, and Ball discusses Chartres in the context of the nearby and near-contemporary cathedrals, especially St Denis, Sens, Soissons, and Strasbourg. (He occasionally brings up the adaptations of the Gothic style further afield.) Like many other important churches, Notre Dame de Chartres was erected on an even more ancient sacred site: a sacred well (not a druidic temple, which is a Renaissance misinterpretation of Caesar's writing). The earliest churches that stood over Chartres's sacred well (which can still be seen in the crypt beneath the cathedral) were wooden and burnt down repeatedly: rebuilding was undertaken in 743, 858, 1020 (at which point the bishop Fulbert decided to make it an impressive Romanesque cathedral), 1134,

and finally in 1194. At this point, it was decided to rebuild in the new Gothic style--a style introduced in the west front and choir of St Denis that had been completed a half-century before.

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