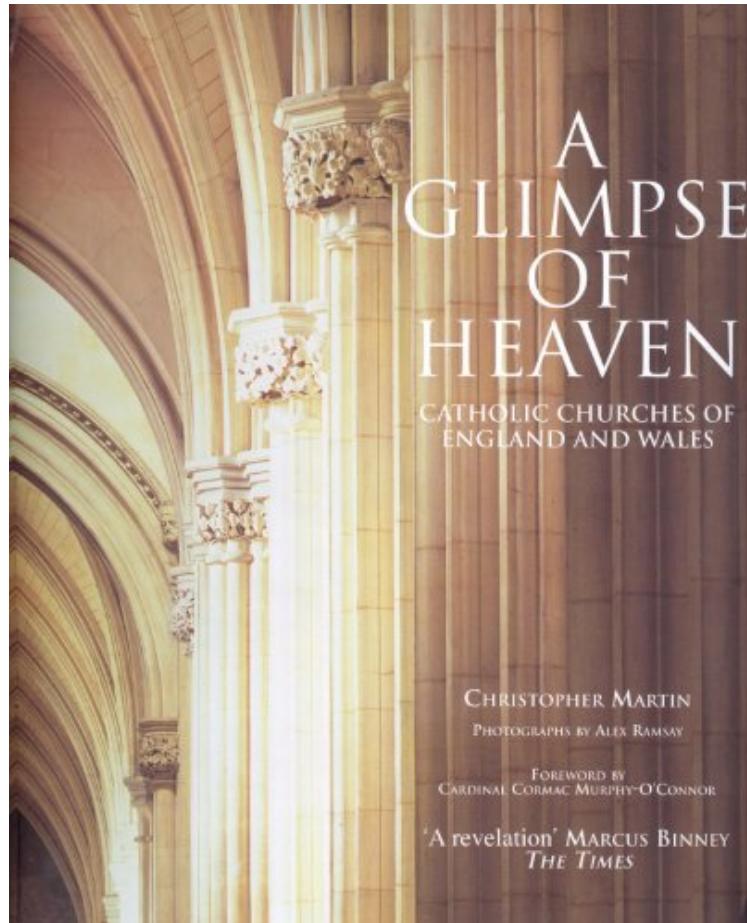


(Get free) A Glimpse of Heaven: Catholic Churches of England and Wales

## A Glimpse of Heaven: Catholic Churches of England and Wales

*Christopher Martin*

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**Christopher Martin : A Glimpse of Heaven: Catholic Churches of England and Wales** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Glimpse of Heaven: Catholic Churches of England and Wales:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Irony and The Ecstasy By FinalFleetwood The irony, briefly acknowledged at the start of this book, is that, prior to the early 16th century, all churches in England and Wales were Catholic. The great medieval Gothic cathedrals we've all seen either in person or in books, movies and tv programs were united with Rome from their very cornerstones. Then Henry VIII's libido and desperate need for a male heir met up with the anti-cleric Cromwell and the apostate archbishop Cranmer. Add to this the blatant greed of certain members of the nobility, and the eventual result was the wholesale rape and/or outright destruction of the Catholic properties, the persecution and forced "conversion" of much of the populace to Henry's new religion, and the execution of many, prominent and otherwise, who chose to remain Catholic. Even today, in 2011, the last vestiges of Henry's reign (and that of his daughter, Elizabeth) are still evident in some ways, including the fact that anyone in the line of

succession who either marries a Catholic or converts to Catholicism immediately becomes ineligible to ascend the throne. The ecstasy, as illustrated and described in the book, is the resurgence, beginning in the early 19th century, of the construction of Catholic churches. The persecution laws had been relaxed to a degree (initially allowing Catholics to build churches as long as those churches included neither steeples nor bells!), and the churches began to appear in response to the growing Catholic population. "A Glimpse of Heaven" documents, in both words and photographs, the origins and continuation of this revival. It is full of bits of arcane trivia, architectural details (some of which are best understood only by architects), and brief histories of each of the churches featured. "Proper" church architecture, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Not all of the examples shown in the book will be met with pleasure, depending on one's personal taste. That, however, is part of the panoply of styles displayed - from traditional Gothic abbeys (yes, even abbeys have returned or, in a few instances, been reclaimed and restored) to typical "country churches" set in stone in the middle of a churchyard, to the Byzantine riot of the Catholic Cathedral of Westminster (whose lavish mosaic interior is still being painstakingly put in place, tile by tiny tile) - all variations are covered. I quibble with one aspect of this otherwise fine book: too few photographs. Those that appear are excellent, but too often the written description of a church gives myriad details of both the exterior and interior while the accompanying pictures don't include those details - leading the reader to fall back on the imagination. Overall, however, this is a revealing book, exposing a part of the U.K.'s religious and architectural history otherwise overlooked. It does a service to anyone interested in either topic.

The architecture and decoration of Catholic churches and their importance as part of our heritage has gone largely undiscovered and unappreciated. This book is a celebration of 100 Catholic churches in England and Wales, with lively and informative text and stunning photography specially commissioned for the book. Each chapter is devoted to a milestone in the history of the Catholic Church since the Reformation, with a short, informative introduction followed by a description of each church complementing Alex Ramsay's photographs. The churches vary enormously in their scale, date and location. The small, now unconsecrated, 14th-century chapel at Rotherwas near Hereford survived centuries of official persecution and more informal terror from local anti-Catholics. The 19th-century church of St Everilda in Yorkshire was built after Catholic Emancipation, but although off the beaten track in the park of a big house it still hid its interior magnificence behind non-committal, blank walls. The Gothic churches of architect Joseph Hansom strike wonder into the hearts of their visitors: at Manchester's Holy Name he contrived a space of breathtaking vastness - architecture designed to shock and awe. Early-20th-century church architects adopted a lighter - and in some cases extraordinary - approach that gave Rochdale a church with a Byzantine dome and a wall of sumptuous mosaics. All these are important, architecturally, decoratively, historically and socially, and each has an additional powerful and poignant dimension because of their remarkable stories.