

historians vouches for the historical accuracy of the makeover.

Historical correctness, while never discountable, is not the fundamental issue. Whether Chartres looks again as it did when it was dedicated in 1260 in the presence of Louis IX—if that were even possible to achieve—does nothing to enhance public understanding of medieval Christianity. For those of us who are not art historians,

what matters is not a fanciful conjuring of the original aspect of its walls and parts. What carries weight, and what needs to be held in mind, is the governing sway of a Christian sensibility over the spiritual tapestry of a civilization.

At stake is historical memory. That cannot be reclaimed by Gothic counterparts to Colonial Williamsburg. There is a vacancy at the heart of a

narrow art-historical understanding of culture divorced from religious sensitivity. Knowledge is one thing; empathy quite another. Credentials do not awaken sensibilities. Current restoration represents an unholy—however unwitting—alliance between scholarship and circus. Or, put another way, between restoration and commission—however subliminal—to keep the public coming. ■

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## GATED COMMUNITY

The buyer signed the contract smugly sure  
 The guarded walls he'd bought would keep away  
 The street-game children, noisy in their play;  
 The beggars, hungry, hideous, and poor;  
 The Bible salesmen coming door to door;  
 Annoying relatives, who'd overstay;  
 Do-gooder activists, with things to say.  
 Unwelcome faces would intrude no more.

He should have known the contract was a lie:  
 Past sentry's eye, past photo-sensor gate,  
 Past locks reset with bit-encoded key,  
 An awful Visitor would, in time, slip by,  
 To shock a man secure in his estate:  
 "This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

—Bryce Christensen