The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscriptions

Calvin B. Kendall

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The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscriptions Calvin B. Kendall Verse inscriptions in stone appeared in abundance on the façades of Romanesque churches in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Marking the place where medieval worshippers were transported from secular to sacred space, portal verse inscriptions provide important, and often overlooked, insights into the dynamic function of the portals and their art. "The Allegory of the Church" is the first full-length study of Romanesque verse inscriptions in the context of church portals and portal sculpture, and is the product of a twenty-year study. Calvin B. Kendall demonstrates how these inscriptions served to express the role of the church building as a concrete allegory of Christ and the Church. Describing them in detail, he traces the history and nature of the changes in allegorical interpretation of the inscriptions until, as medieval assumptions about language and rhetoric changed, they were finally abandoned by Gothic artists. An exemplary work of interdisciplinary scholarship, "The Allegory of the Church" includes a detailed catalogue of Romanesque verse inscriptions.

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