



BRASS TABERNACLE IN THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL

TREASURES OF THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL:

THE BRASS TABERNACLE.

By Bernard Lauwyck

As Easter 2012 approaches, which will be the last day that the Roseau Cathedral will be used for Liturgy, till after the roof renovation project is completed, we continue to look at the treasures inside this building.

Today, we look at the TABERNACLE.

The word Tabernacle is derived from the Latin word for TENT. The tent that the Israelites were commanded by God to construct so He could be among them.

Exodus 25:8 *God said " And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them, my people "*

God provided a detailed instruction how to set up this sanctuary including :

" You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times."

Exodus 25:30.

The function of the tabernacle in the Cathedral is to store the consecrated bread or host, the body of Christ. There is therefore a close link between the tent in Exodus and the tabernacle of the Cathedral. Since the time of Exodus, the Presence of the Lord was placed in a beautiful tent (=tabernacle) and later in the first temple of Jerusalem. Renowned scholar Walter Brueggemann in his book "An unsettling God" states:

" It is clear that the tabernacle tradition (Exodus 25-31;35-40) is preoccupied with BEAUTY.....The skilled artisan work in a variety of materials to construct an adequate and acceptable place of THE PRESENCE.

The culmination of this elaborate preparation is the coming of "THE GLORY OF THE LORD", which takes up residence in the tabernacle (Exod 40:34-38)"

And the Tabernacle in the Roseau Cathedral is a beautiful place for the Presence !!

The unknown artist or workshop produced an intricate brass metal miniature of the entrance of a Gothic Cathedral. Portals or entrances to Gothic cathedrals are usual very elaborately decorated doorways. They emphasize *that Jesus Christ is the door to eternal life . Jesus said : "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9).*

This alone explains the glorification of these church entrances, often encased in great arches and crowded with stone carvings. Most sculptures of carvings around the gothic church entrance are connected with Jesus : Jesus sitting in majesty, the Virgin with child, the angels, the saints.

As example we look at the portal of the west facade of the Cathedral of Amiens.

We recognize the following elements :

Finial: Small ornament located on top of a pinnacle or gable (not shown here)

A) gable; Triangular portion of a wall fronting the enclosing lines of a sloping roof, which often contains sculptures

B) pointed archivolt; A series of decorated, recessed arches spanning an opening such as a portal

C) tympanum; A triangular space between an arch and the horizontal bar of a portal or lintel, often decorated with CHRIST- IN - MAJESTY .

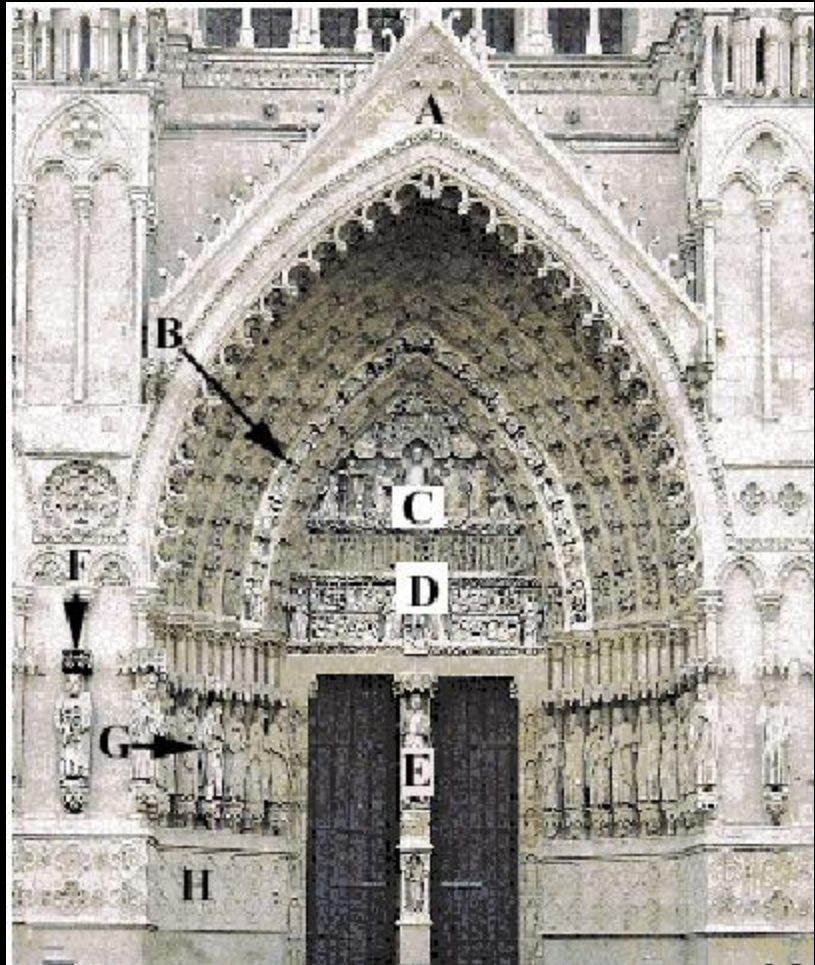
D) lintel; horizontal beam over the doors

E) trumeau; Stone pillar or column supporting the tympanum of a portal at its center

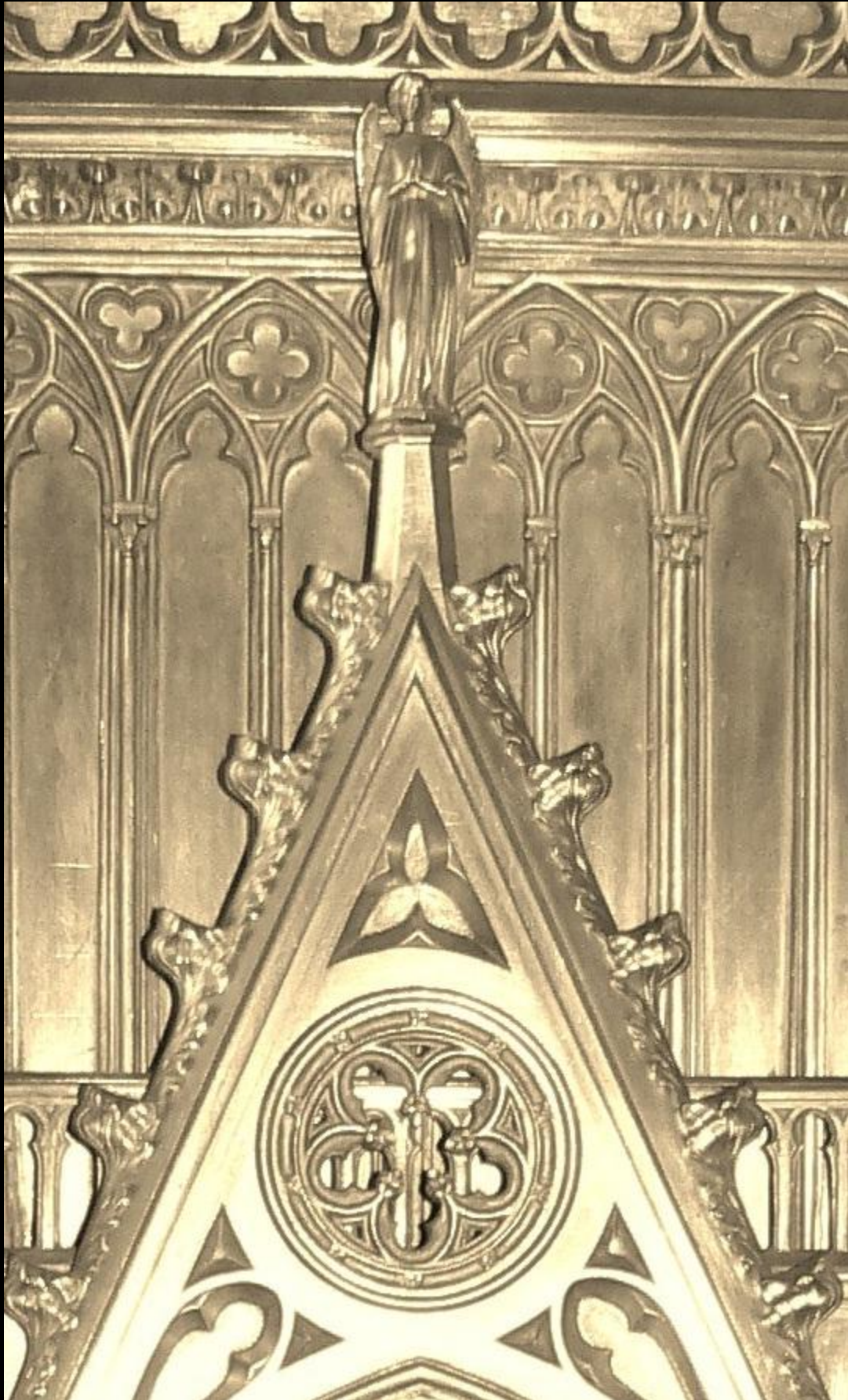
F) canopy above a carved cornerpiece; A decorated rooflike, richly decorated baldachin over a statue

G)jambs;

H) socles: the lower panels of a portal, often located under the jamb figures

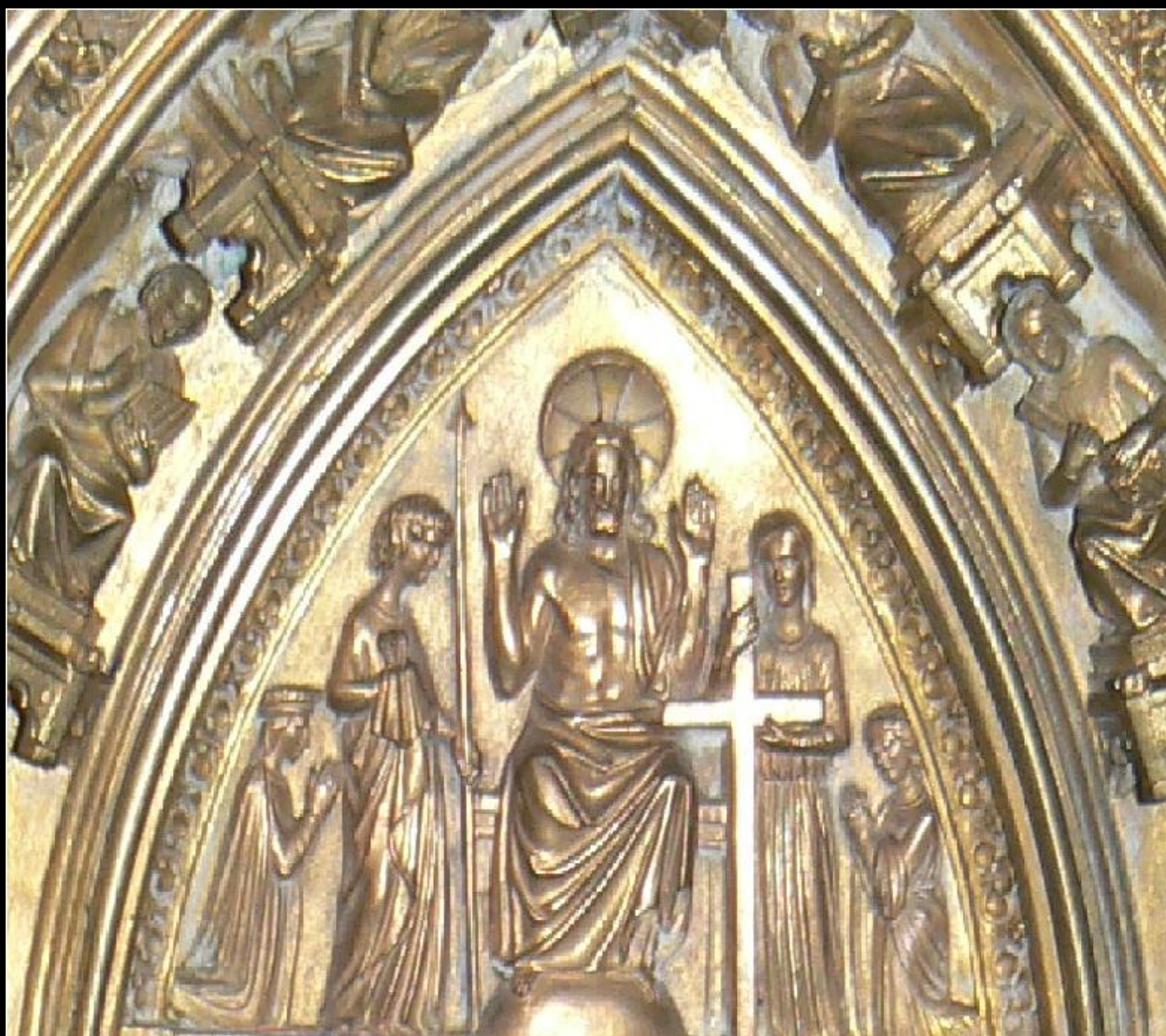


We will now describe the tabernacle starting with the angel, on top of the gable with his hands in prayer.



The TYMPANUM or space between the arch and the door lintel of the Cathedral's tabernacle depicts Christ sitting in Majesty on a stool, showing the wounds in his hands.

He is flanked by two men holding the instruments of the Passion (spear and cross) and the kneeling figures of the Virgin Mary and St. John (both of whom were present at the Crucifixion).



Above this arch are musicians playing the lute, the harp, the flute, the trumpet to the Glory of God, singing:

“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:7-8)





The solid door is of a very intricate design with in front of the trumeau or center pillar the Virgin with child Jesus. Notice also the ornate design of the door hinges. The apostle Peter with key is to the left. St. Paul with sword (instrument of his martyrdom) is to the right.



To the left of the door of the tabernacle is an angel and the two evangelists John and Matthew.



St. John depicted with his symbol “the eagle”.

St. Matthew with as symbol “the face of a man”.

To the right of the door of the tabernacle is an angel and the evangelists Mark and Luke. St. Mark with his attribute “the winged lion”, St. Luke with “the ox”.

There are two sources for these symbols or attributes :

1. The vision of the divine chariot, the Merkabah, Ezekiel 1:10 :

“I looked and I saw beside the cherubim four wheels, one besides each of the cherubim....each of the cherubim had four faces : Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces...”

2. St. John in the Book of Revelation

“In the center , around the throne of God, were four living creatures,.. The first living creature was like a lion, the second like an ox, the third had a face of a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle...Day and night they never stop saying “HOLLY , HOLY, HOLY, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:7-8)



