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Christopher Wren

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Have you ever been to London? If you have, you would think that London is a very beautiful and historic city of England. It has many beautiful and splendid buildings; St. Paul's Cathedral, the Royal Naval College, Hampton Court Palace, Sheldonian Theatre, Kensington Palace, are good examples of them. It is not easy to believe that once London was engulfed by devastating flame in 1666.¹ The fire destroyed two-thirds of the city, many old and important buildings were annihilated in just a few days. Christopher Wren was the one who redesigned many of them. He had a significant role as a royal architect. *The reason, why London has so many beautiful buildings today, is because of Christopher Wren. The city owes him its architectural beauty. He did not influence only the British architecture but also other countries' architecture too.*

Originally, London was not as beautiful as today at all. In 1665, it had a population of 600,000, but the facilities were enough for only one tenth that number.² The streets were so narrow that at some places two people could touch each other from the opposite window. There was so much garbage on the streets that emitted filthy smell. The important buildings were so old and needed renovation. Christopher Wren started

¹ Wikipedia contributors. "Christopher Wren." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 9 Sep. 2012.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Wren>

² Heywood, Gould. *Sir Christopher Wren Renaissance Architect, Philosopher, and Scientist*. 1970. p. 104

changing London by being the first one who adopted the Greek and Roman architectures and combined them together in design for *the Pembroke Chapel* in Cambridge University.³ At that time, anyone could be an architect because there were no serious fields of studying architecture in England, making the country have so less qualified architects. Design the Pembroke Chapel was the first project of him, it was the great start, however it did not affect much the way of architecture in London , not as much as after "*The Great Fire of London*".

"*The Great Fire of London*" happened in 1666. It was a shocking disaster that destroyed eighty-seven churches, eighty-eight factories and thirteen-thousand houses including the hundreds-year-old St. Paul's Cathedral which was the symbol of the city.⁴ The fire started from a small baker's shop and spread widely over the city in a short time. Thus, London needed to be rebuilt and the one who was capable of such a duty was Christopher Wren. Wren, who was assigned for this duty, by the king, designed the entire city. The king was pleased with his plan but it was rejected by the people for its large-required expense. Therefore, he decided to focus on the design for the St. Paul's Cathedral and the eighty-seven churches. Also, he was responsible for the maintenance and construction of all public buildings in England. As the king's surveyor of public works, he started his plan on the most important and the biggest building of the city, the St. Paul's Cathedral. He designed it according to the old traditional style but with more

³ Heywood, Gould. *Sir Christopher Wren Renaissance Architect, Philosopher, and Scientist*. 1970. p. 83

⁴ Britain Express contributors. "The Great Fire of London." *Britain Express*. 9 Sep. 2012.
<http://www.britainexpress.com/History/great_fire.htm>

⁵ St. Paul's Cathedral contributors. "Designs for the Great Model, 1673." *St. Paul's Cathedral*. 9 Sep. 2012.
< <http://www.stpauls.co.uk/Cathedral-History/The-Collections/Architectural-Archive/1-Designs-for-the-Great-Model-1673>>

details; old-fashioned Gothic and classic styles from Greek and Roman were the styles that he chose.⁵ He learned them from the drawings of Bernini, the great Italian architect, when he visited Paris. The churches were also designed and built along with the St. Paul's Cathedral. Wren did not only design them, he also controlled all the processes of the construction; he was responsible for the procurement of material and hiring the workers, located the stone pillar and more. It took thirty-six years to finish the St. Paul's Cathedral. The total expense was £747,954, 3 shillings.⁶ It was one of the most memorable projects in the history of England.

Christopher Wren had created so many beautiful buildings for the City of London; his masterpiece, the St. Paul's Cathedral and fifty-two churches. (The budget was not enough for the other churches in that time.) The Monument to the Great Fire of London, which is also one of his greatest works, is priceless to the people. It reminds them of the unforgettable tragedy and the city rebuilt under the control of Christopher Wren. Nowadays, London is a very beautiful architectural city; the churches are so fascinating, the St. Paul's Cathedral serves as the biggest spiritual centre of Christian worship of the city.⁷ Christopher Wren influenced so much on the architecture of England. His reputation also spread through Europe. Many European architects adopted his style of the St. Paul's Cathedral to their works. In France, where British architecture was not so well-known, there are traces of Wren's dome on the dome of the church of Sainte-Geneviève.

⁶ Heywood, Gould. *Sir Christopher Wren Renaissance Architect, Philosopher, and Scientist*. 1970. p. 159

⁷ St. Paul's Cathedral contributors. "Cathedral-History." *St. Paul's Cathedral*. 9 Sep. 2012. <<http://www.stpauls.co.uk/Cathedral-History>>

In St. Petersburg, there are traces on St. Isaac's. And at Washington, D.C., the US Capitol.⁸ There are many other buildings which designed by Christopher Wren or their architects adopted the style from his. Christopher Wren was a great architecture, indeed.

⁸ Wikipedia contributors. "Christopher Wren." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 9 Sep. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Wren>