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# A 'Disturbing Influence'

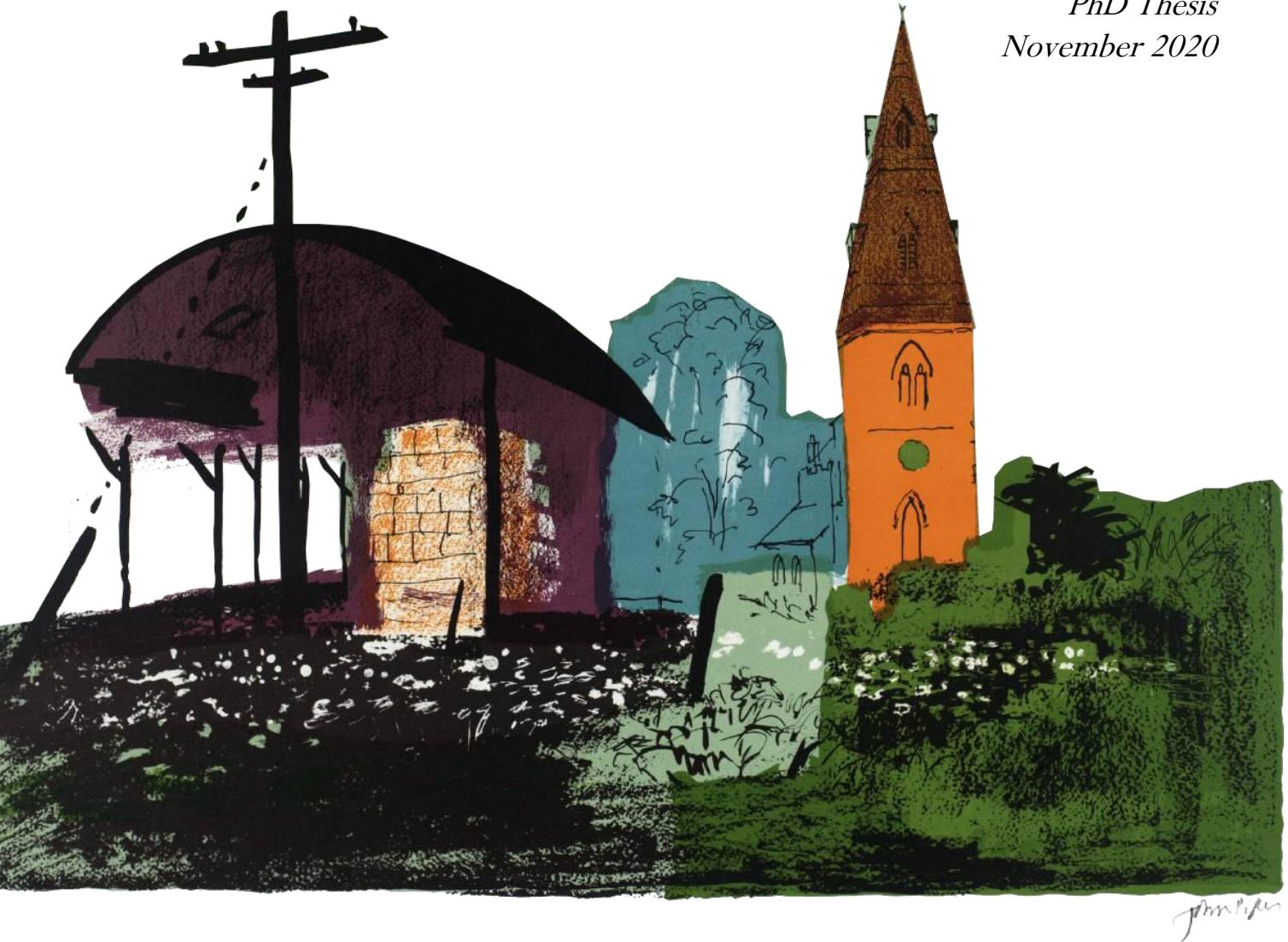
Directions and Cross-confessional Inputs in  
English Church Architecture 1945-1970

**Lorenzo Grieco**

*Kent School of Architecture and Planning*

*PhD Thesis*

*November 2020*





## **A 'Disturbing Influence': Directions and Cross-confessional Inputs in English Church Architecture, 1945-1970**

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# Contents

## Abstract

## Acknowledgments

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Historical and geographical framework
- 1.2 Literature
- 1.3 Methodology
- 1.4 Terminological note

### 2. The liturgical and theoretical foundation of modern church building

- 2.1 An antiquarian church: ecclesiology
- 2.2 Revival in style and rituals
- 2.3 A different approach to style in church architecture
- 2.4 The Liturgical Movement
- 2.5 Liturgical renewal in Britain
- 2.6 Conclusion

### 3. A step forward: pioneering church design in the new century

- 3.1 The function of the Church in the modern world: the Parish and People Movement
- 3.2 Two innovative Catholic churches
- 3.3 Towards a modern church
- 3.4 The social function of churches
- 3.5 Conclusion

### 4. Churches in new urban settlements

- 4.1 Churches as urban landmarks
- 4.2 Polyfunctional church buildings
- 4.3 Shared church buildings in areas of mission
- 4.4 Conclusion

## 5. Towards religious unity: ecumenical trends in architecture

- 5.1 Twentieth-century Ecumenism
- 5.2 Foreign references for shared church buildings
- 5.3 Sharing experiments in Britain
- 5.4 Interfaith college chapels
- 5.5 Other public interfaith centres
- 5.6 Conclusion

## 6. Modernising tradition through technology

- 6.1 Revival versus modern style
- 6.2 A modern functionalism
- 6.3 Form-resistant structures
- 6.4 Prefabrication
- 6.5 Spaceframe structures
- 6.6 Conclusion

## 7. Continental influence in church architecture

- 7.1 'I can see for miles and miles': Britain looking at Germany
- 7.2 'Il ne parle que du Bon Dieu': French architectural poetry
- 7.3 'Norwegian Wood': a Scandinavian scent in church buildings
- 7.4 Conclusion

## 8. Between 'transparent poverty' and theatrical exaggeration: seeing Italy from Britain

- 8.1 A fascist heritage
- 8.2 Pauperism, classicism and baroque
- 8.3 The institutionalisation of the debate on liturgy and architecture
- 8.4 Over-sophistication
- 8.5 Concrete and its expressions
- 8.6 Conclusion

## 9. Conclusion

## References

# Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the evolution of British ecclesiastical architecture in the post-war period, from 1945 to 1970, with a particular focus on Anglican churches. To understand the development, which follows the transformation of liturgy, the study will take stock of liturgical innovations in religious communities and their impact on church layouts around the second half of the twentieth century. The dissertation investigates the theoretical seeds at the base of the post-war relationship between liturgy and architecture, and the cross-confessional inputs in the design of Christian churches, as well as spaces devoted to ecumenical services. The spread of magazines, books, and photographic reportages, as well as the birth of research groups on church architecture during our period, pinpoint the relevance of the subject in post-war British society. At the same time the analysis of the texts published during the period of investigation, and of their gaze towards Continental architecture, will prompt a discussion on the cross-geographical influences on British church building. Particularly, the study will consider the contemporary advances in ecclesiastical architecture in Italy, Germany, and France, tracing common paths and divergencies in the planning of churches by comparison with the British case-studies. Considering the communitarian revolution that would inspire the Second Vatican Council within the Catholic Church and the Parish and People movement within the Church of England – both aimed at bringing the Mass to the people – churches will be analysed according to their relationship with the urban communities. The need to rebuild cities after the destruction and the economic crisis following the Second World War link church buildings to planned urban developments. In such contexts, churches are sculpted on the new exigences of modern neighbourhoods, but their architectural upshot will take account of the complex convergence of different factors and protagonists, from architects to local authorities, from priests to immigrants, who all contributed to their planning. The themes covered by the dissertation are not presumed to offer an inclusive view on British church architecture. Their goal is rather to mark new paths towards a cross-cultural contextualization of church building in England, an architectural phenomenon that cannot simply be dealt with by mere stylistic analysis but requires a broader multi-oriented approach. Indeed, the study takes into account the various inputs from liturgy to ecumenism, from urban and social theories to the influence of Continental architecture, considering British church architecture as an all-round phenomenon.

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# 1. Introduction

*itselfe; every man*

*part of the maine'*

*No man is an Iland, intire of*

*is a peece of the Continent, a*

John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624),  
'Meditation XVIII'

Great Britain is an island, but men living there are not, paraphrasing the title of a text by the American theologian Thomas Merton (1915–68) who, in turn, cited a seventeenth-century composition by John Donne.<sup>2</sup> The ambition of my thesis can be summed up by that sentence, as it tries to analyse a very geographically related theme, such as religious architecture in Britain, by creating isthmi with outer lands, both geographically and symbolically speaking. The need to build bridges around the subject is furthered by the specific nature of British ecclesiastical architecture, developed within a precise religious context. Its peculiar context sees an established national church like the Church of England coexisting with other confessions, according to an intercultural dialogue that injects new stimuli into the complex processes of architecture. While the theological and liturgical development of the Church of England affected several Protestant denominations, it also had a considerable impact on the Roman Catholic Church, the second largest Christian denomination in Britain in the selected time frame. The research looks at the development of Anglican church architecture in the second post war period, considering the development of liturgical theories, the processes of reconstruction, monumentalisation and conversion of old church buildings, the renewed role of churches in the city and society, the influence of cross-religious elements, the concept of modernity, the evolution of sacred art, and the impact of Continental influences.

## 1.1 Objectives

The thesis aims at analysing the development of post-war church architecture through the study of some key topics. The themes correspond to the following chapters: the evolution of nineteenth-century ecclesiology; the spread of liturgical theories twentieth century; the social and urban function of post-war churches; shared church buildings; the language of

construction technology; the influence of Continental church architecture; Italian church architecture seen from Britain. Whilst these themes have been selected around key questions, in some cases the thesis delves into more specific foci. This is the case of the chapter on nineteenth-century ecclesiology or the one on Italian churches, which, even if diverging from the main analysis, exemplify some of the issues related to the complexity of the debate. For instance, the relation between liturgy and architecture, or the idea of styles, from Gothic to Renaissance and Baroque. The chapters also introduce questions such as why did the morphology of churches become a fundamental issue? How did the research on the origins of the Church, oriented towards a re-foundation of the liturgy, relate to the debate on style? Had the building envelope a symbolic relationship with the religious actions it housed? Was the choice of erecting (or reconstructing) a religious building with the language of the industrial city symbolic of a Church of its time? How can the development of church architecture in Britain relate to other countries? Was the adoption of secularised languages a passage from the time of the absolute to the time of history?

The analysis follows a thematically organised path and does not proceed chronologically. Yet its structure aims at a narrative which suggests a direct connection between themes.

## 1.2 Historical and geographical framework

The research analyses the themes in a selected timeframe between 1945 and 1970. It comprises twenty-five years which mark a generation in sociological terms. This historical period was full of fertile exchanges of thoughts. Religions and disciplines opened up to each other, while social theories and movements reached beyond national borders, as the protests of 1968 proved. As we will see, the period under consideration saw the advent of many pivotal points in the history of liturgy and architecture in Britain. In 1945, for instance, the Anglican Benedictine Dom Gregory Dix (1901–1952) published *The Shape of the Liturgy*, a paradigmatic example of Anglo-Catholic liturgical theories. In its pages, Dix affirmed the necessity of a corporate approach to the liturgy and to its core action, the Eucharist. He claimed that the common source of the eucharistic rite was in its underlying actions. Liturgical actions relied on four essential moments: offertory, consecration, fraction, and communion. The text was particularly influential in the Church of England and it guided the setting up of the *Alternative Service Book*, Series 2 (1966-67), an alternative to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. In the same year of *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Geoffrey Francis

Fisher (1887–1972) became Archbishop of Canterbury, the chief religious role in the Church of England. Fisher saw the Church of England as categorically Protestant. Yet, he pushed Anglicanism towards ecumenism, reaching out to Evangelicals as well as to Roman Catholics.<sup>3</sup> In 1946, he preached a sermon in the university church of St Mary the Great, Cambridge. Historians consider it as the first move towards Protestant unity in Britain.<sup>4</sup> On the side of Catholicism, he was responsible for a partial rapprochement with Rome. For instance, he met Pope John XXIII in 1960, a few years before the Second Vatican Council.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he had a fundamental role in the material reconstruction of the country. Before 1945, as Bishop of London, Fisher was the head of the Bishops War Committee, which dealt with issues such as war damages to churches. Later, during his archbishopric, the Church of England prepared a vast plan for the restoration and reconstruction of bomb-damaged ecclesiastical buildings.

The intervention on blitzed churches was headed by a fervid debate on the ethical message of ruins and the legitimacy of architectural rehabilitation. The issue emerged in the publication of *Bombed Churches as War Memorials* in 1945. It presented essays by renowned architects and artists, like Hugh Casson (1910–1999), Brenda Colvin (1897–1981), and Jacques Groag (1892–1962). The book offered an original reflection on the symbolic value of blitzed churches. It insisted on the preservation of their ruins as the witnesses of war losses. Indeed, the text suggested a new way of monumentalising the many bombed churches on British soil. In the first decade after the war, some blitzed churches were lightly restored, others kept in ruins, some others were so damaged to be rebuilt in new forms. In reconstructions, architects often followed an old-fashioned approach to plans, facades, and materials. The trend was clear in the reconstruction of three churches, planned soon after the war and opened by the 1950s. The first to open was the Anglican church of St John Evangelist in St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, rebuilt (1950–4) as a neo-Victorian building by Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel (1887–1959). The second was the Scottish church of St Columba in Chelsea, London, designed as an imposing Portland stone building (1943–55) by Edward Maufe (1882–1974). The third was the Anglican church of St John the Evangelist in Newbury, Berkshire, built in bricks (1943–57) on a design by Stephen Dykes Bower (1903–1994) to replace a blitzed Victorian church by William Butterfield. Of the three, St Leonards was the only one to incorporate substantial surviving parts of the original building.

All three churches were based on traditional Latin cross plans: a large central nave flanked by arcades, reminiscent of medieval basilicas and cathedrals.

At the same time, the starting of this new period for the Church of England, now guided by Fisher, coincided with a political turn-over. The 1945 elections registered a historical victory of the Labour party. The resulting Attlee Government gave a new impulse to welfare politics. Among first actions, in 1945 the Government set up a New Towns Commission. It sustained the need to build new towns to compensate the urban communities destroyed by the war, resulting in the *New Towns Act* of 1946. The development of new settlements stimulated the construction of new religious buildings. This was the case of the churches in Harlow or Stevenage, mentioned in the text.<sup>6</sup> As we will see, the construction of churches in new estates aimed to meet the new liturgical, social and recreation needs of users.

As for the other end of the chosen time interval, March 1970 saw the publication of a significant issue of *Manplan* on religion. *Manplan* was an experimental series of special issues of the monthly *Architectural Review*, which dealt with human space. Indeed, the Religion issue 'focused not on buildings, but on people, and not as individuals, but as a society.'<sup>7</sup> The magazine affirmed the human-centred role of architecture. This perspective structured its articles and images, including the several photos shot at eye level. They offered an instructive analogy in terms of moving the focus away from the formal or decorative qualities of architecture towards the experiential and social. While in most architectural magazines, pictures portrayed few or no users, those of *Manplan* abounded with people in the space. Photographs in the 'Religion' issue were inhabited by faithful of all ages. They prayed, sang, ate, had parties, and played sports in those buildings built for worship. There is a connection between this publishing project and what had taken place in the Church of England in terms of experiment in architecture and liturgy in the years since 1945. Churches had been evolving as multifunctional organism, used not only for the spiritual relief of the faithful, but also as tools to guide their lay life according to the principles of sociality and religious inclusion. From this point of view, *Manplan* offers an instructive analogy in terms of moving the focus away from the formal or decorative qualities of architecture towards the experiential and social.

Among the British projects, the magazine presented a building completed in the same year. It was the ecumenical church of St Andrew in Cippenham, near the Slough Trading Estate.<sup>8</sup> This was the first purpose-built church shared by Anglican and Roman Catholics to open in

Britain. The idea of building a shared church in the area of Slough already dated back to 1966. Then, the local Catholic community was enlarged with the immigration of workers from Ireland and Poland. So, they started a dialogue with the Anglican Church to realise a chapel on their plot.<sup>9</sup> The project soon evolved in a parallelepipedal church building, designed by W. S. Hattrell and Partners. The firm was founded by the architect Michael Hattrell, a member of the New Churches Research Group. Completed in 1970, the building was widely published, not only in *Manplan*, but also in *Churchbuilding, Architects' Journal* and elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> They all stressed the ecumenical experiment, its functional flexibility, and its technical advance. Indeed, it comprised a light structure of slender steel pillars supporting a 22x22 m spaceframe roof. The technology embodied a modern concept of flexibility. As underlined by Robert Proctor, the same spatial potentials had been explored by Cedric Price (1934–2003) in his project for the *Fun Palace* (1961).<sup>11</sup> The church's compact perimeter wall, pierced by few windows only, consisted of prefabricated wall sections. Sliding and folding walls organised the interior space.<sup>12</sup> The inside surface could house up to four hundred people, also in smaller simultaneous gatherings. The worship area housed the altar, set on a moveable platform near the northern corner. This space could be enlarged by opening its sliding partition. All the furniture was moveable. The small organ, along with the tabernacle recess, could be hidden behind sliding screens. Seating was made of stackable chairs.<sup>13</sup> The spatial flexibility allowed the use of the building for other activities. Conferences, meetings, concerts, and dramatic performances animated the space after the service. It was a building to be lived by any Christian at any time.

The industrial look and the flexibility of St Andrew can be compared to the contemporary experimentation on multi-purpose church buildings carried on in France.<sup>14</sup> For instance, its aesthetics reminds the 'Maison du peuple chrétien Saint Luc' designed (1964–68) by Pierre Pinsard (1906–88) and Hugo Vollmar (1936–), for the Nantes diocese.<sup>15</sup> The rectangular plan of the church was organised by a partitioning system designed by Jean Prouvé (1901–84), providing rooms for several activities.<sup>16</sup> Still in 1968, the ecumenical centre of St Marc in the Malherbe, designed by Jean Cognet (1932–2016), was opened in Grenoble. Its spaces, delimited by moveable walls, housed different activities and supplied meeting areas for different confessions. Indeed, it was used by the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed Church of France, and later by an Anglican community, too.

Like the two examples in France, the church of Cippenham exhibited a formal rigour, intended to avoid differences between cults, matching a modernist minimalism with Calvinist

iconoclasm. The formal, technological, and functional gap from the traditional image of a church, based on a basilica plan and covered by a pointed roof, is clear. The in-between path well symbolises the development in church planning expanded by the present text.

### 1.3 Literature

Post-war church architecture in Britain has been largely investigated in literature. Yet, scholars have scarcely analysed the debate of architects, experts of liturgy, and artists within the Church of England. The same goes for the interrelation of professionals from different geographical areas and religious backgrounds. There are a few studies on the English churches of the post-war period, but they deal above all with Roman Catholic church building. Among them, the most updated reconstruction of the phenomenon is Robert Proctor's book on *Building the Modern Church: Roman Catholic Church Architecture in Britain, 1955 to 1975* (2014). The work also mentions some Anglican examples, but their purpose is mainly to contextualise, by contrast or affinity, the parallel development of Catholic churches. Among its merits, *Building the Modern Church* detects some important themes in the post-war church building. They are the liturgical changes, the role of arts, and the contrast between tradition and modernism. Analogous subjects emerge in this thesis which, instead, mainly relies on Anglican examples. For instance, the thesis deals with the distinction between traditional and modern architecture, the relationship of which is rather ambiguous, as it might refer either to religious or architectural aspects. Within Anglican Architecture the borderlines are somehow even more blurring, and the degree of mapping of these onto each other is an important topic. A convergence of subjects between Proctor's book and the current research is also ecumenic architecture, like the churches shared by Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

Paul D. Walker's pioneering doctoral thesis on *Developments in Catholic Churchbuilding in the British Isles, 1945–1980* (1985) also offers an interesting insight into British church architecture. Still, it focuses on Roman Catholic buildings or, at most, shared churches. Like Proctor's book, it helps to understand some general tendencies of church buildings. Yet, it lacks the necessary temporal detachment to value their success or failure in a long perspective. Moreover, it presents few comparisons between the architecture of different religious denominations.

A different approach distinguishes *100 Churches 100 Years* (2019), a publication of the Twentieth Century Society. It presents a survey of one hundred relevant churches, built in Britain in the twentieth century. Its major value lies in the possibility of confronting buildings for different Christian confessions: from Catholicism to the Church of England, from the Church of Scotland to Baptist and Unitarian buildings. The cases are set within a large temporal frame, which helps delineate an evolution of the typology. Each entry contains a short essay, compiled by prominent architectural historians. Due to the breadth of the focus, the short text describing individual churches often fail to convey the complexity of their design. To cover such a void, the book presents some short essays on transversal themes. For instance, they deal with ‘Spaces for non-Christian religion’ (Kate Jordan), ‘Stained Glass’, (Jane Brocket), or ‘Art and Artefacts’, (Alan Powers). Even these subjects, which are investigated more systematically, are peripheral to the main themes discussed in the thesis. The volume also collects the biographic profiles of some influential church architects. These insights give the reader a hint of the several ramifications of the argument. The volume is a valid starting point for those who want to understand Anglican church architecture in a local but interdenominational context.

The volume on one hundred C20 churches followed another text on church architecture, also edited by the Twentieth Century Society, *The Twentieth Century Church* (1998). It comprises different essays on the history of church architecture from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. The focus is broad, ranging from general architectural trends to individual designers. It succeeds in tracing a history of church architecture in Britain, regardless of confessions. It also offers a view of the contextual experimentation carried abroad, a theme evoked in two contributions: ‘Sacred Architecture in a Secular Century’, by Gavin Stamp, and ‘Liturgy and Architecture: The Development of the Centralised Eucharistic Space’, by Elain Harwood.<sup>17</sup>

Today, apart from the cited studies, a comprehensive and organic study on Anglican church buildings still does not exist. While the literature on nineteenth-century Anglican architecture is vast, the same is not true for the post-war period. Instead, numerous works investigate specific aspects such as the production of individual architects specialising in the design of churches. Some expound particularly relevant architectures, such as the cathedrals at Coventry and Liverpool. Yet only guidebooks have dealt with Anglican architecture from a broad perspective. Among these, two are worth mentioning: *Parish Churches of Greater London: A Guide, Anglican Church-Building in London 1915–1945*, and *Anglican Church-*

*Building in London 1946–2012*.<sup>18</sup> However, they describe the development of the typology through rhapsodic architectural episodes. They struggle to delineate a common horizon. Indeed, guides do not articulate an all-around history of post-war Anglican architecture in Britain. Nor do they analyse the relationship with home and foreign stimuli, or the theoretical and liturgical basis for these buildings.

The very recent *Modern Architecture and the Sacred: Religious Legacy and Spiritual Renewal* (2020), edited by Ross Anderson and Maximilian Sternberg, comprises various essays on sacrality in architecture. Its geographic and thematic horizon is large, going from neoclassicism to funerary architecture and war memorials. Due to this vastness, it sometimes hardly provides the reader with a clear insight on church building. In particular, it only systematically presents British architectures in the contributions dedicated to magazines (by Sam Samarghandi), and synagogues (by Gerald Adler).<sup>19</sup>

The most comprehensive study on the evolution of Christian rituals and the resulting spaces is Nigel Yates's *Liturgical Space: Christian Worship and Church Buildings in Western Europe 1500–2000* (2008). It dedicates about forty pages to the twentieth-century renewal. It compares the evolution of liturgy within the Church of England, Roman Catholicism, and the other Christian churches.

There are also several books, focusing more on church history and theology than architecture. Mark Torgerson's *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for worship and ministry today* (2007) analyses some liturgical matters. It describes the theories at the base of the twentieth-century renovation of sacred architecture. It also provided considerable guidance on its European and British protagonists, including some biographical notes on Peter Hammond and John Gordon Davies. Along with Adrian Hastings' *A History of English Christianity 1920–1985* (1986) and Paul A. Welsby's *A History of the Church of England, 1945–80* (1984), it offers a thorough historical contextualisation of the evolution of the Anglican Church in the post-war period.

While Proctor and Walker's studies are the two most complete texts on post-war British church architecture, they both focus on churches for a cult that was not majoritarian in Britain. It is worth noting, however, that, at that period, the Roman Catholic Church erected far more new buildings for worship than the Church of England. The difference was mainly due to the fact that Anglicans already had plenty of buildings while Roman Catholics, being relatively newly established in Britain due to the late emancipation which followed the

Roman Catholic Relief Act (1829), did not. If compared to other confessions, the Catholic directives on church buildings were very early. Moreover, the Roman Catholic church had a fundamental role in the increasing post-war immigration in Britain. Yet, in 1946 Roman Catholics formed only some 11% of the total population of the United Kingdom.<sup>20</sup> In light of Proctor and Walker's focus on Catholic churches, the aim of the present thesis is to turn the focus to the Anglican confession, in the context of others within Britain and in other parts of the world at a time of growing globalisation.

Publications dating back to the period are precious sources. Indeed, they represent very successfully the ideas current at a particular moment, including the cross-religious approach to churches. In particular, two milestones are represented by *Liturgy and Architecture* (1961) and *Towards a Church Architecture* (1962), respectively written and edited by Peter Hammond. Although he was interested in the Orthodox Church and in medieval liturgy, Hammond was also very convinced about the necessity to modernise the liturgical and aesthetic language of church building. With this conviction, he founded in 1957 the New Churches Research Group. It was an inter-confessional group, attended among others by the Catholic theologian Charles Davis (1923–99), the architects Robert Maguire, Keith Murray, Nigel Melhuish (1927–2003) and Lance Wright (1915–2003). In 1960 the NCRG launched the first issue of its magazine, *Church Buildings Today*, later *Churchbuilding*. In 1962 the contributions of many members were collected by Hammond in *Towards a Church Architecture*, intended to 'explain to churchmen the inward approach of the genuine modern architect, and to impart to architects the essential purpose and meaning of the building they are projecting.'<sup>21</sup> The three literary ventures produced within the group, *Liturgy and Architecture*, *Towards a Church Architecture*, and the magazine *Churchbuilding*, offered a ground-breaking view on church architecture in Britain and abroad. They are still today a precious source to understand influences and trends of English post-war ecclesiastic architecture.

*Liturgy and Architecture* has been regarded as 'the most significant book on the subject since the Cambridge Camden Society's *A Few Words to Churchwardens* (1841).'<sup>22</sup> First published in 1960, it was the expression of a new approach modern church planning in Britain. Its author, Peter Hammond, was an Anglican canon and an architectural theorist whose 'influence on the transformation of the design of religious buildings went far wider and became truly international and inter-denominational.'<sup>23</sup> In particular, the chapters of the book dedicated to the development of church planning on the Continent have a special focus

on the Catholic achievements. The wide viewpoint, not limited to the Anglican world, also allowed the book to receive positive reactions from the Catholic world. For instance, J. G. McCarry, editor of the Irish Catholic Magazine *The Furrow*, wrote a review praising the book in 1962.<sup>24</sup> The book also received a positive review by Edward Robert De Zurko, who wrote about it in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.<sup>25</sup> De Zurko soon understood the functionalistic approach proposed by Hammond, who regarded church design as a conscious product of the fundamental function of the church, liturgy.<sup>26</sup> In particular, Hammond structured the liturgical brief of churches around the predominance of the altar. In the book he affirmed the first task of the architect is to relate the altar to the faithful, then to grant the diversity of liturgies and functions of the building.

Other fundamental texts of the period include: *The Modern Architectural Setting of the Liturgy* (1962), edited by William Lockett; *Modern Churches of the World* (1965), by Robert Maguire and Keith Murray<sup>27</sup>; *The New Churches of Europe* (1965) by G. E. Kidder-Smith. As in the case of Hammond's texts, the polyphonic view on church architecture emerging from these bibliographic references mirrored the contextual theological trends. In particular, Christian architecture was a common ground in which the diversity of rites did not represent a division. It was a fertile cross-confessional attitude to church building, lost in more recent literature. These texts provided the basis for an inter-geographical and inter-thematic analysis of architecture. Of course, the limits of these publications emerge in the sharpness of their affirmations. These texts have represented a fundamental bibliography for the starting of the present research and are also objects of study themselves. They will be examined thoroughly through the thesis, according to the research methodology discussed below.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

As the literature review shows, the approach to the theme of church building can be wide, considering the many aspects of the phenomenon. This research establishes some precise boundaries, relying on a selection of themes and case studies which reflect a precise idea of liturgical, technological, and formal innovation in church architecture. The work examines Anglican churches, with forays into the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian confessions. It starts from the assumption that progressive influence in this period passed from Catholic to Anglican. Hence, the investigation looks at a range of scales and special uses within

religious buildings to test this assumption, with reference also to non-Conformist and other denominations.

Cases comprise different typologies of Christian buildings, ranging from cathedrals to parishes, from college chapels to inter-faith centres. A particular focus is on shared churches, which represented the mediation between the architectural typologies of Anglican, Roman Catholic, and free churches. Case studies were selected according to the arguments that emerged from a preliminary analysis of the bibliography and a comparison of the examples. The analysis was instrumental in detecting the main themes of investigation: liturgical developments, urban setting, social role, technological innovation, interdenominational use, Continental influence, critical success. In line with this, the choice of cases was not only made on the basis of the projects' size or of the architects' popularity, but related to those buildings which, more than others, embodied advance in liturgical planning, structural and material innovation, unprecedented formal solutions, or new functions, as well as to those most widely covered in architectural journals and volumes.

The reorganisation of the cases into thematic groups was instrumental in testing and critiquing the argument, also highlighting contradictions and connections. The approach demonstrated the complexity of the phenomena described and the impossibility to fit them into a rigid narrative scheme. Although this *modus operandi* may not in itself represent a novelty in the practice of architectural history, the complexity of the operation lies in the comparison of examples that are not only often typologically dissimilar, but also subject to varying functional requirements, as well as responding to different religious denominations.

In traditional historiography, architecture has often been seen in the light of a linearity of progress, which has not always corresponded to its actual development. Indeed, this positivistic (and in some way Darwinist) reading of architectural history does not take into consideration that artistic, social, and theoretical phenomena sometimes move transversally or in opposite directions. Conscious of this non-linear progression, the research selects a heterogeneous group of examples. In some cases, the constructive and typological tradition still represents a long-lasting heritage. In other cases, a dynamic radicalism aims at a brand-new product, freed from historicism. The selection is conscious that all cases, even the discarded ones, have the same historiographic importance. For this reason, the text sometimes mentions and briefly dwells on small village churches, by lesser-known architects, which prove the diffusion of a trend at different scales and across different languages. In any case, the

priority is to deal with examples that may have had a greater impact, either because of their geographical location, the fame of their designer or simply because of their critical fortune. To the extent that it is relevant to this study, the growth of religious theories is covered, in virtue of their crucial interrelationship with architecture. The analysis also refers to social and cultural factors such as immigration, rites, traditions, memory, and cultural identity. The goal of this study is to analyse a complex subject, like post-war British church buildings, through horizontal themes. Hence, it relates to many but often adjoining branches of knowledge, always keeping the main focus on architecture.

The deep connection between the need of the communities and the construction of churches suggests a specificity of the project's contingencies. However, the study aims at tracing a common path unifying the several projects, based on a wider theoretical foundation. As a result, the text does not indulge in the history of individual bishops, priests, or community members, even if often these individuals shaped the discourse of a wider public and altered the tone of religious discussion. What it rather wants to achieve is a thematic history of church buildings, expounding the links with liturgical, social, architectural, and urban ideas.

The text's specific reading, the breadth of themes, and the large numbers of cases have an impact on the methodological choices. The most evident is that the analysis is not primarily based on archival research. This does not mean that this research has excluded primary sources altogether. Archival documents, including letters, original drawings, pictures of architectural models, and old photographs of buildings, are of undeniable utility in the discourse. However, the broad extent of cases has restricted the investigation to the archives kept by institutions, such as Lambeth Palace, the National Archives, or the Royal Institute of British Architects. Conversely, the study has omitted those archives of parishes or architects scattered all around Britain with limited accessibility, especially during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Since primary archival sources presented too great a challenge in terms of time and mainly favoured a localised interpretation, the approach to the architectural analysis is one of interpretation and comparison, which favours a broader interpretation of national and international phenomena. It also establishes a critical distance from the situational factors affecting church projects. In order to do so, the research considered the intellectual background via a close scrutiny of contemporary published sources such as books, pamphlets,

magazines, and reviews written by liturgists, architects, art and religion historians, which, by and large, illustrate the core of the debate, hence the main source for the selected approach. It could be claimed that some sampling of primary archival material might have established how such sources were put into action in the cases under review. However, the complexity in identifying the myriad of sources related to a broad comparative analysis involving so many instances would have been unsustainable and even off the point. Besides, some archives were simply impossible to trace, such as those of the New Churches Research Group, which edited the review *Churchbuilding*. Equally, these writings require a relative distance - at least of time - from the events. An overestimation of primary archival evidence could also have fostered the idea of projects as the outcome of contingent actions and independent protagonists, an interpretation which could have weakened the strong connection between architecture and theories. Instead, the choice here has been to rely on theories—and practice—related to the development in British church planning, by way of forensically looking at liturgy and architecture in written and built works, as previously mentioned. In particular, the study examines the theoretical writings of some key church designers and theorists, such as those by Edward Maufe (1882–1974), Basil Spence (1907–76), Frederick Gibberd (1908–84), Robert Potter (1909–2010), George Pace (1915–75), Gerard Goalen (1918–99), Peter Hammond (1921–99), Keith Murray (1929–2005), and Robert Maguire (1931–2019).

The twentieth century registered the birth of various movements, like the Parish and People movement of 1949. These represent the grassroots of a campaign for a change of liturgy within the Church of England. Moreover, new research groups and organisations pursued the study and improvement of churches. For instance, the already mentioned New Churches Research Group (NCRG, founded in 1957) prompted a fervid debate on modern and liturgically informed church architecture. The Incorporated Church Building Society (ICBS, instituted in 1818) had a major role in the financing the building, enlargement, and repair of Anglican churches and parishes. The Redundant Churches Fund (instituted in 1969, currently Churches Conservation Trust), also born within the Anglican institutions, contributed to the spreading of guidelines for the preservation of redundant churches. These organisations published handbooks and gave support to architects in the design of new churches or in the restoration and reuse of old ones.

The post-war period also marked the spreading of a new approach to architectural culture. Mass media, such as newspapers, journals, and radio broadcasting, were used with an

unpublished consciousness in the communication of architecture. In printed media, graphics gained a central role. The proof is in the many engraved texts, magazine covers, book illustrations, and affiches used for religious or political propaganda. Moreover, the period saw the definitive affirmation of photography and film as an eloquent means of communication. Photographic reportages helped the diffusion of home and, above all, foreign projects.<sup>28</sup> Films reported life in new towns and recorded public ceremonies, like first stone laying and consecrations, while television spread it all over the Country. These means attest to the outright adoption of new forms of communication in architecture.

The analysis includes a comparison between Britain and other countries, especially European ones. The comparison has its *raison d'être* within our transversal themes, based on affinities and diversities. Factors exterior to architecture, such as those derived from theological, social, liturgical, and urban contexts, contributed to determine the shape of church architectures. However, factors internal to the project itself also impact the church's final form. These factors were dependent upon the choices of designer and the aesthetic background of the community. Indeed, the mutual interrelation between architect, community, and client influenced each ecclesiastical project. All three protagonists were decisive in the result. The architect's education and geographical origin were also influential upon the project. Many British architects travelled to the continent to study buildings. Foreign projects were also regularly published in British magazines and journals. At the same time, many foreign architects, above all German-Jewish ones, reached Britain soon before or during the war. They contributed to the shaping of the post-war British architectural scene.<sup>29</sup> Even if they were not actually involved in church architecture, they prepared a modern theoretical and critical background for Christian church architecture. For instance, Nikolaus Pevsner (1902–83) was a major expert on Victorian and Georgian churches, while also studying *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design* (1968). The Jewish-Polish Joseph Rykwert (1926–) dedicated an entire volume to *Church Building* (1966), whose cover exhibited a picture of the concrete structure of St John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota.

The international cross-fertilization is also evident in the international epistolary exchanges. For example, Fr Edmund FitzSimons, the priest in charge for the construction of the St Mary's Priory Church, Leyland, made a tour of new churches in Switzerland and France in 1959.<sup>30</sup> The goal was to take inspiration to draft a rough plan to be used by the architects as a starting point. The episode also attests to the rich cultural background in the context of the

post-war churches. Architects and liturgists also organised study trips, like those advertised in the magazine *Church Building*. They made a stop in the new religious buildings of Europe and surely contributed to a further mixing of architectural ideas.

Another way to analyse the link between British and Continental church buildings relies on analogy. In the post-war period, the growing spread of media contributed to a fertile circulation of cultural concepts. Television, magazines, and international meetings created a common ground also in architecture. Moreover, post-war Western politics promoted the creation of a common European identity. In the light of this, some formal elements were recurring in the European architecture of the period. For instance, the sobriety of lines and the structural honesty, was a recurring feature in Western European churches. In a certain way, it materialised the Christian post-war afflatus towards pauperism. This formal poverty turned up especially in Italy, where the equivalent neorealist movement in cinema is far better known. The trend did not relate exclusively to a local vernacular language, nor to a specific religion. Yet, it embodied a global tendency, associable to the ‘brick brutalism’ defined by Reyner Banham (1922–88).<sup>31</sup> Brutalism in churches must be addressed in its ethical dimension as a search for the real and related it to its roots in a revolt against an earlier phase of modern architecture, for which Coventry Cathedral would stand as a good example. The question of puritanism and the roots of the historical Protestantism split the Church of England from the Catholic Church. Already in the eighteenth century, the Calvinist influence had provided the Anglican Church with ‘concerns over idolatry and popery’. This can probably be considered at the base of this notion of ‘Holy Poverty’: architecture started to do without applied ornaments and exhibited the structural grid in its bare look, exposing concrete and brick surfaces. Besides the Protestant link, it was an aesthetic declaration of poverty of missionary descent, too. Within religious architecture, this tendency coincided with the rediscovery of missionary duty. In particular, it was the mission of religious orders, which had been recently readmitted in the Anglican Communion.

An opposite trend characterised church architecture, as well. In the nineteenth century, the ecumenical rapprochement with the Catholic Church also prompted the use of figurative art. The diffusion of figuration met the genuine expressions of popular piety, contrasting abstraction, and continued in the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> At its base, the idiosyncrasy of churches depends on the necessity to make religious architecture and art close to people’s taste. In this light, we can understand the persistence, in the twentieth century, of figurative paintings and sculptures. The popular sensibility also explains the endurance of ornaments in church

architecture. Seen as a source of immediate understanding, the ornament often incorporated figurative instances. They could come in the form of stained glass, *dalle de verre*, carved stations of the holy cross, or crucifixes. But they could also invade the carving of fonts, as well as the design of liturgical tools and vestments. Alina Payne has proved how the role of ornament (and figuration) is to provide architecture with a human scale. Indeed, the ornamental unity of churches was a fundamental instrument to mediate between sophisticated theologies and human-sized rituals.<sup>33</sup> Europe provided precedents for the continuation of a longstanding tradition of art commissioned for churches, reinterpreted though the art movements current since 1900. While there was a continuation of more traditional-style work in UK, there was also a new wave of enthusiasm for modern work and people coming forward to execute it.

Thus, an analysis of church architecture cannot but consider its artistic apparatus. Although the focus of the thesis is architecture, and art only plays a secondary role, a church is the closest example to the definition of a total work of art. In it, both architecture and art are in charge of the reunion between the two distant categories of human and divine, conjugated in the space of liturgy.<sup>34</sup> It seems essential to mention the Art Sacré movement and its key commissions from prominent artists, the role of the Dominican father Marie-Alain Couturier (1897–1954), and the excitement generated in Britain and the USA by later commissions, such as those at Audincourt or in Vence. This helps to understand the role of artists who, although mentioned quickly in this text, contributed profoundly to the definition of church buildings. It is for this reason that the thesis opens with an image of John Piper (1903–92), a multifaceted artist. Involved in the War Artists' Commission in the representation of churches damaged in the bombings, Piper was an excellent master of sacred art, as well as a witty art and architecture critic, and an appreciator of Victorian architecture. A well-rounded figure who, more than most, epitomises the British approach to the subject of ecclesiastical architecture. The same approach that emerges in this research, the result of which is the text before you.

## 1.5 Terminological note

A few caveats are required on the terminological choices adopted in the text. The title fixes the discourse to church architecture in Britain, even though it mainly looks at case studies built in England. given the prominence of buildings referring to the Church of England, the

adjective ‘English’ would fit the subject. However, this local specification would exclude worship spaces for other Anglican churches, so that this research takes into consideration the Church of Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church, too. Moreover, it looks at the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Congregational, and Lutheran churches built in England as in Scotland and Wales. A second specification concerns the etymological shift between the noun and the adjective relating to the church. It proves that modern English resorts to several etymologies for the same semantic areas. The etymological root of ‘church’ is analogous to that of the German *kirche* or the Dutch *kerk*. They all derive from the Greek κυριακός, referring to the house of the Lord.<sup>35</sup> Instead, the adjectives ‘ecclesiastical’ and ‘ecclesiastic’ have the same root of the French *église*, the Italian *chiesa* or the Spanish *iglesia*. They derive from the Greek ἐκκλησία (latinized as *ecclesia*), that recalls the convocation of faithful.<sup>36</sup> The double concept of the house of the lord and the congregation of the faithful is reflected in the design of post-war churches. Indeed, as suggested in the text, it swung incessantly between monumental and more modest languages.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘No man is an island entire of itself; every man/ is a piece of the continent, a part of the main’, modern English adaptation from John Donne, *Devotions upon emergent occasions* (1840), 100.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island* (1955); John Donne, *Devotions*, ‘Meditation XVIII’. Donne’s verses are so cogently strong that the final lines of the poem, i.e. ‘And therefore never send to know for whom/the bell tolls; It tolls for thee’, even inspired Hemingway for his 1940 novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

<sup>3</sup> David Hein, *Geoffrey Fisher: Archbishop of Canterbury, 1945-1961* (2008).

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985* (1986), 466-67.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, 522-23.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Parnell, ‘Manplan: The Bravest Moment in Architectural Publishing’ (2014), retrieved from [www.architectural-review.com/archive/manplan-archive/manplan-the-bravest-moment-in-architectural-publishing](http://www.architectural-review.com/archive/manplan-archive/manplan-the-bravest-moment-in-architectural-publishing) accessed February 2021.

<sup>8</sup> On the church, see: Paul D. Walker, *Developments in Catholic Churchbuilding in the British Isles 1945-80* (1985), 538-41; Robert Proctor, *Building the Modern Church: Roman Catholic Church Architecture in Britain, 1955 to 1975* (2014), 311-4.

<sup>9</sup> After the creation of a specific company, aimed at the construction of the building, each Church donated about a quarter of the estimated cost and, following the *Sharing of Church Buildings Act* of 1969, stipulated an agreement of joint use.

<sup>10</sup> John Catt, ‘Editorial’, *Churchbuilding*, 25 (October 1968); George Pace, ‘Shared Church Buildings’, *Churchbuilding*, 27 (April 1969), 7-8; *Manplan*, 5 (March 1970), *Religion*, 200-1 and 219; Lance Wright, Michael Hattrell, ‘Building Study: Shared Church at Elmshott Lane, Cippenham’, *Architects’ Journal* (12 May 1971), 1055-66.

<sup>11</sup> Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 314. The success of Price’s project would be soon confirmed by the spaceframe structures of the Expo Osaka 1970 as well as the project (1971) presented by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers for the Plateau Beaubourg Centre Paris.

<sup>12</sup> As underlined by Paul Walker, the compactness of the perimeter wall raised many similarities with fortresses, markets, or factory buildings like those of the nearby business park.

<sup>13</sup> Walker has underlined the similarity between this flexible scheme and that of schools. In fact, some of the school buildings of those years presented a similar design. For instance, the Church of England’s Primary School designed by David and Mary Medd’s for Finmere, Oxfordshire, comprised a system of sliding doors that enlarged the classrooms into the common space. We could also mention the school of Great Waldingfield, West Suffolk, published on the fourth issue of *Manplan* dedicated to education, with a rectangular plan covered by a space grid roof supported by steel pillars, under which the classrooms were divided by a flexible system of light partition.

<sup>14</sup> On the French churches see Pierre Lebrun, *Le complexe du monument : les lieux de culte catholique en France durant les trentes glorieuses* (2001), 211-38.

<sup>15</sup> The church substituted a far more monumental project presented by the architect Pierre Vié (1928-2017). Pinsars and Vollmar had already worked together in many ecclesiastical projects, including the Dominican convent of Lille (1953-66), which they designed along with the English architect Neil Hutchinson (1924-2008). Hutchinson had a partnership with Prouvé. See Pierre Pinsard, Hugo Vollmar, *Architecture d’églises* (2021).

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<sup>16</sup> The modern look, already evident from its facade, was matched by an unusual denomination, ‘Maison du Peuple Chrétien’, alluding to the cooperativist Maisons du Peuple of socialist tradition, therefore stressing the social role of the religious building.

<sup>17</sup> Gavin Stamp, ‘Sacred Architecture in a Secular Century’, in Roland Jeffrey, ed., *The Twentieth Century Church* (1998), pp. 7–15; Elain Harwood, ‘Liturgy and Architecture: The Development of the Centralised Eucharistic Space’, in Roland Jeffrey, ed., *The Twentieth Century Church* (1998), 49–73.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Hodges, *Parish Churches of Greater London: A Guide* (2017); Michael Yelton, John Salmon, *Anglican Church-Building in London 1915-1945* (2007); Michael Yelton, John Salmon, *Anglican Church-Building in London 1946-2012* (2012).

<sup>19</sup> Sam Samarghandi, ‘Structure for spirit in The Architectural Review and The Architects’ Journal, 1945–70’, in Ross Anderson and Maximilian Sternberg, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Sacred* (2020), 159–178; Gerald Adler, ‘Reading, storing and parading the book: Between tradition and modernity in the synagogue’, in Ross Anderson and Maximilian Sternberg, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Sacred* (2020), 108–124.

<sup>20</sup> The percentage of religious affiliation is taken from C. D. Field, *Religion in Great Britain, 1939-99: A Compendium of Gallup Poll Data* (2015), retrieved from [www.brin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Religion-in-Great-Britain-1939-99-A-Compendium-of-Gallup-Poll-Data.pdf](http://www.brin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Religion-in-Great-Britain-1939-99-A-Compendium-of-Gallup-Poll-Data.pdf), accessed October 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Jacket of Peter Hammond, ed., *Towards a Church Architecture* (1962).

<sup>22</sup> James F. White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* (1964), 165.

<sup>23</sup> Keith Murray, Esther de Waal, ‘Obituary: Canon Peter Hammond’, *The Independent*, 23 October 2011. For a biographical profile, see also Mark A. Torgerson, *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for Worship and Ministry Today* (2007), 70–4.

<sup>24</sup> J. G. McGarry, review of “Peter Hammond, Liturgy and Architecture”, *The Furrow*, vol. 13, no. 3 (March 1962), *The Mass II*, 10–12.

<sup>25</sup> Edward R. de Zurko, Review of *Liturgy and Architecture* by Peter Hammond, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Volume 21, Issue 4, (Summer 1963), 487–488.

<sup>26</sup> De Zurko had dealt with the theme of functionalism in Architecture in the volume: Edward Robert De Zurko, *Origins of Functionalist Theory* (1957).

<sup>27</sup> It is worthy to underline that Maguire and Murray’s book was a relatively and provided a highly illustrated survey for a general-interest readership.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the photographic reportages on European Architecture of the American photographer George Kidder Smith, *Italy Builds* (1956) and *Id., The new architecture of Europe* (1961).

<sup>29</sup> A look to Charlotte Benton, *A different world: Émigré Architects in Britain, 1928 -1958* (1995), catalogue of the homonymous exhibition held at RIBA Heinz Gallery in 1995-1996, can offer an insight on the phenomenon of immigration in the context of architectural practices. To name few German architects moving to London: Fritz Landauer, Marcel Breuer, Alfred Gellhorn, Wolfgang Gerson, Erwin Anton Gutkind.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Corbould, ‘Saint Mary’s Priory Church, Leyland’, *The Ampleforth Journal*, LXIX/II (June 1964), 140. On St Mary’s Priory Church, Leyland, see Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 123-6 and *passim*. Proctor also describes some materials in the parish archive demonstrating the research made by FitzSimons on modern church architecture: *Ivi*, 131, note 48.

<sup>31</sup> Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism* (1955).

<sup>32</sup> Clare Haynes, ‘Anglicanism and Art’, in Jeremy Gregory, ed., *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, vol. II: *Establishment and Empire, 1662–1829* (2017), 371.

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<sup>33</sup> Alina Payne, *From Ornament to Object: Genealogies of Architectural Modernism* (2012).

<sup>34</sup> On the role of art, especially contemporary, in churches see J. Koestle-Cate, *Art and the Church: A Fractious Embrace: Ecclesiastical Encounters with Contemporary Art* (2016).

<sup>35</sup> 'Church', Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, retrieved from [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/church](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/church), accessed February 2021.

<sup>36</sup> 'Ecclesiastic', Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, retrieved from [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ecclesiastic](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ecclesiastic), accessed February 2021.

## 2. The liturgical and theoretical foundation of modern church building

A major theme in ecclesiastical architecture is the prerogative of liturgy on the sacred space. The deep bond between these two entities acquires substance through the actions of the faithful, to which the Greek etymology of *leitourgia* refers. Indeed, liturgy implies a work, codified by rituals, made by people in the worship of God. The way in which the rites are standardised, in terms of time and space, affects the shape in which they took place. Hence the church, the place entrusted to the execution of liturgy, deeply depends on its material and symbolical forms. Considering the direct relationship between liturgy and church architecture, this chapter traces a brief history of English Christianity. It considers the period from about 1830 to the first World War. In this timeframe, a considerable number of new churches were planted, while old ones were largely repaired or replaced. The widespread building programme was sustained by an aesthetic and liturgical backdrop, elaborated by architects and theologians. They built a theoretical base that was still conditioning for mid-twentieth century church planners, hence the importance given to the ideas expounded in this section.

The focus of this chapter is on liturgy related to the forms of worship, the sources of new thinking, and their implementation by architects. It describes how church building was organised and what forces (individual patronage, society and movements in architecture, preferences of individual architects) shaped the nature of the architectures. Moreover, this historical brief covers the Church of England's wide range of beliefs and practices. It aims at analysing how these theories resulted in varied liturgical and architectural outcomes. At the same time, it looks at the Catholic worship after Emancipation, and the uneasy relationship between Anglican and Catholic.

The core of the chapter regards the prominent role of the Cambridge Camden Society, founded in 1839, and its ecclesiology. Along with the theories of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–52) on the spiritual and identarian values of Gothic, the

ecclesiological principles had a considerable impact on High Victorian architects, such as George Gilbert Scott (1811–78), William Butterfield (1814–1900), and George Edmund Street (1824–81). Towards the end of the century, the Cambridge Camden Society continued to exercise a deep influence on the Church of England (as well as on many denominations of American Protestantism which is, however, not debated in this research). The medievalist plan, with the choir between the congregation and the altar, shaped many churches built in the new century. However, some pioneering church architects tried to start a new course, questioning the predominance of the Early Gothic style. A major figure marking the turning point in the renewal of churches between the nineteenth and the twentieth century was Sir Ninian Comper (1864–1960). The style of his churches was in line with the revivalism of Victorian architecture. However, he was more sensible to the church's liturgical suitability to worship rather than to its antiquarian look. Comper's arduous study of the evolution in Christian architecture resulted in a revaluation of the liturgical foci, placed as close as possible to the congregation in his projects. In some way, although following a slightly different path, the liturgical basis of Comper's churches anticipated the application of those principles which, introduced by the Liturgical Movement, guided the design of twentieth century churches. If Comper paved the way to a new consciousness of liturgy in modern church architecture, its theoretical basis was offered by the spreading of the Liturgical Movement in Britain. Born in the continent, the movement provided architects with a major consciousness of liturgical issues. These principles, expressed in some key texts, like Romano Guardini's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, reflected a more direct involvement of the congregation in the rites. Within the Church of England, the wind of the Liturgical Movement brought a renovation of rituals, giving new weight to sacraments and to architectural elements.

## 2.1 An antiquarian church: ecclesiology

The interdisciplinarity of the studies on liturgy and its concretization through buildings, underlay in the nineteenth century the birth of a new discipline, 'ecclesiology', dealing with 'the study of church architecture and adornment'.<sup>37</sup> The first appearance of the term has been historically referred to the publication, in November 1841, of the first issue of *The Ecclesiologist*.<sup>38</sup> The journal was published by a society of liturgists, antiquarians and designers, the Cambridge Camden Society (CCS), also known from 1845 as the

Ecclesiological Society. Founded in 1839, its main goal was 'to promote the study of Ecclesiastical Architecture and Antiquities, and the restoration of mutilated Architectural remains.' The Society's seal, designed by Augustus Welby Pugin (1812–52), depicted a Madonna and the Child on the throne and Saints, accompanied by the representation of an unidentified Gothic church, a ruined Gothic arcade, and a frontal view the Cambridge Round Church that the Society had restored in 1841–4.<sup>39</sup> The society was inspired by the theological insight of the Oxford Movement and by the interest for the Middle Age which animated the Romantic movement.

Born in university circles around 1833, the Oxford Movement was a High Church movement in the Church of England. It called for the restoration of ancient Christian rites within the Anglican liturgy. Also known as 'Tractarianism' from the theological publications *Tracts for the Times* (1833–41), the Movement involved several renowned theologists. Among them, there were John Henry Newman (1801–90), who converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism in 1845, Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–82) and John Keble (1792–1866).<sup>40</sup> As their Oxford counterpart, the Cambridge men, including the founders John Mason Neale (1818–66), Alexander Beresford Hope (1820–87), and Benjamin Webb (1819–85), regarded the Middle Ages as the climax of Christian worship. On the other side, the mystic of Romantic spiritualism and symbolism animated the historical analysis of the society. As underlined by James F. White, 'the Cambridge Camden Society was torn between these two forces: between ecclesiology and antiquarianism, between rigid rules of architectural correctness and the expression of artistic originality.'<sup>41</sup>

Through its activities and abundant publications, the society intended to make a contribution to the erection of new churches, by making available design guidelines, suggesting alterations or improvements and supplying notice of antiquarian research on ecclesiology, in order to correctly instruct designers and clergymen, influencing the aesthetics of Anglican buildings.<sup>42</sup> If the society's educational objective was substantial, its modernity was above all in the capacity to relate liturgical aspects to architectural considerations, according to a trend, broadly spread in nineteenth-century Britain, which symbolically matched aesthetical and spiritual principles (ethical, sociological, and religious) by looking back to antiquity.

The main invention of the Cambridge Movement consisted not only in historical investigations, as pursued by the Society of Antiquaries of London (incorporated in 1751),

but also in design specifications. A new church built according to the ecclesiological standards had to include some fundamental elements. In most parish churches built in the period, an arch or a roodscreen divided the raised chancel to the east from the nave. The visual distinction between the chancel and the nave had to represent the separation of the earthly from the spiritual worlds. The chancel usually comprised the sanctuary and the choir, adapting a feature of cathedral architecture to parish buildings. As underlined by the American Methodist theologian James F. White, the Cambridge theorists were unsympathetically adapting the high liturgy developed for cathedrals, in the presence of a residential choir and frequent fully choral services, to any size of religious buildings, including the small parish churches for which the introduction of a monopolizing choir determined an inevitable confusion for the congregation during the service.<sup>43</sup>

In front of the screen, outside the chancel, a lectern and a pulpit stood at opposite sides. The baptismal font was installed near the western door. The Cambridge guidelines, clearly expressed in edited handbooks such as *A Few words to Churchwardens on Churches and Church Ornaments* (1841–46) – which, among other requirements, stated the opportunity for churches to be covered by steep pitched roofs – presumed a historical accuracy that was often not so strict.

Surely, a lot of the ecclesiological ideology was driven by a desire for didactic symbolism.<sup>44</sup> In particular, the symbolic link relied on the analogy with nature: ‘we shall feel, that the edifice recalls to our minds the Great Architect Himself. The works of nature remind us of the GOD of nature.’<sup>45</sup> Hence, the decoration of churches carried metaphorical implications, connected with the theological concepts of divine creation and holy grace.<sup>46</sup> In 1843 Neale and Webb had translated the work of the French thirteenth-century Roman Catholic liturgist Guillaume Durand, published as *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*.<sup>47</sup> It was a treatise describing the church’s services, decoration, and vestments, also explaining the symbolic value of their form. The book opened with an introductory essay, written by Neale and Webb on the theme of Sacramentality, or ‘symbolism applied to the truth per excellence, the teaching of the Church’, conveying the idea that ‘the material fabric symbolises, embodies, figures, represents, expresses, answers to, some abstract meaning.’<sup>48</sup> In their comment to this English edition, the two Anglican clergymen marked a contrasting distinction between the utilitarianism of ordinary Protestant churches and the imagery of cathedrals, an invitation for contemporary architecture to promote a more conscious understanding of the symbolic apparatus of Christian temples.<sup>49</sup>

The influence of the ecclesiological theories was relevant on the material outcome of architecture. The application of ecclesiological principles was not due to official directives of the Church of England. It was rather related to the proximity of High Church theoreticians to politicians, artists, and architects. Indeed, besides the numerous studies and publications dedicated to ecclesiology, there was not a specific ecclesiological church building program. Despite High Church theories prevailed within the Anglican hierarchies, many churches were still built according to a more evangelical backdrop. The diversity of approaches revealed the lack of a centrally funded building program. In fact, the construction of Anglican churches in the Victorian and Edwardian period did not benefit from direct public sponsorship. They were rather related to the individual will of bishops, and priests. The construction was backed by specific church building societies, involving parishioners and donors. The story of the ecclesiastical architecture of the period is therefore linked to some key figure who sponsored the construction of new churches and influenced their layouts.

A figure of churchman very active in church building was Alexander Morden Bennett (1808–80), vicar of Bournemouth, Dorset. He built eight churches according to ecclesiological principles.<sup>50</sup> For instance, he commissioned to George Edmund Street the enlargement and rebuilding of St Peter's Church in Bournemouth, executed in 1855–79.<sup>51</sup> Street designed a very elongated and richly decorated choir, preceding a sanctuary with carved altar and reredos. But the design of churches was also shaped by the cultural formation and the taste of donors. For instance, the already mentioned landowner and politician Alexander Beresford Hope, founding member of the Cambridge Camden Society, financed several ecclesiastical works. They included the restoration of St Augustine's abbey in Canterbury, transformed into a missionary college.<sup>52</sup> He supervised, on behalf of the CCS, the construction of All Saints' Church in Margaret Street, London, which he also partially financed. Opened in 1849, the church, designed by William Butterfield, is considered the monument of the Ecclesiological High Church Movement.<sup>53</sup> The plan of the church materializes the indications contained in the CCS's *A Few Words to Church Builders* (1841): 'There are two parts, and only two parts, which are absolutely essential to a church - Chancel and Nave [...] This division, essential in the interior, is not always to be traced in the exterior [...] the Chancel should not be less than the third, or more than the half, of the whole length of the church [...] the Aisles to the latter [the nave] are of the next importance. For we thus gain another important symbolism for our ground plan, the doctrine of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity'.<sup>54</sup>

The symbolism of the Ecclesiological society permeated the construction of new churches as the restoration of existing ones. The restoration of churches implied considerable modification of the original architecture. It often included enlargements, a modification of the furnishing (such as the removal of pews or the introduction of a screen), and a heavy reformation of interior and exterior surfaces. The approach was harshly criticised by John Ruskin (1819–1900). In the sixth chapter of his *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), dedicated to the ‘The Lamp of Memory’, the critic condemned the falsity of restoration.<sup>55</sup> The ideas on the authenticity of buildings also impacted on other antiquarian societies active in the same years. In particular, the echo of Ruskin's theories was evident in the action of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. It was founded in 1877, under the main action of William Morris (1834–96). Its goal was to promote repair rather than restoration, which comprised the least modification to the building. Hence, it soon entered in conflict with the Ecclesiological Society and the architects associated to it. Indeed, among its first actions, the society campaigned against the restoration of the medieval abbey church at Tewkesbury on a project by George Gilbert Scott.

Coming from a family well represented in the Anglican hierarchy, George Gilbert Scott was one of the main proponents of revivalist architecture in England. His project for the replacement after fire damage of the Church of St Giles, Camberwell (1842–44), which benefited from the direct advice of the Cambridge Camden Society, determined his fortune as an ecclesiological architect.<sup>56</sup> Gilbert Scott's project for Tewkesbury, however, was harshly criticised by the Pre-Raphaelite critic Frederic George Stephens (1828–1907), art critic of *The Athenaeum* magazine. On the 5th of March 1877 Morris wrote a letter to the *Athenaeum* to extend his support for Stephens against Scott's restoration. The letter is regarded as the manifesto of the future SPAB: ‘What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all “restoration” that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient buildings are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope.’<sup>57</sup>

## 2.2 Revival in style and rituals

Despite its criticalities, the ecclesiological dictates of the Cambridge Camden Society soon prevailed in the restoration and design of churches. The antique medieval roots of liturgy

brought the Cambridge Movement to affirm that modern liturgy, renewed in the light of its pristine rituals, required a setting in buildings that needed to be appropriate in function and style.<sup>58</sup> The scholarly understanding of the medieval liturgy was soon also translated into a matter of architecture. The idea of the possibility of a revival of medieval forms was simplified by a famous assertion of Beresford Hope, assuming ‘that the same shell which contained the apparatus of medieval worship was, speaking generally, suited to contain that of modern worship.’<sup>59</sup> The possibility of adopting a medieval aesthetic opened the debate on the style most suitable to represent it. Of course, Gothic was the style to prefer in England. It was an expression of English nationalism but, above all, it was the style deemed worthy to represent the ecclesiological principles. The antiquarian resurgence of Gothic was idealised on aesthetic, political and social grounds. It somehow comprised a critique to the deteriorating habits of the contemporary era.

It must be clear that the application of the British Gothic Revival to church building was not an invention of the Cambridge Camden Society. The ‘Gothick’ trend, which had already achieved great success in eighteenth-century British architecture, mirrored a European direction of architectural revivalism, which saw England as the main source.<sup>60</sup> Among the English pioneers of the Gothic Revival was the Roman Catholic priest John Milner (1752–1826) who, in 1792, built at Winchester a chapel in the Gothic style.<sup>61</sup> The birth of English Gothic Revival within Roman Catholicism is not casual; indeed, the Gothic style represented for Britain the period of the great pre-reformation when the Catholic spirit infused the stones and the artistical apparatuses of cathedrals. Despite sprouting in the Catholic milieu, Gothic Revival was soon adopted in Anglican architecture, thanks to a copious number of theorists and architects of churches. Among them, Thomas Rickman (1776–1841) elaborated a historical categorization of Gothic architecture which was largely used: in his *Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture* (1817), for the first time, the periods of English architecture were labelled as ‘Norman’, ‘Early English’, ‘Decorated English’ and ‘Perpendicular English’.<sup>62</sup> Rickman designed many Anglican churches, mainly financed through the *Church Building Acts* of 1818, and included in his religious projects many elements of innovation, including an unprecedented use of new materials, like cast iron, in church architecture. However, despite the dimensions of his literary and professional works, Rickman’s production was disregarded by intellectuals, who often found it philologically and liturgically inconsistent.<sup>63</sup> A more scientific depth, instead, was granted to scholars such as

Robert Willis (1800–75), who combined mechanics and stylistic considerations in his book on the history of architecture.

A key role in the affirmation of Gothic as a national style, and an elective style for churches, was played by the architect Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–52). Converted to Catholicism in 1834, despite belonging to a religious minority and dying at the early age of 40, Pugin succeeded in becoming one of the most influential architecture theorists of the Victorian age. His fame was probably only side-lined by the exuberant activity of his nemesis John Ruskin (1819–1900).<sup>64</sup> In 1841, the same year that the first issue of *The Ecclesiologist* was published, Pugin published in the *Dublin Review* an article on ‘The present state of ecclesiastical architecture in England’, republished in book form in 1843.<sup>65</sup> In the text Pugin praised the pointed style and the old Catholic tradition of English church buildings, then listed a series of features that a Catholic parish church should include, illustrated by plans of churches erected ‘in conformity with the ancient traditions.’ Pugin’s praised ‘conformity with traditions’ implied a complete adherence to Gothic aesthetics, both in architecture as in rituals, suggesting a ritualist approach to church design. Traditional rites were, according to him, a key principle for the layout of new churches, as well as the main criterion in the distinction of sacred architecture. It is in this light that he criticized the contemporary trend of church building, guilty at having departed from ancient rite and sacredness in favour of emulating secular buildings.<sup>66</sup> Pugin wrote many texts on church architecture, including the popular *Contrasts: Or, A Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages, And Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day* (1836) and *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841). Whether the first book juxtaposed classical and Gothic architecture, ending in favour of the Gothic one, the second also introduced the theme of architectural ‘honesty’ as a symbol of Christian ‘truth’, a theme often associated to the Gothic structuralism and that would soon root in the English imagery of church buildings.

The action of Pugin even had great impact on the Church of England, probably even more than the influence he exerted on the Catholic Church, to which he had ardently converted. Pugin’s theories, adapted to Anglican liturgy, fostered the use of traditional pre-Reformation habits, in terms of layout, decorations, vestments, or ritual habits. It expressed a form of ritualism which had been hoped by many thinkers of the Oxford and Cambridge Movements, which fervently promoted the revitalization of a period, such as the Middle Ages, where the rite was essentially Catholic.<sup>67</sup> Ritualism represented a debated issue if in 1874 the English Parliament, probably worried by a pro-Catholic accent in the Church of England, approved

the *Public Worship Regulation Act*, which simplified the suing of clergy for illegal ceremonials. Despite it, the gradual ecclesiological revolution of the Church of England was already unstoppable: Anglican clergy started to celebrate from an eastward-facing position, candlesticks began to crowd altars, chancels were arranged with stalls for the clergy and surplice choirs, box pews were substituted by open benches, pre-Reformation eagle lecterns came back in fashion. Some details which could appear irrelevant today, such as the number of candlesticks on the altar, represented a real revolution in the Church of England. They embodied a definitively ‘dangerous’ approach to Roman Catholicism, as underlined by the Anglican liturgist Percy Dearmer (1867–1936) in his *The Parson’s Handbook* of 1899. For instance, he criticised the current fashion of candlesticks as ‘pure Romanism, and a defiance of the Ornaments Rubric, as of all other authority in the Church of England.’<sup>68</sup> Ornaments and liturgical objects were key elements in the clergy’s fight to gain permission for the practice of High Church ritual. This desire to revert to a pre-Reformation ‘English Use’ rite was in contrast to an inadvisable adoption of a post-Tridentine Roman Catholic practice. Dearmer, indeed, stood out against the Roman counter-reformed influence. His position appeared evident in his harsh condemnation of Italian and French churches, which echoed Pugin’s contempt of theatre-like churches: ‘the old order to which we are referred was a matter of fact very moderate, and singularly different in its real beauty from the theatrical exaggeration of many modern Roman churches, and of those English churches which try (with indifferent success) to copy them.’<sup>69</sup> Appointed vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill, London, in 1901, he rearranged the church reflecting the principles enunciated in his book. Dearmer whitewashed the walls, hung curtains and pictures, and reorganised the choir for plainsong and other historically-based hymn settings, many of which were collected by him in *The English Hymnal* (1906, with composer Ralph Vaughan Williams).<sup>70</sup>

The *Roman Catholic Relief Acts* of 1778, 1791, and 1829, which removed substantial restriction for Roman Catholics in the Kingdom, were still recent and their debate on style took the form of aesthetic research for the expression of a freshly authorised faith. Even before the Relief Acts, the Roman Catholic chapels housed in foreign embassies shared many common elements with Anglican ones: seating was arranged to allow the most people to follow the action on the altar; side galleries were often erected to enlarge spaces; pulpits were placed in the nave to better hear the preacher’s sermons.<sup>71</sup>

The political decision to recognise the Catholic cult produced a gradual tolerance of Anglicans towards Roman theology. The Spanish-born Catholic priest Nicholas Wiseman

(1802–65) played a major role in the diffusion of a Catholic revival in England. In 1835, in London, he held lectures on Christian theology addressed both to Catholics and Anglicans, attracting many converts like Pugin.<sup>72</sup> In 1836 founded 'The Dublin Review', a reference point for English Catholicism, but also for those Anglicans leaning to Catholicism and seeking a reunion with the Church of Rome that would be known as Anglo-Catholics. Among these, Wiseman's writings deeply influenced the already mentioned Anglican theologian John Henry Newman, who converted to Roman Catholicism. In 1850, Wiseman became the first Archbishop of Westminster after the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England, a role he kept till his death in 1865. Under his archbishopric, Pugin supervised the construction of many new Catholic buildings in the United Kingdom, including the Benedictine Downside Abbey.<sup>73</sup> The size of its neo-Gothic church, whose construction begun only in 1875, after the death of both Wiseman and Pugin, rivalled the medieval cathedrals lost to the Roman Church during reformation.

The large theoretical production of Pugin was a fundamental resource for designers of English Roman Catholic churches and Pugin himself designed several Catholic churches in England and Ireland following the principles he had enunciated. Like the debate within the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church in England weighed arguments in a debate between a medievalist and a 'Mainstream European Catholic' ceremonial.<sup>74</sup> If many clergy, liturgists, and architects, among them Pugin, were favourable to the first solution, many others expressed their hostility to Gothicism in terms of rites. Indeed, even if Roman Catholic churches were built in the Gothic style their architectural dress was rarely matched by a synchronic Gothic ceremonial. In other cases, the architectural style also reflected a different choice of rituals. For instance, the Catholic clergymen gravitating around the Brompton Oratory preferred a Counter-Reformation ceremonial, including baroque music instead of medieval chants, in line with the Roman-like style of their church in London (built in 1880–4 by Herbert Gribble). Others matched the research in the spiritual origin of the church with the adoption of a neo-Byzantine style whose authority was affirmed by John Francis Bentley's (1839–1902) design for Westminster Cathedral (built in 1895–1903).<sup>75</sup> Bentley's use of the Byzantine style at Westminster was explained by the wish to design a structure that could be enriched over time, since the non-structural nature of Byzantine ornaments allowed their deferred execution after the completion of the whole building.<sup>76</sup> In this way, the whole space could be covered with a moderate expenditure, reserving the cost of decorations to a later period. Moreover, he did not wish to compete with Westminster

Abbey by using Gothic.<sup>77</sup> Finally, the primitivism of Byzantine art and its diffusion in several geographic areas was regarded as a symbol of internationalism, in contrast with the national and local evolution of styles of later periods. In many cases, the flexibility of Byzantine-style churches and the visual power of its iconology made it prevail in the context of Catholic church architecture.<sup>78</sup>

### **2.3 A different approach to style in church architecture**

The Catholic approach to style contributed to weakening the assumption that Gothic was the best manifestation of the English religious identity. Indeed, in the 1840s, a few Anglican churches followed an unconventional stylistic path, resulting in mixing Gothic with classical, byzantine, and Romanesque/Lombard style. Among the most famous example, the Church of SS Mary and Nicholas in Wilton, Wiltshire, was designed (1841–4) by Thomas Henry Wyatt (1807–1880) as an accurate replica of an Italian Romanesque church. Similarly, All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, London, was built (1848–1849) in Lombard style on a design by Lewis Vulliamy (1791–1871), and it was later (1891–2) provided by Charles Harrison Townsend (1851–1928) with a neo-Romanesque facade, inspired to that of St Zeno in Verona, Italy.

If these cases remained linked to a certain Victorian historicism, the accuracy of historical styles was contrasted by the Arts and Crafts movement. Indeed, the churches designed by Arts and Crafts artists were Gothic in the general outline, but they focused on the character of the space rather than on historical accuracy. The slim structures of neo-Gothic architectures were substituted by massive buildings, which made of exposed materials a matter of ‘frank display’. The churches designed by William Lethaby (1857–1931) and Albert Randall Wells (1877–1942) exemplify the trend.<sup>79</sup> Even though these projects were somehow exceptional, the character of Arts and Crafts churches largely impacted the notion of style.

The acceptance of this instance within a still Gothic conception of the church building, can be found in the works of George Frederick Bodley (1827–1907).<sup>80</sup> Apprentice to George Gilbert Scott, Bodley simplified the lines of Victorian architecture. Under the influence of Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites, he tamed the excesses of Gothic Revival with the lines of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Between 1861 and 1870, he designed All Saints’ Church in Cambridge (1863–4), for which William Morris worked on interior finishes and stained

glass, in close collaboration with Bodley.<sup>81</sup> The church marked Bodley's abandonment of early medieval style in favour of a later English Decorated style. However, unlike the Ecclesiologist's preferred architects, Bodley was not interested in the historical and stylistic accuracy of churches. According to him, style was no more than 'a language.'<sup>82</sup> He rather preferred to focus his designs on the overall atmosphere of a church: 'I can't say I care greatly for much strictness of rule or rigid uniformity, so long as all is dignified & solemn, &, from an art point of view, beautiful.'<sup>83</sup>

Bodley's pupil Ninian Comper (1864–1960) criticised his master's primary focus on the aesthetic outlook of churches and his lack of interest in liturgical scholarship. Comper sought to underpin the aesthetic factors with scholarship and precedent, translating his full understanding of worship into church projects.<sup>84</sup> Comper's churches were not derived from the Ecclesiological Society's commands. They rather embodied his personal research on the pristine form of Christian worship spaces. The models to which his projects referred was the Christian architecture of the period before the break with Rome. Comper was in a direct dialogue with liturgists, including J. Wickham Legg. A surgeon and liturgiologist, Legg was a founder of the Alcuin Club along with Percy Dearmer. Legg also studied the English altar, whose description provided Comper with useful guidelines for the design of the *mensa* in his churches: a simple table in the shape of a cube, with a rich covering, surmounted by a ciborium or a baldachin.<sup>85</sup> Even if he is usually regarded as 'one of the last architects of the Gothic Revival',<sup>86</sup> Comper's antiquarian research was not associated to a strict revivalism. According to him, Gothic was 'not the rock from which we were hewn, nor yet the end beyond which we cannot go.'<sup>87</sup> Indeed, his churches combined Gothic, Moorish, and classical elements into a personal architectural style fostering visual 'unity by inclusion'.<sup>88</sup> This aesthetical approach, which owes much to his master Bodley, was enhanced by travels in which he searched the main formal elements of Christian architecture.<sup>89</sup> The first experiment in the fusion of architectural styles was in the reconstruction of Wimborne St Giles, Dorsetshire, 1910.<sup>90</sup> In St Giles' Church the altar was brought a little forward, with the attempt to bring as many people as possible around it. Indeed, by studying Roman basilicas, Comper had realised that anciently the celebrant and the clergy faced east, while the faithful faced west end, as still happened in some great basilicas in Rome. The research evolved into a new approach to architecture, which aimed at involving the faithful in a visual connection with the celebrant. Comper's churches were organised around the Eucharistic space, hence

the importance of altars, which became the focus of the space, as claimed in his publication on the Christian altar.<sup>91</sup>

This idea is central in the church that is regarded as Comper's late masterpiece, St Philip, Cosham, Portsmouth.<sup>92</sup> Opened in 1937, it was the last new church to be built before his death. From the outside it exhibited a simplified Gothic style. Instead, the inside was far more innovative in its layout. The plan consists of a nave with two aisles of the same width. They are structured in four bays, plus a further one in the nave for the lady chapel. Regular bays were indicated by columns with Corinthian capitals, supporting white plastered rib vaults. The altar was moved toward the centre of the space, in the fourth bay of the nave. Therefore, the congregation sat around it, enhancing a more direct connection with the celebrant. As underlined by Anthony Symondson, the result was 'essentially modern yet indebted to the unfolding richness of the Catholic tradition as it had evolved from Constantine to the twentieth century in which the heart and purpose of worship was the gathering of the baptised in the offering of the mass.'<sup>93</sup>

A golden ciborium protected the altar and made it the focus of the space, to the extent that Peter Hammond would describe the church as 'a building to house an altar.'<sup>94</sup> The ceiling of the ciborium was painted with a starred sky in which four angles hold up the oval with the Holy Spirit, recalling the 9th-century mosaics in the vault of the Chapel of St Zeno in the Basilica of St Praxedes, Rome. The painting on the ciborium was, along with the stained-glass windows and the font's lid, the only figurative decoration in the white space. A short railing delimited the sanctuary. Actually, Comper had envisaged a more obtrusive screen that if realised, would have provided the space with a medieval feature, not detrimental for the general 'atmosphere' of the church (to cite the title of a well-known text of his) but not very effective from a liturgical point of view.<sup>95</sup>

The heritage of Comper was pivotal for twentieth century architects. His integration of styles oiled the works of a new stylistic creativity. For instance, following 'his unity by inclusion' J. B. L. Tolhurst proposed an inventive project for All Saints in East Sheen, London. He designed a classical system of columns and entablature supporting a Gothic ribbed vault. The project remained unexecuted since it was rejected by the building commission, who judged the combination too daring, in favour of a more reassuring Early English Gothic solution.<sup>96</sup>

The teachings of Comper extended beyond formal matters. His understanding of liturgical issues, mainly derived from his personal knowledge of historical architecture, was matched by a pioneering church planning practice. His liturgical experiments, as proved in the following chapter, matched the principles of the Liturgical Movement, which was spreading in Britain in those years. It is not coincidental if many of the most advanced liturgical designs of the second post-war period, such as the Church of the Ascension in Plymouth (1958), by Potter and Hare, still looked at St Philip in Cosham as a model of a liturgically conscious architecture.

## 2.4 The Liturgical Movement

Within Christian churches, the historical excavation into primitive communities stressed some critical points of the modern liturgy. The belief that Christian primitivism represented the purest form of worship prompted the birth of many Christian groups. It had a big impact on established churches, too. Indeed, towards the end of the nineteenth century brought a new consciousness of a widespread need for liturgical renovation both in the Church of England and in the Roman Catholic Church—but the same phenomenon could be traced also in other confessions. One of the most tangible results of the changes in liturgy and architecture was probably the renewed consideration of the altar. In nineteenth-century Anglican and Roman Catholic churches the altar stood against the East wall. Altars could also be isolated but were often backed by tall reredos, which implied a celebration *ad apsidem*, i.e., facing the apse and not the assembly. The study of the layout of the primitive Christian assembly, combined with the attempt of a major involvement of people changed the conception and the position of the altar within the sacred space. Indeed, in the twentieth century the altar achieved a central position in the space. The acquired distance from the walls and the elimination of reredos gave the priests the possibility to celebrate the Mass facing the assembly (*versus populum*), relying on the supposition that this visual connection was the standard in ancient times. The idea of celebrating facing the faithful was a nodal point in the spirit of the so-called Liturgical Movement. Besides the renewed consideration of the altar, the Movement played a major role in reducing the formalism of ecclesiology in favour of new liturgical and architectural principles asking for an active participation of the faithful.

The definition of the ‘Liturgical Movement’ corresponds to a varied group of movements. They took root in the nineteenth century but continued to exert a major impact on

twentieth-century liturgy. The boundaries of the movement were broad, both within the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Church. The main problem concerned the corruption of the relation between the celebrant and the assembly. The new movements, in response, promoted major participation of the faithful in the rites.<sup>97</sup> For instance, Antonio Rosmini (1797–1855) in Italy and Prosper Guéranger (1805–1875) in France, promoted the active participation of the laity. It was pursued in the forms of Gregorian chant and a major understanding of rituals, developed through a methodical catechesis of the faithful.<sup>98</sup> The participatory way of attending rituals corresponded to what the Australian-French monk, Alcuin Reid (b. 1963) has defined as ‘the principle of liturgical piety.’ Reid describes this kind of piety as ‘drawing one’s spiritual nourishment from active and conscious contemplation of the faith of the Church as it is celebrated and expressed in the liturgical rites and prayers throughout the annual round of seasons and feasts of the liturgical year, as distinct from the practice of an unrelated, however worthy, devotional exercise.’<sup>99</sup>

Indeed, the first attempts of liturgical renewal were not aiming at reforming rites. They were rather intended to change the spiritual approach of the faithful. Even so, the new way of intending the interface between clergy and laity produced gradual adjustments and modifications of rituals. The issue of participation became the main goal of the Liturgical Movement. It is not coincidental that the leaders of the movement received their formation in monasteries, where communitarian life integrated the liturgical calendar. Indeed, the matrix of the Liturgical Movement was in the culture of European monasticism. The main cradles of the movement were some European Catholic monasteries, established between 1860 and 1900. Among the most influential ones, there were the monastery of Beuron and its daughter houses of Maria Laach in Germany; the monastery of Maredsous and its daughter house of Mont-César in Belgium; St Michael's Abbey, Farnborough, in England.<sup>100</sup> Among the orders that more contributed to the spread of the new liturgical ideas were the French Solesmes Benedictines. Their founder, the already mentioned Guéranger, wrote a series of volumes, *The Liturgical Year* (1841–75). The work had a great impact on Christian churches, including the Church of England. It described the Catholic rites during the year and outlined the historical development of the liturgy. Besides analytical intentions, its main goal was to recover the concept of a daily prayer guided by liturgy and accompanied by music.

One of the main advances of the Liturgical Movement was to translate monastic participation into the everyday liturgy of parishes. For instance, as monks already did in their abbeys, parishioners were encouraged to sing Gregorian chant during services. The

importance of holy music had met a consistent revival in those years. Pope Pius X (1903–1914) was himself convinced of the importance of music to fully live the liturgy. He sustained the importance of active involvement of the assembly in the *motu proprio* 'Tra le sollecitudini' (1903). The idea was in line with the reforming vision of the Pope, sensitive to the innovations of the Liturgical Movement. Indeed, in 1911, with the *Divino Afflatus* Constitution, he also reformed the Catholic breviary. The act eliminated some elements of the traditional book and envisaged the creation of a commission to emendate the missal. An ambitious project that was, however, stopped by his death (1914).<sup>101</sup>

Whether Pius X had an undoubtedly key role, the central figure of the Liturgical Movement was the Belgian Benedictine Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873–1960).<sup>102</sup> Follower of Guéranger, in 1906 he entered Mont-César, where he started to study the liturgy. His research went into the report *De Promovenda Sacra Liturgia*, presented at the Catholic conference of Malines of 1909. The text endorsed the use of vernacular language to promote popular piety and gave some general indications on arts. For instance, it advocated a broader use of music and Gregorian chants, as the author would reaffirm in *La Piété de l'église*, published in 1914.<sup>103</sup> The book aimed at 'promoting the application of all the instructions of Pius X in his *motu proprio* on church music; aiming to have the artists that are called to exercise a sacred art, architecture, painting, sculpture, etc., receive an education that will give them an understanding of the spirit and the rules of the Church's liturgy; making known to artists and writers the fruitful inspiration to art that the Church offers in her Liturgy.'<sup>104</sup> Rather than proposing a renewal of rituals, Beauduin's plan envisaged a program of formation and education of the faithful. It aimed at providing laymen with liturgical knowledge stimulating active participation in rites, worshipping in harmony as a single body. The unity would be reached 'by common participation in spiritual goods, by communication of merits and individual goods, by a continual exchange of prayers offered to God for the welfare and spiritual progress of each member and for the increasing prosperity of the entire body.'<sup>105</sup>

After the First World War, the advances of the Continental Liturgical Movement, soon took root in many European Countries. Liturgical circles were established in Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, and the United Kingdom— as well as the United States. In Germany, the movement was guided by Joseph Göttler (1874–1935), professor of pedagogy and catechetics at the University of Munich. Yet, the most influential theoretician of the German Liturgical movement was the German priest Romano Guardini (1885–1965). Guardini's experience in adapting the liturgy to the need of modern society would inspire

the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>106</sup> In 1918 Guardini wrote *Vom Geist Der Liturgie* (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*), a foundational text for twentieth-century liturgy. The book described liturgy as objective worship, a ritual freed from individualism to become communal action. According to the German priest, the true spirit of the liturgy was to express and shape the unity of the faithful gathered in prayer. The starting point was the idea of liturgy as a balanced form of prayer expressing the dogma of religion without the excesses of popular exuberance. At the same time, liturgy perfectly suited to the ethical and social aspects of community prayer, as opposed to the individual prayer typical of Protestantism.<sup>107</sup> Liturgy, in fact, was a prayer that enhanced the communion between the faithful, in which individuality was sacrificed for the sake of greater unity. Guardini also dwelt on the formal aspects of the liturgy, which he defined as 'style'. In explaining the concept of style, he contrasted Greek temples with Gothic cathedrals. He stated that the classical building clearly embodied a positive idea of style, as it was capable of expressing a universal spirit, as opposed to the regional and individual character of the Gothic church.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the liturgy had to be deprived of particularism, aiming at universality also in style, understood as the arrangement of speeches, the organisation of space, the arrangement of objects, colours and sounds. The universality of style was also based on the symbolism of liturgical signs, which involved the expressive power of the body and its movements. From this point of view, liturgy shared with art the idea of a higher order that accorded with the real world. Consequently, the artist called upon to deal with liturgy had to come to terms with the speaking power of objects but must be careful not to put beauty before truth. The artist was asked to ensure that his creations were direct, renouncing all that is extraneous and superficial in the narration of liturgical truth: 'the artist, as the enemy of all vanity and showiness, must express truth as it should be expressed, without the alteration of a single stroke or trait.'<sup>109</sup> As illustrated in the following chapters of the thesis, the book had an enormous impact on contemporary church planning. Many German architects, like Dominikus Böhm (1880–1955) and Rudolf Schwarz (1897–1961), looked at Guardini to innovate in church design.<sup>110</sup> Guardini's influence of went far beyond Germany and his works were translated into several languages. The English translation of *Vom Geist Der Liturgie* was published in 1930 as *The Spirit of the Liturgy* and soon became a key reference for Catholic and Anglican liturgists. Oddly, there seems to be no review of the work in British magazines before World War II, but the text, along with other texts by the same author, such as *Sacred Signs* (also 1930), was frequently mentioned in books on liturgy, attesting to the broad diffusion of Guardini's thoughts in the United Kingdom. For instance, *The Spirit*

*of the Liturgy* was mentioned in Arthur Gabriel Hebert's *Liturgy and Society*, while the periodical *Die Schildgenossen*, inspired by Guardini, was often cited in *Blackfriars*, a Catholic review edited by the English Dominicans.<sup>111</sup> Already in 1937, an unknown editorialist of *Blackfriars*, under the pseudonym of Penguin, referred to Guardini as the one who 'contributes a superb address on the nature and purpose of churches.'<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the German debate on the liturgy was particularly fervid. The discussion also registered the activity of Johannes van Acken (1879–1937). He authored several texts on Christocentric church art, in which he advocated a new way of designing churches. On a different side, the German liturgist William Busch (1882–1971) did not support the need to modify the traditional rituals. Nevertheless, he recognised the utility of a parallel Latin and vernacular breviary.

Among other geographical areas, the principles of the Liturgical Movement rapidly grew in Austria. A passionate supporter was Pius Parsch (1884–1954) of the Augustinian monastery of Klosterneuberg. In 1935 he reordered the chapel of St Gertrude, inserting an altar for the celebration towards the faithful. He also revived the offertory procession and promoted the use of vernacular in readings. Parsch defended a reform respectful of liturgical traditions, as he sustained in his *The Liturgy of the Mass of 1949*.

In the United States of America, the teaching of the Movement was promoted by Virgil Michel (1890–1938). A Benedictine monk of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, Michel founded the Liturgical Press and this publishing house became a major tool in the spreading of the Liturgical Movement in English-speaking areas.<sup>113</sup> For instance, in 1926, the Liturgical Press launched the journal *Orate Fratres*, with Michel himself a frequent contributor to the early volumes. The articles argued for the necessity of a major participation of the faithful, which could be achieved through some important reforms. At first an increased use of the vernacular. Secondly, a restoration of the offertory procession. Finally, a simplification of the Mass. These improvements were described by Roger Schoenbechler (1900–86) in an article 'On Liturgical Reforms' published in 1936.<sup>114</sup> Corresponding to the liturgical innovation proposed in the text, Schoenbechler also envisaged a renewal of ecclesiastical architecture. According to him the priority of church design was the emphasis on the altar, a theme that would become central in the ecclesiastical architecture of the post-war period.

## 2.5 Liturgical renewal in Britain

In England the theories of the Continental Liturgical Movement started to circulate with a certain delay. Their diffusion was due above all to the influence of French and German liturgists, who connected with English thinkers. For instance, Guéranger himself visited England in 1860.<sup>115</sup> He was escorted by Laurence Shepherd, the English translator of his *Liturgical Year* (published in Dublin, 1867), a work that obtained positive reception in England.<sup>116</sup> The occasion of the trip was the consecration of the Belmont Abbey, in Herefordshire, one of the first Roman Catholic Benedictine monasteries to open in England after the Reformation built in Early English style on a design by Edward Welby Pugin (1834–75), son of Augustus Welby Pugin.

In the English Benedictine circles, another relevant figure was the French Anscar Vonier (1875–1938). Abbot of Buckfast Abbey, in Devon, he authored the influential *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (1925). The book soon became a reference and was described by Yates as ‘a notable landmark’ of the Roman Catholic liturgical renewal in England.<sup>117</sup> Another influential book by Vonier was *The people of God* (1937). It showed how the fulfilment of the Christian Church comprised a public liturgical life. In line with this idea, it sustained the necessity to transform the eucharistic liturgy into corporate action. The Eucharist had to involve the entire assembly, with consequential stress on the centrality of the altar.<sup>118</sup>

Indeed, in those years, the Low Masses were hardly audible and visible by the faithful. they comprised no sermons and no interaction between clergy and lay. Sung masses with sermons were generally celebrated only in cathedrals and larger churches. There, only the choir oversaw the music. The outpost of the theories of the Continental Liturgical Movement in England was the Benedictine abbey of Farnborough. It was founded as a family mausoleum by the French Empress Eugénie (1826–1920). In 1885 she invited the French Benedictine monks of Solesmes to occupy the monastery, under the guide of abbot Fernand Cabrol (1855–1937). The centre launched several publications on liturgy, addressing both French and English readers. Their goal was to highlight the urgency of a liturgical reform. For instance, it launched a massive work by Cabrol, translated in 1922 as *Liturgical Prayer, its History and Spirit*. The book retraced the evolution of the Christian rites and prayers. It devoted an entire section to the sanctification of places and objects, including church buildings.<sup>119</sup>

The need for a reformation of rituals was also manifested by the priest and artist Adrian Fortescue (1874–1923). In 1917, he published *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite*

*Described*, asking for a reform to bring back the ‘austere simplicity’ of the Roman rite.<sup>120</sup> These seeds prompted a fervid debate within the Catholic Church in England. For instance, the English Jesuit C. C. Martindale (1879–1963) recommended a simplification of the breviary and the development of a vernacular Mass of the Catechumens. Instead, the Catholic scholar Lancelot Sheppard (1906–?), school master at St Edmund's College, Ware, proposed a partial reform of the calendar, only highlighting some significant feasts.<sup>121</sup>

The impact of the Catholic Liturgical Movement on the Church of England mainly regarded a change in the approach to the Book of Common Prayer. Since 1662, the Prayer Book had been the only reference to guide the rite, independently from the cultural context, part of the world, or faithful’s religious sense. After World War I, the book, above all its eucharistic canon, was regarded by High Church clergymen as insufficient to answer modern liturgical need. A proposal for a *Prayer-Book Revised*, often attributed to Percy Dearmer, was published already in 1913. It contained a preface by the Bishop of Oxford Charles Gore (1853–1932). However, the *Prayer Book* went through a systematic phase of revision only in the twenties. The adjustment resulted in the publication of three experimental communion rites. They were described respectively by the *Green Book* (1922), presented by the fundamental Anglo-Catholic English Church Union, the *Grey Book* (1923), written by a liberal association of clergy, and the *Orange Book* (1924), prepared by the moderate Anglo-Catholic Alcuin Club.<sup>122</sup> The revision was sustained by a large number of High Church scholars, which had been formed within the tradition of the Oxford Movement.<sup>123</sup> The drafting of the final revised version of 1927 saw the key contribution of Walter Frere (1863–1938), co-founder of the Anglican religious order the Community of the Resurrection, who was the delegate of the Anglican Church at the ecumenical meetings of Malines in the 1920s. Frere maintained relations with the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church. The ecumenical background of Frere and of other scholars working on the new version of the book emerged in many rituals. The external influence disturbed the more Protestant circles within the Church of England, alleging a pro-Roman revision. In fact, the variations to the book met with the opposition of the Evangelical Anglicans who feared a rapprochement with Catholicism. Hence, the revision was not approved by Parliament during its discussion in 1927–8. The failure of the revision of the *Prayer Book* convinced bishops not to condemn the clergy who would have used the provisions from the rejected variation. This was at the base, within the Church of England of the 1930s and 1940s, of a flourishing of experimental liturgical theories and practices. The diversification of liturgies was followed by a variety of

experimental (and often informal) approaches to the design of church buildings, as illustrated in the next chapter.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter described the development of Anglicanism in the 19th century. It mainly dealt with the emergence of ecclesiology and the rediscovery of ancient rites, conceived as a reaction to industrialised society. The adoption of old-fashioned liturgical traditions was accompanied by the success of the revival as an architectural style. Between the different types of revivals, neo-Gothic was certainly the most popular one in Britain, corresponding also with the adoption of medieval rituals. This antiquarian system of liturgy, aesthetics and architecture was challenged by the development of the Liturgical Movement. The chapter presented the main people involved in this development and the timing of their theorising. It introduced their ideas, the type of ecclesiology they followed and the impact and opposition they encountered. The contacts between theorists and architects become clearer in the light of the latter's production. This connection is evident in the next chapter, which deals with the advancement and translation of liturgical concepts into architectural practice.

As described below, projects sought larger and more compact worship spaces. This trend also appealed to historical precedents. For example, among the Catholic preaching orders, there was a tendency to build churches with a single hall so that side aisles, whose columns could obstruct the view of the main altar and pulpit, were avoided. The need for physical, visual, and auditory communication, expressed by the new church designs, changed the faithful's approach to the ritual.

Of course, this change was not sudden. Indeed, the evolution of liturgy and architecture was not a synchronous mechanism and happened gradually over a long time. Antiquarianism continued into the 20th century, often sustained by clergymen. Sometimes it hid a mere unimaginative copying of medieval styles, regardless of their liturgical or architectural implications. This rampant and simplified antiquarianism proved how it would be wrong to consider liturgical and architectural evolution as two progressive, rectilinear movements. Rather, they consisted of episodic moments of innovative creation, often followed by regressions. But it was in these moments that the resourcefulness of theorists and designers gave rise to innovative solutions. These were experiments that would be absorbed into liturgical and architectural practice a few decades later.



## Notes

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<sup>37</sup> The definition is taken from the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

<sup>38</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, 1 (1841).

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> On the leaders of the movement: Lawrence N. Crumb, *The Oxford Movement and its Leaders: A Bibliography of Secondary and Lesser Primary Sources* (2009).

<sup>41</sup> James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (1962), 26.

<sup>42</sup> On the Cambridge Camden Society and its influence on architecture see Christopher Webster, John Elliot, ed., *'A Church as it Should Be'. The Cambridge Camden Society and Its Influence* (2001); Christopher Webster, ed., *Temples ... worthy of His presence: The early publications of the Cambridge Camden Society* (2003).

<sup>43</sup> James F. White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations* (1964), 134–36.

<sup>44</sup> See William Whyte, *Unlocking the Church: The Lost Secrets of Victorian Sacred Space*, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, 19 (1861), 67–9.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Hall, 'What Do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Mar. 2000), 78–95.

<sup>47</sup> The full title is *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum. Written by William Durandus*. On symbolism in High Victorian church architecture: Michael Hall, 'What Do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 59, 1 (2000), 78–95.

<sup>48</sup> John Mason Neale, Benjamin Webb, 'Sacramentality: A Principle of Ecclesiastical Design', in Guillaume Durand, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments* (edn. 1893), xxvi–xxvii.

<sup>49</sup> 'Let us look at a Protestant place of worship. It is choked up and concealed by surrounding shops and houses, for religion, now-a-days, must give way to business and pleasure [...] In contrast to this, let us close with a general view of the symbolism of a Catholick church [...] Verily, as we think on the oneness of its design, we may say: *Jerusalem edificatur ut civitas cuius participatio ejus in id ipsum*.' From John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb, 'General Conclusion' (chapter XI) in William Durandus, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments* (1843). Neale and Webb's tendency towards the symbolism of churches made the American archaeologist and art historian Arthur Lincoln Frothingham Jr. (1859–1923) think of their affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church: Arthur Lincoln Frothingham, Jr., 'Review of The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments by William Durandus', *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1894), 567.

<sup>50</sup> Simon Bradley, *Churches: An architectural guide* (2016), 157–58.

<sup>51</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, 'G. E. Street in the 1850s', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Dec. 1960), 155.

<sup>52</sup> Beresford Hope visited the ruins of the abbey in 1844. Then, he decided to reconstruct the abbey to house a missionary college. The buildings, including the church, were heavily damaged and reduced into ruins during WWII. On Beresford Hope's purchase see the booklet W. F. France, *St Augustine's, Canterbury: A Story of Enduring Life* (1952), 10–1.

<sup>53</sup> William Butterfield was also commissioned by Lewis Gilbertson, member of the Oxford Movement, to make a project for the church of All Saints in Braunston, Northamptonshire. Gilbertson wanted music to improve

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the service, so asked Butterfield to redesign the chancel. The chancel was decorated, and the existing window was raised to leave space for a reredos.

<sup>54</sup> Cambridge Camden Society, *A few Words to Church Builders* (1841), 5–7.

<sup>55</sup> John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).

<sup>56</sup> From his memoirs: ‘I had become exceedingly irate at the projected destruction by Mr. Barry of St Stephen’s Chapel, and I wrote to Mr. Webb [the secretary to the Camden Society] and subsequently saw him on the subject. [...] Mr. Webb took advantage of the occasion to lecture me on church architecture in general, on the necessity of chancels, &c., &c. I at once saw that he was right, and became a reader of the ‘Ecclesiologist.’ Pugin’s articles excited me almost to fury, and I suddenly found myself like a person awakened from a long feverish dream, which had rendered him unconscious of what was going on about him’. George Gilbert Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), 87–8.

<sup>57</sup> William Morris, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *The Athenaeum* (5 March 1877).

<sup>58</sup> ‘The same shell which contained the apparatus of medieval worship was, speaking generally, suited to contain that of modern worship’, from A. B. Hope, ‘Mr. Hope’s Essay on the Present State of Ecclesiastical Science in England’, *The Ecclesiologist*, 7 (1847), 87.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* The sentence was also cited in James F. White, *Protestant worship and church architecture* (1964), 132.

<sup>60</sup> For an overview on Gothic Revival in church architecture: Nigel Yates, *Liturgical Space* (2008), 113–34. For the use of the word ‘Gothick’: Dale Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760–1840* (2019), 353.

<sup>61</sup> Bridget Patten, *Catholicism and the Gothic Revival: John Milner and St Peter’s Chapel, Winchester* (2001).

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Rickman, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture, from the Conquest to the Reformation* (1817).

<sup>63</sup> According to Charles Locke Eastlake: ‘It suffices to know that Rickman worked according to the light which was in him [...] It was indeed a light of no great brilliancy, but he turned it to good account’, from Charles L. Eastlake, *History of the Gothic Revival* (1970), 123. On Rickman see Megan Aldrich, Alexandrina Buchanan, ed., *Thomas Rickman & The Victorians* (2019).

<sup>64</sup> On the relation between Pugin and Ruskin: Patrick R. M. Conner, ‘Pugin and Ruskin’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 41 (1978), 344–50.

<sup>65</sup> Augustus Welby Pugin, *The present state of ecclesiastical architecture in England* (1843).

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*, 35: ‘Churches are now built on exactly the same principle as theatres, to hold the greatest number of persons in the smallest possible space; and the only difference in the arrangement is the substitution of an altar and altarpiece for the proscenium and drop scene.’

<sup>67</sup> On ritualism in the Church of England: Nigel Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain 1830–1910* (1999).

<sup>68</sup> Percy Dearmer, *The Parson’s Handbook* (1907), 96. On Dearmer’s liturgical thought see Jared C. Cramer, *Percy Dearmer Revisited: Discerning Authentically Anglican Liturgy in a Multicultural, Ecumenical, 21st Century Context*, thesis in theology, University of the South, 2017, retrieved from [anglicanhistory.org](http://anglicanhistory.org).

<sup>69</sup> Dearmer, *The Parson’s Handbook* (1907), 36.

<sup>70</sup> J. Barrington Bates, ‘Extremely Beautiful, but Eminently Unsatisfactory: Percy Dearmer and the Healing Rites of the Church, 1909–1928’, *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (June 2004), 196.

<sup>71</sup> Yates, *Liturgical Space*, 102–11.

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<sup>72</sup> Augustus W. Pugin's son, Edgar W. Pugin, designed Wiseman's tomb (1865). The monument was moved in 1907 into the crypt of the new Westminster Cathedral.

<sup>73</sup> The list of new churches built in Wiseman's archbishopric, under the direction of Pugin, is in a letter that Pugin wrote to Wiseman, now in the Vatican Library. See Charles T. Dougherty, Homer C. Welsh, 'Wiseman on the Oxford Movement: An Early Report to the Vatican', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Dec. 1958), 150.

<sup>74</sup> Yates, *Liturgical Space*, 123–5.

<sup>75</sup> On Bentley see Peter Howe, *John Francis Bentley: Architect of Westminster Cathedral* (2020).

<sup>76</sup> Winefride de L'Hôpital, *Westminster Cathedral and its architect* (1919), 2 volumes, vol. 1, 26.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Jacqueline Banerjee, 'The Byzantine Revival', *The Victorian Web* (20 February 2014), retrieved from <https://victorianweb.org/art/architecture/byzantine/introduction.html>, accessed February 2020.

<sup>79</sup> See the recently published volumes Roger Button, *Arts and Crafts Churches of Great Britain: Architects, Craftsmen and Patrons* (2020), and Alec Hamilton, *Arts & Crafts Churches* (2020).

<sup>80</sup> On his figure and his influence on later architects see Michael Hall, *The Holiness of Beauty: G. F. Bodley (1827-1907) and his circle* (2008).

<sup>81</sup> See Roy Tricker, *All Saints Church* (2004). Morris & Co was in charge of the interior decoration.

<sup>82</sup> George Frederick Bodley, *The modes in which religious life and thought may be influenced by art* (1881), 5.

<sup>83</sup> George Frederick Bodley's letter to a friend, from Michael Hall, 'Safe in G. F. Bodley's greens and browns', *Church Times* (6 November 2007), retrieved from <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2007/9-november/features/safe-in-g-f-bodley-s-greens-and-browns>.

<sup>84</sup> On Comper see Anthony Symondson, *The life and work of Sir Ninian Comper: 1864-1960* (1988) and Anthony Symondson, Stephen Arthur Bucknall, *Sir Ninian Comper: An Introduction to his Life and Work, with Complete Gazetteer* (2006).

<sup>85</sup> See John Wickham Legg, 'A Comparative Study of the Time in the Christian Liturgy at which the Elements are Prepared and Set on the Holy Table', *Transactions of the S. Paul's Ecclesiological Society*, vol. III (1892), 71- 77

<sup>86</sup> Symondson, Bucknall, *Sir Ninian Comper*, text in the back cover.

<sup>87</sup> Timothy Hook, 'Soul Refreshment Twentieth Century Gothic', *Sacred Architecture*, vol. 14 (Fall 2008), 34.

<sup>88</sup> See Anthony Symondson, 'Unity by Inclusion: Sir Ninian Comper and the Planning of a Modern Church', in *The Twentieth Century Church* (1998), 19-42.

<sup>89</sup> In particular, he was fascinated by classical architecture during a trip to Rome in 1900. The attraction to classicism impacted his design for St. Mary Wellingborough, 1904-31. He then visited Sicily, where churches exhibited a mix of classical, Norman, and Moorish elements, and again travelled around North Africa, France and Spain.

<sup>90</sup> A. T. P. Cooper, *Wimborne St. Giles Church "A Ninian Comper Restoration"*, s.d.

<sup>91</sup> Ninian Comper, *Of the Christian Altar and the Buildings which Contains it* (1950).

<sup>92</sup> On the church, see *A Brief History and Description of St Philip's Cosham 1937-1987* (1987).

<sup>93</sup> Symondson, 'Unity by Inclusion', 35.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (1963), 75.

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<sup>95</sup> The text is Ninian Comper, *Of the Atmosphere of a Church* (1947).

<sup>96</sup> Kenneth Richardson, *The 'Twenty-five' Churches of the Southwark Diocese: An inter-war campaign of church-building* (2002), 43-45. Richardson provides an extract of the verdict by the commission, according to which the association 'of ribbed vaulting and fan vaulting, carried out in concrete, with the Classical columns and entablature below does not seem to us a happy one.'

<sup>97</sup> Josef A. Jungmann, 'Liturgy on the Eve of the Reformation and in the Baroque period', *Liturgisches Erbe und pastorale Gegenwart* (1960), 87-119.

<sup>98</sup> They both recognised the barrier of Latin language, but they sustained that the passage to vulgar would have deprived liturgy of its spiritual essence, and that the gap could be reduced by a more extensive teaching of Latin in popular classes.

<sup>99</sup> Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council* (2005), 69.

<sup>100</sup> They were founded (or re-founded in the case of Maria Laach) respectively in 1863, 1893, 1872, 1899, 1895.

<sup>101</sup> Carlo Pioppi, 'Principi e orientamenti pastorali di San Pio X', in Roberto Regoli, ed., *San Pio X. Papa riformatore di fronte alle sfide del nuovo secolo* (2016), 27-48. The successor of Pius X, Benedict XV, issued no directives specifically addressing the participation in the Mass, apart from some quick reference in the new Code of Canon Law: John G. Lessard-Thibodeau, *Mutual Liturgical Enrichment: Juridical consideration of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century conciliar, papal and curial documents* (2022), PhD thesis, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, 280.

<sup>102</sup> For a brief profile see Alcuin Reid, 'Introduction' to Lambert Beauduin, *Liturgy the Life of the Church* (2002), 9-10. On his vision see Sonya A. Quitslund, Les idées fondamentales de l'ecclésiologie de dom Lambert Beaudouin, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 91, 10 (1969), 1073-96.

<sup>103</sup> The book was translated into English by St. John Collegeville's abbot Alcuin Deutsch and published in 1926 as *Liturgy the Life of the Church*.

<sup>104</sup> Lambert Beauduin, *Liturgy the Life of the Church* (1926), 46.

<sup>105</sup> Beauduin, *Liturgy*., 12.

<sup>106</sup> In 1961 Guardini was also invited in as member of the preparatory Commission on Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. However, he declined the invitation. See the documents in the Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Conc. Vat. II, b. 1351, Commissio De Sacra Liturgia, Commissio Preparatoria. On Guardini's pioneering role see also Robert A. Krieg, *Romano Guardini: A Precursor of Vatican II* (1997).

<sup>107</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (2012), trans. Ada Lane, originally published by Sheed and Ward in 1935, 11.

<sup>108</sup> Id., 32-33.

<sup>109</sup> Id., 65.

<sup>110</sup> The bibliography on this argument is vast. For an overview on the influence of Guardini on architecture, see Maria Antonietta Crippa, 'Romano Guardini, gli architetti amici e l'architettura: un lascito e la sua interpretazione', in Giuliana Fabris, ed., "In assoluto inizio". *La Cristologia di Romano Guardini* (2015), 59-85. For Guardini and Schwarz: Wolfgang Pehnt, "Dello spirito della liturgia": Romano Guardini', in Wolfgang Pehnt, Hilde Strohl, *Rudolf Schwarz* (1997, Italian edn.), 50-7. On Guardini and Böhm see Wolfgang Voigt, 'Neue Formen mit dem Urgehalte der Tradition: Dominikus Böhm zwischen den Strömungen und Brüchen seiner Zeit', in Wolfgang Voigt, Ingeborg Flage, eds., *Dominikus Böhm 1880-1955* (2005), 13, 42.

<sup>111</sup> Arthur Gabriel Hebert, *Liturgy and Society* (1935; 4<sup>th</sup> edn. 1942), 128.

<sup>112</sup> Penguin, 'Extracts and Comments', *Blackfriars*, 18/206 (May 1937), 376.

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<sup>113</sup> On Michael see: Jacqueline Parascandola, 'Virgil Michel: Prophet of Liturgical Education and Reform', in John L. Elias and Lucinda A. Nolan, eds., *Educators in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition* (2009), pp. 131-61; Lucinda A. Nolan, 'Virgil Michel', retrieved from [www.biola.edu/talbot/ce20/database/virgil-michel](http://www.biola.edu/talbot/ce20/database/virgil-michel), accessed January 2021.

<sup>114</sup> Roger Schoenbechler, 'On Liturgical Reforms', *Orate Fratres*, 10, n. 11-12 (October 1936), 353-357.

<sup>115</sup> A Sister of Ryde, 'Dom Gueranger: prophet of Ecclesial Renewal', *FAITH Magazine*, July-August 2006, retrieved from [www.faith.org.uk/article/july-august-2006-dom-gueranger-prophet-of-ecclesial-renewal](http://www.faith.org.uk/article/july-august-2006-dom-gueranger-prophet-of-ecclesial-renewal), accessed January 2021.

<sup>116</sup> The converted Roman Catholic Cardinal Henry Edward Manning considered the work as 'a prelude to a better world and an avenue to the Vision of Peace' while Dom Cuthbert Johnson, Abbot of Quarr, saw in it 'the signal which marks the beginning of the modern liturgical movement.' See A Sister of Ryde, 'Dom Gueranger: prophet of Ecclesial Renewal', *Faith Magazine* (July-August 2006), retrieved from [https://www.faith.org.uk/article/july-august-2006-dom-gueranger-prophet-of-ecclesial-renewal](http://www.faith.org.uk/article/july-august-2006-dom-gueranger-prophet-of-ecclesial-renewal), accessed December 2021.

<sup>117</sup> Yates, *Liturgical Space* (2008), 144. 'The full Christian religion is this, that the very sacrifice is put into our hands [...] It is thus we must understand all that is said of the Eucharist as being a participation in Christ's sacrifice', from Anscar Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (1956), 223; 226.

<sup>118</sup> 'Everything in the Eucharist is in terms of a multitude, of a people.'; 'we are justified in saying that for the Christian, even more than for the Jew, spiritual nationhood and altar are interchangeable terms. There can be no people of God where there is no altar' From Anscar Vonier, *The People of God* (2013), 67; 73.

<sup>119</sup> Fernand Cabrol, *Liturgical Prayer: Its History and Spirit* (1922), Part IV, Ch. XXII, 203-212.

<sup>120</sup> Adrian Fortescue, *The ceremonies of the Roman rite described* (1920), xix.

<sup>121</sup> Cyril Charlie Martindale, *At Mass* (1951)

<sup>122</sup> For an evolution of the drafts see David N. Griffiths, *The Bibliography of the Book of Common Prayer, 1549-1999* (2002) and Brian Spinks, 'The Prayer Book "Crisis" in England', in Charles Hefling, Cynthia Shattuck, eds., *The Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 239-43.

<sup>123</sup> They comprised the Bishop of Gloucester Arthur Cayley Headlam (1862-1947) and Professor Herbert Maurice Relton (1882-1971). See Arthur Cayley Headlam, *The New Prayer Book: being a charge delivered to the clergy & churchwardens of the Diocese of Gloucester on the occasion of his second visitation* (1927); Herbert Maurice Relton, ed., *The New Prayer Book: Being a course of public lectures delivered at King's College, London, by eight lecturers representing various schools of thought in the Church* (1927)

# 3. A step forward: pioneering church design in the new century

The liturgical advances of the late nineteenth century triggered a renovation of the modern ritual, particularly evident in the first half of the twentieth century. Within the Church of England, the Parish Communion movement, founded by the English monk A. G. Hebert, reinstated the value of the Eucharistic rite in the life of the community. The movement put emphasis on the central value of the Communion that led to a renewed importance attributed to altars in the sacred space. As it also happened in the context of Roman Catholicism, in the churches planned according to the new liturgical requirements the high altar was moved toward the centre and became the heart of the space. Visual obstacles between the celebrant and the congregation were removed, aiming at a major involvement of the faithful. The trend is exemplified in Britain in three Christian spaces which are described in this chapter. They are the Anglican Chapel of Kelham Hall, and the Catholic churches of the First Martyrs in Bradford and of St Peter in Gorleston-on-Sea. Although their stylistic character still looked to a certain historicism, the pioneering planning of these three spaces marked a fundamental step in the evolution of twentieth century church building. They foreshadowed the central spaces designed by Nugent Cachemaille-Day, which include modern liturgy in a modern architectural setting. At the same time, architecture reflected social innovations that would influence the design of post-war church buildings, prompting the pioneering experiments of the sixties.

## **3.1 The function of the Church in the modern world: the Parish and People Movement**

As described in the previous chapter, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Church found itself changing. This was true for the Roman Catholic Church, within which the Liturgical Movement was born, but also for the Church of England. The revision of the Prayer Book was accompanied by the development of experimental Communion rites. The

rediscovery of the Eucharist, its communal character, and its central role in the liturgy changed the view on the role of the Church and its relationship with the society. This new idea was embodied in theological publications, missionary activities, political involvement, functional and architectural principles.

In 1935, the Anglican monk Arthur Gabriel Hebert (1886–1963) wrote *Liturgy and Society: The Function of the Church in the Modern World*. As Hebert declared in his preface, the book was ‘inspired to a large extent by the Liturgical Movement in the Roman Catholic Church’.<sup>124</sup> Hebert graduated from Oxford in 1909 and soon started to work in the poorest districts of London, like Bethnal Green, with the team of Oxford House, inspired by Anglo-Catholic social theories. They were particularly influenced by the revolutionary ideas of Stewart Headlam (1847–1924), who had worked in Bethnal Green himself.<sup>125</sup> In line with this missionary approach, Hebert spent a period in a working-class parish in Horbury, West Yorkshire, where the vicar, influenced by the Oxford Movement, had put the eucharist at the centre of worship.<sup>126</sup> Around 1910, while in Oxford, Hebert met Fr. David Jenks (1866–1935), who had just succeeded the recently resigned Herbert Hamilton Kelly (1860–1950) as director of the Society of Sacred Mission (SSM). Through Jenks, Hebert was introduced to Kelly and his Society, an Anglican order for the training of missionary priests, founded by him in Kennington, London, in 1893.<sup>127</sup> The idea behind its creation was that of a boarding school for young men, who would otherwise be prevented by economic contingencies from answering their vocation. Hebert arrived at the college in 1913 and in 1920, in line with the Society's commitment to South Africa, he left to become a missionary priest in Africa. The African period gave Hebert the opportunity to combine Tractarian ideals with a less ritualistic and more practical approach to community life, which even led him to get involved in building a small permanent church in Frankfort, in the Free State province. The foundation stone was laid in March 1924 and in December of the same year it was dedicated as the Church of the Resurrection: Hebert designed the building, supervised the construction and collaborated with the builders.<sup>128</sup> The mission also engaged in reflections on the liturgy, encouraged by the particular status of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, which was empowered to make additions or adaptations to the service in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. In the midst of the discussion on liturgical revision, Hebert wrote a series of texts on the liturgy that took account of missionary needs, suggesting in particular the restoration of the adult catechism, which were submitted to the local liturgical commission. When he returned to England, the Prayer Book had gone through a fertile debate on its revision, but

was still eventually rejected by Parliament in 1927, disappointing all the reformistic forces within the Church of England. This was the context of Hebert's *Liturgy and Society*, which contains a short historical account on the evolution of the Christian Church, from its origin to the development of the European Liturgical Movement, and a reflection on the modern challenges the Church of England was asked to answer.

One of the main issues was, according to Hebert, the division within the Church, which could be retrieved by means of the Eucharist, 'the centre of all' services, which contains all the elements of Christian worship. Hebert's celebration of the Communion as the fulcrum of Christian activity was highlighted in a specific chapter of the book, titled 'The Parish Eucharist', which enunciated the communal character of the Eucharistic service, an instance shared in Anglo-Catholics circles and already put into practice as a weekly service in some parishes, like W.H. Frere's Church of St Faith in Stepney.<sup>129</sup> In Anglican liturgy, Holy Communion was often considered an act of individual devotion, and was relegated to private services held on Sundays after the communal worship of Morning Prayer (Matins). To understand how the theme of the Eucharistic liturgy had become central in the Anglican liturgy of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first of the new century, and to what extent it expressed a move towards Anglo-Catholicism, it is sufficient to cite some of the numerous publications on the subject. For instance, in 1867, the Anglican scholar Gerard Francis Cobb had published a book, dedicated to John Henry Newman, who had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845, and the leader of the Oxford Movement E. B. Pusey, in which he argued for the possibility of a reconciliation between the Anglican and Roman churches on the basis of an analogical interpretation of Holy Communion.<sup>130</sup> In the text he affirmed the rightness of the Anglo-Catholic interpretation of the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>131</sup> This belief was in contrast to the view of Evangelical Anglicans believing in the pneumatic presence of Christ, according to which the Eucharist was a manifestation of Jesus' spirit. The chapter dedicated to the Holy Communion in *Liturgy and Society* must be read in this larger context of Anglo-Catholicism and Ecumenism. The same subject would be central in the collection of essays edited by Hebert and published in 1939 as *The Parish Communion*, which would have given the name to the homonymous movement within the Church of England aiming at replacing the different Sunday services with a single service of Communion. The movement would have been promoted by the holding of its first conference in 1949 and the creation of a periodical, published from 1950, *Parish and People*.

The rediscovered importance attributed to the eucharistic liturgy, even though it could seem a mere matter of theology, had a consistent reflection on church building. The connection between this new liturgy and the architecture which is bound to host it is already evident in *Liturgy and Society*, in which an entire chapter is centred on the relationship between 'Christianity and art', including architecture in the latter. In the chapter Hebert recognized the importance of the Gothic revival as a moment in which a double-sense relation linked Christianity to its tradition liturgy, therefore matching architecture with its original liturgy. However, he declared the weakness of the Victorian practice of building churches in styles different from those of civic and residential buildings, which chased a 'false romanticism' and incarnated the incapability of the Church to speak a modern language, symptomatic of the divorce between art and the people.<sup>132</sup> He also claimed the need for a modern architecture, deprived of the useless and anachronistic ornaments or revivals, uniting modern design, construction and 'a sense of tradition.'<sup>133</sup> The core of the reasoning, indeed, lay in the conviction that modern architecture had to be functional, its function being undoubtedly the liturgy. The enunciation was accompanied by an architectural metaphor: 'The Forth Bridge is beautiful just because it makes no conscious effort to be beautiful by adding needless ornament to its construction, but simply in solving the practical problem of carrying trains weighing several hundred tons over a mile of sea at a height of two hundred feet above water-level.'<sup>134</sup> In the same way, according to Hebert, 'the Church equally is forced to express herself in the church-buildings which she erects.'<sup>135</sup> The conviction, however, did not bring Herbert to embrace completely modern church architecture: 'there are some [churches], especially on the Continent, which succeed only in being odd and bizarre. They are not to be criticized for being too daringly modern, but because they do not look like churches.'<sup>136</sup>

Although dealing with several aspects of the Christian life, the book is replete with photographs of religious art and architecture, which can give an idea of what the author intended as models for church architecture.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, the selection of photographs, including both ancient and contemporary examples, testifies to Hebert's orientation on ecclesiastical buildings and his interest for the architectural interpretation of liturgical needs. The first image is of the interior of St Paul's Cathedral in London, which appears in the frontispiece as a significant sign of the author's affiliation to the Church of England. The picture of nave and chancel of the Basilica of S. Clemente in Rome is chosen since, as declared in the 'Notes on the Illustrations', it shows the primitive arrangement of church buildings

and, from an archaeological point of view, testifies to the direct connection between the church building and the physical root of its worship (the remains of a house belonging, according to the tradition, to the eponymous saint). An urban view of the Church of St Antonius in Basel, built (1925–27) by Karl Moser (1860–1936), is the occasion for praising the concrete building and its high bell tower which speak the same language as other buildings in the city. The interior of the Högalid Church in Stockholm, designed by Ivar Tengbom (1878–1968), who won the RIBA Royal Gold Medal in 1938, declares Hebert's knowledge of the Swedish Church, which he learnt during his frequent travels in Scandinavia.<sup>138</sup> English examples included the churches of St Nicholas in Burnage, Manchester (1930–2), and St Saviour in Eltham, London (1932–4), both designed by Nugent Francis Cachemaille-Day (1896–1976). We will get back to Cachemaille-Day's church projects at a later stage.<sup>139</sup> In the meantime, it is sufficient to say that Herbert chose to add a picture of St Nicholas's Church from the exterior, to underline the connection with the street, and a picture of St Saviour's Church from the interior, to highlight the openness of the plan. In addition, the Chapel at Kelham, where Hebert had spent many of his years in the College of the Society of Sacred Mission, is reproduced in more than one picture, perfectly fitting the new liturgical principles and representing an eloquent example of how 'its form was dictated by the needs of its use.'<sup>140</sup>

The construction of this chapel, which has been defined 'one of the most profoundly successful church buildings of the 20th century', dated back to some years before the publication of *Liturgy and Society*.<sup>141</sup> Around the beginning of the century, due to the increasing number of students, the Society of the Sacred Mission was forced to relocate from London, firstly to Mildenhall, Suffolk, and in 1903 to the manor of Kelham Hall, Nottinghamshire.<sup>142</sup> In 1924, the architects Percy Heylyn Currey (1864–1942) and Charles Clayton Thompson (1873–1932) of Currey and Thompson were called to design a new chapel for the college, dedicated in 1928 and in use till 1973.<sup>143</sup> The layout of the chapel was based on a central square plan, topped by a massive dome (about 19 meters across and 21 m high), once the second largest concrete dome of England.<sup>144</sup> To the west the main entrance opened into a narthex, which led to two side staircases reaching the upper galleries, used by lay visitors. The nave was a single large space, designed to provide seating for about 300 people, organized in the form of stalls for 150 students in rows, with returned stalls for the priests and lay-brothers. The stalls were arranged in order to favour an antiphonal plain chant accompanied on the organ, which was placed on the northern gallery. The walls were of

exposed brown bricks, with no decoration. The only plastic modulations of the surfaces were the concentric recesses carved in the four pylons of the dome. To the east, the sanctuary was introduced by an imposing brick rood arch, which was crowned by the crucifix flanked by Mary and John, realized in bronze by sculptor Charles Sargent Jagger (1885–1934).<sup>145</sup> The masonry rood arch, which sprang from the walls of the sanctuary, involved no supports, screens, or railings of any sort underneath, and left to a low podium the task of marking the threshold of the sanctuary. Therefore, the nave was in a direct visual and physical continuity with the sanctuary and with the free-standing high altar, situated forward of the apse and raised on three steps.

The importance of the altar, and the removal of barriers between the celebrant and the faithful, clearly expressed the centrality of the eucharist and the concept of liturgy as a corporate action which would find an official theorization in *Liturgy and Society*. The chapel, indeed, represented a noteworthy advance in church building and its relevance was clear to Peter Hammond (1921–99) who about thirty years later, although disliking its ‘odd’ exterior, referred to it as ‘a remarkable church’, ‘admirably adapted to its liturgical function.’<sup>146</sup>

### 3.2 Two innovative Catholic churches

Peter Hammond saw the Kelham chapel as a precursor to the growing importance attached to the liturgy and rightly compared it to two later churches that further developed the principles of the liturgical movement: the Church of the First Martyrs in Bradford (consecrated in 1935) and St Peter's in Gorleston on Sea (consecrated in 1939), both for the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, their advanced arrangements lie mainly in the central position of their freestanding altars, surrounded on four sides by the faithful, embodying the ‘desire to reinstate the altar among the ecclesia.’<sup>147</sup>

While the innovations of the Kelham chapel were favoured by its context, a boarding school of a missionary society sensitive to liturgical innovations, the revolutionary layout of the Church of the First Martyrs is explained by the fact that it was originally built as a chapel of ease for the neighbouring parish church of St Cuthbert. Unlike the chapel at Kelham, which was conceived as a worship space and later converted to a lay hall, the chapel/church at Bradford was designed from the outset so that the furniture could be moved to use the space as a hall, with a bar in the basement. Of course, the client also played an important role: the

Irish father John O'Connor (1870–1952), a priest at St Cuthbert's Church, was fully committed to social activism. A friend of intellectuals such as the Catholic writers Maurice Baring (1874–1945), Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953) and Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874–1936), proponents of the economic theory of Distributism, O'Connor had infused his social theories into the foundation of the Rescue Society, to help unmarried mothers in distress. Similarly, the chapel he commissioned to Bradford architect Jack Langtry-Langton transferred his theological and political vision of liturgy as shared worship into architecture. According to tradition, in fact, First Martyrs was the first church built in England with a central altar, occupying the centre of an octagonal plan.<sup>148</sup> The centrality of the altar, underlined by the light coming from the dome, was emphasized by the circular arrangement of seating, expressing the participation of people in the Mass. The liturgical east and west were empty: the east end serves as a chancel and hosted the tabernacle; the west section was occupied by the entrance and the ambo. The original position implied the celebrant facing the tabernacle, and the apse was somehow replicated by the curvilinear arrangement of the priests during concelebration. The circular seating, indeed, was well adapted to concelebration and, at the same time, favoured antiphonal chant. The linear liturgical layout (ambo-altar-tabernacle), diffused among the faithful the pivotal emergences of the liturgical rite and, by making them close and reachable, it reduced the aura of unattainability which characterized most churches with enclosed sanctuaries. It materialized, in few words, the democratic principles which had characterized the *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on capital and labour, and the more recent *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), by Pope Pius XI. The central position of the altar makes the Eucharist a shared sacrament, a sacrifice which 'is offered not only for the people, but by them and in the midst of them' as the artist Eric Gill would later remind us.<sup>149</sup>

The centralized plan, which looked back to the tradition of paleo-Christian churches like Santa Costanza in Rome, had been investigated in the previous decades, especially in Germany. In the Nation, indeed, the Christocentric theology of the Catholic Johannes van Acken (1879–1937), author of *Christozentrische Kirchenkunst. Ein Entwurf zum liturg. Gesamtkunstwerk* (Christocentric Sacred Art. A Proposal for a Liturgical Total Work of Art, 1923), had informed the activity of German church builders.<sup>150</sup> Van Acken insisted on the openness of the nave so as not to interrupt the faithful's view of the altar, which had to be in a central position, preferably in the crossing, raised, enclosed by railings and marked above by a baldachin or a circular chandelier.<sup>151</sup> Van Acken's aesthetic and spatial theories were able

to combine the requirements of the Liturgical Movement with the principles of the German *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or the concept of total work of art, as declared in the title of his already mentioned publication. It is possible to compare some German ecclesiastical buildings of the period, such as the centrally planned Catholic churches designed by Dominikus Böhm (1880–1955) and Rudolf Straubinger (1896–1973), both realized on Van Acken's principles, with the project of Walter Gropius for a total theatre (1926–7) to be built in Berlin for Erwin Piscator. Indeed, it was not coincidental that the concept of the church designed around the focus of the altar, which reproduces the layout of a theatre, was born in Germany, where the *Gesamtkunstwerk* had been a central issue in aesthetic theorization since Trahndorff and Wagner. But the fusion of the architectural typologies of church and theatre had been a main feature of Evangelical architecture as well, being the preaching of God's words, symbolised by the ambo, and the redemptive crucifixion of his Son, symbolised by the altar, the fulcrum of Lutheran worship, already present in the traditional Protestant 'Charenton type' church (from the French temple in Charenton).

The focus on the pulpit-table also characterised Calvinist and Baptist places of worship, as testified by the integration of the table platform and the pulpit balcony in the London Metropolitan Tabernacle, one of the major Reformed Baptist centres in the city (1861).<sup>152</sup> In fact, already before Van Acken's publication, many modern evangelical churches had a similar arrangement, with the altar in the centre or, at least, very close to it. The Lutheran priest Emil Sulze (1832–1914) and the architect Otto March (1845–1913) had theorised about a similar arrangement, which was even formalised in the 'Wiesbadener Programm' of 1890.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, in the Protestant rite the altar was even used during the reading of the Scripture, hence a free-standing central altar would have permitted the celebrant to address the faithful directly when reading.<sup>154</sup> The centrality of the altar, joint to a central plan, had characterized the experimentation of many evangelical architects, from the several projects of Johannes Otzen (1839–1911) for the Ringkirche in Wiesbaden (1892–4) to the more recent star-like 'Sternkirche' (1922, unbuilt)<sup>155</sup> and the circular Auferstehungskirche in Essen (1929)<sup>156</sup> by Otto Bartning (1883–1959), or the octagonal Waldkirche in Planegg, realized (1925–6) on a design by Theodor Fischer (1862–1938).<sup>157</sup>

We can therefore raise the possibility that the idea of central altars was already diffused at the beginning of the century in Evangelical churches, and they were later adopted by Catholics who saw in the centrality of the altar the occasion for the renewed importance attributed to the corporeal reality of Eucharist according to transubstantiation. This

phenomenon happened in a country such as Germany, where the coexistence of Protestant and Roman Catholic cults favoured an interconfessional dialogue and where the conviction that architecture, and in particular church architecture, could exert an influence on society had a solid foundation.<sup>158</sup> As a sign of the ecumenical tendencies in Germany in the first half of the century, Van Acken himself collaborated over a long period with an evangelical architect, Otto Müller-Jena (1875–1958), who designed (1912–4) the Catholic Holy Cross Church in Gladbeck, North Rhine-Westphalia.

The early adoption of altar-centred church layout in England could be explained in the light of a German influence on English Architecture. The hypothesis would need further investigation based on contact lines which the present research can only suggest. The impact of international religious meetings as well as the Church's guidelines, above those issued by central organs, should not be underestimated in the creation of a large cross-geographical net in which ideas circulated quickly and often before their conversion into written instructions. Finally, the diffusion of German magazines on architecture in England surely favoured the knowledge of German architects and building. For instance, in the 1920s and in the 1930s the German magazine *Baumeister*, which had a large distribution in Britain, published many projects of churches.<sup>159</sup> In 1927 an entire issue of the magazine was dedicated to Catholic church architecture, while a 1931 issue dealt with 'Protestant church construction', presenting, among others, Bartning's church in Essen.<sup>160</sup>

Besides the reportages published on foreign magazines, the RIBA periodically commissioned photographic campaigns in foreign countries –and its library still keeps a collection of photographs of international church architecture—many of which were already used for a 1934 exhibition on 'International Architecture'.<sup>161</sup> Among the subjects, including churches built in Great Britain, Germany, United States, Hungary, Austria and Finland, there were two photographs of Otto Bartning's Gustav-Adolf Church in Berlin-Charlottenburg (1933–4) and one of his steel Pressa Church (1928) which testified the interest in those years for the German architect specialized in evangelical church building.<sup>162</sup>

As the Church of the First Martyrs in Bradford suggests, innovation in church design occurred especially in Roman Catholic church buildings, where the central altar also began to be adapted to a cross plan. This arrangement also had some historical precedents, both in Catholic and Reformed experiences. The free-standing altar, in the centre of the cross, was a distinctive element of Catholic churches in the form of a martyrdom or mausoleum (such

as St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican or Michelangelo's designs for St John of the Florentines in Rome, to name but two exemplary cases). The use of the altar as the hinge of a multidirectional plan had characterised the experiments of the German Reformed Church, starting with the first example of the Stadtkirche in Freudenstadt (1601–8), to several T-form churches of the eighteenth century.<sup>163</sup> But in the twentieth century, in the wake of Van Acken's theories, Catholic architects started to move the altar from the end of the choir to the junction of the church's arms, making people come closer to the liturgical centre. It was, for instance, the case of the Church of Christ the King (*Christus König*) in Hamminkeln-Ringenberg (1935) by Dominikus Böhm, in which the congregation sat on three sides of a free-standing altar, or the project for the renovation of the St Paul's Church (1937–8, only partially realized) in Offenbach by Rudolf Schwarz, where the seating encircled the altar.

The layouts of these two German churches can be easily compared to another Catholic church built in England few years after the one in Bradford: the Church of St Peter in Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk. Its architect was Eric Gill (1882–1940), sculptor, engraver, type designer, was one of the most eclectic figures in the panorama of twentieth-century British art.<sup>164</sup> Son of a non-conformist minister, he had trained as architect with William Douglas Caröe (1857–1938), specialist in church architecture, before committing his life to art. Friend to Father O'Connor, he was a supporter of social-Catholic theories, which he related to liturgy in an article on 'Mass for the Masses' published in 1938 in the magazine *The Cross and the Plough* (vol. 4, n. 4), the organ of the Catholic Land Associations of England and Wales, the main association of English distributism.<sup>165</sup> No sooner that the essay was published (in the last quarter of 1938) that he received the commission to 'build a real church with a central altar and all.'<sup>166</sup> Although it could be argued that Gill's aesthetics came from a sincere interpretation of liturgy and distributism, a German connection cannot be excluded, since his design was very close to the contemporary German experiments. The artist could have been introduced to German ecclesiastical architecture through his friend and patron Harry Clemens Ulrich Graf von Kessler (1868–1937), whom he followed for a two-week tour around Thuringia in 1930, or through his young German apprentice Ralph Alexander Beyer (1921–2008), who had emigrated in 1937 to England, where he first stayed with the German architect Erich Mendelsohn (1887–1953).<sup>167</sup> After all, it is probably not by chance if in 1939 in a review on *The Catholic Herald* the writer Joan Morris compared the English building with the German church of Neu-Ulm, probably Dominikus Böhm's St John the Baptist (1922–26), as the predominance of white pointed arches suggests.<sup>168</sup> At the same time, it

would not be difficult to compare the pointed arches of St Peter's with those in the sanctuary and the entrances of St Hildegard's Church in St. Ingbert, Saarland, consecrated in 1929 on a design by Albert Boßlet (1880–1957). Indeed, even though not explicitly cited, the German examples surely constituted a background for Gill. The Continental influences were not only stylistic, but they also regarded the theoretical background animating the liturgical layout of St Peter's in Gorleston. The new relationship between the priest and the faithful, transferred into the position of the altar encircled by the assembly, reflected the artist's social orientation, in line with the international Catholic social theories. Gill's ideas were close to the Continental attempt to translate into liturgical terms the worker's crisis, particularly vivid in France and Germany, especially in the intention of associations like the *Jeunesse Ouvrieres Catholiques*, the *Jeunesse Universitaire Catholiques* and *Le Sillon*.<sup>169</sup>

Gill was already in his fifties when, through the stained-glass designer Joseph Edward Nuttgens (1892–1982), he received the commission to design the church of Gorleston, his first building. He had already worked with church decorations, as the stations of the cross in the Catholic Westminster Cathedral (1914), and the carved Calvary framing the east window in the Anglican Church of St Thomas the Apostle (1934), Hanwell by Edward Maufe. However, till then the only work which had seen him closer to church architecture was the reordering of the chapel in the Anglican Blundell's School, Tiverton, commissioned by the headmaster Neville Gorton (1888–1955). Gill had closed some windows in the apse and replaced the wall altar with a new free-standing one.<sup>170</sup> The project was completed in the middle of 1938, but the involvement of Gill in the project already dated back to 1935, when he was asked to give a lecture to the students on the 'Christian altars'.<sup>171</sup> Relying on the same idea for the Catholic church in Gorleston he proposed to the priest Thomas Walker to raise the high altar in the centre of a Latin cross plan, surrounded by the congregation on all sides. The pioneering character of this layout was particularly emphasised by Hammond, who in 1960 quoted from Gill's *Sacred and Secular* (1940) and his letters in relation to the central altar, adding that the church was 'one of the most courageous essay in planning for liturgy that the 'thirties produced'.<sup>172</sup> The idea of the altar as a centripetal force shaping the church, which Gill defended in a letter to the Bishop of Northampton, expressed his view of the church building which he mainly saw as an altar covered by a canopy.<sup>173</sup> According to Gill's design in St Peter's, the altar was placed in the centre of the cross, crowned by a lantern which discharged onto four pointed concrete arches, ideally reconstructing the baldachin above the *mensa*, while smaller pointed arches separated the nave from the aisles or the single

chapel. The correspondence between structure and architecture, embodied by the absence of plastic decoration and the expressive use of concrete arches, evokes an expressionistic interpretation of Gothic. By virtue of its pointed arches, Fiona McCarthy has compared Gill's church to All Saints' Church in Brockhampton, designed (1902) by William Richard Lethaby (1857–1931), while Alan Powers has drawn a line with the bare Gothic of the Benedictine Catholic church at Quarr Abey on the Isle of Wight, designed (1912) by the French monk Paul Bellot (1876–1944).<sup>174</sup> Although the comparison is mainly based on a stylistic analysis, it is interesting to note a certain ambivalence (which Pevsner would consider a legacy of the Arts and Crafts) that St Peter's shares with Lethaby's building. Indeed, in the latter, the exterior, with large stone blocks and a vernacular thatched roof, conforms to a picturesque ideal, but the interior reveal the use of a modern technology, especially in the vault in mass concrete.<sup>175</sup> Similarly, in the former, the exterior envelope follows a more traditional aesthetic, displaying brick surfaces, pitched roofs, buttresses and pilasters around the lantern, which do not reveal the clear lines of the interior, whose slender geometry is only hinted at by the pointed arches of the porch.

### **3.3 Towards a modern church**

The three ecclesiastical buildings in Kelham, Bradford and Gorleston can be seen as pioneering experiments in bringing the altar forward. They were designed to answer to a renewed idea of liturgy. According to their liturgical conception, the Eucharist had become the core of the religious ceremonial. As a consequence, the centrality of the rite addressed the design of both Catholic and Anglican churches. Naturally, the revolutionary layout of the latter two churches gives evidence of the importance of the altar in the Catholic liturgy. In the Roman tradition, indeed, the Eucharistic sacrifice was not only a transcendental action but also a concrete manifestation of God's presence. This idea corresponded to a typically Catholic way of intending and the Church and its liturgy both as theological categories and as empirical forms in time and space.

However, the Anglo-Catholic trends within the Church of England pressing for a central role of the Eucharist rite, had reached their goal by 1939. The Eucharist became one of the fundamental sacraments structuring the English service. Such an integrative view was at the centre of *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, written by Michael Ramsey (1904–88). Future archbishop of York (1956–61) and Canterbury (1961–74), Ramsey often consulted

with Gabriel Hebert before publishing the book. According to him, the worship ‘centres in the action of Christ in which the Christians, as one body, share. Such is the background to the Christian Eucharist.’<sup>176</sup> The same approach was shared with Gregory Dix who, as already mentioned, published in 1945 *The Shape of the Liturgy*, in which he claimed the importance of the formal manifestation of liturgy, structured around the four actions of offertory, prayer, fraction, and communion.

The theological assumptions on the formal aspect of liturgy within the Anglican confession boosted a re-evaluation of rituals and strongly influenced church design. For instance, the process of moving the altar towards the people, inaugurated by the chapel at Kelham, was soon followed in Anglican architecture by some receptive architects. They focused more on the function of the church building rather than on its style. The importance of a pragmatic approach was evident to Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel (1887–1959).<sup>177</sup> A deep connoisseur of Victorian architecture, he converted to Catholicism in 1936. In his *Commonsense churchplanning* (1947) he decried the aesthetical practice of architects who neglected the function of churches to pursue an elitist refinement.<sup>178</sup> He rejected the Ecclesiological model of the chancel with the choir in front of the altar, as he affirmed in his writings and through his built works.<sup>179</sup> The sharp judgement on English church building he expressed in *English Architecture Since the Regency* (1953 but based on lectures given in 1934 and not updated) gives a hint of his view: ‘The English church architect, however, while not disdaining to borrow from here or anywhere little bits that tickle his fancy, has in the main been unable and perhaps unwilling to embark upon strange adventures. He has, in fact, usually gone on producing the sort of building he has been producing for some time; gentle more or less Romanesque simplicities with a great deal of whitewash inside and a nice touch of pure colour at the high altar.’<sup>180</sup> Among the few interwar churches he picked out as exceptions were the Roman Catholic St Gabriel Blackburn (1933), by Francis Xavier Velarde, and the Anglican St Nicholas Burnage (1932), by his pupil Nugent Francis Cachemaille-Day.<sup>181</sup> They were praised for using modern constructional methods. In particular, Goodhart-Rendel noticed that in St Nicholas, Cachemaille-Day was able to do without arches without losing the sacred atmosphere of the interior.

Indeed, Cachemaille-Day was one of the most skilled church architects of the period.<sup>182</sup> After having worked for Goodhart-Rendel, from 1928 he worked with Felix Lander (1898–1960) before they both joined Herbert Welch (1884–1963). In 1935 he set up his own professional practice, focusing on church architecture. During his career, Cachemaille-Day

designed churches for different confessions, from the Sutton Baptist Church (1934), with a free-standing altar (not always seen in Baptist buildings), to the more expressionist examples of St Nicholas at Burnage and St Saviour in the former royal forest at Eltham Palace. For the second project, he was awarded the London Architecture Medal in 1933.<sup>183</sup>

However, the buildings that most demonstrate Cachemaille-Day's involvement in the principles of the Liturgical Movement are the churches built after 1935, the year in which he finally established his own practice and, coincidentally, the same year in which Hebert's seminal book was published. For example, the Church of Epiphany, built in 1936–8 in Gipton, Leeds, was designed on an elongated basilica plan in which the altar was carried forward towards the people, while the apse was occupied by the women's chapel, raised to a higher level. The architect's progressive advancement in design for liturgy can be summed up by in the evolving projects for the Anglican Church of St Michael and All Angels, Wythenshawe, near Manchester. A first version dating back to 1931, documented by a drawing kept in the RIBA collection, attests to a more traditional plan and a style still reminiscent of Italianate trends.<sup>184</sup> The final project (1937) looks more audacious: based on an octagonal star-like plan, an unusual solution in church architecture (except for the star churches of Otto Bartning, Johannes Otzen and, before them, Francesco Borromini). The church was praised by Peter Hammond who, presented it as one of the most important developments in church planning in England between 1928 and 1940, along with other buildings designed by the architect, as St Saviour's, the mission church at Sunderland (1938), and the Church of All Saints, Hanworth (1951–7).

St Saviour Eltham was conventional in his plan, a long rectangular nave and passage aisles, with the main axis oriented north-east/south-west. It took inspiration from Continental Expressionism, but it also looked to the model of the Gothic cathedral of Albi in France, above all for the round stair-tower and the syncopated rhythm of slit windows and buttresses.<sup>185</sup> The entrance to St Saviour was through a porch opening in the West end, where the font was placed. Above it, a gallery housed the choir, with an organ divided in two parts. Towards the other end, the sanctuary was flanked by a Lady chapel with a wall altar. The sanctuary had a square plan, comprising the presbytery, delimited by low communion rails in bricks, and a lower level, housing the clergy stalls and the lectern. The high altar was detached from the wall on the back, and it was fully visible from the congregation. However, the novelty was not in its plan; it rather relied on its material simplicity. The church's reinforced concrete structure clad in brickwork, which was thought to prevent fire damage,

was also expressing a quality of modernism hardly recognised at this date in English publications. Its simple surfaces foreshadowed that nakedness of ‘brick brutalism’ that, as we will see in the following chapter, would be particularly in fashion in post-war ecclesiastical architecture. Indeed, the interior space was dominated by concrete frames bearing a concrete roof, while the infill walls were in exposed brickwork and white plastered surfaces. This ‘silent’ yet majestically void space missed the rich visual eloquence of Victorian or Arts and Crafts churches. Among the few figurative elements there was a massive, suspended cross and a tall statue of the Saviour by Donald Hastings. Placed behind the altar as a sort of carved reredos, the sculpture was made of concrete, hence it was monochromatic. The only spots of colours left were in the carpets and the altar clothes; this restraint in the use of colour was probably of Protestant descent, inspired by the Lutheran faith of the architect’s wife.<sup>186</sup> Probably also in virtue of this Protestant ethic, in the design of St Saviour, Cachemaille-Day adopted a mellow approach to the sincerity of structures and materials. He declared that ‘no attempt has been made to reproduce any historical style on the one hand nor to be unusual on the other hand, but rather to treat modern materials in a simple way and let them give a quality to the building of their own.’<sup>187</sup> This approach is also evident in a late project of his: St James’ in Clapham, London (1957–8). The interior was in exposed brick walls and concrete piers, crossing at ceiling level in a kind of modern, organically shaped coffering. The project actually comprised the reconstruction of the church, after it was bombed during the Second World War in 1940. Indeed, its design incorporated an earlier nineteenth-century crypt survived to the bombing, but the new upper structure followed a completely different logic from the previous Victorian building.

### 3.4 The social function of churches

This section starts with a narrative on the social advances within the Church, in order to provide background for the post-1945 period. While the altar in the centre of the church stressed the communal participation of the assembly to the liturgy, the church was considered a communitarian organism. The removal of any form of physical separation between the clergy and the faithful also represented an attempt to democratise the rituals, in line with the contextual social politics rising in the nation state. The theories developed by British socialists were spread among church leaders, too. Their reflection can be found both in the birth of Christian unionism, or the trade-union movement inspired by Christian social theory.<sup>188</sup> The

proximity with workers was also facilitated by the clergy's involvement in material work and missionary activity, according to a pragmatic approach that can be framed in the global phenomenon of the working-priests. As explained in the next chapter, the rapprochement between Church and Society produced, in the field of architecture, a gradual identification between religious and civic aesthetics and functions. Indeed, after the Second World War, church designs provided a significant boost to communal interactions. This approach brought the social role of religious architecture to a major consciousness, reflected above all in the function and the shape of parish centres.

In Britain, the growing relevance of social politics in the context of the post-war Welfare State also moulded the Church's politics. In other nations, like revolutionary France or Russia, socialism was markedly associated with atheism and anticlericalism. Instead, the United Kingdom represented a favourite ground for the union of Christian and social ethics.<sup>189</sup>

A brief historical outline is useful to illustrate the post-war function of the Church in British society. The spreading of socialism in England, mainly due to Robert Owen (1771–1858), originally met with suspicion on the part of religious hierarchies. The distrust came not only the Anglican Church, but also the Roman Catholic and the Methodist ones. However, the half of the nineteenth century marked the gradual integration of social theories into a new notion of Christian socialism. The development was due to some key intellectuals, strenuous promoters of working men's associations. They included the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) and the Anglican theologian Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–72), author of influential texts such as *The Kingdom of Christ* and *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*.<sup>190</sup> They saw co-operation as an economic solution based on social justice, under the religious spirit of brotherhood. In line with it, Christian ideology shaped the creation of several political groups and working men's associations in Britain.<sup>191</sup> According to Christian socialism, art was approached instrumentally as a way to satisfy men's creativity. At the same time, on the model of medieval monasticism, the production of fine art items offered economic independence to nongovernmental organisations of communal life. So, art was a vehicle to a new rational social order based on Christian principles.<sup>192</sup>

Christian Cooperativism pursued the matching of social reforms with an active mission. This everyday activity among disadvantaged classes translated the evangelical lesson into tangible practice. It also provided the working class with a close witness to the Christian

message. The claim to merge Christian and socialist ideals crossed religious denominations. However, it was particularly encouraged by the Distributist theories within the Roman Church and those in the High Anglican Church.<sup>193</sup> Despite the High Church being often accused of an excessive formal affection to rites, many Anglo-Catholic priests moved in the periphery of industrial cities. There, they soon became known as the ‘slum priests’ and started groups for the improvement of social and working conditions. For instance, in 1877 the densely populated area of Bethnal Green, London, saw the birth of the Guild of St Matthew. It was a High Church association for the improvement of the conditions of the poor people in the area. The core of the Guild included prominent figures. They comprised the priests Stewart Duckworth Headlam (1847–1924) and Percy Dearmer, the author of the already mentioned manual, *The Parson’s Handbook* (1899).<sup>194</sup> In 1912, in the wake of Cooperativism, Dearmer established the Warham Guild in London, an association of architects, artists, and craftsmen to study and produce ecclesiastical ornaments. The Guild was active in all fields of decoration till Dearmer’s death in 1936, when it turned into an ecclesiastic vestments company. However, its influence on church decoration continued till the nineteen-sixties. Besides producing ornaments, it also published several guides on church furnishing.<sup>195</sup> For instance, *The Fittings and Ornaments of the Church*, published by the Guild in 1947, contained several provisions. They concerned the style, dimensions, and colours of altars, but also of reredos, frontals, chancels, railings, fonts, and curtains.<sup>196</sup> The text also suggested a series of spatial devices aiming at drawing attention to the high altar. The tips included the enlargement of the altar stone and the stripping of its surrounding space. To maintain the focus on the altar, the book suggested the whitening of nearby walls and the substitution of reredos with curtains.<sup>197</sup> The potential public for the texts ranged from architects and artists to priests. Indeed, as underlined in the catalogue accompanying the first exhibition of the Guild in 1913, the group followed two main scopes:

1. *To act as an agency for bringing the work of architects, painters, and craftsmen in wood, metal, and glass before those who are responsible for our churches, and thus to carry out work in conjunction with artists of acknowledged position.*
2. *To design and to make the garments and other ornaments required in the services of the English Church.*<sup>198</sup>

The statement on the aims of the Guild also stressed that the works were produced ‘under fair conditions of labour’. The respect of a modern concept of “fair trade” was in line with the principles of Guild Socialism developed by George Douglas Howard Cole (1889–1959).<sup>199</sup> The convergence attested to the mix of social doctrine, economic theories, and

Christian ethics pursued by several associations. For instance, the already-mentioned priest Stewart Headlam also participated in another socialist association. It was the Fabian Society (established in 1884), the forerunner of the Labour Party (founded in 1900).<sup>200</sup>

Such a deep integration of religious and social ideologies was a double-sided phenomenon. On one side, it brought Christian doctrines into political reform. On the other side, it introduced social instances in theological and liturgical contexts. This two-fold character appeared evidently in Hebert's *The Parish Communion*. It proposed the Eucharist as the main service of the day, to be lived socially in the parish. The religious custom sponsored by Hebert originated from Christian socialists. Indeed, it had been theorised, among others, by the Christian socialists Walter Frere (1863–1938) and John Stote Lotherington Burn (1853–1925). Hebert's text contributed to the formation of the "Parish and People" movement. It reunited both the Catholic and the Evangelic parties within the Church of England, under the goal of diffusing daily communion. Non-communicant faithful were admitted to the service; however, the Eucharist represented a whole society doing something together before God. While stressing the communitarian character, the movement also recovered the transcendental spirit of communion. Indeed, it sustained a certain "Catholic" belief in the real presence of Christ in the action. The movement also started a discussion on the most optimal conditions for the celebration of the Eucharist. To meet the needs of workers, it suggested the set of a Sunday morning service, enriched by music.<sup>201</sup>

The Eucharist testified to the incarnation of God among men; similarly, the Church's mission in the world represented the application of his evangelical teachings into concrete acts of piety. In popular areas, new parishes rose with the aim of diffusing the living words of Christ. This programmatic intent was supported by Spencer Leeson (1892–1956). He wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Church and The Welfare State* (1952), where he stressed the importance of pastoral activity among citizens. The English missionary apostolate, already practiced by organisations like the mentioned Society of Sacred Mission, developed organically in the post-war. The growth was mainly due to movements inspired by the French *Communauté Mission de France*. The French mission started in 1941 to open the Church towards society and to establish a dialogue with non-Christian people. It also played a major role in the rising of the movement of the *prêtres au travail* (or worker-priests) born around 1944. The movement is traditionally ascribed to the Dominican father Jacques Loew, who started to work in the Docks of Marseille in 1941. The priests emulating him fused together clerical and secular identities. At the same time, their 'unique occupational identity readily

took on the character of a social movement.<sup>202</sup> Inspired by the French scene, analogous experiments were conducted in England in the 1960s. They ended in the formation of part-time priests and secularly employed clergy.<sup>203</sup> The first group included those who were ordained later in life to answer a shortage of clergy. They continued their secular activity but also worked as auxiliary priests. The second group comprised ordained clergy who left their spiritual role to take up a secular job. The closeness between clergymen and working-class people produced important attempts to modernise the language of the Church. It was in this context that the book on mission and worker-priests (1960) by the German sociologist Gregor Siefer (1928–) was translated in English in 1964 as *The Church and Industrial Society*.<sup>204</sup>

Siefer's translation was not the only clue of the renewed relationship between the Church and the industrial city. Indeed, some years before Edward Ralph Wickham (1911–94), Anglican Bishop of Middleton, a town of the Manchester area, had published the book *Church and People in an industrial city* (1957). The text reflected on the impact of religion on the principles of an industrialised society. It also focused on the estrangement of working classes from services, highlighting criticalities in the inadequate structure and shape of churches. According to him, the medieval large churches expressed conformity of religious beliefs. They were the fulcra of small communities, reflecting the uniform Christian society. With industrialisation and religious toleration, the concept of a Christian community broke down.<sup>205</sup> To fill this gap, Wickham suggested a supplementary non-parochial structure. Its institutional freedom would have reflected the fluidity of modern geographies. Wickham also found the signs of an awakening in this direction in contemporary religious practices. They included: 'parish visitations by the laity, ecumenical assemblies of local congregations, house-meeting, house-churches and even "para-churches".'<sup>206</sup> They all expressed concepts which would be significantly implemented in the church buildings of the 1960s and 1970s, offering new models for the planning of church spaces in new urban developments, as we will see in the following chapter.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In the first half of the twentieth century, the reflection on the social function of religious institution caused a renovation in the structure of the Church, and therefore, in its architectural counterpart. The centrality of the altar, reflecting the rediscovery of the

Eucharist, which was pioneering in the churches of the early twentieth century, was normalised in post-war church buildings. The buildings in Kelham, Gorleston, and Bradford, along with the theoretical and professional activities of Goodhart-Rendel and Cachemaille-Day, described in this chapter, were the basis of the abandonment of nineteenth-century ecclesiology. At the same time, the openness of the Church towards social issues started a process of identification between religion and society that would be fundamental for the definition of the sacred space in the post-war era.

As noted towards the end of the 19th century by French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), English Protestantism differed from other European Protestant cults since it formalised religious obligations into secular law.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, it recollected the social basis of religion, re-admitting in the Church what was in the social order. The confluence of social demands in the religious institution inevitably resulted in a broadening of the functions of religious architecture. As will be seen in the next chapter, the identification between the religious community and civil society was reflected in the functions acquired by church buildings. The use of existing church buildings also for recreational activities, such as concerts or theatrical performances, was the simplest case. It required limited changes in the architectural layout of the building that did not alter the layout of the sacred space. Instead, the design of new multi-purpose religious centres required a rethinking of the entire church structure. This change in the architectural conception of church spaces naturally implied a rethinking of their relationship with the city. The evolution of the church was particularly evident in the new urban settlements. There, church buildings became powerful instruments of social aggregation, as well as symbols of the Church's mission in the world.

## Notes

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<sup>124</sup> Arthur Gabriel Hebert, Preface to *Liturgy and Society* (4th edn. 1942), 6–7.

<sup>125</sup> On Headlam, see also the section on ‘The social function of churches’ in this chapter.

<sup>126</sup> Christopher Irvine, *Worship, Church and Society* (1993), 6.

<sup>127</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of Hebert’s activity within the Society of Sacred Mission: Christopher Irvine, *Worship, Church and Society* (1993). On the Society see also Alistair Mason, *History of the Society of the Sacred Mission* (2012).

<sup>128</sup> Files on the activity of the Society of Sacred Mission in South Africa, from 1906 to 1987 are in: AB2409, the inventory can be retrieved from [historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?inventory/U/collections&c=AB2409/1/7495](http://historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?inventory/U/collections&c=AB2409/1/7495)

<sup>129</sup> A. Bishop, *Eucharist Shaping and Hebert’s Liturgy and Society: Church, Mission and Personhood* (2016).

<sup>130</sup> Gerard Francis Cobb, *The Kiss of Peace: or England and Rome at One on the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (1867). About one hundred years later, in 1971, the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission would have finally reached a shared interpretation of the Eucharistic misters, as in the *Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine* (1971).

<sup>131</sup> The Anglican Church still has a variety of sacramental theologies, which translate the influences of other Christian traditions.

<sup>132</sup> Hebert, *Liturgy and Society* (4th edn. 1942), 240.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Id.*, p. 239.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Id.*, 240–1

<sup>137</sup> Hebert himself presented the illustration nos. X–XVI as a sample of his ideal. *Id.*, 240, note 1.

<sup>138</sup> On Hebert’s Scandinavian connection see C. Irvine, *Worship, Church and Society* (1993), 23–50.

<sup>139</sup> See the last paragraph of this chapter.

<sup>140</sup> Hebert, *Liturgy and Society*, 25.

<sup>141</sup> Scott Anderson, *The Setting of the Liturgy*, retrieved from [ordinariateexpats.wordpress.com/2015/02/21/fr-scott-anderson-the-setting-of-the-liturgy/](http://ordinariateexpats.wordpress.com/2015/02/21/fr-scott-anderson-the-setting-of-the-liturgy/), accessed 28 February 2021.

<sup>142</sup> The original complex of Kelham was commissioned in 1861 to George Gilbert Scott by the Manners Sutton family. The design anticipates Scott’s St Pancras’ station in London and it is widely considered to be one of the masterpieces of Victorian revivalist architecture.

<sup>143</sup> After its de-sanctification in 1973, when the college closed, the church has been transformed into a space for private events.

<sup>144</sup> David Adam, *The Wonder of the Beyond* (2011), 101.

<sup>145</sup> The sculptures were removed when the chapel was de-sanctified. They are currently in the church of St John the Divine in Kennington, London.

<sup>146</sup> Peter Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (4th edn. 1963), 71–2.

<sup>147</sup> Paul D. Walker, *Developments in Catholic Churchbuilding in the British Isles 1945–1980* (1985), 82.

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<sup>148</sup> According to Robert Proctor it is uncertain whether the church was the first one to have a central altar: Robert Proctor, 'Our Lady and the First Martyrs', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 45.

<sup>149</sup> Letter 245 to Graham Carey, 16-1-1936, from Eric Gill, Walter Shewring, ed., *Letters* (1947), 351–2.

<sup>150</sup> Johannes van Acken, *Christozentrische Kirchenkunst. Ein Entwurf zum liturg. Gesamtkunstwerk* (1923).

<sup>151</sup> Rudolf Stegers, *A Design Manual: Sacred Buildings* (2008), 20.

<sup>152</sup> See David E. Eagle, 'Historicizing the Megachurch', *Journal of Social History*, 48, 3 (April 2015), 589–604; Z. Vukoszavlyev, 'Space forming a community – community forming a space. Architectural evaluation of idealized form for Protestant Churches in Europe after 1918', *Actas del Congreso Internacional de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea* 5 (2017).

<sup>153</sup> Emil Sulze, *Die evangelische Gemeinde* (1891); O. March, *Unsere Kirchen und gruppierter* (1896).

<sup>154</sup> Walter Distel, *Protestantischer Kirchenbau seit 1900 in Deutschland* (1933), 23.

<sup>155</sup> In particular, the Stenkirke (1922), a star-shaped church that emphasised social cohesion, was a religious space and, contemporary, a 'preaching theatre', referring to a definition of Marcello Fagiolo: Marcello Fagiolo, *Architettura e massoneria: L'esoterismo della costruzione* (2007), 354. Although the proper centre was occupied by the pulpit, and the altar was behind it, at a higher level, the project for the German church, similarly to its English counterpart, expressed the intention of making the liturgy a communal action.

<sup>156</sup> The same principle informed the construction of Bartning's Auferstehungskirche (1930), or Church of the Resurrection, again for the Evangelic Church, where the centre was marked by a baptismal font and the altar followed just behind.

<sup>157</sup> In Fisher's Walldkirche the altar was originally in the middle of the octagonal plan; it was moved slightly eastward some years later.

<sup>158</sup> Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *German Architecture for a Mass Audience* (2000), 57–69.

<sup>159</sup> The library of the Royal Institute of British Architects currently has many numbers of the magazine and, although it is hard to establish whether they were collected already in the first years of 1930s or later, its reference role is undeniable.

<sup>160</sup> *Der Baumeister* XXV, 10 (October 1927); *Der Baumeister* XXIX, 1 (January 1931).

<sup>161</sup> RIBA Library, no. P004526. *International architecture 1924–1934: catalogue to the centenary exhibition of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (1934).

<sup>162</sup> The church, built (1928) for the Cologne Fair, was rebuilt as Melanchthonkirche in Essen, where it was destroyed during the Second World War.

<sup>163</sup> White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* (1964), 86–7.

<sup>164</sup> Born in Brighton, he studied Chichester Technical and Art School and at the age of 18 he went to London where he firstly trained as architect, then became a letter-cutter and sculptor, gaining important commissions. In 1913, he had converted to Roman Catholicism and in 1921 he became a lay member of Dominican Order. Its heartfelt conversion was followed by the foundation of a Catholic community of artists, the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, 'a religious fraternity for those who make things with their hands', based on a medieval conception of the artist corporation and, at the same time, on socialist and Catholic labour ideals.

<sup>165</sup> Eric Gill, 'Mass for the Masses', *The Cross and the Plough* vol. 4, n. 4 (1938).

<sup>166</sup> Letter 294 to Graham Carey, 15-9-1938, from Eric Gill, Walter Shewring, ed., *Letters* (1947), 408.

<sup>167</sup> Eric Gill, *Autobiography* (1941), 263.

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<sup>168</sup> *The Catholic Herald* (1 September 1939), cited in The Architectural History Practice Limited, *NHPP 4DI: Places of Worship. Twentieth-Century Roman Catholic Church Architecture in England. A Characterisation Study* (2014), retrieved from [hrballiance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RC-C20-Characterisation-Final-July-2014.pdf](http://hrballiance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RC-C20-Characterisation-Final-July-2014.pdf), 21.

<sup>169</sup> Patrick Odou, *Eric Gill, a Precursor of Vatican II* (15 July 2005), retrieved from [traditioninaction.org/HotTopics/j007htGill\\_VaticanII\\_Odou.htm](http://traditioninaction.org/HotTopics/j007htGill_VaticanII_Odou.htm). *Le Sillon*, or ‘The Furrow’, was founded in 1894 by Marc Sangnier as a reaction to Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*. Condemned by Pius X, it ended in 1912, when it was substituted by the *Ligue de la jeune République*. It anticipated the phenomenon of the working priests.

<sup>170</sup> On the reordering of the chapel see the last chapter of this text.

<sup>171</sup> Letter 227 to John O’Connor, 28-2-1935, and Letter 287 to John O’Connor 28-2-38, from Eric Gill, Walter Shewring, ed., *Letters* (1947), 323; 400.

<sup>172</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (1963), 70–1.

<sup>173</sup> Andrew Derrick, “A Canopy over an Altar”: Gill’s Church of St Peter, Gorleston, Norfolk’, in Martin John Broadley, ed., *Eric Gill: Work is sacred* (2013), 81.

<sup>174</sup> Fiona McCarthy, *Eric Gill* (2011), 296; Alan Powers, ‘St Peter the Apostle’, in in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 45.

<sup>175</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Buildings of England: Herefordshire* (1963), 90-91; Elain Harwood, ‘The Use of Reinforced Concrete in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Churches’, in *Historic Churches* (2005), retrieved from <https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/concrete-churches/concrete-churches.htm> (accessed august 2022); Pinai Sirikitakul, *Constructional ‘Theory’ in Britain*, PhD thesis, UCL, 2012, 142–143.

<sup>176</sup> Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (1935, edn 2009), vii.

<sup>177</sup> On Goodhart-Rendel see Alan Powers, ed., *H. S. Goodhart-Rendel 1887-1959* (1987).

<sup>178</sup> Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel, *Commonsense churchplanning* (1947).

<sup>179</sup> *Id.*, p.6.

<sup>180</sup> Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel, *English Architecture Since the Regency* (1953), 281.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Peter Reder, ‘The Bricks of Faith: the churches of N.F. Cachemaille-Day’, *The Modernist magazine*, 19 (2016).

<sup>183</sup> The expressionist character of the two churches is noted, for instance, in Malcolm Torry, *The Parish: People, Place and Ministry: a Theological and Practical Exploration* (2004), 104, and in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 37 and 41 (respectively Michael Bullen, ‘St Nicholas’ and Clare Price, ‘St Saviour’). In particular Bullen suggest a link to the works of the Dutch architect Willem Marinus Dudok (1884–1974) and to those of German architects. Indeed, the fortified-like volumes of St Saviour are not far from the experiments of Dominikus Bohm, Josef Bachem (1881–1946) or Fritz Höger (1877–1949) and the rounded corners, superimposed brick volumes, and striped surfaces recall the production of the architects from the Amsterdam school, like Piet Kramer (1891–1972) and Jan Wils. Particularly Wils’ City Theatre in Amsterdam (1934–5) can be easily compared to St Saviour’s church, built just few years before, suggesting maybe a two-way connection between Dutch and English architecture. For a profile of the architect see also Alan Powers, *Modern: The Modern Movement in Britain* (2005), 68–9.

<sup>184</sup> *Church of St Michael and All Angels, Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester: design for the interior looking towards an altar*, library ref. PA174/2(12).

<sup>185</sup> John Thomas, *Albi Cathedral and British Church Architecture* (2002), 40.

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<sup>186</sup> The interpretation is suggested by Sam Wigginton, *The zealous suppression of colours* (s.d.), retrieved from <https://en.calameo.com/read/005989922b6bd44117c6e> (accessed May 2021).

<sup>187</sup> Kenneth Richardson, *The 'twenty-five churches' of the Southwark Diocese: An inter-war campaign of church-building* (2002), 62.

<sup>188</sup> Joseph Clayton, 'Christian Tradition in the English Labour Movement', *Blackfriars*, 19/217 (April 1938), 244-49.

<sup>189</sup> For a punctual overview, see Donald Gray, *Earth and Altar: The Evolution of the Parish Communion in the Church of England to 1945* (1986), 69-149.

<sup>190</sup> Frederick Denison Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838); Frederick Denison Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, 2 volumes (1871-2). On Christian social theories in Maurice see also the thesis of Ronald Luke Steel, *The Contribution of F. D. Maurice to the Christian Socialist Movement of 1848-1854* (1971) and Peter R. Allen, 'F. D. Maurice and J. M. Ludlow: A Reassessment of the Leaders of Christian Socialism', *Victorian Studies*, 11/4 (June 1968), 461-2.

<sup>191</sup> For an overview of the phenomenon, see J. M. Ludlow, *Christian Socialism and Its Opponents* (1851).

<sup>192</sup> On the theme of art in Christian socialism, see the recently published Mark A. Allison, *Imagining Socialism: Aesthetics, Anti-politics, and Literature in Britain, 1817-1918* (2021).

<sup>193</sup> Of course, Christian socialism was not a prerogative of Roman Catholics or Anglo-Catholics. See for instance the involvement of the Anglo-Saxonist theologian Charles Kingsley (1819-75) or the Methodist Hugh Price Hughes (1847-1902).

<sup>194</sup> Percy Dearmer, *The Parson's Handbook* (1899). On Dearmer's manual, also see chapter 2.

<sup>195</sup> For a list of publications, see [anglicanhistory.org/england/warham/](http://anglicanhistory.org/england/warham/) (accessed February 2021).

<sup>196</sup> Harold S. Rogers, *The Fittings and Ornaments of the Church* (1947).

<sup>197</sup> *Advice Ecclesiological: Illustrations of Church Interiors before and after Alterations Effected by the Warham Guild* (1960).

<sup>198</sup> *First Exhibition of the Warham Guild for the Designing and Making of Ornaments according to the Use of the Church of England* (1913), exhibition catalogue (London, 1-3 July 1913).

<sup>199</sup> *Short Statement of the Aims of the Guild*, cited in *The Warham Guild* (1987).

<sup>200</sup> Robert Worthington Smith, 'Religious Influence in the Background of the British Labour Party', *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, 37, 4 (March 1957), 355-69.

<sup>201</sup> Henry de Candole, *The Church's Offering: A Brief Study of Eucharistic Worship* (1935), 20.

<sup>202</sup> Robert L. Bonn, Ruth T. Doyle, 'Secularly Employed Clergymen: A Study in Occupational Role Recomposition', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 13, 3 (September 1974), 327.

<sup>203</sup> *Id.*, 327-9; see also the doctoral thesis of Patrick H. Vaughan, *Non Stipendiary Ministry in the Church of England: A History of the Development of an Idea* (1987).

<sup>204</sup> Gregor Siefer, *Die Mission der Arbeiterpriester, Ereignisse und Konsequenzen. Ein Beitrag zum Thema: Kirche und Industriegesellschaft* (1960). The title of the English translation is: *The Church and industrial society: A survey of the worker-priest movement and its implications for the Christian mission* (1964).

<sup>205</sup> Edward Ralph Wickham, *Church and people in an industrial city* (1957, 6th edn. 1959), 222-3.

<sup>206</sup> *Id.*, 264.

<sup>207</sup> Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide: Étude de sociologie* (1897), English trans. as *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1952), 115.

# 4. Churches in new urban settlements

The twentieth century was a period of immense change. The demographic expansion, the bombing of city centres in the Second World War, and the development of transport technologies prompted a policy of decentralisation. People were encouraged to move out of city centres towards suburbs and recently developed areas. The growth of these areas of urban development was initiated by the 1946 New Towns Act and the 1952 Housing Act.<sup>208</sup> The programme produced a massive undertaking of public housing. Moreover, it implied the construction of new infrastructures, including churches. Nevertheless, the presence of churches in the new urban environment cannot be reduced to a mere infrastructure. Indeed, in the early post-war period, the goals of the Christian missions coincided with those of the Welfare State and the revaluation of the Church's social and administrative basis coincided with its missionary activity in popular urban areas. The New Towns or the new housing estates growing around industrial centres were planned with provisions for the community that took a long time to be implemented. In this context, in which 'the unity of life and work was non-existent', religion was instrumental to build a sense of belonging, often involving other aspects of the citizens' lives.<sup>209</sup> With the diversification of activities, the Church also called for an involvement of the workers in their free time: 'the hope behind Industrial Mission was that it would revivify the Church's presence within the urban lower class.'<sup>210</sup> Missions required new reasonings on the sacred building, which are the object of this chapter.

The relation with the surrounding urban context gave life on distinct and often opposite reactions. The trend was visible, for instance, in the design of St Andrew and St George in the new town of Stevenage. A further reflection on the theme is stimulated by the key case of churches of Harlow New Town, where the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches were planned as two poles emerging in the town structure. A different approach, instead, adopted humbler dimensions and a more contemporary and secular language. Church architects avoided historic styles, often refusing the referents that traditionally made church buildings identifiable as such. This new image, besides mirroring the contemporary aesthetics, represented the idea of a Church incarnated in the spirit of its time, and open to external

factors, such as associationism, cultural events, entertainment, etc. These factors, which were mainly concerned with economic and social issues, dictated the requirements of the building: the flexibility of the plan, the possibility of converting the space to a new use in the future, or the economic feasibility of the construction, the inclusion of different activities or the sharing of the building by several religious groups.

Indeed, on one side, the necessity to create a new community pushed churches toward the inclusion of different functions. The trend is evident in the large number of dual-purpose churches built in Britain in the fifties and sixties. Among them, the Anglican Church of St Philip and St James at Hodge Hill, Birmingham, is an extraordinary example of a church conceived for multiple uses. On the other side, the opening of the Church to the whole of society brought to the first shared church buildings. The first experiments in shared church buildings paved the way for buildings designed for joint ecumenical worship in the 1960s and 1970s. This is the case of the Ecumenical centre in Skelmersdale, the outpost in a new town of the internationally inspired Ecumenical trend which is described in the next chapter.

#### **4.1 Churches as urban landmarks**

The reconstruction of Britain after World War II implied a large plan of urban development, which expanded industrial centres and, at the same time, created new independent urban poles, in the forms of housing estates or new towns. In such areas of new development or urban renewal, the occurring shift of population and its frequent turnover made it difficult, if not impossible, to insert a parochial system, which required the identification of the parishioners in an urban community. With the goal of fostering a communal identity, the areas of new development were scheduled as mission areas, offering an open context in which a team of clergyman worked in coordination with local authorities and social agencies to create the conditions for the establishment of a parish.

In the first-generation New Towns, mainly low-density and largely low-rise, with green spaces and roads between the housing areas, churches seldom had the kind of urban context that was seen even in the interwar suburbs. It responded to unclear planning logics, like those determining the segregation of the old church of Harlow New Town, ‘isolated in green fields, when even God asks for no more than one acre; and all the houses turn their back on it.’<sup>211</sup> As far as new churches were concerned, they were often established in private houses, the so-called ‘House Churches’, ‘with the object of meeting people where they were.’<sup>212</sup> Or,

when they were housed in proper buildings, they were often positioned in relation to the larger roads rather than the houses or shops. The peripheral locations allowed the acquisition cost of the land (above all in the cases of community initiatives) to be reduced, but also ensured future enlargements of the church facilities, according to the demographic evolution of the area.

In line with this ductile approach, the missionary works of priest was often based on temporary and flexible buildings. They frequently consisted of prefabricated church halls, in which there was no room for formal sophistications or expensive ornaments. This was the case of the prefabricated church, covered by an industrial steel roof, built (1955) by Robert Potter (1909–2010) for the ward of Bridgemary in Gosport, Hampshire. Its simple rectangular plan, enclosed by lightweight walls and a ceiling of exposed steel trusses, reflected an international trend of hut-churches, as exemplified by the almost contemporary Roman Catholic Church of St Anthony in West Vancouver, Canada.<sup>213</sup> Potter's church hall housed a wall altar, raised on a dais, and separated by railings, which could be hidden behind curtains during secular activities. The configuration was intended to be temporary, waiting for the construction of a new church. Nevertheless, the new building was never realised, and in 1981 the hall was modernised and transformed into the permanent Church of St Matthew.

The transformation of temporary buildings into permanent parish churches testified on one side the difficulty to gain further resources for a new expansion; on the other it demonstrated the success of missionary activities, which succeeded in creating a community around a building, however humble or temporary. Indeed, there is no doubt that, during the urban development promoted by *New Towns Act* of 1946, churches and other community associations had a relevant part in the identification process of communities and played an important role in the physical growth of the urban landscape, too.<sup>214</sup> Many interesting churches were built in new towns. Just to give an idea of the extent of the phenomenon, in few years, Crawley, designated a new town in 1947, was provided with nine churches. There, a Trinity United church (later Elim Pentecostal) opened in the 1950s; a Methodist church (St Paul) in 1953 (replaced by a new one in 1966); a United Reformed church (Bishop Hill) in 1955; a Roman Catholic church (St Francis and St Anthony), by Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel, in 1958; a far more modernist Anglican church (St Mary), by Henry Braddock (1900–75) and Donald Frank Martin-Smith (1900–84), in the same year; a conventionally-planned Anglican church (St Alban), by Thomas Francis Ford (1891–1971) in 1962; another Roman Catholic one (St Edward the Confessor), this time with a modernist

look based on a triangular plan by Alexander Lane, in 1964; a Mormon church, by Thomas Bennett (1887–1980), was added in 1964. But we could similarly enlist the modern churches built in other New Towns soon after the designation, as in the case of the churches of Runcorn, designated a new town in 1964.<sup>215</sup>

In several of the mentioned cases, it was not uncommon for church buildings to be enriched with further functions integrated with the main worship space.<sup>216</sup> According to the degree of integration between functions, two different ways of conceiving the church building emerged. The first one saw the church as the house of God, a place primarily intended for worship. In this case the worship space is provided with a dignity of its own, while further functions, as school, hall, and presbytery, were intended as secondary and separated volumes. The architects falling into this category, sustained the urban relevance of the church, even from a visual point of view. Their vision was not distant from those stressing on the significance of particular buildings or architectural systems within the urban tissue. For instance, the concept of architectural predominance was central in Bruno Taut's (1880–1938) theory of *Der Stadtkrone* (or 'The City Crown'). In the homonymous text (1919), the German architect called for the setting of a building characterising the fulcrum of an urban settlement by its monumental size and its formal recognizability.<sup>217</sup>

The Italian architect Aldo Rossi (1931–97), in his *L'Architettura della Città* (1966), interpreted the structure of the city according to primary urban artefacts, whose individuality depended mainly on their form. The urban artefacts added a layer to the city since their materiality was entrusted with spiritual and aesthetical values by virtue of their artistry. The concept of artistry, related to the quality of buildings and to their uniqueness, was conditioned by the city but also conditioning the city itself.

Indeed, as underlined by the American urban historian Lewis Mumford (1895–1990) in his historical survey of the urban space (1961), the Church used to lead the life of the city both visually and pragmatically: 'its spires were the first object the traveller saw on the horizon and its cross was the last symbol held before the eyes of the dying.'<sup>218</sup> The dominance of the church on the city was represented by its materiality and bulk, its verticality imposing a skyward vanishing point for urban vistas. This orienting function was not different to that theorised by Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City*, which was published the year before Mumford's text.<sup>219</sup> In the book, which soon exerted a deep influence on urban planners worldwide, the sacred focus, polarizing and organizing the entire surrounding area, was

intended both as a ‘node’, a ‘strategic spot in the city into which an observer can enter’, and as a ‘landmark’, a point-reference symbolising a direction and in which the observer does not enter (valid above all for its spires).<sup>220</sup> Similarly, the theme of the identity of singular element within the urban context frequently populated the literature of the period. For instance, the American architect Robert Venturi (1925–2018), in his *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), underlined how the architecture of Hawksmoor’s Christ Church, Spitalfields, is summed up in the tall spire, ‘spatially and symbolically dominating the skyline of the parish’.<sup>221</sup> Such visions entrusted landmarks with a series of criteria, such as a spatial prominence, a unique identity, a well-defined shape, a contrast in terms of scale, forms, or colours with the background. Traditional churches, with their tall towers, steeples, and pinnacles, surely responded to the traits.

The guiding role of bell towers or dome, along with civic towers, column, or obelisks, within the pre-industrial city is an undeniable phenomenon. As underlined by Gordon Cullen in his *The Concise Townscape* (1961), the vertical focal point ‘crystallises the situation, which confirms ‘this is the spot’. ‘Stop looking, it is here.’<sup>222</sup> In particular, English townscapes, such as that of London before the fire, were mainly scattered with bell towers, spired and pinnacles. However, with the rise of tall buildings and skyscrapers in metropolitan centres, churches lost the prerogative of height. Indeed, we must recognise that the theoretical references just mentioned implied an urban density quite different from that of the modern city. In these new urban contexts, churches struggled even to retain their role of nodes, gradually robbed by skyscrapers, leisure, and shopping centres. It was in the suburban areas that the church building could fulfil its traditional role of visual and social reference. In a standardised suburban context, made of economical housing, or in a new town lacking history and identity, the church often embodied a polarising presence. Of course, the symbolical role led churches to compete with high-rise urban blocks, prompting the construction of steeples that, boasted by the use of new materials, emerged from the urban tissue. This phenomenon had an international range; however, it was more evident in geographical areas with a long tradition of Gothic architecture. Indeed, in countries such as England, France, and Germany, the verticality was historically associated to the need of a visual emergence, above all in flatland. For instance, in France, the churches of St Firmin in May-sur-Orne, Normandy (1955–60), St Pierre in Thionville (1962–5), or the majestic concrete volume of St Joseph in Le Havre (1951–7) by Auguste Perret (1874–1954) proved the success of the *flèche* as an urban and landscape signal.<sup>223</sup> The spire also served to

distinguish the worship function among other buildings with similar visual evidence, as in the case of the Westbourne Park Baptist Church, London, designed in the 1960s by Ansell and Bailey, with a spire over a slightly pitched brick volume.<sup>224</sup> The graphic function of bell towers was clear in those open frame structures thought for visual recognisability, being unusable for other functions: from the already mentioned St Andrew and George in Stevenage by Seely and Paget to many churches by Basil Spence, such as St John The Divine and St Oswald in Coventry (1957 and 1958), St Andrew in Edinburgh (1958), or St Catherine of Siena in Sheffield (1968).

The vertical emergence, in the forms of tall bell towers, steeples, or spirelets above the crossing, increased the monumentality of the temple within the city. This way of conceiving the sacred building led architects to reinterpret the monumental presence of traditional churches in a modern language. The reasons were not only urban: the “monumentalist” church architects also stressed on the importance of a shared beauty. They tried to bring to the periphery the same sublime feelings of a cathedral built in the city centre, avoiding reducing the image of the church to an industrialised product, which would deprive the working class of one of the few direct contacts with art it was left. This effect was obtained by subtracting the church building from the logic of nearby constructions, whether it was a question of scale, style, materials, or street alignments. Its impressive brick volumes, the almost symmetrical layout and the lively stained-glass windows, made it for sure a precious item. The idea of the church as a monument was somehow a traditionalist conception, being the idea of monumentality deeply contested in the modernist circle.<sup>225</sup> However, it was rather understood by Gerard Goalen (1918–), as the intrinsic property of a building that could render with its visual eloquence the majesty and eternal spirit of divinity or, in Alois Rieg'l's words, ‘a claim to immortality.’<sup>226</sup>

At the same time, monumental architect opposed the pretentious belief, at the base of multifunctional and flexible parish centres, that faithful would attend the centres even in their leisure times. This theories on the aesthetic dignity of the church building characterised the design of two similar (and almost specular) churches built in the new town of Harlow, built as ‘two wings of the same community.’<sup>227</sup> They were the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Fatima, built (1958–60) on a designed (1953–4) by Goalen and the Anglican Church of St Paul, built around the same years (1957–9) on a design by Derrick Humphrys of Humphrys and Hurst.

The Catholic church was organised according to a central plan, mixing a Greek cross with a liturgically conscious T-shaped plan, with the altar on a middle stage encircled by the assembly, not differently to the layout that the architect submitted in the same period to the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral competition.<sup>228</sup> The height of the interior space, emphasised by a hanging canopy over the altar and by the tall walls, almost completely perforated by colourful *dalles de verre*, created a dramatic atmosphere. Its design was mindful of the holiness of medieval cathedrals but also sensible to the contemporary Continental experimentation, suggesting a kinship with the concrete beams and the glass walls realised by Rudolf Schwarz (1897–1961) in the churches of St Anna in Duren (1951–6) and St Antonius in Essen (1956–59). This atmosphere was confirmed by the words of Goalen himself, according to whom a church “should be as fine as we can afford, and in particular its scale should be generous.”<sup>229</sup> In line with this, Goalen underlined the importance of a decorous worship space over a flexible but rather ordinary parish centre: ‘before we embark on the lavish provision of social centres let us consider carefully whether the activities which they are to shelter could not equally well take place elsewhere.’<sup>230</sup> This intention to visually characterise the church building also emerged in its exterior look, marked by a tall spire that worked as a landmark in the context of a suburban area. The open and unbuilt site where the church was located allowed the volume to be seen on all sides, making its stereometric volume emerge from the landscape.

The first church in any new town centre and intended as the mother church of the new town of Harlow, the Anglican Church of St Paul used a language very similar to its Catholic counterpart.<sup>231</sup> It was based on an analogous plan, even if slightly closer to a Latin cross with side aisles. Like the Catholic church, it was intended as a building for worship, bringing secondary functions outside the borders of the church. In this case, the denial of further spaces beyond the worship area could more efficiently rely on the church’s proximity to the many attractions of the town centre, whose masterplan was elaborated (1947) by Frederick Gibberd (1908–84). Being enclosed by civic buildings with a considerable height and size, St Paul’s had to find a way to visually embody its uniqueness. In order to make the building emerge, the architect signalled it with a slender spire above the crossing, pierced the walls with consistent stained-glass windows, and used brick walls to contrast the concrete and Portland stone with which surrounding buildings were realised. The idea of distinguishing the church building from the urban tissue, rendering the building as ‘a sacred gem

surrounded by profanity', also characterize other religious architectures erected in the New Towns.<sup>232</sup>

Another very eloquent case is, indeed, the Church of St Andrew and St George in Stevenage. The largest parish church to be built in England since the Second World War, it was erected in the first New Town born under the *New Towns Act* of 1946.<sup>233</sup> To understand the relevance of this peripheral church, the foundation ceremony was attended by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. The reference of this building, constructed in 1956–60 on a design by John Seely (1899–1963) and Paul Edward Paget (1901–85), is the majestic cathedral of the Gothic tradition. It is appropriate to mention that Seely and Paget had been designing churches since the beginning of the 1930s, in a variety of styles. Their ecclesiastical projects sometimes followed the fashion, sometimes were against it, probably according to the commissioners' requests. Their church in Stevenage retraced the plan of a Gothic cathedral with a sudden leap into modernism. Preceded by a lower narthex, the plan was based on an elongated rectangle comprising a tall nave with two lower aisles, organised by an exposed skeleton of crossed parabolic arches in pre-cast reinforced concrete. Set across to the longitudinal development of the plan, the arches supported the barrel vault ceiling of the nave, pierced the glass clerestory, and worked as buttresses downloading on the exterior wall of the aisles. The first solution counterposed the barrel roof to a trabeated system of beams which crowned the concrete arches and also emerged in the facade, while the basement of the bell tower was encapsulated within the main body of the church. The project, in line with Seely and Paget's experimentation on catenary forms, was not different from the structures proposed by George Pace (1915–75) in the completion of Sheffield Cathedral (1956–61) and in the first scheme for the reconstruction of St Mark, Broomhill (1950), two buildings that, not by chance, related to the language of Gothic cathedrals.<sup>234</sup>

The landmark role was played by a very tall, detached bell tower, with an exposed concrete structure based on a circular plan and crowned by a concrete spire. The tower marked the position of the church, otherwise hidden in a slightly peripheral parcel of the new Stevenage's civic centre and dialogued with its main emergence: the squared clock tower/campanile (1957–9) designed by architect Leonard Vincent (1914–2007), of the Stevenage Development Corporation, in the central square of the town.<sup>235</sup> Its predominance in the urban context was even recorded in the 1967 comedy *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*, set in Stevenage and directed by Clive Donner (1926–2010).

## 4.2 Polyfunctional church buildings

Before the completion of Seely and Paget's church in Stevenage, the parishes of St Andrew worshipped in a separate, smaller building, St Andrew's Church, in the area of Bedwell. It was a small church, built (1953–4) on a design by Clifford Holliday (1897–1960) in collaboration with Donald Stirling Craig (1916–97). The building, with a familiar pitched roof, a flint stone wall to an end, and a rustic cross made of wooden trunks on its front, dialogued with its humble language with the surrounding building. In line with the visual affability of its exterior, the interior was linear and worked both as a worship space during services, and as a community hall at different hours. The altar, indeed, was set on a stage, preceded by curtains which, once opened, hid it from view during secular assemblies.

This humble church, which was continually used as a community hall even after the erection of the joint Saints Andrew and George's Church, till its demolition in 1993, confirmed the historical analysis made by Mumford: 'at its humblest level in the city parish the church was a neighbourhood centre, a focus of the daily community life; and no neighbourhood was so poor that it lacked such a church, even though at the center of the town there might be a vast cathedral big enough to enclose all its citizens on solemn or festive occasions.'<sup>236</sup>

At the same time, the double use of St Andrew's Church attested a custom, that of multi-functional churches, recurring in history. Indeed, the notion of the Church as a many-sided institution, was historically rendered by ecclesiastical buildings which performed several roles and functions. According to the Anglican priest John Gordon Davies (1919–90), who published in 1968 a book on *The Secular Use of Church Buildings*, only later in history the positivistic society assigned the several functions of churches to specialized secular institutions and to separate places.<sup>237</sup> Besides the dubious historical validity of Davies' arguments, intended to defend the contemporary move towards multifunctional churches, the post-war need to recreate a communal spirit made churches return to being multi-purpose organisms. Indeed, the concentration of functions within a single building, besides reducing costs, also enabled new neighbourhoods to establish their identity. At the same time, the introduction of new functions and the changed target pushed for the adoption of a new architectural language. The language of modern churches had to be close to the people: the church had to represent a 'house among houses'.<sup>238</sup> Church and town planners claimed the necessity of a more modest language, understandable by the people living and working

in the areas. At the same time, they saw in the multiple functions of the church building a further solution to reduce the gap of the growing secularisation. Indeed, by approaching the masses in their every-day life, and offering opportunities for their free time, the polyfunctional church fulfilled its missionary goal while enhancing local identity. From an architectural point of view, the multiple uses were translated into flexible plans, which could be re-arranged outside the main worship and services hours. Indeed, the increase in leisure and personal freedom celebrated by the Festival of Britain required the Church to adopt a new strategy to reach people. The Church's religious and social approach aimed to guide the faithful even in their free time. Ecclesiastical buildings started to be included in larger parish centres, including small theatres, cinemas, dining hall and areas for physical activities, in the tradition of the Catholic oratory. The transformation from the detached church to the parish centre responded to a world-wide phenomenon. However, In Britain it assumed specific connotations. Contrary to Continental examples, which often included sports fields, in English parish centres the scope for physical recreation was more limited. Yet, the physical involvement of the faithful, which had been a key goal of the Liturgical Movement (at least during ceremonies), was encouraged through indoor dancing and dramatic representations. The change prompted a reflection on the appropriate spaces to house the new activities. The church centre had to integrate them in a coherent architectural complex, where the worship area represented the living core. As Edward Mills well described in his book, 'the new community churches are being moulded by the pattern of contemporary life and are no longer designed to hold large Sunday congregations with no provision for weekday activity, although the emphasis must of necessity be upon the place set aside for the act of worship.'<sup>239</sup>

Some church centres had already been realised in the Victorian period. They usually comprised secondary spaces, with the function of halls or vicarages, flanking the main body of the church. However, the functions were rarely combined within one connected plan, rather resulting in a heterogeneous aggregation of volumes. Between the world wars a further development was set in this direction: dioceses built standardised dual-purpose buildings with a stage on one end and a sanctuary on the other one, separated by a folding screen. In most dual-purpose churches the sanctuary and the stage were designed as opposite poles, having a middle space in common for the faithful/spectators. The two ends of the space reserved to the assembly were intended as prosceniums, where the action happens in 'another time and another place'. Of course, it triggered an overlapping correspondence between liturgical rituals and dramatic actions. Smaller rooms and lavatories were often

placed in a vestibule along one side of the hall and on the back of the stage.<sup>240</sup> However, this standard layout was hardly expandable in view of future urban developments and, consequently, of growing communities.

The issue of flexibility oriented the construction of dual-purpose buildings in the post-war period. Architects experimented on several solution to increase the transformability of interior spaces. At the same time, they tried to keep an architectural and visual homogeneity, paving the road to the organicism of late-nineteenth-sixties multifunctional church centres. For instance, in 1953 J. J. Crowe designed the Church of All Saints, Aveley, Essex as a temporary dual-purpose church-hall, a 'tool in the missionary work of the church.'<sup>241</sup> The stage was a plain proscenium with curtains while the sanctuary, with a free-standing altar and preceded by foldable doors, ended with its stone floor in the volume of the hall, suggesting a merging of the two spaces.

The idea was to build a small church-hall which, once the community would have increased and a new larger church would have been built, would be turned into a simple hall. Indeed, the construction of temporary dual-purposes churches, which granted worship spaces in a short time and maximised the investment, was in the programs of many Anglican dioceses. For instance, in 1950 the Manchester Anglican diocese set up a Reorganisation Committee. One of its first action was to commission to Herbert Rhodes a proposal for a dual-purpose church. It was planned to be eventually built in some housing estates of the Birmingham areas: Limeside, Newall Green, and Baguley Hall.<sup>242</sup> The temporary church at Limeside, dedicated to St Chad, was erected in 1952. Its story clearly exemplifies the clash between the practical needs of the community and the aesthetic eloquence required by church authorities or by the faithful themselves. The original idea was that the building could be enlarged and turned into a permanent church after the increase of the local community. Rhodes had elaborated a simple project for the church-hall. His appearance was considered too anonymous by the commission, claiming that 'from the outside it was almost impossible to tell that the building was used even in part for public worship.'<sup>243</sup> In light with the commission's representational will, the project of the definitive church proposed a more articulate structure. Adjacent to Rhodes' church, which was transformed into a hall, the new church was drawn by Paterson & Macaulay in 1963 and completed in 1965.<sup>244</sup> It comprised a hexagonal volume in bricks, topped by a timber pyramidal roof. The roof ended in a crown-shaped lantern which signalled the presence of a worship space underneath, in line with the provisions of the commission.

The novelty of dual-purpose churches did not always correspond to a novelty in style. Style was later an interchangeable character that the church could adopt according to the commissions. This aspect is clear in the project for multifunctional churches designed by Michael Farey.<sup>245</sup> Farey realised many of them, conceived as permanent multi-purpose churches, even in different architectural styles, keeping in mind the necessity to make the building live on several occasions. The presence of other functions supported the construction and maintenance costs. At the same time, Farey succeeded in keeping the visual recognizability of the church, strengthening the identitarian spirit of its religious community. The goal was pursued by providing the multifunctional building with elements borrowed from the tradition of (mainly Gothic and neo-Gothic) cathedrals: brickworks, bell towers, spires, stained-glass and rose windows. Among the first multi-purpose churches he designed, the Church of the Good Shepherd, Beavers Lane, was erected in 1956 for a new housing area in Hounslow. The building had to house different functions: worship space, sacristy, committee room, hall with stage, kitchen, and the priest's house. Farey articulated the plan into several units, among which the worship space came up for its peculiar layout. Indeed, it was based on a trapezoidal sanctuary (whose wall was pierced by an ever-present six-point star window) joint in sequence to a larger rectangular and an even larger nave. The nave could open through a sliding screen into a larger hall, for about 250 seating. Once the partition between the nave and the hall was open, it hid the view of the stage adjacent to the hall. Vice versa, when the stage was open the partition excluded the more sacred area, in order to use alternatively the hall as a theatre or as an expansion of the nave.<sup>246</sup>

In the same years Farey worked on the design of St Andrew's, Roxbourne, South Harrow, completed in 1957. In this case the Gothic imprint was evident not only in the decoration but also in the plan of the worship space. In fact, it comprised a sanctuary in the north-east apse (again pierced by a six-point star windows); a large nave flanked by two aisles; a tower standing over a side entrance porch. The border of the nave was defined by a moveable wall. This mechanism could extend the space for the congregation into a large hall, doubling the seating capacity. The opposite end of the hall housed a stage that, in case of religious services, could be used as a low gallery. Conversely, the main nave could be used as 'an overflow to the hall for religious dramas.'<sup>247</sup>

Some years later, in 1959 Farey built the Church of St Luke, West Kilburn, with a more modern language and an unusual octagonal plan based on a geometrical pattern combining rectangles, lozenges, and crosses.<sup>248</sup> It included eight classrooms organised around a small

central chapel. Three sides of the chapel could open on the three adjacent classrooms thanks to sliding partitions, for a total of nine possible configurations, increasing the seating till the larger Latin-cross configuration housing about 400 seats. Two entrance vestibules were disposed diagonally, orthogonal to them, the spaces between the classrooms served as a refectory and office/committee room.

The three churches by Farey represented the variety of the contemporary experimentation on multipurpose ecclesiastic buildings. The multiplicity of activities and functions often implied the abandonment of a visual unity in favour of a multifaceted architecture, more adequately expressing the diversity of its interior spaces. For instance, the Church of St Philip and St James, Hodge Hill, Birmingham, comprised a very flexible space, whose geometry was dictated more by its functional requirements than by visual symbolism.<sup>249</sup> Completed in 1968, on a design by Martin Terrance Purdy (?–2016), the building was used with a significant flexibility till its abandonment and demolition in 2008.<sup>250</sup> Its plan was made by the accumulation of rectangular spaces, covered under two pitched roofs, which worked as lanterns for the rooms underneath, divides by a lower stripe corresponding to a living room. To the east, one of the roofs covered a series of smaller spaces including a coffee bar, a games hall, and several service spaces. The other, towards the west, covered the worship area, accessed from a northern entrance porch through a corridor which led to the Baptistry. The font, housed in a transparent recess, was opposite a stage/playroom which could be opened or closed through a moveable partition. Instead, the altar, raised on a platform, was set at the west end of an axis orthogonal to the font-stage. Behind the altar, small spaces hosted a quiet room and a sacristy, while a slender corridor led to the rectory. In front of the altar, towards the east, the worship space could be enlarged by a partition which opened into the living room.

This layout permitted to have a larger space, which was often used for secular function, like communal suppers, assemblies or even parties, in line with the principles theorized by Davies in *The Secular Use of Church Buildings*, published in the same year in which the church was opened.<sup>251</sup> Indeed, the construction of the church involved the Birmingham Institute for ecclesiastical architecture founded by Davies, and its design and supervision were entrusted to the Birmingham School of Architecture, led by Denys Hinton, with Purdy as research fellow.<sup>252</sup>

#### 4.3 Shared church buildings in areas of mission

In the context of missionary expansion, flexibility and multi-purpose were the key words representing the adaptation of the Church to an evolving urban and social substrate. The mission in new urban areas, aimed at the establishment of a new parish, comprised a gradual process. As Paul A. Welsby pointed out, a first step could be the creation of ‘house churches’, with the aim of meeting people where they lived. Meeting in house churches contributed to the creation of communities that were later directed to a permanent building.<sup>253</sup> In other cases, before the erection of a permanent parish church, the missionary plan often proposed the setting up of a pastoral unit. It comprised a building with some residential units for the staff and a ground floor for pastoral activities, including worship, social care, and children education. Despite the pastoral units had their own independence, they were often linked to an institutionalised centre, like a major parish church or an ecumenical centre, which provided an official space for liturgical use. The ecumenical centre, which represented the entire Christian Church in the area, was seen as an adequate answer to interpret the changing percentage of faiths in the area. At the same time, it contributed to the formation of a communal identity, independent on the Christian confession professed by citizens. Besides the spaces for traditional and ecumenical worship, the centre had to house spaces for youth, office accommodation for the several churches, consulting and committee rooms, recreational and essential services like a kitchen, a canteen, and a toilet.

If the financing of ecumenical centres often encountered the difficulty of bringing together different figures, such as the Council, the community of citizens and the different religious authorities involved, joint ventures based on double agreements for the construction and sharing of a religious building appeared to be a more feasible solution. Although church sharing was a response to the multiculturalism of post-war British society, increased by recent immigration especially in industrial areas, the main impetus for its realisation was an economic contingency. Indeed, the construction of a new church building was a particularly heavy financial burden, and interdenominational churches were not uncommon with a view to reducing costs. As proof of this, in 1960 Anglicans and Methodists built a new church together in Greenhill, Herne Bay, Kent.<sup>254</sup> The building was symbolic of the ecumenical rapprochement between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England which, however, would be formally rejected at the 1972 General Synod of the Church of England. Similarly, in Harlow, the local mission succeeded in bringing about an ecumenical reality by uniting the parish of St James, shared between Anglicans and Methodists, with the

Roman Catholic congregation of St Luke's.<sup>255</sup> Sometimes shared spaces have been integrated into civic centres, overcoming the difficulty of an interdenominational joint venture to construct a building. For example, in Corby's New Town, the Danesholme Community Centre housed an ecumenical church, built around 1970, marked on the outside only by a conical tower that replaced the steeple.<sup>256</sup> The spontaneous experiments were officialised by the *Sharing of Church Building Act* of 1969, which allowed churches to enter into agreements to share buildings, including, in addition to places of worship, complementary functions such as church halls available for other activities, youth centres, hostels, residences for ministers or lay workers. Among the benefits of the bill was to promote a sense of community in new towns or large housing estates or, in older communities, to reduce the maintenance costs of buildings.

The Bishop of Peterborough set up a special commission in 1969 to prepare a document addressing the pastoral activity in the growing towns of his area.<sup>257</sup> The proposal implied five types of church centres. Among them, there was the Christian centre, a design for an ecumenical act of faith, conceived as a shared church, hosting contemporaneously experimental and traditional denominational forms of worship and officiated by an ecumenical corporate ministry. The building should consist of a large space for the assembly with three chapels 'of the traditions'. The chapel of prayer, for the meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, would be a simple space, in line with the austerity of Quaker meeting houses. The chapel of the word, with pulpit and organ for a Free Church order, would recover the central role of sermons of Evangelical tradition. Finally, the chapel of the liturgy, to host complete worships with altar, would meet the requirements of modern Anglicanism and Catholicism, with a particular stress on the eucharistic rite. In the middle, a big, shared space would house ecumenical experimentations. In order to increase the seating, each chapel could open into the common space, which would be oriented differently according to the rite. The opening of folding screens or curtains, would even grant a single larger space, in which the unity of Christian is symbolised by the font, 'a perpetually flowing fountain of water rising from a basin set in the vestibule at the entrance to the place of assembly.'<sup>258</sup>

An analogous scheme characterised many ecumenical architectures in Britain. The functional distinction matched a 'conciliatory' formal simplicity which characterised Ecumenical buildings, from the already presented one in Cippenham to that erected in Skelmersdale, a suburban area developed to answer to the overcrowding of Liverpool. Indeed, in Skelmersdale the Church of England, along with the Methodist, Baptist, and the

United Reformed Churches, had supported the construction of an inter-faith centre, which opened in 1973. The project was designed by the Anglican priest and architect Peter Bridges (1925–2015) and a fellow of his studio, the already mentioned Martin Purdy.<sup>259</sup> Instead of placing the secondary functions in a detached volume, the architects grouped all functions in one building, organised on three levels. The structure is composed of prefabricated elements: steel pillars and corbelled beams, which made it possible to realise the main worship area without the obstacles of central pillars. The pillars were exposed on the inside, while on the outside they were hidden behind an independent masonry facade, pierced by large fenestration, including the ribbon-window in the upper part of the worship hall. The worship space was a double-height hall, flanked by an upper gallery with curtains that could open to increase seating. The worship space was equipped with movable furnishings, including the altar dais, which could be moved according to the occasion. Outside, steel beams were enclosed in a thick parallelepiped roof. The flat roof, ribbon windows, and absence of a bell tower or cross, looked to the tradition of modern civic buildings, making the centre difficult to distinguish from a medical facility, library, or bowling alley.

The inclusion of an interfaith space fulfilled the state's requirement of neutrality for community centres, aimed at avoiding sectarian divisions within the neighbourhood. This intention was clearly expressed in the 1944 *Report* (the so-called *Redbook*) of the Ministry of Education, conceived to offer guidance on community centres in housing schemes:

*The community centre is not intended to serve as a substitute for home, church or other traditional rallying points of social life ... [The community centre] can supply an absolutely neutral meeting place ... Nearly all other social agencies ... tend to draw people together on a corporative basis. In the community centre ... they should meet as individuals.*<sup>260</sup>

While the idea of the divisive action of established religions encouraged interchange between confessional groups, it also pushed towards a progressive separation of the civic and religious spheres. In this sense, the creation of an atmosphere of mystery typical of a cathedral no longer corresponded to the more prosaic celebration in a neutral meeting place.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

If in the first half of the century the archetypical buildings of modernity, such as theatres and cinemas, looked at the formal characterisation of church buildings, towards the seventies the relation was completely reversed.<sup>261</sup> The process also represented a progressive loss of the spiritual representation of churches, in favour of their role as places that could more readily suggest a range of secular uses. The transformation of religion from a collective system of values with a cultural, social, political, and ethical structure to a matter of personal belief led the worship into the realm of private needs.

Hence, spirituality becomes one of the several services offered to citizens and, of course, one of the less economically convenient. As we have seen, this functional change was reflected in their external and internal appearance and their position in relation to other buildings. It is not by chance if in many areas designated for urban development in the late 1960s and in the 1970s, city centres were often characterised by shopping centres and places for leisure while little if any space was left for church buildings. For instance, the Emmanuel Church of Redditch (opened in 1978), shared by the Congregational and the Methodist community, was relegated to the second floor of the central Kingfisher Shopping Centre. Its entrance was almost opposite to the neo-Gothic, nineteenth-century Anglican Church of St Stephen. This change led to a gradual impoverishment of the liturgy, leading to two opposing trends: on the one hand the secularisation of rites, on the other a reactionary attachment to the forms of tradition. These two extremes will be reconciled in an emblematic case: university chapels. Indeed, they are the junction point between the conventional liturgical heritage and the lay demands of modern educational institutions. Not by chance, it is precisely in university chapels that the patterns of tradition are innovated in a modern language, as described in the next chapter.

## Notes

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<sup>208</sup> Anthony Alexander, *Britain's New Towns: Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities* (2009), 16-20.

<sup>209</sup> Paul A. Welsby, *A History of the church of England, 1945-1980* (1986), 34.

<sup>210</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985* (1986), 444.

<sup>211</sup> Gordon Cullen, *The Concise Townscape* (1985), 137.

<sup>212</sup> Welsby, *A History*, 35.

<sup>213</sup> On the Canadian church Willy Weyres and Otto Bartning, *Kirchen: Handbuch für den Kirchenbau* (1959), I, 130; Edward D. Mills, *The Modern Church* (1956), 86-7.

<sup>214</sup> Frederic J. Osborn, Arnold Whittick, *The New Towns: Their Origins, Achievements and Progress* (1977).

<sup>215</sup> See, especially: The Roman Catholic church of St. Edward's church in Ivy Street (1955-6) by Edmund Kirby & Sons, the Anglican church of St. Andrew Anglican (1963-4) by Richard Twentyman, the Heath Methodist Church (1970).

<sup>216</sup> Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 277-308.

<sup>217</sup> Bruno Taut, *The City Crown* (2015), trans. and ed. by Matthew Mindrup and Ulrike Altenmüller-Lewis.

<sup>218</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (1961), 266.

<sup>219</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (1960).

<sup>220</sup> Lynch, *The Image of the City* (1960, 12<sup>th</sup> 1990), 47-48.

<sup>221</sup> Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), 30.

<sup>222</sup> Gordon Cullen, *The Concise Townscape* (1985), 26.

<sup>223</sup> The church in May-sur-Orne was designed by Pierre Benvenu, that in Thionville by Roger Schott.

<sup>224</sup> The church was demolished in and substituted by a new building, comprising a church, a library, a community hall and 33 flats, designed by Allies and Morrison and opened in 2019.

<sup>225</sup> On the idea of monumentality see Christiane C. Collins and George R. Collins, 'Monumentality: a Critical Matter in Modern Architecture', *Harvard Architectural Review*, VI (spring 1984), 14-35.

<sup>226</sup> Alois Rieg, *Der Moderne Denkmalkultus: Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung* (1903), republished and translated as *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin*, trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, *Oppositions* 25 (1982), 38.

<sup>227</sup> This poetical image was suggested by the parson of St Paul, Harlow, who I thank for its great availability.

<sup>228</sup> Gerald Adler, 'Our Lady of Fatima', in S. Charlton, E. Harwood, and C. Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 84; Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 289-91. On the Liverpool project: *Ibidem*, 156.

<sup>229</sup> Gerard Goalen, 'The House of God', *Churchbuilding*, 2 (January 1961), 3-5.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>231</sup> Des Hill, 'St Paul', in S. Charlton, E. Harwood, and C. Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 78.

<sup>232</sup> The definition is from Hill, 'St Paul', 78.

<sup>233</sup> Timothy Brittain-Catlin, 'St Andrew & St George', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 83.

<sup>234</sup> On Pace's project see chapter 7. See also Peter Pace, *The Architecture of George Pace* (1990), 174, 180.

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<sup>235</sup> The counter-positioning of towers reminds the medieval dichotomy between civil and religious powers.

<sup>236</sup> Mumford, *The City in History* (1961), 266–7.

<sup>237</sup> John Gordon Davies, *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (1968), *passim*.

<sup>238</sup> The concept of ‘house among houses’ is the departing point of the interesting study on the post-war church Architecture of Turin, Italy, presented in Carla Zito, *Casa tra le case: Architettura di chiese a Torino durante l’episcopato del cardinale Michele Pellegrino (1965-1977)* (2013).

<sup>239</sup> Edward D. Mills, *The Modern Church* (1956, edn. 1959), 33.

<sup>240</sup> Michael Farey, ‘The Church Centre’, *Churchbuilding*, 2 (January 1961), 6

<sup>241</sup> Ronald Smythe, Susan Harrison, ‘The New Town Mission Field’, *Churchbuilding*, 5 (January 1962), 14–5.

<sup>242</sup> Michael Gilman, *A Study of Churches built for the Use of Congregations of the Church of England Between 1945 and 1970 and of their Effectiveness in Serving the Needs of their Congregations Today* (2000), vol. 1, 80–3.

<sup>243</sup> Meeting minute of the Manchester Diocese Committee for Church Buildings, 28 January 1953, from Gilman, *A Study of Churches*, vol. 1, 82.

<sup>244</sup> *St Chad (1965)*, retrieved from [sacredsuburbs.wordpress.com/2015/03/08/st-chad-1965/](http://sacredsuburbs.wordpress.com/2015/03/08/st-chad-1965/), accessed February 2021.

<sup>245</sup> Michael Farey, ‘The Church Centre’, *Churchbuilding*, 2 (January 1961), 6–10

<sup>246</sup> Farey, ‘The Church Centre’, 10.

<sup>247</sup> Farey, ‘The Church Centre’, 9.

<sup>248</sup> In a certain sense, its geometrical construction could be compared to the head of Wren’s original plan for St Paul’s Cathedral (1668). The pattern had a long tradition: for instance, it was used in a pavement of a Roman villa in Roggiano, Calabria.

<sup>249</sup> On the church see ‘The Present State of Church Building’, *Manplan*, 5 (March 1970), Religion, 216–7; Reinhard Gieselman, *Contemporary Church Architecture* (1972), 146–9; Elaine Harwood, ‘Liturgy and Architecture: The Development of the Centralised Eucharistic Space’, in Roland Jeffrey, ed., *The Twentieth Century Church* (1998), 74; Michael Gilman, *A Study of Churches*, vol. 2, 311–5.

<sup>250</sup> Purdy would be the author of a handbook on church design: Martin Purdy, *Churches and Chapels: A Design and Development Guide* (1991). For a biographical profile: [apec.ac/martin-purdy-obituary/](http://apec.ac/martin-purdy-obituary/), accessed February 2021.

<sup>251</sup> On the book and its influence on church building and conversions, see also the last chapter.

<sup>252</sup> See Hinton’s obituary, ‘Professor Denys Hinton: Architect’, *The Times* (3 April 2010). Hinton also authored many Anglican architectures of particular interest, such as St George’s in Rugby (1962), St Chad’s in Pheasey (1964), St Michael & All Angels’ in South Yardley (1966). Soon after the construction of the church in Hodge Hill, Hinton was involved in the design of another church in Birmingham, the Carrs Lane Church, begun in 1968 and completed in 1970 for the Congregational confession (later merged into the United Reformed Church). The building comprised a spacious worship space, accessed from a foyer, on the upper ground floor, which granted the distribution to a quiet room, a shop and other service spaces in the lower floor. From the exterior its contemporary sharp look made it close to other buildings in the city, for instance libraries or cinemas, therefore huge cross was set outside to outline its religious function. Already few years after its opening, the church became the centre of an ecumenical cooperation between the local United Reformed Church and the Methodist one, which was formalised by the creation of a Local Ecumenical Partnership only in 2013.

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<sup>253</sup> Paul A. Welsby, *A History of the Church of England: 1945-1980* (1986), 35.

<sup>254</sup> ‘Mattins and Methodists’, *The Living Church*, 12 July 1959, 9

<sup>255</sup> ‘Harlow Town’, in W. R. Powel *et alii* (eds.), *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 8* (1983), 149-158.

<sup>256</sup> *About Danesholme Community Centre*, retrieved from <https://www.danesholme-community.org.uk/links-history.html>, accessed September 2022.

<sup>257</sup> The report is partially published in *Churchbuilding*, 29 (January 1970), 3-6.

<sup>258</sup> *Idem*, 6.

<sup>259</sup> Bridges had worked in 1952-3 in the office of Robert Potter and Richard Hare. He found an architectural office with Purdy (now APEC) in 1969. On Bridges: Martin Purdy, *The Ven. Peter Sydney Godfrey Bridges* (24 February 2015), retrieved from churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/20-february/gazette/obituaries/the-ven-peter-sydney-godfrey-brides, accessed February 2021.

<sup>260</sup> Ministry of Education, *Community Centres* (1944), 7-8, from James Greenhalgh, *Reconstructing modernity Space, power and governance in mid-twentieth century British cities* (2017), 162.

<sup>261</sup> On the correspondence between theatres and churches in Germany and America see: Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *German Architecture for a Mass Audience* (2000); Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (2005).

# 5. Towards religious unity: ecumenical trends in architecture

The cultural diversity of British society in the post-war era changed the way in which religion was part of the citizen's life. While religious influence retreated and participation in official religious institutions declined, the extensive migration to Britain from former colonies of people adhering to a religion other than Christianity prompted a reshaping of national and religious identity. Besides stimulating a rethinking of religious theories, the impact of religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Bhuddism, and other non-Christian faiths also worked as a compactor for Christianity. Indeed, the idea of a Christian identity stimulated convergences between denominations on a theological and social basis. The cooperation among different Christian groups fuelled a common frame: the so-called 'ecumene', an inhabited region united by a religious (mostly Christian) civilisation. Ecumenical experiments in Britain depended on several factors. At first, the cross-cultural background of the Liturgical Movement stimulated the hybridisation of ceremonials. If the Catholic church was initially diffident about such experiments, the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) opened the opportunity of an interconfessional Christian dialogue. Although Catholic priests continued not to give communion to non-Catholics and Catholics continued to be forbidden to take it in Anglican churches, there were important signs of rapprochement. Indeed, the first half of the 1960s registered a gradual increase in the sharing of church buildings between Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Non-Conformist communities. In the beginning, existing church buildings started to house different religious communities mainly to split maintenance costs. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the construction of interconfessional centres was a particularly effective tool of community-making in new urban areas. There, from the 1960s new buildings, specifically conceived for ecumenical use, were designed. In some cases, they also comprised spaces for non-Christian confessions. This was the case of college chapels, which represented one of the most fertile areas of experimentation for ecumenism.

The present chapter presents the evolution of ecumenical principles in the twentieth century. It also analyses their application in foreign interconfessional projects. Indeed, in the

mid-twentieth century worship places for different confessions started to appear abroad. They were mainly set in American Universities or within the non-governmental organisations. A large section is devoted to the architecture of interfaith chapel in British colleges. There, the ecumenical commitment of chapels was a way to grant the religious equity of educational institutions. Whether they be universities or army colleges, they adopted and developed new typologies to answer to this specific need. The main study cases are the chapels at the universities of Keele, Sussex, and Cambridge. The last section describes the application of ecumenical principles to later interreligious spaces. In particular, it focuses on the chapel at Heathrow, in line with the international trend of interfaith airport chapels.

## **5.1 Twentieth-century ecumenism**

Twentieth-century ecumenism represented a new spring for religious movements. However, it coincided with a significant growth of secularism, both in Britain and the rest of the world. The speed of social changes and technological advancements hardened the religious crisis following World War II. On the other side, it brought the faithful to look for ways to enlarge their religious panorama. War had produced a humanitarian validation of people's identity in a communal religious spirit. In such a vision, the different confessions emerged as individual cores in a larger religious scheme.

The phenomenon mainly regarded Christian denominations which approached to unity in early twentieth-century Britain.<sup>262</sup> The contemporary ecumenical movement is generally considered to begin with the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, which gathered many Protestant pastors. The event was animated by several representatives of Anglican denominations. The goal was soon shared by the Church of England and, already in 1920, the Lambeth Conference had launched an 'Appeal to All Christian People'. Few years later, the Malines Conversations (1921–25) had the dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics. The Church of England also took part in the World Conference of Life and Work, held in Stockholm in 1925, and to the first World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lausanne in 1927. The Roman Catholic Church did not participate in the Life and Work group, but it was a Member of the Faith and Order Commission. However, when the two organs merged in the World Council' of Churches (WCC) in 1948, the Roman Catholic Church decided to remain outside the organisation till 1968. The Anglican Church, instead, soon joined in. Indeed, the British Council of Churches (BCC), established in 1942, soon

worked as the national counterpart of the WCC.<sup>263</sup> Inspired by the Ecumenical spirit of the WCC, this British organisation represented the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Church in Wales, the Free Churches, the Society of Friends, the Salvation Army, and other organisations of interdenominational imprint.

In 1946 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, preached a sermon in the University Church at Cambridge. It marked the beginning of a process aiming at bringing together the Churches in Britain.<sup>264</sup> In the same period, several interconfessional meetings issued a series of reports evoking Christian unity. The Church of England tried to act as a leader, based on the conviction that Anglican theology already combined Catholic and evangelical traditions.

The Catholic Church never participated in these initiatives, although in 1949, the Holy See issued an Instruction *On the Ecumenical Movement*. Surprisingly, this permitted the Catholic faithful to engage in discussion with people adhering to other Christian denominations. Anglicans saw in it an occasion for reunion until the following year when Pius XII declared the Roman dogma of the Assumption of Mary. The dogmatic approach of the pope dismantled the hopes of an Anglican-Catholic relationship. The election to the papacy of Giuseppe Roncalli in 1958 (John XXIII 1958–63) offered new hope and was a key figure in changing the relations with other confessions. Above all, he carried out his action through a very important tool, with a global-scale echo: the Second Vatican Council.

The Council was announced by Pope John XXIII on the 25th of January 1959 and opened on the 11th of October 1962. It was certainly a turning point in the field of ecumenical relationships.<sup>265</sup> The dialogue between Christian denominations was not the reason why it was called ecumenical. The adjective rather referred to the idea of the universality of the Roman Church. Yet, the council was a privileged field for interdenominational speculations and its influence on other Christian denominations contributed to the formation of a common liturgical background. This institutionalised search for unity supported ecumenical experiments and interdenominational exchanges. The contacts were already fostered during the organisation of the Council. John XXIII himself wanted some outside observers to represent the other cults and report the work of the Council to their superiors. During the preparatory phase of the Council (1959–62), the pope emitted a *motu proprio*, which assigned the future themes of the Council to specific commissions. The Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, in charge of the ecumenical issue, was presided by German Jesuit

Augustin Bea (1881–1968). Among the members, there were many priests involved in ecumenical activities. For example, French Jesuit Charles Boyer (1884–1980) founded in 1945 the *Unitas* Centre. It was a centre for ecumenical studies whose ideas were disseminated all over the world through the homonymous journal, *Unitas*, published in four languages.<sup>266</sup> In this activity Boyer was soon joined by the Ladies of Bethany, a congregation of nuns from the Low Countries with the mission of approaching people, even from different religion. Together, in 1950, they created the organisation *Foyer Unitas*, based in Palazzo Pamphilj in piazza Navona from 1962. The organization offered a place to sleep to non-Catholic pilgrims who arrived in Rome, and especially to observers called to the Council.<sup>267</sup> Many Anglican priests frequented the place, including the observers Bernard Clinton Pawley (1911–81) and John Moorman (1905–89).<sup>268</sup>

After its opening in 1962, the enthusiasm for the event, described in the press as ‘the greatest step of the century in the quest for Church unity’, involved several British critics and churchmen.<sup>269</sup> The outcome of the council was extensively commented upon by the Anglican observers, who collected them in a book published in Oxford in 1967.<sup>270</sup> For instance, the American priest Massy H. Sheppard, an observer for the Episcopal Church, noted ‘a deep unity of outlook linking’ the reform of the calendar promoted by John XIII ‘with the best Anglican liturgical tradition, theory, and practice.’<sup>271</sup> The council's initiative did not lead to effective reconciliation. However, one of the achievements of the council was to pursue unity among Christians on the basis of liturgical reform. As David Turnbloom has underlined, the Council's innovations can be traced back to the development of the liturgical theories of the main Protestant churches, including the Anglican Church.<sup>272</sup> For instance, the Revised Common Lectionary, released in 1994 by the English Language Liturgical Consultation and the North American Consultation on Common Texts, was based on the 1969 Roman Catholic lectionary, which followed the reform of the Council.

Conversely, Anglican and other Protestant observers also exerted their influence on the council fathers. The impact of Protestantism is more difficult to detect in theological achievements; yet, in liturgical practice and aesthetic taste, it was relevant. Among the most known results, the Roman Catholic liturgy saw an increasing use of the vernacular as the language of the rite and the taking of Communion under both kinds (bread and wine), which had characterized the Protestant approach for years. Also, in the field of architecture,

following the Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church would often be accused of excessive Protestantism.<sup>273</sup>

Ecumenical meetings between Roman Catholics and Anglican were also proceeding at the apex levels. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 1960 John XXIII received the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher and, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1962, the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Arthur Arnold Morris (1898–1977). The meetings continued also after the retirement of Fisher in 1961 and the death of Roncalli in 1963. Their successors, Giovanni Battista Montini, Pope as Paul VI (1963–78), and the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, continued the dialogue. On 24 March 1966 they met in the basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls in Rome and promulgated a Joint Declaration marking 'a new stage in the development of fraternal relations, based upon Christian charity, and of sincere efforts to remove the causes of conflict and to re-establish unity.'<sup>274</sup> The meeting was accompanied by the foundation of the Anglican Centre in Rome, which promoted dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

The rapprochement with the Church of Rome also followed the ecumenical inputs of the Focolare Movement. Founded in 1943 in Trent, Italy, by Chiara Lubich (1920–2008), the movement aimed at social unity through material, cultural, and spiritual communion. Lubich's movement, promoting Christian unity, was part of a European network of interfaith associations, including the ecumenical community in Taizè, France, and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Geneva. The introduction of the Focolare Movement in England dated to 1961, when Lubich met Pawley in Rome. In the same year, she invited some Anglican priests to the Focolare centre in Grottaferrata, near Rome, on the occasion of an interconfessional meeting between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. In 1963 the first Focolare centre opened in Liverpool. In 1964, on the suggestion of Pawley, Lubich was invited to speak in the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral.<sup>275</sup> One year later, she was received by Ramsey in Lambeth. Ramsey was convinced that the movement could create a bridge between the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Church. In 1967 a Focolare centre opened in London, sealing the rapid expansion of the movement all over England. In the English Focolare centres, Christians lived the gospel together.<sup>276</sup> There was no distinction between Catholics and Anglicans, in a unity 'In Christ' which was reaffirmed by a visit of Lubich in 1971.<sup>277</sup>

Ecumenical dialogue also progressed on the Protestant side. In 1967 an Anglican-Lutheran Committee was formed to initiate a formal dialogue that would result in the *Pullach Report* of 1972. In addition to bilateral meetings, opportunities for ecumenical exchange in England increased considerably in the 1960s. In 1965, for example, an ecumenical conference on 'baptismal life' was held in Swanwick. It was attended by 270 people, mainly Anglicans, but also Catholic, Orthodox and Baptist clergy. Gilbert Cope from the University of Birmingham's Institute of Church Architecture also spoke at the event and gave a lecture on the architectural context of baptism.<sup>278</sup> Meanwhile, the third conference of the WCC Faith and Order Commission, held in Lund, Sweden, in 1952, produced the Lund Principle for Ecumenical Cooperation. The principle was officially approved by the Church of England at the 1968 Lambeth Conference. The conference, which also marked a partial opening to the ordination of women priests, introduced a series of resolutions (11 and 12) inviting dialogue with other churches. In particular: the Church of South India, the Churches of North India, the Church of Lanka, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches, the Lutheran churches. It also called for dialogue with Marxists and atheists, setting 'forward the common unity of mankind and a common participation in its present history.'<sup>279</sup>

## 5.2 Foreign references for shared church buildings

The sharing of churches between two or more confessional groups was a long-lasting tradition in Europe. Indeed, the change in the religious dedication of worship places attested to the fungibility of sacred architecture. Therefore, it was evident that the same space could fit more confessions. Already after the Reformation, many churches were shared by Protestant and Roman Catholics in Germany, Switzerland, France and Belgium. The phenomenon responded to a tolerant politics which tried to mitigate religious differences. It was widespread above all in the cases in which the sovereign belonged to a minoritarian religious group. In 16th-century Germany the use acquired a proper name: *Simultankirche* or *Simultaneum* ('simultaneous church'). These spaces were generally used at different times by two groups, or by three groups in the case of a *Trimultaneum*. In other cases, buildings were portioned to create individual spaces for the congregations. Given the rapid development of the type in foreign countries as the United States of America, Switzerland, and France, it is sometimes convenient to refer to international cases which constituted an

important reference point for English cases. Without going too far back in time, our analysis will focus only on examples of interfaith architecture built in the second half of the twentieth century.

Post-war Europe represented an already globalised context, and Britain with his colonial heritage was probably one of the most striking cases in Europe. The cultural cross-fertilisation pushed for interconfessional union, which was pursued by many international meetings on architecture. For a typology such as the interfaith building, in which the liturgical flexibility was the main evidence, social, political, and theoretical considerations were fundamentals. However, these theories tended to circulate according to channels which did not follow the same path of architectural theory, promoted, for instance, by the work of associations for the interreligious dialogue. For this reason, it is important to stress some organisations and examples which provided some practical provisions for the design of sacred spaces devoted to ecumenical brotherhood.

Among the most influential organisations was the aforementioned World Council of Churches (WCC), created in 1948 (but already planned in 1937–8) to encourage the fellowship of the churches.<sup>280</sup> The organisation included the Anglican, Old Catholic, Syriac, most Orthodox, mainstream and Evangelical Protestant churches; the Roman Catholic Church, however, was not a member of the association, although it participated with observers in WCC meetings. The Council organised many conferences on different aspects of ecumenism, but never explicitly addressed the issue of shared church buildings. Yet its Swiss headquarters, the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, designed by the Honegger brothers and inaugurated in 1965 and equipped with an interfaith chapel, designed by Danish architect Svend Erik Møller (1909–2002) offered a model for shared places of worship.<sup>281</sup>

The space was intended primarily for staff and visitors who were already accustomed to interfaith dialogue, and therefore conducive to ecumenical worship.<sup>282</sup> The plan comprised a rectangle with the assembly arranged in three branches around the area of the altar, pulpit and lectern, covered by a canopy. The altar consisted of a simple wooden table, very similar to the Protestant communion table. It was raised on a low platform that made it clearly visible to the assembly (the carved screens of the iconostasis/plutei were added later) and at the same time, inserted among the people. The dais was permanent; instead, the altar, the Cross, pulpit, and lectern were moveable, allowing the space to adapt to several rituals. The absence of iconography made the space suitable for the aniconism of some denominations, including

the most “Calvinist approach” of the Anglican Low Church.<sup>283</sup> The relevance of the chapel is expressed by his publication in *Churchbuilding*.<sup>284</sup> This article, dated 1970, should be seen in the context of the many ecumenical experiments conducted in Britain in those years. It described a place which ‘must not bring the thought to a specific Christian Confession’ but, at the same time ‘must not have the character of a meeting hall.’<sup>285</sup> The description of the space, provided by Erik Møller, was followed by some considerations by Norman Haine, who discussed it in relation to contemporary developments taking place in the United Kingdom. Haines praised the flexibility of the space, but pointed out some limitations, deduced from user comments. Among them, he emphasised the fact that the space works well with staff who were already predisposed to ecumenism. However, it could hardly be a model for ‘ecumenical work outside.’<sup>286</sup>

Before it, another building for ecumenical use had caught the attention of British experts in liturgy and architecture, notably Robert Maguire and Keith Murray, who published it as the last case in their selection of the *Modern churches of the world*.<sup>287</sup> This was the church of the ecumenical monastic community of Taizé, which was very influential in the work of liturgical revision in Western Europe.<sup>288</sup> The community was founded in 1940 by the Protestant Reformed minister Roger Schütz, who professed reconciliation between Christians.<sup>289</sup> The church was erected by the young German volunteers of the *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste*, a pacifist movement redeeming Germany's Nazi past, and was consecrated in 1962. It consisted of a single large hall in the shape of an elongated hexagon, covered by a triangular coffered roof made of precast concrete. The interior arrangement was pretty traditional.<sup>290</sup> Nevertheless it was soon changed. Indeed, due to their activism with the Catholic Church, Schütz and the vice-prior were invited as observers to the Second Vatican Council. After the Council, they considered the interior of the church too rigid and decided to reorganise it significantly. In 1967 the choir was removed and replaced by movable elements. The rest of the newly added furniture could also be easily removed. Thus, the church could be transformed into a meeting space, a dining room or even a dormitory.<sup>291</sup> Although the architect's commitment to community principles was praised by Maguire and Murray, and his post-Vatican reordering attested to an innovative approach to flexibility, the church did not find approval from George Pace who, in an article in *Churchbuilding*, described it as disappointing: ‘It is sad that in a climate of sharing “side by side because God sent us and not because we are trying to convert each other” should not have generated nobler architecture.’<sup>292</sup> Beside Pace's aesthetic judgment, the flexibility of the space was particularly

suited to the context of Britain's multi-purpose churches. In the same years in Britain, this multifunctionality was legitimised by John Gordon Davies' historical reconstruction in *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (1968). Davies was the director of the Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture at the University of Birmingham and his book, which had huge impact on architects, analysed the historical use of sacred buildings for secular purposes: defending against attacks, having legal proceedings, publishing notices, teaching, or even more mundane activities such as acting, dancing, feasting, playing, selling goods, storing, living and sleeping. The stated aim of the historical excursus was to examine the relationship between the sacred and profane use of churches, to appreciate their unity, and finally to consider the idea of the consecration of buildings. The idea of a polarity between sacred and profane space was elaborated by the Romanian scholar, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) in *Sacred and Profane* (1957), which based the sacredness of a space on its power to connect different cosmic dimensions.<sup>293</sup> Later, this polarity would be reinterpreted (1972) by Larry E. Shiner (1936–) in the light of the 'human' or 'lived' space, or a discontinuous space 'interlaced with symbolic associations' which characterised not only religious architecture, but all those building conceived according to a spiritual significance.<sup>294</sup> Davies, instead, broke the dichotomy by inserting a third term: 'secular' that he distinguished from 'profane'.<sup>295</sup> The first is that which belongs to the human sphere; the second is all that is not sacred, which is contrary to it and cannot exist with it. According to Davies, the frequent equating of the two terms prevented the exercise of secular activities in churches, as they resulted in a desecration of space. Instead, he argued, the revelation of Christ's humanity had become the locus of unity between heaven and earth, which justified the coexistence of sacred and secular activities in the same space. Of course, if the same space could host secular actions, it could also host different rituals without being profaned by them.

If the mentioned cases were shared by denominations within the Christian sphere, some churches were also shared with other religions. For instance, the Unity Chapel (1965–9) in the convent of the Claris Sisters in Yarzeh, Lebanon, housed the prayers of the local Islamic community, too. It was a massive concrete building, designed by Jacques Liger-Belair (1933–), with a high concrete tower recalling the convent of La Tourette. The brutalist look of the building in Yarzeh was appreciated for its modernity and its pictures appeared in several magazines, from *Liturgical Art* to *Manplan*.<sup>296</sup>

In other cases, shared sacred buildings also comprised spaces for the Jewish worships. For instance, areas for the Jewish cult were reserved in American college chapels. Indeed, the

Jewish elites in American society, many of which were donors to important universities, required specific places for the preservation of their religious tradition. The inclusion of different religions in university colleges was however homogenised in the architectural style. This was often evoking a typical western neoclassical or Gothic monastery. Even when the style evolved to a more convincing modernism the monastic layout was still used to organise the space. After all, there is a direct line of derivation between religious orders and educational institutions, which have historically sought to emulate the organisation of monasticism, also from an architectural point of view (see the adoption of the Gothic style, the recurring use of cloisters, bell towers, refectories, etc.).

Built since the 1960s, ecumenical university chapels have responded to a number of requirements. Firstly, they were an instrument of broad dialogue between students of different religious backgrounds, fostering students' sense of community, not unlike that achieved by student associations, fraternities, or sororities. Secondly, they concentrated different cults in one space, avoiding the construction of larger spaces that would have been difficult to justify due to growing secularism and the rarity of large ceremonies such as baptisms, weddings, or funerals. Finally, they often functioned as flexible spaces, adaptable to activities such as music concerts, readings, meetings, etc.

The first modern experiments in multi-religious architecture on university campuses in the United States of America dated back to 1875, when the Sage Chapel was built on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca.<sup>297</sup> The trend continued in the second post-war period. Indeed, in those years, the affirmation of the religious root of American society, although not connotated with a specific confession, was opposed to the atheism of communist states. The American religious tolerance was 'encapsulated in a tri-faith model of American religion as Protestant/Catholic/Jewish' that had been encouraged by the military during the war to foster fraternisation of the troops.<sup>298</sup> It is no coincidence that multi-faith chapels were built in new university colleges, where students could deepen their religious heritage.

This was the case of the Brandeis University, a non-sectarian university sponsored by the Jewish Community. Its campus in Waltham, Massachusetts, whose original masterplan was designed by Eero Saarinen (1910–61), also included a chapel for joint worship. It consisted of a curvilinear plan organised around a single altar, top-lit from a window. The design was not approved, and Saarinen presented an alternative project (1951) for shared chapel in the form of a truncated tricuspid, with three distinct altars for Protestants, Catholic and Jews in

the branches, and a central common area for the assembly. The project suggested an interesting solution to the theme of a shared space that would be adopted, for instance in the interconfessional chapel of Heathrow airport, described later in this chapter. Nevertheless, Saarinen's new project did not satisfy religious authorities, yet. Indeed, the Jewish sponsors could not accept the sharing of the building with different other confessions. Therefore, the New York firm Harrison & Abramovitz drew up a design for a chapel for Jewish worship only. It would then offer hospitality to students of other religions, too. However, when the site was consecrated in 1952, the project met with protests from students against the abandonment of the original interfaith arrangement. Therefore, the same firm was commissioned to redesign the new religious centre, which eventually comprised three separate buildings arranged around a common pond, completed in 1956. The three chapels for the Brandeis University were published in several architectural magazines, from the American *Architectural Forum* and *Architectural Record*, to the French *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and the Dutch *Bouw*.<sup>299</sup> They surely had an influence in the design of the three chapel for the Harrogate Army College and in the first design of George Pace's chapels for Keele University, both described in the following sections.

Whether the possibility to gather three different denominations in one space at Brandeis University had failed, Saarinen came back to his idea while designing an Ecumenical chapel for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston (1950–5) and the Oreon E. Scott Memorial Chapel on the Drake University Campus in Des Moines (1953–5). In particular, the Boston building was conceived as a cylindrical building enclosing an amoebic wall, whose undulation was more frequent around the altar.<sup>300</sup> Saarinen's chapel on the MIT campus was soon published in the major reviews on architecture.<sup>301</sup> It became a model for ecumenical college chapel, stressing the possibility for students to worship in a single, shared volume.

In line with this policy, several other interesting interconfessional chapels were built in the United States of America. For instance, two other influential projects were the Cadet Chapel for the U.S. Air Force Academy, near Colorado Springs, CO, built (1959–62) on design by Walter Netsch Jr. (1920–2008) of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and the interdenominational chapel at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama (1960–9) by Paul Rudolph.<sup>302</sup> They focused on the possibility to enclose all the confessions in a single building, with a fixed liturgical centres in a layout that can be slightly changed according to the needs of the community.

### 5.3 Sharing experiments in Britain

In England some churches were already shared in the 16th century, too. For example, a portion of the crypt of Canterbury cathedral, had been used by French Protestants since 1560. The Church of St Nicholas in the grounds of Arundel Castle, was instead divided into a Roman Catholic and an Anglican side. The chancel of the church was a mausoleum of the Roman Catholic Fitzalan family. Yet, the religious faith of the family provoked tension with the parish. In 1874 a wall was erected to divide the chapel (and the chancel) from the rest of the nave, creating two separate worship areas in the same building.<sup>303</sup>

The practice continued in the twentieth century. During the 1940s the former Anglican Church of St Margaret of Antioch, Leeds, hosted many Russian Orthodox communities. They were made by exiles arrived in England following the occupations of Poland and Czechoslovakia. The church had a three-nave basilica plan, in which an entire aisle, the north one, was dedicated to the Orthodox community. To fulfil the Orthodox function, an iconostasis was also arranged in the north aisle.<sup>304</sup> The suitability of the basilica layout for sharing in this way lay the way it was historically shared among the major Christian traditions. Yet, the adoption of new plans and modern architectural languages did not prevent the continuation of similar sharing experiences.

This is demonstrated by the Church of St John, North Woolwich, London, consecrated in 1968 for Anglican worship while also hosting a Roman Catholic community.<sup>305</sup> The worship space was part of a polyfunctional complex designed by Laurence King and Partners, made of a rectangular nave with a lower side aisle, composing an 'L' shape. The square volume of the altar permitted orienting the function toward one of the two branches, according to the size of the assembly. Besides the flexible capacity, the sharing capacity was eased by the minimalism of decoration. The white-plastered interior and the avoidance of decoration or symbolism specific to any of the user groups meant that no conflict would occur. A lantern, in the shape of a transparent box with a fiberglass fleche, brought the light on the altar. It was raised on a dais and preceded by simple railings. Above the celebrant, an imposing wheel chandelier descended from the ceiling. It was an element widely diffused in Anglican architecture but present in Catholic churches, as well.

In most of the cases cited, however, shared churches were the result of a coexistence that came later in the building's life. Their architectural layout had not been conceived for joint

use *ab origine*. It rather derived from the adaptation of existing spaces, generally split in its parts to fit more congregations and more worship traditions in it. The end of the 1960s, instead, marked in England the beginning of a florid period for the construction of new shared churches, informed by ecumenical principles.

In the post-war period the building of ecumenical and interdenominational churches was motivated by political will and, above all, by practical conveniences. For instance, they were realised when the space for liturgy was limited and had to answer to a multicultural public, as in the case of chapels within hospitals, airports, or other public spaces. They were also useful to strengthen a brotherhood bond and the identity feeling of a community. This was particularly valid in new housing schemes, as demonstrated in the previous chapter; but it was also important in other occasion where a communitarian spirit was sought.

For instance, it was the case of army colleges, attracting youth from all over the kingdom and the Commonwealth countries. While this attested to the pervasiveness of ecumenical thinking, which had penetrated into military enclaves historically linked to Anglicanism, it was also significant of an important social change. Indeed, ecumenism reflected the growing multiculturalism of the British military, which had attracted many young men from Ireland and former colonies. At the same time, it responded to soldiers' affection for Catholic chaplains, fostered especially during the First World War by the active role of Catholic fathers, who were more visible on the front line than ministers of other denominations.<sup>306</sup> To cite one example, in 1968 the Army Apprentice College in Harrogate was provided with worship space for denominations other than Anglicanism. The architectural result, very close to Brandeis University's solution, attested that in such a conservative context the separate building typology was still considered the best. In fact, three pyramidal chapels were built, facing the training ground: one for Anglicans, one for Roman Catholics, one for other denominations. The division into three detached buildings, while guaranteeing a plurality of denominational beliefs, underlined a certain hesitancy towards shared cults and the differences in size implied a hierarchical relationship, at least visually, between the building and the respective cults.<sup>307</sup>

#### 5.4 Interfaith college chapels

As affirmed in the introduction of this thesis, year 1970 is symbolic of many tendencies in religious architecture. In that year, for instance, *Churchbuilding* analysed many examples of

shared churches. In the same year, the monographic number of *Manplan* on 'Religion' focused on ecumenical practices as part of a reflection on the relationship between religion, man, and the city.<sup>308</sup> The introduction to the issue described religion as a force that could 'exert a revolutionary effect' on mankind.<sup>309</sup> A few pages after, a picture of youths protesting in Trafalgar Square against South African apartheid was accompanied by the text: 'Belief newly concerns itself increasingly with social and political issues. The demonstration expresses this, a hotted up version of the procession: a new 'face' of religion.'<sup>310</sup>

The new spirit of ecumenism was particularly vivid among the young. The youth movements of the late 1960s and the interest for exotic spirituality accelerated the unification of rituals under a common idea of spirituality. As underlined by Hastings, the movement of the sixties 'despised structure, secular or religious.'<sup>311</sup> The contempt for structure was of course a big propelling force for ecumenic unity: 'Structure requires clear divisions - between churches, between religions, between sacred and secular. In a state of *communitas* the division and rules are seen to be artificial and hampering, there is instead an intense sense of the unity of everything.'<sup>312</sup> They imagined the breaking of barriers between religions as a possible solution to Marxist atheism. Not by chance, in 1971 John Lennon was singing of 'a brotherhood of man' and 'people sharing the world', although his atheism was of course comprising a world with 'no religion too'.<sup>313</sup>

Universities were the main cradle of the youth movements, opposing wars and rediscovering oriental mysticism. The removal of walls between religions resulted in the attempt to bring several worship spaces under a single roof. Indeed, several projects of the late 1960s tried to recollect a fundamental unity, although recognising distinct spaces for each confession. The result was a progressive reunification of several confessions within a single space, conceived for this specific goal.

The passage from separate worship spaces to a single visual unity which is exemplified by the evolution of the plans for the interfaith chapel at Keele University (1963–65). In 1958 George Pace was commissioned to build a chapel where Anglicans, Roman Catholics and free churches could pray. Early sketches from that year depicted an aggregation of undulating cylinders pierced by slits and with sloping roofs.<sup>314</sup> The plastic group of volumes housed three separate chapels gathered around a bell tower, connected by a lower common space and a vestibule. A different solution, dating from the same year, arranged three rectangular planes of different sizes along an orthogonal axis. The Anglican and Catholic chapels were

oriented east-west. The smaller Free Church chapel had a north-south axis. Between them, a connecting space served as a vestibule and contained the sacristies. As pointed out by Peter Hammond, the layout of this first design, comprising three chapels connected by an intermediate space, is reminiscent of the layout of the Interfaith Centre at Brandeis University.<sup>315</sup> The following year, however, Pace adopted a different solution, which reflected the principles enunciated at the 1959 ecumenical meeting of the World Council of Churches. The design presented a large unity, consisting of a rectangular volume with a larger pitch for the Anglican cult and a curved volume, with two opposing apses, for the other cults.<sup>316</sup>

The project soon evolved, around 1960, into the final solution, which envisaged a rectangular plan with only two curved apses on the short side. Unlike the previous phase, the final design gathers the confessions into a unitary building: a simple volume with a gabled roof, enlarged by two cylinders, slightly higher than the roof ridge, which delimit the apses.<sup>317</sup> Covered by conical roofs, the curved volumes of the apses echo the two-tower layout typical of Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals, as well as the massive presence of medieval ramparts. This modern reinterpretation of medievalism was in line with Continental experiments on the language of ecclesiastical building. In Germany, in fact, Gottfried Böhm had long studied the medieval combination of spaces and typologies and, in the city of Bergisch Gladbach, was building (1956–60) the Church of Christ the Heart with a series of pointed towers. The external appearance was simplified by simple brick walls, pierced by groups of small rectangular (in a few cases pointed) windows with exposed concrete lintels. The linearity of the exterior, ‘designed to be austere, highly disciplined and timeless’, matched the unpretentious expression of the interior. It had exposed concrete lintels, brick walls and a sequence of wooden frames evoking vernacular wooden construction.<sup>318</sup> The interior was organised as flexible space, ‘non-directional and without built-up drama [...] capable of infinite re-arrangement and re-ordering.’<sup>319</sup> It was accessible through two entrances on the longer side. The worship space consisted of a large rectangular space for interdenominational use (although designed primarily for Anglicans) with the main altar on one dais and the choir on the opposite side. Behind the main altar was another space with two apses, which contained chapels for Roman Catholics, with the Blessed Sacrament, and another for Anglicans and Free Churchmen. Each denomination thus had its own worship space, which could be enlarged and opened for communal worship by adjusting the movable

screen. However, this rarely happened, and the church was criticised ‘for having calcified a vision of ecumenism that was too conservative.’<sup>320</sup>

A few years later, the belief in religious brotherhood and shared worship pushed towards single volumes. unique liturgical volumes, without spatial distinctions between cults. For instance, after the completion of the Keele University chapel, on the campus of the University of Sussex, the chapel was built within a single cylindrical volume, indebted to Saarinen’s MIT Chapel, as underlined by the shallow pool surrounding it. Its official designation of ‘meeting house’, indicated a generic meeting space. This name was partially justified by the presence of additional meeting spaces besides the one reserved for worship. Rather, it embodied a desire to avoid any reference to specific religious cults, since the more traditional definition of ‘chapel’ would have referred to a Christian place of prayer. The building was included in the master plan for the university campus, commissioned from Basil Spence. One of the leading authorities in architecture at the time Spence had already worked on many university colleges and school buildings.<sup>321</sup> Spence was even commissioned to design a church building, enclosed in one of the courtyards that structured the layout of the university complex. After all, he was one of the most renowned church architects in Britain, having designed several church buildings in England and Scotland, as well as interfaith chapels on university campuses. These include the chapels of the University of Edinburgh (1956–7) and St Aidan’s College (1961) in Durham, which remained unfinished.<sup>322</sup> The building that Spence was asked to build for the worship at the University of Sussex was inserted in the masterplan from the beginning, but only in 1962 its realisation became possible due to a private donation. The construction began three years later, in 1965, and the house was finally opened in 1968. The building was required by the University program to embody an interconfessional spirit, such as the Unity Chapel that Spence had designed for Coventry cathedral, and, like its precedent in Coventry, it the architect organised it according to a circular plan.<sup>323</sup> The worship space was unique and contained an altar on a curved platform with three steps, preceded axially by the ambo. In its main lines, it was a typically Christian space. However, as already argued, the adoption of non-denominational terminology such as ‘meeting house’ tried to affirm the religious impartiality of the chapel.

Instead, the Lancaster University Chaplaincy Centre, built in 1968–9 to a design by Cassidy & Ashton comprised a single volume containing three separate spaces, each for a religious confession. The plan of the centre consisted of three circles: the two smaller ones enclosed the actual chapels, one for joint Anglican and Free Church worship and the other for Roman

Catholic use; the larger one housed a quiet area, a suite for Jewish meetings, service rooms, a cafeteria downstairs and the chaplains' flats upstairs. In the centre of the three circles, a vestibule, accessible through three entrances, distributed the students to the three main blocks. This irregular area, which appeared to be a waste space, had a fundamental ecumenical function, functioning as a 'concourse area' for joint worship. In fact, the curvilinear walls of the two chapels could slide to form a common space; it is no coincidence that the axis of the two chapels intersected at the centre of the vestibule, which could easily become the fulcrum of a two-way assembly. The centrality was signalled on the outside: while the circular tree-like bodies had flat roofs, a tall spire crowned the vestibule, recovering the visual prominence of a bell tower. Despite this intersection, the Anglican and Roman Catholic chapels remained two distinct spaces, reflecting the sponsor's vision of ecumenism. It is no mystery that, with the Catholic diocese having financed much of the construction, the spatial division of the building echoed the needs of the Roman Church, ready for dialogue with the Church of England but keen to maintain its own distinctive identity.<sup>324</sup>

In other cases, chapel projects were not well accepted by students and academic members and were only realised after the insistence of donors. In these contexts, a more general concept of ecumenical use, without denominational specifications of the spaces, was more expendable. Ecumenism, for instance, offered a solution for building the Chapel at Churchill College, Cambridge. Unlike many ancient colleges of the city, Churchill College, intended for scientists and technologists, was not related to Christian orders. It had been conceived as a memorial to Winston Churchill (1874–1965), in whose name a trust for its creation was founded in 1958. In 1958 Leslie Martin had arranged a competition for the college masterplan, attended by many of the most prominent architectural firms of the period. They included the Smithsons, Stirling and Gowan, Ernö Goldfinger, Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Drake, Lyons Israel Ellis, Robert Matthew, Denys Lasdun with Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew & Lindsay Drake. The competition was won by Richard Sheppard, Robson & Partners. According to the first competition brief, the chapel was to be integrated with the main building. This decision was opposed by the academic body, in particular the biologist and Nobel Prize winner Francis Crick (1916–2004).<sup>325</sup> As a compromise, the chapel was removed from the main building and placed in an open field rather far from the main entrance, close to playgrounds and housing estates. In addition, its funding was separated from that of the college, and was fuelled mainly by the private donation of Anglican priest

and liberal politician Tim Beaumont (1928–2008). The sum available, approximately £22,000, inevitably resulted in a smaller building, which was provided by Richard Hebert Sheppard (1910–82) with a shape clearly distinguishable from the adjacent flats.<sup>326</sup> To make it visually part of the college, it was built with an exposed concrete structure and brown Stamfordstone bricks. Its floor plan reflected a ‘modern interpretation of a byzantine basilica’: Although rectangular, the central arrangement of the assembly rather followed a Greek cross layout, with the altar at the crossing.<sup>327</sup> The main area of the chapel is organised by four reinforced concrete pillars that supported beams that divided the worship space into nine naves. On the short side, a strip of service rooms housed storerooms, toilets, a vestry and a meeting room that could be opened onto the main space through a sliding door. The entrance door opened behind a metal portico obtained from the intersection of two orthogonal rectangular frames, serving as a bell tower, legible laterally as a Latin cross. The entrance was located on the diagonal of the space, visually extending the interior depth. To avoid any distraction, the main worship area lacks large windows, except for the vertical ones open at the beams; otherwise, light comes from above, especially from the lantern above the altar space. The lantern, supported by the concrete structure, was made of wood and consisted of four *canons à Lumière* covered in copper plates like the entire roof. It brought light to the central altar space, on which a spatial cross was suspended. Despite the cross, the single space had to be usable for different denominations, including Jews and Muslims, taking into account the liturgical themes and needs of each. To accommodate all the different functions, the interior furnishings, including the central altar, were mobile, allowing for musical and theatrical performances.

## 5.5 Other public interfaith centres

University chapels were pioneering applications of an ecumenical movement, representing a spark in the spread of ecumenical centres, as we saw in the previous section, or in the creation of spaces for interreligious worship within public buildings. Starting in the 1960s, in fact, interreligious spaces began to furnish a large portion of publicly funded buildings, which included mainly cemeteries and crematoria, but also hospices, hospitals and airports. An early example is the Robin Chapel, built in 1949–53 at the Thistle Foundation in Craigmillar, Edinburgh, a charity for disabled army workers.<sup>328</sup> The chapel rather followed the tradition plans of royal chapels, while adopting an almost medievalist language.

A more innovative plan structured the design of the St George's Interfaith Chapel at Heathrow Airport by Jack Forrest of Frederick Gibberd and Partners.<sup>329</sup> Dedicated in 1968, its construction was funded by the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Free Church. The space included an underground chapel, protected from aircraft noise and other buildings. The entrance was preceded by a garden created on the roof, surrounded by high walls, which took the form of a modern memorial garden with a central cross and plaques on the walls. The space opened into a portico, which housed some service rooms and a spiral staircase, leading to the underground chapel, recalling the imagery of a crypt (and perhaps the atmosphere of the ancient Christians who gathered in the catacombs). At the upper garden, the worship space had a circular plan, intersected by three trapezoidal apses. Each apse had its own independent altar, raised on a low predella, in two cases preceded by a railing, and intended for a single confession.<sup>330</sup> The seats faced the apses in a centrifugal arrangement and could easily be rearranged towards the different focal points of the apses. In any case, separate chapels were not considered necessary and after a few months, only one altar was used.<sup>331</sup> The geometric construction pays homage to Borromini's St Ivo at the Sapienza, Rome, and to the more recent project (1952–6), the Treasury of St Lawrence in Genoa, designed by Franco Albini (1905–77).<sup>332</sup> We do not know for certain whether Albini's design was known to the architects working in the office of Frederick Gibberd and Partners, although its publication in the English and American press might suggest knowledge of the project.<sup>333</sup>

The example at Heathrow was not the only ecumenical chapel opened in an airport. In fact, many interfaith chapels have been established in airports in the United States, initially for workers' worship, later also for passengers.<sup>334</sup> However, it was the first attempt to link interfaith worship and remembrance, in a continuity between these two emotional moments that are majestically embodied by architecture. With this in mind, the Heathrow chapel resorted to one of the primordial images of the Christian ecclesia, the catacomb, which for many years combined the worship of God with the memory of the dead. The use of underground space for had a very pragmatical reason, since it reduced aircraft noise and made a space within the airport suitable for meditation and worship. However, it also had a very symbolic value, evoking a uterine and chthonic atmosphere. The same religious sentiments, for instance, can be found in Graham Sutherland's wartime sketches of coal mines, in which workers are kneeling as if in adoration. Similarly, in the Heathrow chapel, the contrast between the dark, cavernous intimacy of the worship space and the bright, airy buildings of

the surrounding terminals, with high ceilings and walls of glass, emphasised how, in an age of space conquests projected towards the heavens, religion offered a space to investigate the ‘geological level of existence.’<sup>335</sup>

## 5.6 Conclusion

The theme of interconfessional worship was strongly experienced among young people, and it deeply impacted on the definition of chapels, even in contexts as apparently conservative as military training colleges. Reconstructing the history of university chapels, it is evident how the students' ideas, culminating at times in protests against their university authorities, often guided the design of interconfessional chapels. By 1970, these ideas of inclusivity stemming from the counterculture of the 1960s had become well established. This is one of the main reasons why 1970 signals the chronological limit of our period. By 1970 many interdenominational projects had been realised while, in the same years, the Catholic Church formalised the liturgical theories of the Vatican II. Formalisation, on the one hand, registered the changes that had taken place in Catholic ritual and aesthetics; on the other hand, it crystallised liturgical practice, preventing further external influences on the Roman liturgy. In the 1970s interfaith architecture had a solid heritage of built cases, however their success did not last for long. If the sharing of churches in cities demonstrated the weakness of a common administration by different communities, in colleges the situation was different. The interfaith chapels were favoured by the active religiosity of the students and the central governance of the university authorities, which responded to the strong religiosity of the sponsors. In the most prestigious colleges, students themselves came with strong religious inclinations, usually of an evangelical kind, while others were more conventional Anglicans. However, they had to face a further phenomenon, that of the growing secularisation of society, which determined the stop of interfaith experiments. Indeed, if only few colleges were being built after 1970, even fewer of them housed chapels. One of the latest was the ecumenical chapel at Robinson College, Cambridge, designed by Gillespie, Kidd and Coia, which did not follow the students' request, but rather an explicit request of the benefactor paying for the college. Opened in 1981, it was one of the last glimpses of a marvellous period of architectural experimentation on ecumenical spaces.

The chapter has demonstrated how the ecumenical principles enriching the theological debate of the post-war period influenced the design of sacred place. Although it is not always

true that ecumenical and shared worship spaces achieve different architectural solutions, in plan or in any other respect, common use imposes certain characteristics. After the first experiments involving separate spaces for each cult, the idea of a single shared space was arrived at. The relationship between the groups is no longer an interference to be avoided, but a dialogue to be stimulated. In fact, it is no coincidence that, as Robert Proctor recounts in his book, many multi-faith spaces, conceived with separate altars, were modified through use, reserving a single shared altar for the celebration of all denominations.<sup>336</sup> This led to a reflection, both historical and architectural, on the original liturgical space. The aim was to recognise in the various denominations their common denominator in a pristine sacred space that could offer models for the ecumenical sacred space of the future. In this sense, the church of Cippenham, mentioned in the opening of the text, is an example of this new research, comparable in its liturgical, spatial, and technological solutions, to foreign architectures. For example, it can be related to the industrial volumes of the Church of Saint Luke in Nantes, also known as the 'Maison du Peuple Chrétien' (1964–8) by Pierre Pinsard (1906–88) and Hugo Vollmar (1936–), with movable partitions designed by Jean Prouvé (1901–84).<sup>337</sup> At the same time, the industrial aesthetics of the church in Cippenham or the ecumenical centre in Skelmersdale can easily be compared to other ecumenical centres built in Europe at that time, such as the St Mark's Ecumenical Centre in the Malherbe district, Grenoble (1968), by Jean Cognet. Indeed, a parallel can be fund between the foreign examples of interfaith architectures and those built in England, above all in the sphere of college chapels. It is not strange difficult to see reflections of Scandinavian Protestant architecture in the chapel at Hull University, just as it is not unreasonable to trace German ancestry in the apsidal cylinders of George Pace's Keele Chapel, reminiscent of Bohm's volumes in St Elisabeth's in Cologne. Even if we know that the projects for American colleges were widely published in the major architectural magazines, it is hard to trace the specific connections with English architects, thinkers or artists who could be inspired by them. Therefore, the chapter has essentially reckoned upon the stylistic comparison of case studies.

Even if there is often a lack of documentary evidence, it must be borne in mind that the idea of ecumenism implies a close exchange between different confessions and the assumption of a common geographical base overcoming national distinctions. Therefore, as the next chapter suggests, a conscious analysis of the theme must consider the wide net of relations between groups which were even geographically diversified.

## Notes

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<sup>262</sup> On the development of ecumenism see Susan K. Wood, 'Ecumenism', in R. Gaillardetz, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II* (2020), 282-302.

<sup>263</sup> Colin Davey, *The Story of the BCC* (1990).

<sup>264</sup> Paul A. Welsby, *A History of the Church of England 1945-1980* (1983), 79.

<sup>265</sup> For an introduction to the Second Vatican Council: R. Burigana, *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II* (2012). A detailed historical narration can be found in G. Alberigo (ed.), *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II*, 4 vols. (1999). For the Ecumenical trends within the Council: G. O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (2013).

<sup>266</sup> T. Worcester (ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits* (2017), pp. 265-270.

<sup>267</sup> For a history of the *Foyer Unitas*: J. Koet, L. Galema, M. M. van Assendelft, *Hearth of Unity: Forty Years of Foyer Unitas, 1952-1992* (1996).

<sup>268</sup> Pawley, who learnt Italian during the war years as prisoner-of-war in Italy, met several Roman Catholics. His letters from Rome testified to his intellectual sharing of some Vatican principles. Bernard C. Pawley, *Observing Vatican II* (2013).

<sup>269</sup> Monica Furlong, 'The Second Vatican Council: the greatest step of the century in the quest for Church unity', *The Sunday Times Magazine* (7 October 1962), supplement, 2.

<sup>270</sup> Bernard C. Pawley, ed., *The Second Vatican Council: Studies by Eight Anglican Observers* (1967). For a review, see the contribution by the English Catholic Benedictine Cristoph Butler, *In the Light of the Council* (1968), 51.

<sup>271</sup> Massy H. Shepherd, 'The Liturgy', in B. C. Pawley, ed., *The Second Vatican Council: Studies by Eight Anglican Observers* (1967), 149-74.

<sup>272</sup> David Farina Turnbloom, 'Liturgy', in R. Gaillardetz, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II* (2020), 190.

<sup>273</sup> This Protestant spirit was caught, even before the Council, by Banham: see chapter 8. The project of the church built (1975-80) on a design by the Lutheran Alvar Aalto (1898-76) in Riola, on the Bolognese hills, was also attacked for its Protestant air.

<sup>274</sup> Michael Cantuariensis and Paulus PP. VI, *The Final Report* (London: CTS/SPCK, 1982), 117-118, cited in *The Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Michael Ramsey*, retrieved from [www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105816/Common-Declaration-March-1966.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105816/Common-Declaration-March-1966.pdf), accessed December 2021.

<sup>275</sup> The Ecumenical vocation of the city would be enshrined in the creation, in the 1970s, of an ecumenical federation of schools, which are now under the name of Liverpool Hope University, highly supported by the Catholic Archbishop Derek Worlock and the Anglican Bishop David Sheppard.

<sup>276</sup> The British branch of the movement also founded their own magazine, the *New City Magazine*. The first issue was out in 1970.

<sup>277</sup> Independent Catholic News (28 October 2013), retrieved from <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/23490>, accessed December 2021.

<sup>278</sup> 'England: An Ecumenical Conference on the baptismal life' – Swanwick, Derbyshire, England from January 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 1965', *Studia Liturgica* (1 March 1965): 59–60.

<sup>279</sup> Resolution 11: Christianity and Other Faiths; Resolution 12: Religious Dialogue.

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<sup>280</sup> W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: The council, 1982). For a rapid overview see also Peter Lodberg, 'World Council of Churches', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 12, No. 2, *Europabilder der Kirchen in der Nachkriegszeit* (1999), 527-36.

<sup>281</sup> Møller had gained popularity for his Arhus City Hall (1937-44), designed with Arne Jacobsen (1902-71). His previous experience with religious architecture regarded the Adventskirken (1942-4) in Vanløse, Denmark.

<sup>282</sup> Franz Graf, Giulia Marino, *Le Centre œcuménique à Genève (1961-67) : Étude patrimoniale*, (Geneva : EPFL-ENAC-TSAM - laboratoire des techniques et de la sauvegarde de l'architecture moderne, 2013), retrieved from [http://ge.ch/geodata/SIAMEN/Procedures\\_Archives/29981\\_RIE\\_annexe3sur4.pdf](http://ge.ch/geodata/SIAMEN/Procedures_Archives/29981_RIE_annexe3sur4.pdf), accessed February 2021.

<sup>283</sup> The ornament was limited to abstract stained glass, also added after the completion. For the rest, all the decoration is left and to the expressivity of materials, from the wooden panels screening the glass walls, to the texture of concrete vaulted beams. It is significant of a materialistic poignancy, typical of Nordic architecture, which at the same time embodies a pushed technological drive joint to a modernist consciousness on the use of light, shadows, and rhythm. Its technological expressivity can be compared to Mangiarotti and Morassutti's glass church of in Baranzate, Italy, on which see also chapter 5. The dialogue between the grid structure of the walls and the vaulted covering gives a nod Le Corbusier's High Court in Chandigarh, India, as well as to the works of Josep Lluís Sert.

<sup>284</sup> 'Lessons from Geneva', *Churchbuilding*, 29 (January 1970), 9-12.

<sup>285</sup> Erik Moller, 'Ecumenical Centre Chapel, Geneva', *Churchbuilding*, 29 (January 1970), 9.

<sup>286</sup> Norman Haines, 'Some thoughts on Ecumenical Chapels', *Churchbuilding*, 29 (January 1970), 11.

<sup>287</sup> Maguire and Murray, *Modern Churches of the World*, 154-7.

<sup>288</sup> Nigel Yates, *Liturgical Space*, 143.

<sup>289</sup> Brother Roger founded the community in the small town of Taizé in Burgundy, France. There, thanks to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, Cardinal Roncalli (future Pope John XIII), he was allowed to use an old medieval Catholic church. The growth of the community also led to the need for a larger church; therefore, a member of the community, Brother Denis (1934-2005), designed a new building.

<sup>290</sup> Initially, the nave was organised by a massive choir before the altar, a stone altar raised on a podium, the organ to the north wall and an ambo to the southern corner. The chancel was therefore distinct from the rest of the space, even though it was symbolically part of it since the roof grid continued in the altar space, where the triangles were excavated in a device which 'links the two parts firmly together'. Maguire and Murray, *Modern Churches of the World*, 155.

<sup>291</sup> Moreover, the steps of the sanctuary were removed, the altar was substituted with a simple wooden table, on which a round chandelier was suspended, while a lectern was set in the middle of the assembly. See Pierre Lebrun, *Le complexe du monument : les lieux de culte catholique en France durant les trentes glorieuses* (thesis, Université Lumière Lyon2), 70-1.

<sup>292</sup> George Pace, 'Shared Church Buildings', *Churchbuilding*, 27 (April 1969), 3.

<sup>293</sup> Eliade Mircea, *Sacred and Profane* (1957).

<sup>294</sup> Larry E. Shiner, 'Sacred Space, Profane Space, Human Space', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 40/4 (1972), 425-436. In particular, he mentioned masterpieces of world architecture such as the ancient Greek Temples, Fallingwater, the Unité d'Habitation at Marseille, the Court Building at Chandigarh.

<sup>295</sup> Davies, *The Secular Use of Church Buildings*, *passim*.

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<sup>296</sup> *Liturgical Arts*, 40/1 (1971), 30-31; *Manplan*, 5 (March 1970), 189. To underline the architect's ability to solve the functional need of different religious, one can consider that, besides his many projects of churches, he even realised a mosque in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>297</sup> Morris Bishop, *A History of Cornell* (2014), 121.

<sup>298</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, 'Protestant Theologies and the Problem of Sacred Space. Divine/Human Relationships in American Chapels & Churches since 1945', *Actas del Congreso Internacional de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, 5 (2017), 9.

<sup>299</sup> *Architectural Forum* (September 1954), 134-135; *Architectural Record* (January 1956), 147-153; *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 71 (1957), 58-60; *Bouw* (November 2, 1957), 1106-1109.

<sup>300</sup> The space had no windows to the exterior and was lit by an eccentric oculus in the ceiling, whose light fell on the altar space, materialised by a glittering suspended sculpture by Harry Bertoia (1915-78). The table comprised a simple marble block on a three-step circular dais, which hid a staircase opened in the floor behind, leading to underground spaces including the vestry and other service rooms.

<sup>301</sup> They included *Casabella* (1955), *Architectural Forum* (1956), *Architectural Record* (1956), *Architettura Cronache e Storia* (1957), *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (1957), *Bauwelt* (1957).

<sup>302</sup> The Cadet Chapel was divided in two levels. It covered three worship areas under the same roof: the main level housed the Protestant worship area, the underground level the Roman Catholic and Jewish ones. The interior of the Protestant and the Catholic Chapels was designed by Harold E. Wagoner (1905-86), an architect specialised in Church Architecture, who would also design the interfaith chapel at Grand Canyon (1970). See Jay M. Price, *Temples for a Modern God: Religious Architecture in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 103-4.

<sup>303</sup> In 1979 the wall would be demolished but the spaces would be kept separated by a screen.

<sup>304</sup> The church was designed (1901-8) as a three-nave brick basilica by Temple Moore (1856-1920). The façade of the church was added by George Pace in 1964. On the orthodox community in the church see John Minnis with Trevor Mitchell, *Religion and Place in Leeds* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2007), 12.

<sup>305</sup> 'St. John's Church Centre North Woolwich', *Churchbuilding*, 28 (October 1969), 7-9.

<sup>306</sup> This was partially due to their assistance to dying soldiers. The bibliography on the role of Catholic chaplains during the First World War is abundant. For an overview, see Michael Snape, 'British Catholicism and the British Army in the First World War', *Recusant History*, 26:2, 314-358; Grace Davie, 'The military chaplain: a study in ambiguity', *International journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 15:1 (2015), 39-53.

<sup>307</sup> 'Editorial', *Churchbuilding*, 27 (April 1969), 2.

<sup>308</sup> *Churchbuilding*, 29 (January 1970); *Manplan*, 5 (March 1970), Religion.

<sup>309</sup> 'Introduction', *Manplan* 5 (1970), 169.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibi*, 187.

<sup>311</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985* (1986), 584

<sup>312</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>313</sup> John Lennon, 'Imagine', *Imagine* (1971).

<sup>314</sup> Peter Pace, *The Architecture of George Pace* (London: Batsford, 1990), 57. The shapes were not distant from the sinuous church that Miguel Fisac was building (1957-60) in Victoria, Spain.

<sup>315</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 134.

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<sup>316</sup> Pace, *The Architecture of George Pace*, 57.

<sup>317</sup> Pace, *The Architecture of George Pace*, 189; George Pace, ‘Shared Church Buildings’, *Churchbuilding*, 27 (April 1969), 3.

<sup>318</sup> Pace, *The Architecture of George Pace*, 191.

<sup>319</sup> Pace, *The Architecture of George Pace*, 189.

<sup>320</sup> Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 309.

<sup>321</sup> Louise Campbell, ‘Towards a new university: from Redbrick to Sussex’, in *Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects*, ed. by L. Campbell, M. Glendinning, J. Thomas (2012), 166.

<sup>322</sup> On the projects of the unbuilt chapels: Clive Fenton and David Walker, ‘The Modern Church’, in *Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects*, ed. by L. Campbell, M. Glendinning, J. Thomas (2012), 112–3.

<sup>323</sup> University of Sussex Library, *Programme of the Meeting House Chapel of the University of Sussex*, SxMs92/3/3/6.

<sup>324</sup> Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 309-10.

<sup>325</sup> Mark Goldie, *A Cultural Revolution* (2014), retrieved from [chu.cam.ac.uk/about/history-churchill/cultural-revolution/](http://chu.cam.ac.uk/about/history-churchill/cultural-revolution/), accessed February 2021.

<sup>326</sup> Richard Sheppard, and Canon Duckworth, ‘Churchill College Chapel’, *Churchbuilding*, 25 (October 1968), 21–3.

<sup>327</sup> Mark Goldie, *Building of the month: October 2007 - The Chapel at Churchill College Cambridge* (2007), retrieved from [c20society.org.uk/building-of-the-month/the-chapel-at-churchill-college-cambridge](http://c20society.org.uk/building-of-the-month/the-chapel-at-churchill-college-cambridge), accessed February 2021.

<sup>328</sup> *Thistle Foundation Conservation Area: Character Appraisal* (2001), 7-11.

<sup>329</sup> On the project see George Pace, ‘Shared Church Buildings’, *Churchbuilding* 27 (April 1969), 6-7; Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 310-1; Christine Hui Lan Manley, *Frederick Gibberd* (2017), 100-2.

<sup>330</sup> This organisation did not work fully if, already in 1972, the main altar was rededicated to shared ecumenical use, while the two other apses were dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament and the baptismal font.

<sup>331</sup> Norman Haines, ‘London Airport Chapel’, *Churchbuilding* 29 (January 1970), 11.

<sup>332</sup> Franco Albini was known in Britain and his personal relationship with Leslie Martin is proved in Antonello Alici, ‘Franco Albini and Leslie Martin: “A Parallel Working Life”’, in L. Ciccarelli and C. Melhuish, eds., *Postwar Architecture in Italy and the UK: Exchanges and transcultural influences* (2021), 70–85.

<sup>333</sup> Michel Santiago, ‘Treasury in Genoa’, *The Architectural Review*, 121/722 (1 March 1957), 202-3; ‘A Buried Treasury’, *Architectural Forum*, 6/4 (April 1957), 152-5. It was probably an inspiration also for Philip Johnson’s underground painting gallery at his New Canaan estate (1965): Key Bea Jones, *Suspending Modernity: The Architecture of Franco Albini* (2014), 168-72.

<sup>334</sup> Wendy Cadge, ‘A Brief History of Airport Chapels’ (9 January 2008), retrieved from [smithsonianmag.com/travel/airport-chapels-brief-history-180967765/](http://smithsonianmag.com/travel/airport-chapels-brief-history-180967765/), accessed 28 February 2021.

<sup>335</sup> The definition come from the anthropologist Eliade Mircea, who pointed out the existence of a subterranean matrix of religions: Eliade Mircea, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities* (1957, 1<sup>st</sup> English edn. 1960), Chapter 8.

<sup>336</sup> Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 309.

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<sup>337</sup> The program was inspired by the booklet *L'Eglise maison du peuple de Dieu : liturgie et architecture*, produced by the Comité National d'Art Sacré in 1965 on the basis of the principles of the Second Vatican Council.

# 6. Modernising tradition through technology

While previous chapters have emphasised the impact of liturgical and social theories on church buildings, this chapter reverses the point of view. In fact, it considers the technological expression of post-war ecclesiastical architecture, which is not only a matter of construction but also an expression of a formal approach that questions the concept of style. The narrative starts from the conflicting relationship between traditional aesthetics and the formal innovation allowed by modern building techniques. This juxtaposition is especially reflected in the construction of the great British cathedrals of the 20th century. They range from the traditional masonry construction and the Gothic layout of the Anglican cathedrals of Liverpool and Guildford to the modern ‘concrete exoskeleton’ of the Liverpool Catholic cathedral, with the mixed structure of the Coventry Cathedral (unreinforced concrete and stone for the walls, pre-stressed concrete for the roof and the pillars) standing between the two. Of course, the approaches to design were not always so clear-cut: historicist churches were also built with modern technology. Similarly, construction technologies, materials, and formal elements from the historicist tradition could be found in churches that were commonly regarded as modernist, too. For example, as Robert Proctor and Max Sternberg have already shown, the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, described by Michael Manser as ‘a gargantuan concrete aberration from the Apollo space programme’ had a clear medievalist influence.<sup>338</sup>

However, the concept of modernity involved several aspects of church architecture: the use of new building technologies and the adoption of a modernist style often corresponded to the spread of modern liturgical ideas. Not surprisingly, the functionalism recognised to modernist architecture was expressed in churches as the optimisation of liturgical activity. The compliance with the liturgical function became the main goal of designers, sometimes to the detriment of a mystical atmosphere. Indeed, this new faith in rationality called into question the symbolic nature of sacred architecture. This architectural argument was addressed on a global scale, e.g. by Rudolf Schwarz and Le Corbusier, and found correspondence in the British debate. As leading influences within the NCRG, Nigel Melhuish and Peter Hammond sought to steer church architecture towards a combination of

functionalism and symbolism. They pushed towards a new sacred architecture capable of abandoning the cumbersome legacy of the revivalist past.

In this context, the contribution of Alison and Peter Smithson is crucial. The pair bring the protests of the younger generation of CIAM to Britain. Moreover, with their competition design for the new Coventry Cathedral, they offer the model of a new way of conceiving ecclesiastical architecture., whose bold structural design represented a rejection of traditional morphology in favour of a new aesthetic based on structural expressiveness and was celebrated by leading critics and theorists of the time, including Peter Hammond.

The project marked the spread of form-resistant structures in church architecture, i.e. structures that derive their strength from their geometry. For instance, churches began to be covered with thin concrete shells whose strength was guaranteed by double curvature or pleating. These structures, by increasing the span of the roof, freed the assembly space from the clutter of supports. The result was greater visibility of the interior and a greater sense of spatial unity. In other cases, the modernity of the project was measured by the degree of prefabrication. The development of a British construction industry and the creation of patents for prefabricated dry construction also influenced sacred architecture. New companies tried to conquer this market traditionally associated with craftsmanship, promising greater economy, flexibility and speed of construction. The church in the new town of Duston, designed by McLachlan, Seely and Paget, was emblematic of the prefabricated church phenomenon.

On the other hand, the flexibility of space led architects to think about extendible or mobile ecclesiastical solutions, capable of responding to changing urban needs. The ease of assembly and disassembly, prefabrication and planimetric flexibility decreed the success of space frame structures also in the roofing of ecclesiastical buildings. These solutions, translated from civil architecture, oriented church designers towards a new aesthetic and a new concept of the church: certainly, a church for the space age.<sup>339</sup>

## **6.1 Revival versus modern style**

Soon after the Second World War, the new welfare state played a major role in the definition of the built environment. Indeed, the State's agenda incorporated the reconstruction of national industries and the realisations of new infrastructures, along with the formation of

new urban areas. In this wide program, the State found its architectural expression in the rational match of form and function, seen as a product of those efficiency and material progress which had been the main slogan of modernism since the early twentieth century.<sup>340</sup> Among the most evident aspects of modernism, the affirmation of a western rationality and confidence in the application of a scientific method was deeply linked to the optimisation of space and construction processes, with advantages in terms of cost and speed, which were driving factors in the post-war reconstruction. In addition, the adoption of a modernist style, was particularly suitable for the fuelling of national industries. The new modernist buildings, devoid of built-in ornaments and often based on standardised elements, matched the adoption of advanced construction technologies, also pushing towards semi and total prefabrication. If civic architectures, representing the State's efficiency, were easily designed in the new modernist style, in church architecture the phenomenon was less clear-cut.<sup>341</sup> Several churches of the period prove how the adoption of new technologies did not always imply formal innovation, according to a trend which could fit to Alan Powers' definition of 'another Modernism'.<sup>342</sup> Other churches demonstrate that modernism had not a univocal meaning and that it was declined in different variants according to designers and clients' sensitiveness, geographical setting, political will, financial availability, and other contextual conditions.<sup>343</sup> In any case, there is no doubt that the progressive affirmation of modernism in the second post-war period discussed the concept of revivalist styles also in church architecture. In particular, the Gothic style, that had been for long associated with social and ethical idealism, was challenged by modernist church designer. Even so, in ecclesiastical projects, the echo of ecclesiology and medieval revivalism remained influential. Traditional prototypes survived under the guise of basilica plans, Gothic proportions, stained-glass windows, furnishing, or vestments. In part, this endurance was due to the fact that the influence of theorists like Morris, Ruskin, and Pugin was still strong in the ecclesiastical sphere. These reference figures had successfully associated past styles with moral, political, and liturgical values. In the field of the artist's ethos, the question of style had been interpreted by Pugin and Ruskin as a revolt against creative individualism. In a period in which Marx denounced the alienation of labour, the modern slavery of industrial society was opposed to the creativity of the free Gothic craftsmen. Creativity that was always acting in a shared, homogeneous reference system. On the contrary, the Renaissance represented the emblem of permissive capitalism, which had revalued individual initiatives as well as singular creativities.

The interlacing of aesthetic and moral theories clarifies the complex role of style in twentieth-century architecture. It justifies the post-war endurance of church buildings still oriented to past styles. In particular, the revivalist fire saw in the rescue of medieval traditions a rebellion against the fast changes of society. The crisis of the old system of social, economic, and political values upset the faithful, who started to look for a reassuring image.

This nostalgic sentiment is evident in the fact that most of the British cathedrals built in the period still spoke with a medievalist vocabulary. For instance, the Anglican cathedral of Liverpool, built (1904–78) on a design by Giles Gilbert Scott (1880–1960), exemplified such a ‘continuing vitality of tradition.’<sup>344</sup> Its neo-Gothic look was the expression of a tradition that looked to models geographically and confessionally diversified. For instance, it could get inspiration from German Gothic or a more Italian paleo-Christian past, often according to the degree of Anglo-Catholicism.<sup>345</sup> Not by chance, Scott sustained that the design of a cathedral depends not on the efficiency but rather on the atmosphere. In line with it, he affirmed that his religious building embodied ‘a type of functionalism with which the functionalist is unfamiliar’.<sup>346</sup> The Gothic tower of the Anglican cathedral was opposed, a few miles away, by the modern outline of the new Roman Catholic cathedral. Dedicated to Christ the King, the Catholic church was completed in 1967 by Frederick Gibberd (1908–84). It stood out in the city with its bright, white look. A candour that called to mind Le Corbusier’s affirmation that, *when the cathedrals were white*, an unexpected system of forms sprang from a ‘new, marvellous and exceedingly daring technique.’<sup>347</sup> The new glow of Gibberd’s cathedral, indeed, evoked a new age made of technological advancement and spatial conquer, as suggested by its spaceship-like form.<sup>348</sup>

The survival of the Gothic ecclesiology was also evident in Guildford Cathedral (1936–61). In 1932 Edward Maufe (1882–1974) won the competition for the new cathedral, completed after World War II. The building reinterpreted the traditional plan of a nave flanked by aisles with simplified volumes. In a way, the open interior with repeated Gothic arches in pale stone, enhancing the reflection of light, recalled the atmosphere of hazy suspension exuded by the Danish Grundtvig Church (1921–40). Like in the Danish church, pointed arches and vaults were cleared of ornamentation, limited to a few focal points. Yet, the symbolism of the decoration, the proportions, and the monumentality of the exterior was still ‘in the best tradition of medieval cathedrals.’<sup>349</sup> A partial mediation between modernity and tradition was represented by the new Coventry Cathedral (1951–62), designed by Basil Spence (1907–76). If Spence had well understood the potential of modern structures and art, he was

attentive to retain a certain echo of tradition. The link with the Gothic tradition relied above all on its elongated plan, with the altar to the end, and the slender proportions of its volumes. But the feeling was also furthered by the introduction of elements of uncontroversial Gothic descent, from the stained-glass windows to the tree-like pillars, from the entrance porch to the spire. As suggested by Hammond, it 'illustrates no less clearly than its revivalist predecessors at New York, Liverpool and Guildford [...] the subordination of function to visual effect.'<sup>350</sup> Actually, the traditional skin of the church hid a modern structure, calculated by the Ove Arup engineering firm. It emerged in the modern pre-stressed concrete canopy, composed of a series of ribs. The space between the ribs was closed by concrete panels. Their intrados had originally to be shown 'in the interest of structural honesty', but then it was clad by a timber vault mimicking a coffering.<sup>351</sup> The concealing of the canopy declared the architect's ineffectiveness in communicating a new image of modernity. Yet, in some later projects of churches recalled in this chapter, Spence would demonstrate a bigger freedom and a much more conscious idea of modernity.<sup>352</sup>

Although their scale would suggest a departure from minor religious architecture, the cathedrals mentioned exemplified a widespread contradictory relationship between modern and historicist forms. Complicating matters was the heavy legacy of tradition, often understood as the reproduction of the typical image of the church, imagined as a familiar and reassuring shelter from the evils of modernity. In the second half of the century, while the acceptance of modernism was often taken for granted, the discussion on the traditional image of churches was carried on by more conservative architects. Undeniably, it would be illusory to think that, with the largest religious building in the kingdom, the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool, built on a neo-Gothic design, modernism was definitively accepted as the standard for church buildings.

On the other hand, modern architecture approached the faithful by speaking an everyday language. It was the language of the contemporary world, a language of rationalised means, represented by exposed structures, poor materials, and freedom of form. Modern churches therefore adopted the current standard of functionalism to respond directly to human needs, rejecting the formal rhetoric of style. The triumphalism of the old church was in fact deemed inappropriate in a value system that could no longer be contextualised in a society based on Christian power: 'The image of the Pantocrator has given way to Jesus the Servant.'<sup>353</sup> Similarly, the massiveness of stone gave way to the versatility and speed of steel and concrete constructions.

Fidelity to the structural truth of the building resulted in a progressive exposure of materials and construction elements. The interior of churches began to be marked by the rough texture of concrete walls, while coffered ceilings were replaced by steel trusses supporting the bold new structures. For instance, steel beams make their appearance in George Pace's William Temple Memorial Church in Wythenshawe, Manchester (1960–6). A slender steel structure characterises Maguire and Murray's St Joseph the Worker in Northolt (1967–9). Following an inclination that would lead to the future formation of a high-tech tendency in British architecture, post-war religious buildings translated the social task of the Church—as proved in the previous chapter—into a language that is sedimented in modern society. The use of functional spaces and industrialised construction technologies, which for years had been a prerogative of industrial buildings, blended the expressive vocabulary of architecture, often transcending even the limits of typology.

A major contribution in the development of a technological language came from engineers, who were increasingly involved in the design of daring structure for churches. Arup's contribution in the designs of Basil Spence's new Coventry Cathedral (1962) and Gerard Goalen's St Thomas More Church in Maresfield Gardens, Swiss Cottage, (1968), gives an idea of the considerable engineering component of these projects.<sup>354</sup> Also the collaboration between the duo Seely and Paget and the Italian Engineer Pier Luigi Nervi, who was awarded the RIBA Royal Gold Medal in 1960, in the project for the extension of the Portsmouth cathedral (1964–8) is symptomatic of the primary role attributed to engineers.<sup>355</sup> The identification between technological and architectural solutions produced a new faith in the formal potential of structures. In his lecture at Harvard University for the academic year 1961–2, Nervi had praised the evolution of structural elements into decorative forms embodied by the chapel at King's College, Cambridge 'where the ribs, which are reduced to pure decoration, form a pattern that suggests the isostatic lines of principal stress'.<sup>356</sup> As Nervi's words proved, in a certain way, structural engineering readmitted the Gothic's correspondence between structure and form into the principles of technological efficiency promoted by modernism. Nervi's admiration for Gothic architecture was also declared in the Harvard lecture:

*upon entering a Gothic cathedral we are seized by an emotion rarely inspired by other great works of architecture. How would it be possible to attribute the union of these two different perfections – that of building technology and that of architectural beauty – to a purely chance occurrence?*<sup>357</sup>

In the end, in post-war church architecture Gothic revival was questioned by the spreading of modernism but, at the same time, it remained as a major influence for its structural conception of architecture, according to which technology and decorations are deeply intertwined.

## 6.2 A modern functionalism

Dealing with a subject such as modernism in British architecture is a rather complex issue, especially when referring to church building.<sup>358</sup> The development of modernism is primarily understood as the application of functionalist principles to architecture but, in the case of church building, it is worth expounding the relationship simplified in Louis Sullivan's famous phrase that 'form follows function.'<sup>359</sup>

The use of the adjective functional, inaugurated by Alberto Sartoris' book on *Gli Elementi dell'architettura Funzionale* ('The elements of Functional Architecture', 1932) – whose title was suggested by Le Corbusier – soon started to identify the new trend of modernism.<sup>360</sup> In Britain the debate on functionalist architecture and modernism was established by key texts like *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936) by Nikolaus Pevsner, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960) and *Age of the Masters* (1962) by Reyner Banham.<sup>361</sup>

Pevsner's *Pioneers* became particularly popular and influential after the second edition of 1949, when the title of the book was changed in *Pioneers of Modern Design*, implying a previous stage of modernism.<sup>362</sup> In the book, Pevsner argued that architectural modernism was based on a belief in the machine and the abandonment of unnecessary ornamentation. He also recognised England's leading role in the use of new technologies and materials in church design. They were 'chosen for practical and not for visual reasons', like in the case of the cast-iron columns sustaining the galleries of St Anne in Liverpool (1770–2), or those in the round-planned St Chad in Shrewsbury (1790–2).<sup>363</sup> However, Pevsner was also aware that the development of the modern style was linked to its social system and that the British resisted this social agenda:

*the levelling tendency of the coming mass movement -and a true architectural style is a mass movement- was too much against the grain of English character. A similar antipathy prevented the ruthless scrapping of traditions which was essential to the achievement of a style fitting our century.*<sup>364</sup>

The same idea of a coincidence between modernity and the machine age is in Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*. In line with Pevsner, the work recognised the socio-cultural basis of modernity. In addition, it suggested a concept of architectural modernity based on the triple form of function, technology, and aesthetics. Interestingly, one of the few churches mentioned in the text, Perret's Notre Dame Church in Le Raincy (1923), is described by Banham as 'a confusing monument'.<sup>365</sup> In fact, according to the English critic, while using modern materials, the aesthetic acceptance of this exposed concrete church was facilitated by a traditional anatomy, its form being 'Gothic and Greek at the same time'.<sup>366</sup> The contradiction between technology and aesthetics also represented a vulnerability of British ecclesiastical architecture. A weakness that, according to Banham, was particularly evident in Spence's winning design for the new Coventry Cathedral.<sup>367</sup>

In his *Age of the Masters*, instead, Banham provided some examples of valid church design. They included the 'sail-like curves of Le Corbusier's pilgrimage chapel at Ronchamp' and the 'hard-edged brick and concrete angles of Robert Maguire's parish church of Saint Paul, Bow Common'.<sup>368</sup> The two buildings were praised for having started from a functionalist approach while finding a personal formal solution. Indeed, they were included as good models in the chapter dedicated to 'Function'.

As is well known, the main function of an ecclesiastical building is the liturgy. It follows that a church should first and foremost meet the needs of the space to perform the ritual actions. This issue had already been addressed in *Vom Bau Der Kirche* (1938), by German architect Rudolf Schwarz (1897–1961). Translated in 1958 by Cynthia Harris under the title *The Church Incarnate*, the new English edition of the text was introduced by a preface by one of the most important German architects of the time, Mies Van der Rohe.<sup>369</sup> Schwarz's discourse was deeply influenced by the liturgical theories of the Catholic theologian Romano Guardini.<sup>370</sup> The book presented the church as 'an instrument of worship, a symbolic representation of the deepest relationships, and a sacred participation in creating the mystical body of the Lord'. As an instrument of worship, its planning required an analysis of the liturgical function.

How to conduct this analysis was the subject of discussion. On a 1960 issue of the *Architectural Review* Banham wrote:

*No longer can architects assume that only the basest material functions of architecture come within the purview of science. If the magic of Late Gothic is now susceptible to scientific analysis... then a very large part*

*of the psycho-physiological relationships between man and environment is likely to fall to the mathematician, not – as heretofore – the mystic.<sup>371</sup>*

At first, the attempt to rationalise construction created a gap between religious and civil buildings: the former remained tied to the languages of the past, while the latter were already adopting a modernist vocabulary. The persistence of a romantic medievalism, ‘a very boring thing’ that ‘survives only in Church-building’, was even due to the scarcity of models to look at for modern churches.<sup>372</sup> Indeed, the cautious tendency to recover modernity in church architecture led British architects to look for guidance in the only field where modernity was allowed: the architecture of civic centres, schools, cinemas and factories. This triggered the trend that Proctor called ‘Municipal Modernism’, i.e. the secular appearance of churches that made them integrated into the urban landscape.<sup>373</sup> According to Banham, due to the absence of proper models, during the early years of modernism, a functional church would have been a ‘glass box with an altar at one end’, imitating the forms of other buildings like factories.<sup>374</sup> Over time, the formation of a modern functionalist consciousness in church architecture affirmed the need to consider the specific needs of the rite. Furthermore, functional analysis led architects to evaluate the use of spaces and the movement of worshippers through them.

From this perspective, according to the Belgian father Frederic Debuyst (1922–2017), three main different paths emerged. The first, defined ‘analytic’, adapted the industrial aesthetic remaining almost indifferent to the site.<sup>375</sup> It simplified the lines, used materials rationally and searched for new layouts to grantee a major flexibility of the church space. The second, referred to as ‘synthetic’, rejected the cold aesthetic of industrialism to look for lyrical spaces, expressing a particular vision of man’s world.<sup>376</sup> Finally, a third way tried to analyse the two others, unifying poverty with lyric and freedom with seriousness. This third line of expressive research counterbalanced the positivistic rationalism with a symbolic interpretation of the church building, according to which the significance of functionalism was to provide a ‘new sense of the things at the base of sacramental life.’<sup>377</sup>

Indeed, symbolism represented a way to connect eschatological ideas and practical uses, two concepts which had often been regarded as opposite. Their synthesis was explicated by Nigel Melhuish (1927–2003) who, in a lecture held at the University of London in 1959, affirmed that the architect’s ‘instruments should be formed out of meaning and function at once.’<sup>378</sup> Melhuish’s affirmation represented a tentative to overcome the crisis of a Modern Movement accused of blind scientism by the critics of Team 10.<sup>379</sup> Indeed, in the same years, Team 10’s British members, Alison and Peter Smithson, enriched the architectural debate

with themes as community, morality, participation, and historical context, arguments to which the contemporary research on church design was particularly sensitive.<sup>380</sup>

The Smithsons' design for a church, submitted to the competition for the new Coventry Cathedral in 1951, already reflected their commitment to critique the Modern Movement. The proposed design consisted of a square plan, with the main axis arranged along the diagonal. It was conceived as one large volume containing all the functions. Within the volume, raised on a podium, the functions were defined 'space by space', organised around three main poles. The central one, towards the east, was dominated by the altar, raised on a step and embraced by an 'ark'. The space around the table accommodated the communicants for Sunday mass or the clergy at special celebrations. Above the altar, a gallery housed the organ. This cantilevered balcony was accessible via two stepped ramps, which also provided seating for the choir, and housed the lectern and pulpit in its front parts. The faithful could sit freely in the space around the altar; however, the geometry of the floor plan evidently favoured a seating arrangement on three sides of the altar. The possibility of easily changing the arrangement of the assembly was favoured by the openness of the ground floor, occupied only by the altar space, the pillars supporting the hanging chapels and the stairs leading to them. The amplitude of the space, which embodied the modernist principle of the free design of the church building, seemed to cite the statements of Team 10, according to which man must 'have the possibility to define in space his personal opinion.'<sup>381</sup> On the upper floor, however, the spaces were more rigidly defined. Three suspended square boxes enveloped the Chapter Chapel to the south, the Lady Chapel to the east, the Unity Chapel to the north, while an elongated music gallery was placed at the same level, towards the west entrance. The four volumes marking the corner of the square were accessible through different solutions: a C-shaped internal staircase for the Chapter House, two horseshoe-shaped side staircases for the Lady Chapel, two side entrances to the music gallery, a semi-circular internal staircase and a long external ramp, which provided a *promenade architecturale* across the bell tower landing into the chapel of Unity. The use of ramps and varying ceiling heights created a multi-oriented perceptual experience, based on changing views of both the interior space and the exterior panorama. At the same time, ramps and stairs weaved a complex interplay of layers. The actual church, raised on a podium, belonged to a different layer than the remains of the old cathedral. Under the roof, the division into two layers separated the layer of communal worship from that of private prayer. Inevitably, the distinction in layers implied important symbolic connotations, according to a spiritual

elevation from the level of the ruins of the old medieval cathedral, assimilated to the old rigid liturgical forms of the Gothic period, to the open space of the modern assembly, to the closed area of the chapels. It is debatable whether this was the intention of the authors; however, the asymmetrical ramp connecting the bell tower with the church and the Unity Chapel seems to fully embody a statement by Jacob Bakema (1914–1981) that architects should ‘harmonize life on the ground and life in touch with the horizon.’<sup>382</sup>

The project, although discarded by the jury and not even considered for a mention, firstly faced a period of indifference. It was showed at the exhibition on the ‘20th century form: Painting, sculpture and architecture’, held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1953. however, it was only in the 1960s that it started to be published in articles and book on architecture.<sup>383</sup> Used as a nemesis of Spence’s neo-Gothic layout, it was praised in Peter Hammond’s *Liturgy and Architecture* which celebrated it for its ‘serious and imaginative attempt to approach the problem from the point of view of functional analysis.’<sup>384</sup> In contrast, Banham, while recognising the radical nature of the project among other voices, saw it as a negative moment in the architect’s development. He argued that its formality, steeped in classical symmetry and balancing measures, was revealing of a still strong influence of Wittkower’s studies of Palladio, while its adherence to Le Corbusier’s *tracés régulateurs* showed a still intact attachment to the old system of modernism.<sup>385</sup>

Despite all, the success of the project was evident even to Banham, who recognised its impact on many of the entries submitted to the 1960 competition for the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral.<sup>386</sup> In fact, the great showcase of the Coventry competition and Banham’s benevolent words about the New Brutalist trend they promoted made Alison and Peter Smithson’s project one of the most influential unrealised church building projects in Britain, comparable perhaps only to Lutyens’s vision for Liverpool’s first Metropolitan Cathedral (1933–58), which had remained unfinished. The attempt to subject technological issues after symbolical needs, of course, excited the members of the New Churches Research Group, who published the project in a 1963 issue of *Churchbuilding*, affirming that:

*The use of unusual engineering structures seems very often to prevent the development of architecture in churches. It is only when the understanding of function really informs the design – as in this case [the Smithson’s project] – that it is possible for the architect to use and not abuse the engineering structure.*<sup>387</sup>

The structural braveness and earnestness of the Smithsons' project, indeed, was taken by the NCRG as the symbol of their battle for the rescue of a church architecture in line with the times. The intention was well stated in the words of Peter Hammond:

*We have then to try to express these same truths [relating to the origins of the Christian Liturgy] in terms of the architecture of our day. Structural steel and shell concrete have opened up possibilities undreamed of in earlier ages – possibilities that it would be ridiculous to ignore.*<sup>388</sup>

### 6.3 Form-resistant structures

The liturgical arrangement of the Smithsons' entry had deeply convinced Hammond, who saw it as a milestone in the evolution of British Liturgical Movement.<sup>389</sup> Yet, it was its technical novelty and its formal solution to determine its future success. In particular, the major object of fascination of the project was the roof, in the shape of a hyperbolic paraboloid ('hypar'). It followed an innovative double-curvature geometry which would have permitted a considerable reduction in the thickness of the covering. Its structural resistance and dimensions were calculated by the British civil engineer Ronald Stewart Jenkins (1907–75) of the Ove Arup office.<sup>390</sup> A close friend of Peter Smithson with whom he also worked for the Hunstanton School (1954), Jenkins was regarded as 'the engineer of the New Brutalism'.<sup>391</sup> His interest in shell structures proved his intuitive understanding of the third dimension, already proved in his *Theory and design of cylindrical shell structures* (1947) and *Theory of new forms of shell* (1952). The anticlastic shell (consisting of a double curvature surface whose centres of curvature are located on opposing sides) was an innovative and rarely experimented form for the period. Just to explain its precocity, in 1951 Felix Candela's Cosmic Rays Pavilion for the Mexico City University, whose echo is evident in the much simpler boiler house of Architects' Co-Partnership and Jenkins's Brynmawr Rubber Factory (1946–52), was just being built. The curvature proposed by the Smithsons in the Coventry project was less accentuated than usual, above all along the north-south direction. Indeed, the authors thought that otherwise it would be too directional, weakening the emphatic tension on the opposite direction, raised towards the main altar. Therefore, the roof was designed as flat as possible and its lower corners were raised above the ground, to recreate the image of a light mantle covering the space underneath.<sup>392</sup>

The expressive plasticity and the symbolism of the saddle roof became particularly popular among a certain part of modernist church architects and the Smithson's shell was soon emulated all over Britain. In the meantime, the geometrical solution of the hypar had conquered every typology of public architecture, from sport buildings to markets, from gas stations to civic buildings. For instance, the Commonwealth Institute in Kensington, built (1962) to designs by Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall & Partners (RMJM), a modern cathedral for the celebration of the Commonwealth, was covered by a similar structure, and so were the Wrexham swimming baths (1964). The British investigations on thin shells were surely influenced by the experimentation carried on abroad, where the new technology had already been applied to the design of religious buildings. Among them, the Church of Notre Dame de Royan (1955–8) by Guillaume Gillet (1912–87) and Marc Hébrard (1909–79), whose paraboloid roof was calculated by engineer René Sarger (1917–88), was well-known in Britain, where it was published.<sup>393</sup> Despite the foreign influence, the use of double-curvature shells in British church building was undoubtedly linked to the effective diffusion of the Smithsons' project, as demonstrated by the great success that this structural solution met in Britain more than in other Countries. More than in magazines and book, it is in the built environment that one can find the most eloquent traces of its popularity.

While experimentation in most foreign countries focused mainly on concrete, in Britain thin shells often relied on structural timber, which underwent a widespread revival.<sup>394</sup> In several cases, the form-resistant roofs of churches were clad externally with metal, aluminium or copper sheets, while their soffits were generally clad with wooden slats, declaring the influence of a Scandinavian style. The use of wood tames the structure, tempering its brutalist expression.

Indeed, by the year in which the Smithsons' Coventry entry was published on *Churchbuilding*, Robert Potter (1909–2010) and Richard Hare (1924–90) were realizing an impressive timber hypar roof to cover the kite-shaped plan of St Aldate's Anglican Church, Gloucester (1959–64).<sup>395</sup> The building was constricted on a small lot between two streets. So, together with the slender spire and steeple, the roof served as a landmark to signal its presence. The roof, which rested on two external forked trestles, was calculated by the civil engineering firm E.W.H. Gifford & Partners. While St Aldate's was unique, not surprisingly considered 'the best example of the work of Potter and Hare', it was not the only building in the rest of the Kingdom exhibiting such technology.<sup>396</sup>

Sam Scorer (1923–2003), who had already worked with thin hyperbolic paraboloids, also designed a church whose roof was modelled with this geometry. In the same years that the Church of St Aldate was being built, Scorer was completing the Anglican Church of St John the Baptist in Ermine (1962–3), Lincoln.<sup>397</sup> The first project of the building, presented in 1959, was organized according to an oval plan. The ground floor housed the vestibule, service spaces and a smaller chapel, while the main worship area was elevated above the ground, supported by a crown of aerodynamic pillars. In the worship space, the altar and the font occupying the two centres of the oval, while congregation was disposed concentrically elevated seating along the perimeter, according to an arena-like arrangement. The two levels were connected by an imperial staircase which led to the Baptistry dais.<sup>398</sup> This first solution was covered by saddle roof, cut on the oval perimeter: in this case, the whole of perimeter walls and pilasters contributed to bear the loads of the roof.<sup>399</sup> The final built project, instead, comprised a one-storey building, made of a low concrete basement crowned an upper glass lantern, along with a detached bell tower which was not realized. The glass volume, corresponding to the worship area, was covered by a self-bearing anticlastic shell cladded externally in aluminium, chained to the ground in the two lower corners, where it downloaded on V-shaped trestles, which sank into two pools collecting rainwater. The externalisation of constraints made possible the absence of pillars sustaining the roof in the middle of the hall. The ceiling, covered by wooden planks disposed parallel to the east wall, gave the impression of a plastic wooden sail, rising towards the altar, behind which a large uninterrupted window decorated abstractly by stained glass artist Keith New (1926–2012), contributing to the modern look of the building.<sup>400</sup>

Besides the cited buildings, the list of British churches with hypar roof is long. To mention some, the Boghall Church of Scotland in Bathgate (1964–5) by Wheeler and Sprowson;<sup>401</sup> the ovoidal-planed Anglican Church of the Holy Family at Blackbird Leys, Oxford (1964–5) by Colin Shewring (1924–94);<sup>402</sup> the Anglican St Oswald's Church in Kidderminster (1965) by Maurice Jones and James Snell;<sup>403</sup> the Anglican All Saint's Church in Guildford (1967) or the Roman Catholic St Bernadette's Church in Whitchurch, Bristol (1967–8) by James Leask of Kenneth Nealon, Tanner & Partners, all exhibit a hyperbolic paraboloid roof. A particular case was the William Temple Church, Abbey Wood (1966), designed by Ralph Covell (1911–88).<sup>404</sup> The building consisted of a brick box on a rectangular plan, with a glazed stripe on top, interrupted by four central pillars, one for each side. The pillars, corresponding to the drainpipes, supported a roof formed by the union of four hypar surfaces, whose central

convergence point, at a higher quote, was marked by a spire.<sup>405</sup> Covell was even the designer of St Richard at Ham, Richmond, completed in 1966. The layout of this church was based on a Star of David, created by the superimposition of two inverted triangles. The intersection between the triangles was occupied by the main hexagonal core of the worship space, while the six corners served as vestibule, lady chapel, parish room, vestry, kitchen, and children's area. This complex geometry was covered with a roof composed of radial petals, alternating hyperbolic paraboloids and straight folded surfaces.

The modernity of shells, whose audaciousness was evident in the reduced thickness of the slabs, in concrete or in structural wood, was underlined by the eloquence of their plastic expression. This worked both for paraboloids and other ruled surfaces, easily reducible to a net of cables or to a ruled surface made of planks, but even for folded surfaces. Instead of granting the resistance for the double-curvature, folded surfaces offered an alternative way to obtain a form-resistant structure keeping the thickness at acceptable dimensions. The solution was largely used in those years almost all over the world, as demonstrated by the various kind of folded roof adopted in church buildings, from the linear combination of folded plates adopted in the Church of St Luke Evangelist (1955–8), Rome by Vincenzo (1904–85) and Lucio (1922–) Passarelli, along with the structural engineer Riccardo Morandi (1902–89); the polyhedral folded plate structure of Christ Church, Bochum (1956–9), Germany, by Dieter Osesterlen (1911–94); to the intersection of pitched roof of St Esteban in Cuenca, Spain, 1967 by Antonio Camuñas Paredes (1905–81).<sup>406</sup>

Britain also offered a great variety of formal solutions. Some churches, like the Mitcham Methodist Church (1958–9) by Edward D. Mills (1915–98) presented simple zigzagged surfaces. Other projects associated a traditional basilica plan to a folded, linear-pitched roof, as in the case of St Mary, South Ruislip (1958–9), by Lawrence King, which also presented an interesting hyperbolic paraboloid canopy over the high altar. Many other churches combined pitched surfaces in radial folded coverings. St Mary Magdalene and St Francis (1956), Bristol, by Thomas Hedley Bruce Burrough (1910–2000); the New Court Congregational Church (1961), London, by John Diamond;<sup>407</sup> the Christchurch College Chapel (1963–4), Canterbury, by Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall, the Roman Catholic Church of the Annunciation & St Augustine on Beckenham Hill, London, (1964) by Raglan Squire & Partners; or the Guildford Congregational Church (1965) by Barber, Bundy and Greenfield, were all example of religious building covered by pitched surfaces arranged

around a central point. This was a popular solution also in the United States, where Ralph Rapson (1914–2008) used it in St Peter’s Lutheran Church in Edina (1957), Minnesota.

A particular declension of this structural theme was explored in the Anglican Church of St Michael and All Angels in Newton (1963), Wirral, whose roof was divided into four irregular gables. The unusual shape deformed a regular four-gable roof, whose borders remained fixed on the lower masonry basement while fulcrum was pressed and shifted from the centre, creating irregular pediments. Another variation was employed in the roof of St Paul’s Church in Newington (1955–60), London, by John Wimbleton of Woodroffe Buchanan and Coulter. The building, consisting of a worship area at the first floor and parish rooms below, was covered by a pitched folded roof, intersected with two full-height gables towards the altar and six smaller ones set high in the nave.<sup>408</sup> All around the roof, a zigzagged hem covered the side walls. The walls were made of a concrete mesh that framed coloured glass panes. They were also folded, stiffening the spans between the pillars which continued in the porch underneath. The complexity of folded surfaces was recalled in the belltower, raised on the staircase, which pierced roof over the entrance door.

Differently, Denys Lasdun (1914–2001) intended his never-built project submitted (1960) to the competition for the new Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral as a temple marked by a dramatic, folded roof.<sup>409</sup> The architect, who would become famous as the author of the National Theatre in South Bank (1967–76), proposed a central plan delimited by a segmented curtain wall following the geometry of a circle, interrupted by seven small square chapels. This central space was free from any structural supports. This permitted to place the all-round altar on a dais in the middle of the plan, slightly decentred, and enveloped on three sides by the congregation. To maintain the openness of the assembly space, the secondary areas were arranged behind the wall of the sanctuary, which organized the upper balcony for the choir, two medium chapels, and the staircases leading to Lutyens’s crypt. The large span, with a diameter of about meters, would be possible thanks to a folded roof disposed radially around a decentred fulcrum, which at the zenith with the altar. It was composed by twelve folded petals, each made of two hypar surfaces, which descended towards the perimeter, where they were anchored in correspondence of twelve buttresses, six of which were disguised within the walls of the side chapels. Although Lasdun had never designed a church building before, his proposal impressed Peter Hammond, who saw it along with the other 297 competition entries exhibited at the Ursuline School in Wimbledon. From that moment the two started a prolific exchange of letters, partially documented in the Lasdun archive at

RIBA. Lasdun reviewed Peter Hammond's book *Liturgy and Architecture* in a 1960 issue of *Frontier* and, some years later (1963), in the Anglican magazine *Prism*, also *Towards a Church Architecture*, edited by Hammond, to which he had been asked to contribute, although he declined the offer.<sup>410</sup> The second review offers an insight into Lasdun's image of 'the tomorrow's church', a building capable of respecting the context, achieving a sense of community and giving consideration 'to industrialised building techniques', a significant element in the triadic character of modern church building.<sup>411</sup>

#### **6.4 Prefabrication**

The use of new materials and the available technical resources facilitated the construction of large open interiors with free light. The convenience, as in the case of theatres, lay in the possibility of covering a space with a single roof without intermediate supports hindering the vision of the liturgical foci and opposing the visual unification of clergy and assembly. At the same time, the industrialisation of the building process made it possible to increase speed and reduce costs in the construction of new worship spaces, and to meet the demand for elasticity and adaptability. Indeed, in a rapidly changing social and urban context, changes in the size of the congregation, the updating of liturgical arrangements and the relationship with an evolving urban context required a new type of church. They had to be housed in buildings that could be built at limited expense, easily reorganised, or even moved, adaptable to a rapidly changing world (and society). Industrialisation seemed the right answer to these problems.

The industrialisation of construction was indeed a major theme in post-war Britain where, from the 1950s, the processes of prefabrication had been achieving a relevant role in the architectural scene.<sup>412</sup> Between the 1960s and 1970s, industrialised construction reached an advanced stage in the housing and education sectors. Its advancement provided definite advantages in accelerating the reconstruction of the nation and strengthening labour policies through the revival of light industry. For this reason, the industrial development of the building sector was fostered by political initiatives, such as the one promoted by the Ministry of Education, which set up a commission to study and develop standardised building components for new schools.<sup>413</sup> This type of operation stimulated a vast mass construction campaign, facilitated by the use of prefabricated components using precast concrete, steel or glued laminated timber technologies, which were offered on the market at affordable prices.

In 1957, the Consortium of Local Authorities Special Programme (CLASP) was established with the aim of developing a precast school building programme. The result was a modular construction system, based on lightweight steel frames and equipped with a variety of claddings, which soon characterised the construction of schools as well as offices and homes. A few years later, the system was followed by many other systems such as SCOLA, CMB, SEAC, ASC, ONWARD and MACE, which adapted the modular concept to a lightweight steel structure.<sup>414</sup>

As far as church architecture was concerned, prefabrication in the 1950s mainly concerned finished building elements such as doors, railings, gates or furniture. There were some prototypes of completely prefabricated structures, such as the one proposed (1958) by the French architect André Le Donné (1899–1983). However, the adoption of a complete construction system for church architecture was still rare and would only catch on in the following decades.<sup>415</sup>

After a few years, in 1965, the Brighton architect John Arthur Wells-Thorpe (1928–2019), wrote an article on system building for churches, suggesting four possible approaches to provide church architects with new tools to get rid of traditional building methods.<sup>416</sup> The first consisted of a ‘rationalised traditional building’, based on a site-specific project which took advantage of prefabricated structural components (roof, walling, windows, etc.). A second solution implied the application of the CLASP system to church building, even if it had never been used for that typology before. The third way evoked a consortium of more dioceses gathered to produce a construction system specifically intended for church building. The last, which Wells-Thorpe thought to be the most effective, regarded the development of a series of church types based on standard components around liturgical requirements. Wells-Thorpe’s theories on the need of prefabrication were supported by his professional practice. Member of the Established Anglican Church, he realized many church buildings, a typological theme he had been interested in since its university thesis on modern church architecture.<sup>417</sup> In 1968 he designed the Anglican Church of the Holy Cross, Woodingdean with a partially prefabricated system.<sup>418</sup> The church was also an example of the architect’s concept of flexibility. The worship area was equipped with sliding partitions which opened to the parish room, adapting to a larger or a smaller congregation and enabling the church and the adjoining hall to be converted for different uses.

The same concept of flexibility and expandability was sought by architects, who experimented different spatial and technical solutions. Among the most remarkable examples there was a project of Maguire and Murray, which presented a raising wall to accommodate more faithful.<sup>419</sup> If this kind of church could be enlarged limitedly to their built structure, several architects were reasoning on prototypes to be theoretically enlarged endlessly by the addition of prefabricated units. In 1965 Seely and Paget elaborated in cooperation with the company Swiftplan Ltd. a system for the aggregation of polygonal spaces for church use. The units had different number of sides (square, pentagonal, octagonal) which had all the same length, sharing a side when put together.<sup>420</sup> The proposed structure was made of radial “half-portal” trusses, in steel or in laminated timber, infilled by prefabricated panels. Instead, Hamish McLachlan (1920–2011), who had been trained in Basil Spence’s office from 1949 to 1952, proposed a prototype based on rectangular modules working with the “A75 Metric System” of the A. H. Anderson Ltd company. The scheme was also presented during an exhibition at Church House, Westminster, held in November 1965 and sponsored by the Council for the Care of Churches.<sup>421</sup> The two pioneering studies were at the base of one of the first churches in Britain to be entirely built with a prefabricated system. Indeed, in the same year, the authorities of the Anglican Church of Northamptonshire commissioned to both the firms of Seely and Paget and Hamish McLachlan to jointly work to a system design church for the new town of Duston.<sup>422</sup> After a careful comparison of the proposals, the “A75 Metric System” was chosen to be used in the final project. Indeed, the commission appreciated its potential to grantee a ‘real freedom of design while employing standardised component’ and achieving ‘the desirable economies of quantity production.’<sup>423</sup> The church designed by McLachlan, and Seely and Paget was conceived as a square space, hosting from 200 to 300 people and destined to the worship, preceded by an elongated rectangular unit containing vestry and other service rooms. The square worship area could be enlarged by adding two modular side stripes while, on the other side of the entry unit, a further square structure could be added to house the church hall, expandable too.<sup>424</sup> The building modules comprised factory-made elements assembled on site, according to a steel frame supplied with various kind of finishes. Windows were designed as vertical stripes for the main body, horizontal ones for the secondary modules. The ceiling was made by steel beams supporting prefabricated panels, with a conical glazed lantern in the middle of the church (which still required a semi-artisanal kind of work). Therefore, the entire construction would be easily assembled, or disassembled for extension or re-erection in a new site. The novelty of the construction system was sponsored by the

Anderson construction company, that exhibited a section of the building, including the glass lantern and a portion of the walls, at the ‘Churches, Schools and Youths Club Exhibition’, held in January 1967 at the Royal Horticultural Society’s Hall, Westminster. After these sections had been moved back to Duston, site work started in early October 1967. Although the construction, due to its novelty, met some unforeseen issues – including an unexpected number of pieces of brickwork and the disparity of measurements between glazing and walls – the assembly proceeded rapidly and, already in 1968, the church, dedicated to St Francis, was officially opened. Although rare, this was not an isolated case of prefabrication of religious buildings. For instance, in the same year of its opening, St David and Patricia Brown of Weightman and Bullen completed the Catholic Church of St Michael and All Angels in Wombwell, built with the CLASP system.<sup>425</sup>

Other projects took advantage of the potential of prefabricated timber structures. In 1966 the Roman Catholic Church of St Cecilia was erected in Trimley as a square wooden church.<sup>426</sup> The church was designed by the Catholic section of the New Churches Research Group, including Lance Wright, Peter Ansdell Evans, Austin Winkley, Michael Hattrell, Jaime Bellalta, Philip Jebb, Colin Fleetwood-Walker, and Tom Markus. The walls were made of wood, in order to allow an enlargement of the church in the eventuality of a future growth of the community. The simplicity of the plan and the proximity between the priest and the assembly made it look like a common house and also its cost, only £11,000, was close to ‘the price of a large house’, as a newspaper of the time suggested.<sup>427</sup>

The development of highly industrialised systems favoured a further step towards flexibility and economy, represented by the projects for relocatable churches, one of which was realised by Wells-Thorpe at a cost of about £7,000. In the 1960s the idea of a moveable church met the needs of changing communities in areas of urban development. The Anglican Diocese of Chichester, for instance, set up a study group for the construction of relocatable buildings, which was continued by the Birmingham University Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture.<sup>428</sup> In 1966 the group published a report in which they suggested the construction of moveable churches in new housing area to serve the community for a limited time, of about five years, before being moved to a different location according to contingent needs.<sup>429</sup> The idea would imply a considerable saving in terms of construction costs, mainly covered by the Diocese, involving the community in financing a small part, suitable to their income. In 1968 the Diocesan Building Committee approved the design for a relocatable church by Wells-Thorpe. The project was erected in 1975–6 in Hassocks, for the parish of

Clayton with Keymer, in the middle of a new residential area. It comprised a series of standardized elements which could be easily moved without construction machinery, from the timber structure to the plywood panels forming the floor, the walls, and the roof. The building occupied a corner of the available lot to leave space to a future permanent church. Even if the permanent building, dedicated to St Francis of Assisi, was later built, the temporary building was not relocated elsewhere, and it is still used as a hall for the adjacent church.

The rapidity and the facility with which a church building could be moved from a location to another were simply unthinkable some years before and introduce brand new themes in the discourse of modernity. The mobility of the worship building looked to the tradition of the temple-tent, diffused in military contexts, but also among nomadic populations. Of course, the archetype of the moving temple was the Jewish Tabernacle. Indeed, in his book on *Contemporary Church Art*, translated in English in 1956, the German art historian Anton Henze recognised the survival, in modern church architecture, of the holy tent of the Jews.<sup>430</sup> While its shape was materialised by tent-like structures, in which concrete was often called to mimic the smoothness of fabrics, its mobility was revived by modern, moveable religious buildings.

The idea of a relocatable church eliminated the century-old assumption of its solidity and reflected the advent of a liquid and mobile society and the power of construction technology. Broadening the view, the inclusion of industrialised construction techniques in church design embodied a precise aesthetic choice that promoted the idea of a church that spoke the same language as its neighbour, the language of industrialisation. It contributed, therefore, to creating the image of an embodied church, represented by buildings no longer distant from people, nor by mysterious places that were 'strange and unique as possible.'<sup>431</sup> The focus on the temporal substance of the church, however, deprived the building of a dimension typical of worship. Indeed, from a phenomenological point of view, the notion of a church easily replicable elsewhere appeared at odds with the concept of the spirit of place and, framed in Walter Benjamin's ontology of art, excluded church buildings from any claim to aura. The deprivation due to the industrialisation of ecclesiastical buildings had clear political implications, as it supported a process of transforming (in this case metaphysical) values into needs, aiming at the functional objective of religious architecture.<sup>432</sup> Indeed, the development of a modern, industrialised language in church construction can undoubtedly be read as a political response to practical needs.

## 6.5 Spaceframe structures

Whereas the mobility of churches soon appeared hardly practicable, in the industrialisation of religious buildings one of the main issues remained of course the free span covering. The scepticism in the application of prefabricated systems to church design was even due to the fact that their modular composition easily permitted the realization of small and medium rooms, useful for houses, schools or small churches. However, the adaptation to large-span spaces was more challenging. Indeed, the use of a diffuse light structural system at the perimeter was often not sufficient to avoid using middle supports. A solution to the problem came from the development of light metal space-frame system, suitable for industrialised building techniques, which would become celebrated through the pavilions at the expos of Montreal 1967 and Osaka 1970.

Space frames soon proved to be a very convenient construction system, especially for roofs, as they made it possible to rationalise the structure, which essentially consisted of two elements, the bar and the node. Space frames facilitated structural calculations, since the reactions of the bar to loads could be approximated to simple compressive or decompressive stresses (without shear stresses or bending moments), uniform along the bar. In addition, the space frame made it possible to reduce weight and presented good resistance to wind loads. The division into small pieces facilitated the transport of the materials to the construction site, where they were assembled using a dry construction technique. Often entire pieces of the structure were assembled on site at ground level and only lifted into position with cranes, or alternatively, the structure was built on site using a cantilever method.

Britain played a considerable part in the development of this technology. The origin itself of spaceframes is traditionally assigned to a British inventor, the Scottish Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922), who proposed it as a solution to rationalise the three-dimensional reticular structures originally intended for aeronautical purposes.<sup>433</sup> In Europe, early experimentations on space frames were conducted also in Germany, where they resulted in the Dischinger (1923) and the Mero (1943) systems. In Germany, the technology was soon explored in church buildings. An early application in the covering of church spaces was Rudolf Schwarz's restoration of the Liebfrauenkirche, Köln-Mülheim (1952–5), whose ceiling in golden metal pipes resented of the coeval experimentation on space grids. Just few years later, many German churches, both for Roman Catholic and Evangelical confessions,

exhibited modern spaceframe coverings, from the flat roofs in the churches of St Pius X, Flittard (1957–60) and Christ the King (*Christus-König*), Wuppertal (1959–60) by Joachim Schürmann to the pitched one of the Church of Tersteegen (*Tersteegenkirche*), Düsseldorf (1958) by Erich Neumann-Rundstedt; from the pyramidal solution of the Church of St Peter (*Petruskirche*), Leverkusen-Bürrig, (1957–9), by Helmut Henrich and Hubert Petschnigg to the barrel vault of the Church of the Holy Cross (*Heiligen Kreuz*) in Düsseldorf-Rath (1958), by Josef Lehmbrock.<sup>434</sup>

Spaceframe construction enjoyed success also in Britain, where organizations and companies, like the British Iron and Steel Research Association (BISRA), founded in London in 1944, and the Iron and Steel Corporation of Great Britain, a nationalised industry arising from the Iron & Steel Act of 1949, provided research on steel construction. For instance, in 1969 the British Steel Corporation, formed in 1967, set up a Tube Division covering pipes and tubes, including those for space grids. Indeed, the market of metallic hollow tubes for construction had increased since the development, in the 1950s, of new patents for space grid structures. One of the most successful patents was the Space Deck system, developed in the early fifties by Denings of Chard, which made use of inverted pyramidal modules.<sup>435</sup> A Similar system, Nenk, was also developed in those years by the Ministry of Public Ministry and Work in collaboration with Denings, mainly to be used in the construction of army barracks.<sup>436</sup> Presented as futuristic elements at the ‘This is Tomorrow’ exhibition held at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1956, which exhibited a space grid canopy designed by Theo Crosby (1925–94), who would also realise in 1961 with the same idea the pavilion for the 6th World Congress of the UIA (International Union of Architects), South Bank, London, space grids became the symbol of a new modernity.<sup>437</sup>

They soon fascinated architects and engineers, providing them with the potential for unpublished visions, like those of the Archigram Group and the engineer Cedric Price (1934–2003). In particular, Price’s Fun Palace of 1964 proposed an adaptable and interactive building for the leisure of Londoners, conceived as a huge space frame structure infilled with mobile volumes. The independence of the volumes from the load-bearing frame structure granted an unprecedented flexibility of functions—‘choose what you want to do’—and of use—‘it’s up to you how you use it.’<sup>438</sup> The Fun Palace was never built but, few years later, in 1972–7, an InterAction centre was built on a design by Cedric Price in Kentish Town, North London. It was a small-scale version of the Fun Palace, including rooms for several function, including a large meeting hall with a central stage which was not very different

from the main hall of a parish centre. As Robert Proctor has underlined, the principles of flexibility and interactive systems embodied by the project were received in the ductility of many churches, including the mentioned church of Cippenham.<sup>439</sup>

Even in this case, the Coventry Cathedral competition of 1951 had anticipated a long-lasting trend in British architecture. In particular, spaceframe characterized the entry submitted by Colin St John Wilson (1922–2007), who would become famous for his design of the British Library, and Peter Carter (1927–2017). On that occasion, the two architects collaborated with Frank Newby (1926–2001) of the Felix Samuely office, who is remembered, among other projects, for the Skylon at the Festival of Britain (1951) and the aviary designed with Price at the London Zoo (1965).<sup>440</sup> The project for Coventry consisted of a spaceframe canopy, calling back to the space frames for aircraft hangars designed by Konrad Wachsmann (1901–80). The structure itself was made of a dramatic large-span cantilever space deck, supported by four reticular pillars delimiting the space of the sanctuary. The roof covered a simple rectangular plan, whose proportions were based on the golden ratio, enclosed by a transparent continuous glazing which boasted the expressiveness of the structural grid. The project, which tried to match religious symbolism and extreme technology in a new form that Wilson defined ‘mechanolatry’, was published on the *Architects’ Journal*, earning the approval of architects and critics like Banham.<sup>441</sup>

Despite its success, no churches were built in the United Kingdom with the radical audacity of Wilson and Carter’s proposal. Nevertheless, spaceframes were adopted with more contained ways in church buildings, above all limited to roofs. For instance, the reviled winner of the Coventry competition, Basil Spence, realized in 1965–8 a church with a space grid roof.<sup>442</sup> In 1962 he had been called to present a project for the Anglican Church of St Matthew in Southcote, Reading, but his first design had been rejected for its high cost; so, he had been asked to provide a new project. Elaborated with the assistance of Spence’s son, John, the following solution was able to calm down the costs by using a spaceframe structure for the roof. It employed the “triodetic” technology, a system developed in Canada which grouped the bars around cylindrical nodes, cut by vertical slots to be filled by the crimped termination of hollow aluminium tubes.<sup>443</sup> The adoption of the “triodetic” grid was not superimposed to a diverse formal characterization of the lower parts. Indeed, the roof, the walls and the plan all spoke the same geometrical language, based on squares and isosceles triangles, as evident in the design of windows. The geometrical nexus originated by a practical need, since a space grid roof required a simple and rational layout, with modular

dimensions and angles at 90 or 45 degrees. Coherently, the floorplan was resulting from the intersection of squares: a square for the main body and a smaller one behind the altar, with the congregation/altar axis arranged along the diagonal. Upon the altar, a pyramidal lantern let the light descend through the segmented ceiling, breaking the visual repetitiveness of the structural solution with a dramatic chiaroscuro effect that highlight a real miracle of technology.

In the following years, the application of spaceframe in religious architecture started a long ascent, in part still uninterrupted.<sup>444</sup> For instance, the Roman Catholic churches of St Joseph in Wool, Dorset (1971) by Anthony Jaggard of John Stark & Partners, and St John Stone, Woodvale, Southport (1970–1) by Richard O’Mahony & Partners, exhibited space reticular roofs.<sup>445</sup> They represented a worldwide trend, which would reach its climax in the middle 1970s when, the largest space grid church, the new Crystal Cathedral of Garden Grove, was built (1977–80) on a design by Philip Johnson (1906–2005), concretizing Wilson’s idea of a modern transparent church, in which technology was intended as one of the most the poetical instruments of architecture.<sup>446</sup>

## 6.6 Conclusion

Despite the persistence of tradition, in the post-war period the modern movement provided a new inspiration for ecclesiastical architecture. The focus on functionality, in line with the liturgical needs of the community, led to rethinking not only the spaces, as we have seen in previous chapters, but also the very shape of the church. This approach provided church architects with a new language, more suited to the technological development of the modern age. In this renovation of the church’s language, we often mention architects and artists as the main actors of an aesthetic revolution. However, a huge contribution was offered by engineers, whose names are rarely traceable in official documents and sources. This widespread population of engineers, working side by side with architects, introduced a completely new language, in which the form was subjected to principles of statics and pragmatics. This did not reduce the expressive audacity of church buildings. On the contrary, the new engineered churches of the post-war period appeared no less daring than the slender Gothic vaults did to the faithful of the twelfth century. Moreover, whereas the Gothic was an international style, the language of structure contributed to the creation of a cross-geographical language, too. For this reason, it is important to delineate a brief evolution of

the contemporary church architecture in some foreign countries, which is the subject of the next chapter. Its goal is to underline how the categories of modernity and tradition took on different meaning in the respective architectural cultures, while determining the factors of a cross-fertilisation with the British church building.

## Notes

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<sup>338</sup> Robert Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, *passim*, in particular 35-41; Maximilian Sternberg, 'Medieval Moderns? Cistercians and the City', in H. Steiner, M. Sternberg (eds.), *Phenomenologies of the City: Studies in the History and Philosophy of Architecture* (2015), 49-66; Joe Moran, 'From Sgt Pepper to the sublime: in praise of Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral at 50', *The Guardian* (3 June 2017), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jun/03/from-sgt-pepper-to-the-sublime-in-praise-of-liverpools-metropolitan-cathedral-at-50>, accessed September 2021.

<sup>339</sup> L. Ashwell Wood, 'Cathedral for the Space Age'. (*Eagle*'s cutaway drawing, 3 June 1967)

<sup>340</sup> For an insight on British modernism, see Alan Powers, *Britain: Modern architectures in history* (2007).

<sup>341</sup> On modernism and church see Powers, *Britain*, 116-118.

<sup>342</sup> Powers, *Britain*, 24.

<sup>343</sup> On the several variations of British modernism, see also James Greenhalgh, *Reconstructing modernity: Space, power and governance in mid-twentieth century British cities* (2017), 13-15.

<sup>344</sup> Gavin Stamp, 'Sacred Architecture in a Secular Century', in R. Jeffrey, ed., *The Twentieth Century Church* (1998), 10.

<sup>345</sup> The same was valid also for the Roman Catholic Church in Britain. We could mention the German atmosphere in Our Lady of the Assumption, Northfleet (1916), or the replica of a Roman basilica in Our Lady and St Alphege in Bath (1929). See David Frazer Lewis, 'Our Lady f the Assumption' and 'Our Lady and St Alphege', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 24; 31.

<sup>346</sup> Giles Gilbert Scott, Colombo Cathedral Competition, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 95/4742 (MAY 9th, 1947), 378.

<sup>347</sup> Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White (Quand les Cathédrales Étaient Blanches)*, trans. Francis E. Hyslop (1964), 8.

<sup>348</sup> Unfortunately, the project was not equally capable to interpret the advances of liturgy since the new theories of the Second Vatican council made it outdated already before its drawing, as suggested in W. E. A. Lockett, 'Some Reflections on Cathedral Building in the Twentieth Century', *Churchbuilding*, 23 (January 1968), 4.

<sup>349</sup> Robert Drake, '1965: Cathedral Church of the Holy Spirit, Guildford', *100 Buildings 100 Years*, retrieved from <https://c20society.org.uk/100-buildings/1965-cathedral-church-of-the-holy-spirit-guildford>, accessed December 2021. On the cathedral see also Juliet Dunmur, 'Cathedral Church of the Holy Spirit', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 102-5.

<sup>350</sup> Peter Hammond, 'A Radical Approach to Church Architecture', in P. Hammond, ed., *Towards a Church Architecture* (1962), 26.

<sup>351</sup> 'Coventry Cathedral: how the plan took shape', *The Times*, supplement on Coventry Cathedral (25 May 1962).

<sup>352</sup> See the church of St Matthew, Reading, described in the last section on spaceframes.

<sup>353</sup> W. E. A. Lockett, 'Some Reflections', 5.

<sup>354</sup> In particular, the construction of the pre-stressed concrete roof of Coventry Cathedral was followed by the structural engineer Povl Ahm (1926–2005). See Chris Burgoyne, Owen Mitchell, 'Prestressing in Coventry Cathedral', *Structures*, 11 (2017), 62–83.

<sup>355</sup> On the project, see Paolo Desideri, Pier Luigi Nervi Jr, Giuseppe Positano, *Pier Luigi Nervi* (1982), 242. In the same years, Nervi was also collaborating with the British Powell and Moya for the Pitt River Museum of Oxford and with the American Pietro Belluschi for the design of St. Mary Cathedral, built in 1966-71 in

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Los Angeles. Moreover, he was working in the new Vatican Hall, which would grant him fame in the Catholic world.

<sup>356</sup> Pier Luigi Nervi, *Aesthetics and Technology in building* (1965), 5.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>358</sup> For an overview of modernist architecture in Britain see Alan Powers, *Modern: the Modern Movement in Britain* (2005).

<sup>359</sup> Louis H. Sullivan, ‘The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered’, *Lippincott’s Magazine* (March 1896), 403–9.

<sup>360</sup> The original title was *Gli Elementi dell’architettura Razionale*. Le Corbusier suggested to change *razionale* into *funzionale*. On the episode see also Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1967), 320.

<sup>361</sup> Reyner Banham, *Age of the Masters: A Personal View of Modern Architecture* (1962).

<sup>362</sup> On the influence of Pevsner’s *Pioneers* see Alina Payne, review of N. Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, in *Harvard Design Magazine*, 16 (winter Spring 2002), 66–70.

<sup>363</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of modern design, from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (1974), 129.

<sup>364</sup> *Id.*, 179.

<sup>365</sup> Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 41.

<sup>366</sup> *Id.*, 42

<sup>367</sup> Reyner Banham, ‘Coventry Cathedral – Strictly “Trad, Dad”’, *New Statesman*, LXIII (25 May 1962), 768–9.

<sup>368</sup> Banham, *Age of the Masters*, 22–23.

<sup>369</sup> On Schwarz and Van der Rohe see Maria Antonietta Crippa, ‘Romano Guardini, Rudolf Schwarz, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: un dialogo amicale sull’architettura cristiana’, *Palladio*, 53 (2014), 83–98.

<sup>370</sup> For a companion to the book see Gerald Robinson, *Sacred Journey: A Companion for Rudolf Schwarz’s The Church Incarnate* (2020).

<sup>371</sup> Reyner Banham, ‘The science side’, *Architectural Review* (March 1960).

<sup>372</sup> Nigel Melhuish, *Liturgy and the Modern Movement in Architecture* (1959), 6.

<sup>373</sup> Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 69–78.

<sup>374</sup> Banham, *Age of the Masters: A personal View of Modern Architecture* (1975), 22.

<sup>375</sup> Frederic Debuyst, *Modern Architecture and Christian Celebration*, ed. by J. G. Davies and A. Raymond George (1968), 43.

<sup>376</sup> Debuyst, *Modern Architecture*, 47.

<sup>377</sup> Nigel Melhuish, ‘Modern Architectural Theory and the Liturgy’, in P. Hammond, ed., *Towards a Church Architecture* (1962), 63.

<sup>378</sup> Melhuish, *Liturgy and the Modern Movement*, 11.

<sup>379</sup> Born around 1953 in the context of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), Team 10 contested the approach of CIAM, and decreed its death after the 1959 meeting in Otterlo, Netherlands. The team put together a group of architects whose main core was composed by the Netherlandish Jacob B. Bakema (1914–81) and Aldo van Eyck (1918–99), the Italian Giancarlo De Carlo (1919–2005), the Greek French Georges Candilis (1913–95), the American Shadrach Woods (1923–73), and the British couple made by Alison Margaret Gill (1928–1993) and Peter Denham Smithson (1923–2003). With John Voelcker (1927–

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72), Alison and Peter Smithson, introduced the critics of Team 10 in Britain, along with a new way of intending modernity.

<sup>380</sup> See Alison Smithson, ed., ‘Team 10 Primer 1953-62’, *Architectural Design* (December 1962), 559-602.

<sup>381</sup> Jacob Bakema, ‘Architecture and Town Planning’ (1961), part of Alison Smithson (ed.), ‘Team 10 Primer 1953-62’, 560.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> *20th century form: Painting, sculpture and architecture*, catalogue of exhibition (London, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 9 April-31 May 1953).

<sup>384</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 135-6.

<sup>385</sup> Banham, *The New Brutalism*, 41

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> Robert Maguire, Keith Murray and John Catt, ‘The editors’, *Churchbuilding*, 8 (January 1963), 3.

<sup>388</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 27.

<sup>389</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 135-6.

<sup>390</sup> Ronald Hobbs, ‘Ronald Stewart Jenkins: engineer and mathematician’, *The Arup Journal*, 2 (1985), 12.

<sup>391</sup> Dirk van den Heuvel, *Alison and Peter Smithson: A Brutalist Story: involving the house, the city and the everyday (plus a couple of other things)*, doctoral thesis, Technische Universiteit Delft, 2013, 180. Jenkins would also calculate the shells of the Sidney Opera House (1959-73).

<sup>392</sup> *Churchbuilding*, 8 (January 1963), 5.

<sup>393</sup> G. E. Kidder Smith, *The New Churches of Europe*, 76-81.

<sup>394</sup> On structural timber see James Sutherland, ‘Revival of structural timber in Britain after 1945’, *Construction History*, 25 (2010), 101-13.

<sup>395</sup> ‘Civic Trust Award 1966’, *Churchbuilding*, 21 (April 1967), 16. The building is now listed grade II.

<sup>396</sup> See the Historic England record number 1379929.

<sup>397</sup> Ben Stoker, ‘St John the Baptist’, in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 94; Karolina Szynalska, *Sam Scorer: A lesser known architect of the twentieth century* (2010), 24-5, retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/9052377.pdf>, accessed June 2022. It is worthy to notice how the author sustains that Scorer’s church is not son to the Smithson project but, on the contrary the Coventry entry owed much to the experimentation carried on by Scorer: *Ibi*, 32-4.

<sup>398</sup> References for this first theatrical solution can be found in a couple of German churches, from Bartning’s Auferstehungskirche in Essen (1930) to the Roman Catholic cathedral of Berlin rebuilt (1952-8) by Hans Schwippert (1899-1973) and organized around a central confession, while its suspended hall reminded the Googie structures built abroad. On Berlin cathedral: Christine Goetz, *Victor H. Elbterm Die St. Hedwigs-Kathedrale zu Berlin* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2000).

<sup>399</sup> It was not very different from the Dorton Arena in Raleigh (1952), North Carolina, calculated by Matthew Nowicki (1910-50).

<sup>400</sup> New had even worked for the Coventry Cathedral.

<sup>401</sup> *Churchbuilding*, 22 (October 1967), 6.

<sup>402</sup> *Churchbuilding*, 17 (January 1966), 8-11. The church is currently at risk of demolition.

<sup>403</sup> *Churchbuilding*, 25 (October 1968), 12.

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<sup>404</sup> Covell had worked on many churches, even with more traditional languages, as in the case of St Agnes, Kennington Park (1956).

<sup>405</sup> A similar roof had been used in the Roman Catholic church of St Hugh, Lincoln (1963-4) by John Rochford.

<sup>406</sup> Even though we deal essentially with roof, folded surfaces were used even for walling.

<sup>407</sup> Eric A. Willats, *Steers with a Story: The book of Islington* (1986), 'RE.G.INA Road'.

<sup>408</sup> The roof has been said to be an hyperbolic paraboloid, see Joshua Mardell, 'Building of the month: October 2010 - St Paul's, Lorrimore Square' (20101), retrieved from <https://c20society.org.uk/building-of-the-month/st-pauls-lorrimore-square>, accessed February 2021. However, there is no evidence of a double curvature in the folded surfaces.

<sup>409</sup> On the project: Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 155; Dominic Wilkinson (ed.), *A new Cathedral, 1960*, exhibition catalogue (Liverpool, 2017).

<sup>410</sup> Denys Lasdun, review of 'Peter Hammond, Liturgy and Architecture', *Frontier*, IV (1960), 305; Denys Lasdun, review of 'Towards a Church Architecture', ed. P. Hammond, *Prism*, 71 (March 1963), 57-8.

<sup>411</sup> Lasdun, review of 'Towards a Church Architecture', 58.

<sup>412</sup> For an overview on the theme see Andrew Rabeneck, 'The invention of the building industry in Britain', *ArtefaCToS*, 4/1 (December 2011), 93-121.

<sup>413</sup> Particularly, experimentation on school architecture followed a contemporary renovation of the scholar institution, which followed a philosophy well incarnated by the school buildings of Walter Gropius and Edwin Maxwell Fry (1899-1987): Iain Jackson, Jessica Holland, *The architecture of Edwin Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew: twentieth century architecture, pioneer modernism and the tropics* (2014), 75-8. On post-war school architecture see: Andrew Saint, *Towards a Social Architecture: The Role of School Buildings in Post-war England* (1987).

<sup>414</sup> Malcolm Seaborne, Roy Lowe, *The English School: Its Architecture and Organization, Volume II. 1870-1970* (1977), in particular Part 4: *A New Architecture for Education 1944-1970*.

<sup>415</sup> Le Donné's project, firstly appeared on the French magazine *Art d'Eglise*, was later published on *Churchbuilding*, 15 (April 1965), 22-3.

<sup>416</sup> J. A. Wells-Thorpe, 'Church Building and New Construction Techniques', *Churchbuilding*, 14 (January 1965), 11-3. Also cited in Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 99-100. On the figure of Wells-Thorpe see his autobiography: John Wells-Thorpe, *Behind the Façade: An Architect at Large* (Brighton: Book Guild, 2009).

<sup>417</sup> According to Proctor, Wells Thorpe was Catholic. His participation in the Anglican community and his friendship to Chichester's Bishop George Bell, instead, are sustained in the obituary composed by Stephen Adutt, retrieved from [regencysociety.org/john-wells-thorpe-1928-2019/](http://regencysociety.org/john-wells-thorpe-1928-2019/), accessed February 2021.

<sup>418</sup> On the church see also the paragraph about the Scandinavian influence in the following chapter.

<sup>419</sup> 'Expandable Churches: Five Architects present their Schemes', *Churchbuilding*, 17 (January 1966), 5; Gerald Adler, *Robert Maguire & Keith Murray* (London: RIBA Publishing, 2012), 96-7.

<sup>420</sup> 'Design System Built Churches', *Churchbuilding*, (17 January 1966), 12-4. John Seely (1899-1963) had already died and the office was led by Paul Edward Paget (1901-1985).

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-6.

<sup>422</sup> 'Church of St. Francis, Duston', *Churchbuilding*, 20 (January 1967), 9-10.

<sup>423</sup> Quotation from an advertising of the period.

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<sup>424</sup> After the construction in Duston of the church and the vestry, the following enlargement did not follow McLachlan's plan, but instead followed a more classical non-modular geometry.

<sup>425</sup> 'Wombwell – St. Michael and All Angels', *Churchbuilding*, 23 (January 1968), 21; Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 100-1

<sup>426</sup> The Architectural History Practice, *Twentieth-Century Roman Catholic Church Architecture in England: A Characterisation Study* (2014), retrieved from <http://www.hrbballiance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RC-C20-Characterisation-Final-July-2014.pdf>, accessed 28 February 2020, 102; Walker, *Developments*; 506; Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 134.

<sup>427</sup> 'Low cost church the shape of a house', *The Catholic Herald* (3 June 1966).

<sup>428</sup> 'Relocatable Church Project', *Churchbuilding*, 27 (April 1969): 13-4; Trevor Beeson, *Round the Church in 50 Years: A Personal Journey* (2007), 88.

<sup>429</sup> Building Study Group, *Buildings and breakthrough. Report of the Buildings Study Group submitted to the Buildings Committee of the Diocese of Chichester* (1967).

<sup>430</sup> Anton Henze, Theodor Filthaut, *Contemporary Church Art* (*Kirchliche Kunst der Gegenwart*, 1954), trans. by Cecily Hastings, ed. by Maurice Lavanoux (1956)..

<sup>431</sup> 'Design Entry for a System-built Church', *Churchbuilding*, 15 (April 1965), 21.

<sup>432</sup> The process is in line with Marcuse's theorization of technology as a political venture. See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964), in particular chapter 9.

<sup>433</sup> Mick Eekhout, *Architecture in Space Structures* (1989), 12-3.

<sup>434</sup> The trend of pace grids for the covering of church buildings would continue in Germany also in the 1960s as proved, among others, by the Christi Auferstehung, Neviges-Siepen (1965); St Bonifatius, Moers-Asberg (1966), by Max Clemens von Hausen and Ortwin Rave; St Andreas, Eching (1970) by Friedrich F. Haindl.

<sup>435</sup> Jhon Chilton, *Space Grid Structures* (2000), 44-6.

<sup>436</sup> Chilton, *Space Grid Structures*, 2.

<sup>437</sup> *This is Tomorrow*, catalogue of the Whitechapel Gallery exhibition (1956).

<sup>438</sup> Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, *Fun Palace promotional brochure* (1964).

<sup>439</sup> Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 314.

<sup>440</sup> Louis Campbell, 'Towards a New Cathedral: The Competition for Coventry Cathedral 1950-51', *Architectural History*, 35 (1992), 219-20; Stephen Kite and Sarah Menin, 'Towards a new cathedral: mechanolatry and metaphysics in the milieu of Colin St John Wilson', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, Vol. 9, 1 (March 2005), 85-8.

<sup>441</sup> Kite and Menin, 'Towards a new cathedral', 86-7.

<sup>442</sup> John Spence, 'St. Matthew's Reading', *Churchbuilding*, 24 (April 1968), 16-7; Clive Fenton, David Walker, 'The Modern Church', in Campbell, *Basil Spence*, 112-3.

<sup>443</sup> Chilton, *Space Grid Structures*, 38-9.

<sup>444</sup> Among the last cases using a tensegrity system there is Norman Foster's chapel for the Vatican Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Architectural Biennale. See Francesco Dal Co, ed., *Vatican Chapels* (2018), 188-215.

<sup>445</sup> On St Joseph is listed grade II. See the record at Historic England, ref. number 1416504. On St John Stone see Proctor, *Building the Modern Church*, 306.

<sup>446</sup> On Johnson's cathedral see Chilton, *Space Grid Structures*, 67-8.

# 7. Continental influence in church architecture

Even when it comes to a specific typology such as church buildings, which are deeply rooted in the local community and whose design is often determined by a series of contingent dynamics, the internationalisation of architectural trends must be considered. This phenomenon can be traced back to two factors. The first factor lies in the ecumenical power of religious institutions—where ‘Ecumene’ stands for the original definition of inhabited land—whose missionary character, as we shall see in the next chapter, becomes a crucial opportunity for cultural exchange. From a cultural point of view, the phenomenon could be translated into the introduction of a foreign style, imposed by the ethnic group in a position of supremacy. However, during translation, the foreign language is often enriched with local derivations.<sup>447</sup> This mechanism was still active the post-war period, during which exchanges between countries were made fluid by economic recovery. At the same time, the movements of clergymen contributed to the internationalisation of religious cultures.

This factor relates to a more general phenomenon of globalisation, which intensified considerably in the 20th century, reinforced by inter-state political and economic relations. Facilitated by the establishment of intergovernmental organisations, the funding of rehabilitation programmes, the breaking down of trade barriers, the movement of people and migration, the development of European integration and the improvement of transport and communication systems, globalisation was reflected in the progressive internationalisation of the language of architecture. Evidence of this was the formation of the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne), held from 1928 to 1959, which contributed to the affirmation of functionalist architecture, and the spread of the so-called ‘International Style’. The latter was a definition devised by Henry-Russell Hitchcock (1903–87) and Philip Johnson (1906–2005), in MoMA’s 1932 *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, to denote the tendency of architecture in the 1920s and 1930s to use modern materials and to recast decoration. Although the principles of the International Style were mainly adapted to institutional and commercial buildings, their influence on religious architecture cannot be overlooked. Indeed, the New York exhibition did not feature religious

buildings, but many of its protagonists, including Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra, would go on to design influential churches.

Albeit the study would surely benefit from a comparison with transoceanic cases, to not disperse the focus of the work, the present chapter does not deal with examples of religious architecture outside Europe, even though they are sometimes mentioned, also in other sections, to contextualise the proposed analysis. Within the European context, a selection has included some countries and excluded other ones. The selection has been rather built around epitomic churches by architects who exerted a certain influence on the international scene, from Dominikus Böhm to Le Corbusier, from Rainer Senn to Sigurd Lewerentz and Alvar Aalto, whose religious buildings had an undeniable echo in Britain, if not worldwide. At the same time, the geographical selection is functional to the analysis of some major themes in church buildings. For instance, the comparison with Germany, which always remains in the foreground of the main liturgical discourse, embodies the tentative to introduce new linguistic elements, often derived from expressionist architecture, into church architecture, overcoming the forms of derivative revivalism, and introducing a new modernity.

Between the wars, the connections were strengthened also through the presence of émigrés from Germany, where the discourse on liturgy was already advanced. It is no coincidence that German church architects of those years are the main references for British church architecture. The reflection on French church architecture is instead functional to consider some other themes like sacred art (also suggested in the previous chapters), modern materials, and new expressive research, perfectly embodied by the chapel at Ronchamp. The analysis of church architectures in Scandinavian countries offers the opportunity to reflect on the theme of extroversion and introversion of church buildings, which was incarnated in the churches that the Scandinavian Seamen's mission built in the main port cities of Britain. If the case of the relationships with Italy is addressed specifically in the next chapter, notable *lacunae* are those related to the religious architectures of Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain, which are however scattered elsewhere in the text. The choice of some countries instead of others, of course, does not deny a certain interest for architectures built in other geographical areas. For instance, Switzerland is often cited in English texts on church architecture. However, this chapter aims at tracing the main line of influences, coming from three directions: Germany, France and Scandinavia.

The decision to put at the same level British and foreign cases is meant to underline a common ground, surely facilitated by the knowledge of international experiments and cultural exchanges between the European religious communities. In order to make them visible, this intercultural dialogue requires an analysis that considers the impact of foreign ecclesiastical architecture in the British press and detects the correspondence of shared stylistic elements between British and foreign architecture in both the Protestant and Catholic churches. Indeed, the fertile atmosphere of the time, also favoured by the multicultural composition of society, allowed for transversal cultural exchanges that contributed to giving English ecclesiastical architecture a foreign flavour.

### **7.1 ‘I can see for miles and miles’: Britain looking at Germany**

Despite the political antagonism that saw the two countries on opposite sides during the two world wars, German architecture had a profound influence on British architecture, as already suggested in the second chapter of this text. Without outlining a complete history of the links between British and German ecclesiastical buildings in the first half of the 20th century, we will propose a series of direct parallels through which it is possible to start a comparison game between the ecclesiastical buildings of the two countries.

The first concerns an English church of the late 1930s, which displayed such a German air that Pevsner associated it with ‘German Expressionism [...] rather than that of England.’<sup>448</sup> The church was St Wilfrid’s Church, Halton, designed by Art and Crafts architect Albert Randall Wells (1877–1942) and built in 1937–9. The exterior of the building, based on a Latin cross plan, was rendered as a composition of stereometric brick volumes with pointed windows that rhymed with the geometry of the interior. The interior space consists of a continuous series of cross vaults plastered in white, reminiscent of Dominikus Böhm’s St Apollinaris Church in Frielingsdorf (1926–8).

Böhm was a great inspiration for many architects and his works were often published in major English texts on church architecture, from Maufe’s *Modern Church Architecture* (1948) to Hammond’s *Liturgy and Architecture* (1961), from Kidder Smith’s *The New Churches of Europe* (1964) to Maguire and Murray’s *Modern Churches of the World* (1965). However, Böhm’s influence was most evident in the works built by British architects. For example, the Liverpool architect Frances Xavier Velarde, who also travelled to Germany, built many churches whose architecture was reminiscent of Böhm’s designs. Velarde’s only

Anglican church, St Gabriel's in Blackburn (1933), is organised through an interplay of barrel vaults that recalls the round geometries of St Augustinus in Berlin (1927–8) by Josef Bachem (1881–1946). Similarly, just to mention one of the most obvious elements of Velarde's inspiration, the overlapping arched windows, used as a hallmark in most of his churches, from the earliest such as St Monica's in Bootle (1936) to the latest such as St Teresa's in Borehamwood (1962), cited the fenestration of some of Böhm's churches, including St Kamillus, Mönchengladbach (1928–31) and St Joseph's in Hindenburg (1929–31) or St Engelbert's in Essen (1933–6).<sup>449</sup> Even in the 1950s, British architects looked to Bohm as a catalogue of formal solutions. Even major ecclesiastical projects were not immune to German fascination: the Unity and Industry chapels in Basil Spence's Coventry Cathedral winked at Böhm's Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the 1928 Cologne Press Exhibition.<sup>450</sup>

Other German influences can also be detected in Robert Potter's ecclesiastical works. For instance, his Church of St George in Oakdale, Poole, Dorset (1959–60), featured a wooden roof (Figure 7) that could plausibly be related to another church by Böhm, St Mary in Ochtrup (1951–3). The German church, in fact, was covered by a similar wooden plaster ceiling, later (1965) clad in wood, which discharged onto slender pillars (Figure 8), inspiring many architects throughout Europe, as is also shown in the interior of the aforementioned French Church of St Peter, Thionville, Moselle (1962–5) by Roger Schott. Similarly, a German aircraft enlivened Potter's Ascension Church in Crownhill, Plymouth (1956–8).<sup>451</sup> The concrete vault, supported by slender bellied columns, is reminiscent of Böhm's design for a church in Duisburg (1936).<sup>452</sup> In contrast, the hexagonal windows decorated by Geoffrey Clarke, opened in the stone wall to the east that bore a suspended figure of Christ sculpted by Jacob Epstein, were reminiscent of the Tree of Life that decorated the eastern wall of St Anne's in Duren by Rudolf Schwarz (1956).

If Bohm was a sure guideline for an entire generation of church architects working in Britain, Rudolf Schwarz has remained the most influential figure when it comes to the liturgical aspects of architecture. His churches are often cited in Hammond's *Liturgy and Architecture*. Schwarz was known in Britain as much for his professional activity as for his important theoretical speculations and writings. In 1958, his main text, *Vom Bau Der Kirche* (1938), was translated into English by Cynthia Harris as *The Church Incarnate*, with a preface by Mies Van der Rohe.<sup>453</sup> In the book, Schwarz translated the liturgical activities and functions theorised by the German theologian Romano Guardini into diagrams and spatial

arrangements. Together with the *Guidelines of the German Liturgical Commission* (1947), soon translated into English, Schwarz's text had the greatest echo in the British liturgical movement.<sup>454</sup>

Knowledge of German church buildings was further enhanced by trips there. In 1961, the Birmingham University Institute organised a study trip to Germany, Switzerland and France.<sup>455</sup> In Germany they stopped in Cologne, where they visited St Chistophorus, completed in 1959 by Rudolf Schwarz and St Pius X, completed in 1960 by Joachim Schürmann; in Dusseldorf, where they visited St Maria in den Benden, completed in 1959 by Emil Steffan; Wuppertal-Elberfeld, home of the Christus-Konig and St Michael, completed in 1960 respectively by Schürmann and K. Goebel and Wilhelm Schlombs; Frankfurt, where they appreciated St Michael, completed by Schwarz in 1954; Leverkusen, St Albertus Magnus, completed in 1959 by Lehmbrock and Schulting; Mainz, home of the Holy Cross completed in 1952 by Richard Jörg.

## 7.2 “Il ne parle que du Bon Dieu”: French architectural poetry

In France, they visited André Le Donné's Church of the Holy Heart in Mulhouse (1959), a modern representation of traditional spaces, enclosed in parallelepiped volumes and intended to facilitate a corporate ritual. According to the architect and artist Giles Blomfield (1925–2012), who participated in the trip and wrote a report on church construction together with Gilbert Cope, the French church exemplified a certain ‘Germanic rigidity in its formalism.’<sup>456</sup> The gravity of the concrete structure, the infill panels reminiscent of Japanese architecture and the cross-beamed ceilings reminiscent of Italian concrete engineering experiments, suggest an international appeal. Indeed, Blomfield himself compared its plan, with a central altar flooded by a lantern, to the British church that Maguire and Murray had built in Bow Common.

Although the church was the only French one mentioned in the report, French churches were often regarded as models. In 1957, an exhibition on French churches was held in London, accompanied by the catalogue *Eglises de France Reconstruites*, and in 1958, three years before the tour to Germany, the University of Birmingham had organised a study trip to France, which covered the Paris area and the diocese of Besancon. Peter Hammond, who had taken part in the study trip, wrote a guide to the new church buildings in France a few years later in response to the many people interested in French church buildings.<sup>457</sup> Another

trip was undertaken in 1963 through Belgium, Holland and the Paris region, on the occasion of a visit to the Church of Notre Dame du Raincy.<sup>458</sup>

Signalled in Hammond's guide among the French pivotal projects, Notre-Dame du Raincy (1922–3) by Auguste Perret (1874–1957), a 'honest piece of reinforced-concrete construction, devoid of meretricious ornament or irrelevant detail.'<sup>459</sup> The importance of Perret's church was remarkable for its use of modern materials, reinterpreting the basilica in a more open plan. In fact, the architect conceived the space by eliminating the structural divisions between the nave and the sanctuary and dividing the aisles with slender pillars, not obstructing the view of the altar. The wholeness of the space was even emphasised by the continuous stained-glass windows opened all around the sanctuary but also on the side walls of the aisles. In England, the church was soon published in *Architectural Design in Concrete* (1927), edited by Thomas Penberthy Bennett (1887–1980), who praised its structural coherence and the concrete decoration by Maurice Denis (1870–1943), 'arising from a logical and reasonable use of concrete forms.'<sup>460</sup> Some critics focused more on its liturgical freshness; others, however, criticised its 'hardly modern' essence.<sup>461</sup> Among them, Banham considered the church a 'confusing monument' as it used a contemporary aesthetic but did not dare great structural challenges and, moreover, clothed the form with a classical yet Gothic dress.<sup>462</sup> In fact, if the plan reinterpreted the layout of a basilica or a Gothic cathedral due to its vertical proportions, the façade, with its 'crazy but magnificent' central tower, recalled the image of Gothic temples, particularly German ones.<sup>463</sup> Perret's church had a worldwide echo, as shown by the concrete expressiveness of St Anthony's in Basel (1926–7) by Karl Moser (1860–1936), and was emulated for many years to come also in England, where H. Woodhall proposed a design inspired by the French church for the new Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral (1960).<sup>464</sup>

Naturally, the church exerted a great influence on one of Perret's most talented scholars, Le Corbusier, who often commented on the magnificent eloquence of its materials. The Swiss architect was the author of two buildings included by Hammond in his guidebook and considered, in addition to the aforementioned cases of Audincourt, Aussy and Vence, to be among 'the most remarkable buildings produced by the appeal *aux maîtres au dehors*': the chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut at Ronchamp (1950–5) and the monastery church of La Tourette (1956–60).<sup>465</sup> The chapel of Ronchamp had a controversial reception in England. James Stirling (1926–92) wrote about the chapel in a passionate article on *Architectural Review* on March 1956 (Figure 16).<sup>466</sup> Stirling considered the building as a 'pure expression

of poetry' and the sign of 'an ancient ritual' which he compared, for its 'dramatic inevitability', to the rings of Stonehenge or to the dolmens of Brittany. Similarly, Kidder Smith praised it as a landmark of ecclesiastical architecture, incomparable to other churches and imbued with a deep religious atmosphere: 'the most impressive church of the last 500 years.'<sup>467</sup> Banham recognized a different character emerging under the rich eloquence of its forms: 'Ronchamp is not Formalism in the commonly accepted sense, because it does not gain the one secure advantage of formalizing within the tradition – that of communicability.'<sup>468</sup> The critic argued that the innovative aspect of Le Corbusier's building, which 'does not look like a church', produced a discussion on its definition in the context of modern architecture, which suggested a different way of considering modernity. Much more severe was the judgment of Maguire and Murray, who thought the chapel in Ronchamp to be 'not like a church' and yet 'quite unlike any other kind of building'.<sup>469</sup> They argued that its forms and materials were 'perverse, enhancing the dreamlike unreality of the whole', and added that 'as a place for liturgy any barn would be better'.<sup>470</sup> Rather than its exuberant forms, the two British architects negatively evaluated the chapel as a reminder of other extravagant architecture, indifferent to functional (and liturgical) needs.<sup>471</sup> Although not totally objective, Maguire and Murray's concerns were rooted in a diffused tendency in church architecture that looked to Ronchamp as a symbol of plastic expressiveness. Indeed, quotations from the Ronchamp chapel were scattered in many church buildings in Britain. A sign of its popularity was, for example, the use of irregular windows at the depth of large bays, such as those piercing the southern wall.

A building that owes its character to Le Corbusier's splayed windows is the chapel designed by George Pace for Michael's theological college in Llandaff, Cardiff (1957–9).<sup>472</sup> The building was constructed to replace the former chapel of the Anglican college, which, like the old chapel in Ronchamp, had been destroyed in a raid during the Second World War. George Pace himself acknowledged his debt to Le Corbusier in the design of the chapel. Like his French model, the chapel was built with stone, creating a sculptural volume whose interior has rounded corners, but the most obvious reference to Le Corbusier is probably the open fenestration in the western wall. Although made in only two dimensions, the seemingly random arrangement of windows created a rich light effect comparable to that of Ronchamp.

A similar fenestration was also used in the Catholic seminary of St Peter's in Cardross, County Argyll, Scotland, completed in 1966 to a design by the German-born architect Izi Metzstein (1928–2012) and his colleague Andy MacMillan (1928–2014) of Gillespie, Kidd

and Coia.<sup>473</sup> As the critics have pointed out, Metzstein and MacMillan's debt to Le Corbusier, confirmed by the slides depicting Le Corbusier's works at the disposal of the two architects, is also evident in almost all their works, especially Catholic churches. However, the design of the Seminary is particularly "La Tourette and Ronchamp redolent", as it reinterprets many of Le Corbusier's principles in a complex architecture full of quotations from his works. Among the many quotations, the concrete barrel vaults look to Le Corbusier's Maisons Jaoul, the curved walls on either side of the chapel, enclosing shed windows, wink at Ronchamp's lanterns. Similarly, other buildings by the Scottish firm demonstrate a deep knowledge of Le Corbusier, from the splayed windows of St Bride's, East Kilbride (1957–63), to the detached roof of St Patrick's in Kilsyth, Glasgow (1963).

In Scotland in particular, the echo of Le Corbusier's work was vast and the curved white walls of Ronchamp inspired many church buildings. The Laurie Memorial Building in Edinburgh (1962), by Shaw-Stewart Baikie & Perry, features curved walls in rough white plaster. Similarly, the Craigbank Church of Scotland in Edinburgh (1966), by William Hardie Kininmonth (1904–88), was composed of whitewashed volumes reminiscent of Le Corbusier's work.<sup>474</sup> The access route to the worship space unfolded as an architectural promenade between curved planes and surfaces that were reminiscent of the roof of the Ville Savoye. The curved bell tower, on the other hand, was reminiscent of the church towers of Ronchamp.

At the opposite pole of Le Corbusier in the field of church buildings was another Swiss architect, Rainer Senn (1932–2016), who built churches mainly in France.<sup>475</sup> His best-known project is the chapel of St Andrew, built in October 1955 for the Companions of Emmaus, a community of Abbé Pierre. Funding was limited and the architect built it alone, together with two Spanish assistants, in a fortnight. The materials were raw board walls and bitumen paper on the roof. According to Senn, the financial limitation can be positive for the aesthetics of the building, as it helps the architect to reflect on the basic forms of architecture.<sup>476</sup> Hammond described the chapel as a building of immense importance, embodying the community spirit of the Eucharist. At the same time, Senn's chapel reinterprets the *topos* of the Vitruvian hut, which had interested English 'architectural anthropologists' from William Lethaby to Joseph Rykwert (1926–).<sup>477</sup> The chapel was published in Maguire and Murray's *Modern Churches of the World* and in *Churchbuilding*, where it was praised by George Pace for its humble materials and atmosphere: 'The architect should be capable of thinking fundamentally with great simplicity and of creating a building

to the honour and the worship of God from chicken-house' materials and constructions.<sup>478</sup> The simplicity of Senn's churches also emerges, according to Hammond, in St James (*Jacques*) in Grenoble (1958) by Vincent, Dupat and Potié.<sup>479</sup> The church was built as a temporary building, which could be dismantled, reused and hopefully replaced by a larger building—which did not happen—once the area was fully developed. Its temporary use was therefore associated with a modest appearance.

For other unspecified reasons, Hammond chose the Church of St Agnes in Fontaine-les-Gres (1956), near Troyes, by Michel Marot (1926–2021), which also appears on the cover of one of the editions of his book *Liturgy and Architecture*. The church was chosen by Hammond mainly because of its unusual triangular floor plan, determined by the site. While Marot would also use other materials, such as bricks and precast concrete coffers, as in the Church of St John Bosco in Meaux (1965), in St Agnes the predominance of wood, with a ceiling covered with wooden planks, expresses a clearly Nordic influence, which will be decisive in guiding architectural taste in Great Britain as well.

### 7.3 'Norwegian Wood': a Scandinavian scent in church buildings

If in the post-war period Scandinavian design and architecture had a world success, consecrated by the exhibitions 'Stockholm Builds' (1941) at the MoMA, or 'Design in Scandinavia', travelling through United States and Canada from 1954, its influence was evident also in British architecture and, more in detail, in church buildings.<sup>480</sup> In particular, the impact of a Scandinavian style on British churches can be traced back to different tracks, concerning political, theological and formal affinities.

A deep cultural root linked Scandinavian countries to Britain, evoking a common Viking past. In the twentieth century the countries had several opportunities to reinforce the bond. Britain had been favourable to the creation of the Kingdom of Norway, whose first queen came from England and, during the Nazi invasion of the Nordic country during the second World War, the British Government had supported the Norwegian resistance. After a moment of crisis with Finland, which was allied with the Nazi government against the Soviet during WWII, British diplomatic relations with Scandinavian countries were recovered in the post-war period.

During the entire century, British cities housed a relevant presence of Scandinavian immigrants, above all Swedish, who passed through Britain to sail for North America or worked in the docks. Therefore, many Nordic churches, providing Lutheran worships, were built in Britain for these communities. It was not a case that big metropolitan cities offered singular examples of church architecture, in which a Scandinavian atmosphere was merged with local materials and aesthetics. Particularly, London housed many Scandinavian churches, housing Nordic congregations that had already been established in the eighteenth century. They were animated by émigrés, above all seamen, who lived and worked in the city. In the second half of the twentieth century, the many Seamen's missions from Scandinavia decided to renovate their worship places in the city, supplying new spaces for further functions like recreative rooms, bar, hostels, and shops.

One of the most interesting ones, built after the recovered diplomatic relation with Finland, is the Finnish Seamen's Mission Church in Rotherhithe, London. The church, completed in 1958 on design by the Finnish architect Cyril Mardall (formerly Cyril Sjöström) (1904–94) of the British firm Yorke, Rosenberg and Mardall, was built for the Finnish seamen employed in the docks nearby.<sup>481</sup> The church was a real meeting point for the foreign communities, housing meeting rooms and spaces for several activities, including a hostel, a Finnish shop and a sauna in the basement. From the outside, the building camouflaged itself between housing blocks and office buildings. Indeed, its street front, clad in Portland stone, presented an atypical aesthetic for a church building. It was rhythmed by rectangular windows arranged on three levels and five rows, corresponding to the secondary functions, vaguely reminiscent of Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como (1932–6). The only elements suggesting the presence of a worship area were the slightly pitched roof and the rectangular bell tower, covered in grey shingles. Interiorly, the worship area consisted of a parallelepipedal double-height space, with an upper side gallery for the organ and the choir. Opposite to it, a line of large undecorated windows filled the space with the cold light from the north. The diffused light, joint to the plainness of surfaces, including the flat roof and the straight eastern wall, suggested a modern domestic space, more similar to a meeting hall than a traditional ecclesia, maybe comparable to the auditorium in the Skanskvarnsskolan, Stockholm (1940–5), by Paul Hedqvist (1895–1977) presented at the 1941 MoMA exhibition (Figure 30). The effect was conveyed by the use of poor materials: plastered walls, parquet flooring, wooden boiserie, prefabricated panels for the ceiling (the wooden cladding was added later along with the Scandinavian-style lamps), split stone blocks behind the altar. The altar wall was only carved

with a thin cross, and the altar itself was not emphasized by any impressive architectural device besides the stone surface and a modest railing.

In the same years, in 1958–9, the Danish Mission opened a church in Commercial Road, designed by the Danish church architect Holger Jensen (1918–2004) along with Edward Armstrong and Frederick MacManus (Figure 31).<sup>482</sup> The building resulted from the intersection of two pitched volumes in bricks, covered by copper roofs, which emerged from the flat tops of the nearby blocks.<sup>483</sup> The worship space was made of exposed brick walls, contrasted by a ceilings in wooden planks and by white concrete beams. Angle forked beams supported the butterfly ceiling, while a lower horizontal one supported a balcony for the choir and the organ. The altar was placed towards the west, lit by a high ribbon window opened in the eastern wall and by a lower one opened to the south, tasselled by rectangular stained glasses, and preceded by two statues of the apostles. The big-size statues, the southern light, use of bricks and wood created a dramatic ambience which suggested an archetypical image of the sacred space (Figure 32).

A similar feeling animated in the new Swedish Seamen's Mission Church in the London Docklands, opened in 1966 by the Swedish king Gustaf Adolf VI.<sup>484</sup> The church was obtained from the remodelling of an earlier 1930s church building, by the firm Wigglesworth and Marshall Mackenzie, which was transformed (1963–6) on a design by the Danish architect Bent Jørgen Jørgensen (1915–99), along with the English architects of Elkington Smithers. Jørgensen, who had worked with Arne Jacobsen (1902–71), extended the ancient complex with a modern volume added before the older building, comprising recreational facilities, flats, and a hostel. Like its Finnish counterpart, the new volume exhibited a very serious façade, made of a three-storey volume in London stock bricks, pierced by small square windows (Figure 33). The old building, instead, was reordered for a new modern worship. Its interior, diversely to the Finnish church, was characterized by a warmer atmosphere, expressed by brick walls, the hanging chandeliers, the slender arched windows of the old building, opening on an enclosed garden to the south (Figure 34). Besides the southern light, the chiaroscuro effect was provided by the dark wooden ceilings treated with black pine tars (or Stockholm tar), a typical Swedish surface treatment used in buildings and in boats, and by the contrast between spaces differently lit. For instance, the dark space of the organ appears through a rectangular opening above the altar.

The shadowy atmosphere, the attention to materials and the visual consequentiality of spaces of the church can be significantly compared to the church architectures built in Scandinavia in those years. Enlarging the view, in all the three Scandinavian mission churches in London we can find traces of the main directions of Nordic church architecture, which visibly extended their influence outside the national border, reaching the British islands. The main element favouring such a cross-cultural meeting was the climate of exchanges between the Anglican and the Lutheran churches of Scandinavia, whose outcome are evident in liturgy as in architecture.

In particular, the connection with the Swedish Church was particularly felt in the Church of England. The dialogue between the two religions had been already subject of the 1888 Lambeth Conference, but it was in the twentieth century that it started to show its results. The payback was concretized, for instance, in the studies conducted by the Swedish theologian Yngve Brilioth (1891–1959). In his *The Anglican Revival* (1925) Brilioth outlined a history of the Oxford Movement, focusing on the rediscovered importance of the Eucharist, to which he dedicated another volume (1926), translated in English as *Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Catholic and Evangelical* (1930), which was the most mentioned book in Gabriel Hebert's *Liturgy and Society*.<sup>485</sup> Indeed, Hebert was among the key figures of this Anglo-Scandinavian relationship. He firstly visited Sweden and Denmark in 1928, then in 1931 as delegate to the Anglo-Scandinavian Theological Conference.<sup>486</sup> There he met the Lutheran Archbishop Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931), whose texts were translated in English by Hebert himself. Hebert's link with Scandinavian Lutheranism was so deep that in *Liturgy and Society* he claimed that the closest term of comparison for the history of English Reformation was the history of the Church of Sweden, where the reform had been matched by a political will.<sup>487</sup> During his visit in Denmark, Hebert visited the Church of S. Peter, Malmo, and assisted to the eucharistic rite. He was surprised by the Catholic ambience of the rite, since in the Church of Sweden the absence of iconoclastic wind (on the contrary of England's Puritan trends) had kept all the Catholic decoration and art. Therefore, at least from an iconographical point of view, it had been a very conservative process of reformation.

The proximity of the Swedish Lutheran Church to Roman Catholic aesthetics laid the ground for a contamination with Anglican church buildings, which had also showed many points of convergences with the Roman Catholic ecclesial architecture. Particularly influent in post-war Britain was the activity of Swedish architect Sigurd Lewerentz (1885–75), author of many sacred buildings, from the Resurrection Chapel in Woodland Cemetery, Stockholm

(1922–5) to the chapels of the Malmö Eastern Cemetery (1916–75), from the Church of St Mark, Björkhagen (1956–60), to that of St Peter, Klippan (1963–6). The latter two, which represented Lewerentz's last works in church architecture, were soon appreciated in England.

St Markus's Church was part of a parish complex set in a green area in Björkhagen, a peripheral district of Stockholm. The worship space was enclosed in a higher parallelepipedal volume in bricks, whose side walls vibrated through the intersection of curved surfaces. The interior, characterized by brick walls and a brick vaulted ceiling, featured a vivid chiaroscuro, produced by the light stemming from the small windows to the south (Figure 35). The rectangular hall was partitioned into two areas by a spinal wall, pierced by large rectangular portals which visually linked a bigger area with the altar and a secondary one with the organ and the Baptistry. For its peculiar layout, the care to materials and the Caravaggesque light-dark contrast, the church was defined by Kidder-Smith as 'Heteroclite in approach, Byzantine in detail, quite glorious in effect.'<sup>488</sup> The building also caught the attention of Banham, who found in its exposed poverty an element of affinity with the English Brutalism. However, he hardly succeeded in finding a precise category to fit it into, since its compositional vibrancy was barely comparable to the English brick brutalists.<sup>489</sup>

The richness of formal solutions would soon attract another English architect, Colin St John Wilson, who had studied the compositional schemes of classical architecture. Colin St John Wilson would be a scholar of Lewerentz, writing of his classical chapel of Resurrection, in Woodland Cemetery (1922–5), St Mark and St Peter. In particular, the analysis of St Peter, the last church built by Lewerentz, would offer to the English architect a case to reflect on the 'Dilemma of the Classical.'<sup>490</sup> Indeed, according to Wilson, the power of the project lay in the architect's ability to turn away from the classical language and to keep a poetical appeal in modern architecture, a mysterious 'silence' in a building characterized by 'apparent straightforwardness and [...] actual obliqueness.'<sup>491</sup> Moreover, Wilson underlined his way of exposing materials, like the ever-present bricks, used for floor, walls and ceiling in all their reality: never cut, subject to weather and aging, sometimes deformed or burnt in the furnace. Or again the technological solution of the central steel pillar, set in the middle of the plan, connected to a truncated beam which supported two longer transversal beams, connecting the joists of the vaulted ceiling (Figure 36).

Lewerentz's language had a great impact on British architects such as St John Wilson and Leslie Martin. For instance, the system of overlapping beams of St Peter's Church was reinterpreted by Martin in the chapel of the University of Hull (1965–7), in which also the bricks composing the altar dais are a quote of the masonry presbytery designed by the Swedish master for St Peter's Church (Figure 37).<sup>492</sup> Nevertheless, it was the eloquence of its interior atmosphere, mixing sacramental silences and formal richness, to have a deep influence on certain British church architects, who designing ecclesial spaces closed into themselves. Indeed, the main feature of Lewerentz's sacramentality consisted in the introversion of buildings, protecting their interior in fortress-like masses. This character was evident in a clear Swedish trend, also embodied by the Church of St Thomas in Kirunagatan (1960), by the disciple of Lewerentz Peter Celsing (1920–74).<sup>493</sup> Made of a simple brick box, it consisted of square layout with central court, with the church occupied the northern side. The worship area consisted of a single rectangular hall, accessible from the east, covered by a system of longitudinal beams supporting a flat ceiling in white elongated panels, from which four slender lamps in metal and glass were hanged. The altar was set in a rectangular recess on the west side, lit only by a small slit on the north, while the hall was illuminated by slender windows opened to the southern court. More than Lewerentz's church, this stereometric building can be easily juxtaposed to the Swedish Seamen's Mission Church in London, as well as in a series of introverted church built in Britain in the same years. For instance, the Church of St Bride's, East Kilbride (1963–4), designed by the Scottish firm of Gillespie, Kidd and Coia, consisted of a single parallelepipedal volume in bricks, with limited openings to the exterior besides the system lighting the church from above (Figure 38).<sup>494</sup> The introversion of these churches interpreted a specific relationship between the temple and the secular city, which saw in the church the safe refuge from a dangerous world.

A complete opposite tendency of Scandinavian sacred architecture tended to open the space towards the exterior world: a tendency which was only hinted in the large windows opened to the north of the Finnish Seamen's Mission Church in London. The architects recurring to this scheme usually organized the interior space around the view of a natural landscape, to sustain worship with sublime feelings. The openness to the landscape was, for instance a major point of the Resurrection Chapel (1938–41) in the cemetery of Turku, Finland, by Erik Bryggmann: the asymmetrical disposition of the transparent wall in the side aisle, opening into the surrounding wood, symbolically suggested the transition from the immanent world to a paradisiac nature.<sup>495</sup> The link with nature emerged above all in chapels,

for cemeteries or colleges, where the individual worship represented a major while it remained less appropriate for parish building.

Among the group of nature-linked Scandinavian sacred architecture, the Otaniemi Chapel (1956–7), designed by Heikki and Kaija Siren for the Technical University outside Helsinki, was one of the most known (Figures 39, 40). The building was composed of a rectangular plan with a south-north orientation, organized through a system of two parallel brick walls, and transversal screens in different materials, like glass or wood. The entrance happened through an enclosed courtyard to the south, in which a parallelepipedal bell tower was set. Following, a low hall housed service rooms and spaces closed by moveable partitions, which could be open to increase the capacity of the chapel. The proper worship area consisted of a rectangular volume with an angles roof, sustained by an exposed system of four wooden trusses with steel rods. The trusses and the ceiling in wooden planks were lit from a high window opened in the southern wall, above the entrance hall. The focus of the worship space was on the continuous glazing behind the altar, facing to the north. The large translucent screen opened into the surrounding landscape, in which a linear cross was planted among trees. The natural setting of the wood, made almost unreal and unreachable by the glass partition, expressed an effective rhetorical device in which ‘the Finn’s native pantheism enjoy the most sympathetic of settings’, using the word of Kidder Smith, who published the Chapel in his reportage of European churches.<sup>496</sup> The church was also noted by Maguire and Murray, who added it to their collection of world churches, noting that ‘though this is a Lutheran church, its primary formative function doesn’t seem to be the liturgy [...] the function for which the chapel seems to be designed is silent prayer and withdrawal.’<sup>497</sup> The British couple of architects underlined, therefore, how the college chapel was not apt to the carrying on of a communitarian worship, but rather promoted an individual religious experience, which looked back to the tradition of monastic isolation.

In was soon emulated, both in Finland, where the Paattionlehto Cemetery Chapel in Kemi (1960) by Osmo Sipari (1922–2008) exhibited a shed roof a large ‘landscape window’, and abroad, for instance in Germany, where Josef Wiedemann (1910–2001) designed on a hill in a mountain region the Church of St John in Gebirg (1966). In Britain, where the project had been published in *Churchbuilding* already in 1962, the echo of the chapel was evident in the already mentioned Church of the Holy Cross, Woodingdean, by John Wells-Thorpe.<sup>498</sup> The church consisted of a lower parallelepipedal volume for the service rooms, joined to a worship area covered by a shed roof, which showed many similarities with the Scandinavian

model. Differently from the Finnish chapel, the inclination of the roof was disposed in the opposite direction to the axis of the altar and the space presented no large glazing at eye level. However, the knowledge of the Otaniemi chapel was evident in the moveable partitions, in the exposed wooden trusses supporting the roof, in the distinction of a lower basement, in bricks, and an upper part, cladded in wooden planks (Figure 41). The shape of the Finnish chapel would still inspire, in 1974, the angled roof of the Peckham Methodist Church by Gordon (1923–2019) and Ursula Bowyer (1925–), featuring exposed timber trusses with metal rods over brick walls (Figure 42). However, the urban setting would prevent it from including a glazing opening to the outside.

The transparency of the altar wall characterized, instead, the Kildrum Parish Church, built (1962) on design (1955) by Alan Reiach (1910–92) and Stuart Renton (1929–2006) for the Church of Scotland in Cumbernauld (Figure 43).<sup>499</sup> If the inspiration to the Otaniemi Chapel was evident in the altar's glass panel, framing a cross set in the wood outside, the rest of the building was deeply inspired by the Scandinavian style, or at least to its idea. Indeed, its language can be contextualized in a series of buildings realised in thin wood or metallic frames, generally associated to wide spaces, lit by large windows, and accentuated by low ceilings. To keep the focus on the landscape, these buildings were often composed through isolated elements, generally steel pillars, around which plans are stacked. Conscious of the lesson of Mies van der Rohe, the organization through planes created perspectival box leading the view to the exterior scenery. plans are rendered as solid surfaces, in materials like wood, bricks or plaster, or transparent ones in glass. The most eloquent case of this tendency, which can be easily compared to the Kildrum Church, were the Crematorium Chapels in the New City Cemetery of of Gävle, Sweden (1954–60, Figure 45) by ELLT (Alf Engström, Gunnar Landberg, Bengt Larsson and Alvar Törneman). The building was made of concrete walls, above which the timber flat roof, supported by isolated pillars, seemed to levitate (Figures 46 and in the opening). Like its Swedish counterpart, the Kildrum church, opened only one year after, presented an asymmetrical plan, made of flat blocks on three sides of an open court (Figure 44). The steel pillars were isolated and detached from the perimeter walls, which cladded with bricks externally and white-plastered interiorly. Besides the shape and the visual link with the landscape, also the chosen materials evoked a Nordic geography: Norwegian quartz for the pulpit and the reading desk, timber for the altar, Finnish redwood for the ceiling (Figure 47).

Within the British vogue of Finnish design, the figure of Alvar Aalto (1898–76) had obviously a prominent place. Awarded with the Royal Gold Medal for architecture by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1957, the Finnish architect gained a consistent number of admirers in Britain.<sup>500</sup> Among them, there were Leslie Martin, Colin St John Wilson, and Patrick Hodgkinson, who would become famous for the Brunswick Centre. However, the critical reception of Aalto's most famous sacred architecture, the Church of the Three Crosses in Vuoksenniska (1957–8), Imatra, was controversial. Maguire and Murray decried its non-relevance in liturgical issue, affirming 'as a church, it makes no contribution to the debate which is exercising theologians and architects throughout the west: it remains a great auditorium.'<sup>501</sup> Nevertheless, they decide to put its image on the cover on their book on the *Modern Churches of the World* (Figure 48). Reyner Banham, instead, compared the building to a crocodile. However, he recognized Aalto's ability to reinterpret folk tradition in a sophisticated modern language, solving the problematic relation between tradition and modernity that characterized the British debate on church building in the entire post-war period.<sup>502</sup>

#### 7.4 Conclusion

'Since, Lord, once again ... in the steppes of Asia, I have neither bread nor wine nor altar, I will raise myself above these symbols up to the pure majesty of reality, and I, your priest, will offer You, upon the altar of the Whole Earth, the labour and the suffering of the world'.<sup>503</sup> This quotation, from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, is used by Maguire and Murray in the introduction of their *Modern Churches of the World*. It well expresses the idea of a Christian Church that is detached from the physicality of material goods, as well as a Church that is independent of national distinctions. However, in selecting their cases from several countries, the two English architects realised that a major role is played by their aptness to the place. One cannot analyse a church without considering the 'relevance to its environment and the kind of culture of which it is the product, down to the kind of stuff it is made and the way the stuff is used'.<sup>504</sup> A contrast is evident between *genius loci*, deriving from environmental and cultural factors, and the universality of language and forms on the other, driven by the ecumenical aspirations of the Church and by the technological homogenisation of the globalized world.

On the basis of these considerations, this chapter has highlighted similarities and influences between British and Continental sacred architecture. It has drawn the lines of influence of Western ecclesiastical architecture suggesting the existence of a shared cultural heritage at the European level. On the other hand, such relationships are defined not only by affinity but also by contrast. As the next chapter will demonstrate, taking the Italian case as an example, divergences can also exist within the same European / Western cultural context. These differences are based not only on a different ethical and religious conception but also on an aesthetic and environmental distance that will tend to diminish only at the end of the 1970s.

## Notes

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<sup>447</sup> One of the most eloquent cases is the dissemination in the 17th century of the Jesuit church prototype, based on the Mother Church built in Rome, which spread throughout the world, from Europe to Asia and South America, incorporating local contributions (or even just local materials). The case shows that the Roman Church succeeded in exporting a style, but also a liturgical set-up, updated to the criteria of the Counter-Reformation. The same phenomenon can easily be transported to the 20th century.

<sup>448</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire the West Riding* (1959).

<sup>449</sup> On Velarde and his German connection, see Dominic Wilkinson, Andrew Crompton, *F.X. Velarde* (2020), *passim*.

<sup>450</sup> Louise Campbell also suggests that Spence's preliminary design for the chapel, which featured a more tapered cylinder, covered by a conical roof, had a formal derivation from Bohm's Warriors' Memorial Chapel at St John in Neu-Ulm (1927): Louise Campbell, 'Coventry Cathedral', 80. See also Nigel Swift, David Paisley, 'Dominikus Bohm, Sir Basil Spence and the dream in the Dentist's Chair: A German source for the Coventry cathedral', *German Life and Letters*, vol. 64, 2 (2011), 248.

<sup>451</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 118-9; John Lane, Harland Walshaw, *Devon Churches: A Celebration* (2007), 12-7; Martin Walker, 'Building of the month: October 2011 - Church of the Ascension, Plymouth' (October 2011), retrieved from c20society.org.uk/building-of-the-month/church-of-the-ascension-plymouth, accessed October 2020; Robert Williams, 'Church of the Ascension', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 72.

<sup>452</sup> *Dominikus Bohm* (1962), 511, 523; Wolfgang Voigt, Ingeborg Flage (ed. by), *Dominikus Böhm: 1880-1955* (2005), 154.

<sup>453</sup> Rudolf Schwarz, *The Church Incarnate: The Sacred Function of Christian Architecture (Vom Bau der Kirche, 1938)*, trans. Cynthia Harris (1958).

<sup>454</sup> Theodor Klauser, ed., *Richtlinien für die Gestaltung des Gotteshauses aus dem Geiste der römischen Liturgie* (1947). For the translation see Theodor Klauser, 'Directives for Building a Church', *The Furrow*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (August 1950), 353-62; or *Documents for Sacred Architecture* (1957), recently published also in Mark A. Torgerson, *An Architecture of Immanence* (2007), 230-7. On the guidelines see Peter Hammond, ed., *Towards a Church Architecture*, 248-54.

<sup>455</sup> Gilbert Cope, Giles Blomfield, 'A Survey of Six Continental Churches', Part one, *Churchbuilding*, 4 (October 1961), 3-11, Part two, *Churchbuilding*, 5 (January 1962), 16-22.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibidem*. Blomfield studied at the Bartlett School in London and worked in the office of Ernö Goldfinger. He produced many artworks for Canterbury Cathedral, to which he was architect, including the sculpture of the Becket altar.

<sup>457</sup> Peter Hammond, *Guide to New French Churches* (1959).

<sup>458</sup> 'Some new Churches in Belgium, Holland & the Paris region', *Churchbuilding*, 10 (October 1963), 10-2.

<sup>459</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 53.

<sup>460</sup> T. P. Bennett, *Architectural design in concrete* (1927).

<sup>461</sup> Reyner Banham, *Age of the Masters: A Personal View of Modern Architecture* (1975), 43.

<sup>462</sup> Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1967), 41-3.

<sup>463</sup> See, for instance, the towers in the Freiburg, Ulm and Bern Minsters.

<sup>464</sup> Dominic Wilkinson, ed., *A New Cathedral 1960* (2017).

<sup>465</sup> Hammond, *Guide to New French Churches*, 2.

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<sup>466</sup> James Stirling, 'Ronchamp', *Architectural Review* (March 1956), 155–61.

<sup>467</sup> Kidder Smith, *The New Churches of Europe*, 90.

<sup>468</sup> Reyner Banham, *A Critic Writes: Selected Essays by Reyner Banham* (1996), 50; originally published in *Architectural Review* (February 1960)

<sup>469</sup> Maguire and Murray, *Modern Churches of the World*, 48.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibi*, 48: 'Particularly in church design, Ronchamp has provided a justification for architects to ignore any discipline, to pursue private whimsy without concern for function.'

<sup>472</sup> Pace, *The Architecture of George Pace*, 168–71; Judi Loach, 'St Michael's College Chapel', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 76.

<sup>473</sup> Patrick Hodgkinson, 'St Peter's Seminary, Cardross', *Mac Journal*, 1, *Gillespie, Kidd and Coia* (1994), 41–6; Diane M. Watters, *St Peter's, Cardross: Birth, Death and Renewal* (2016); John Allan, 'St Peter's Seminary', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 108.

<sup>474</sup> *Churchbuilding*, 22 (October 1967) 7; Alistair Fair, 'Craigsbank Church', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 107.

<sup>475</sup> Hammond, ed., *Towards a Church Architecture*, 161–71.

<sup>476</sup> Rainer Senn, 'The Spirit of Poverty', *Churchbuilding*, 9 (April 1963), 23. On its success in Britain see also Paul D. Walker, *Developments in Catholic Churchbuilding in the British Isles, 1945–1980*, PhD Thesis in Architecture, University of Sheffield (1985), 149, 162 and 503.

<sup>477</sup> In particular, Rykwert published the book *On Adam's House in Paradise* in 1972, which explores the archetype of the primitive hut: Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History* (1972).

<sup>478</sup> George Pace, 'Temporary Churches', *Churchbuilding*, 3 (April 1961), 8.

<sup>479</sup> On the church see Pierre Lebrun, *Le complexe du monument : les lieux de culte catholique en France durant les trente glorieuses*, PhD Thesis, University of Lyon (2001).

<sup>480</sup> See G.E. Kidder Smith, *Today's Sweden in photographs* (1941), which accompanied 'Stockholm Builds'. On the latter exhibition see Jørn Guldberg "Scandinavian Design" as Discourse: The Exhibition Design in Scandinavia', *Design Issues*, volume 27, Issue 2 (Spring 2011), 41–58.

<sup>481</sup> Henrietta Billings, 'Finnish Church', in Charlton, Harwood, and Price, eds., *100 Churches 100 Years*, 73.

<sup>482</sup> 'Lutheran Church in Stepney for Danish Seamen', *Churchbuilding*, 9 (April 1963), 15–22; Robert Maguire, Keith Murray, *Modern Churches*, 108–11.

<sup>483</sup> Nowadays the building is at the corner between commercial road and branch road. Before, a big, taller building limited its west side.

<sup>484</sup> 'Sweden in England: rare 1960s complex listed' (19 December 2014), retrieved from [c20society.org.uk/news/sweden-in-england-rare-1960s-complex-listed](http://c20society.org.uk/news/sweden-in-england-rare-1960s-complex-listed), accessed October 2020. The Church is listed grade II. Historic England number 1420139.

<sup>485</sup> Christopher Irvine, *Worship, Church and Society* (1993), 50.

<sup>486</sup> On Hebert and the Scandinavian church see Irvine, *Worship, Church and Society*, chapter 2, 23–50: The Scandinavian connection.

<sup>487</sup> A. G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society*, 171.

<sup>488</sup> Kidder Smith, *The new Churches of Europe*, 256.

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<sup>489</sup> Banham, *The New Brutalism*, 125: ‘It is a building that would greatly enrich the Brutalist canon if it could safely be included within it, but how convincing could such classification be made? [...] It combines shallow vaulting, plane and curved walls [...] with a concept of plan, space and geometry that has nothing in common with any of the Brutalist buildings that use brick in any related manner.’

<sup>490</sup> Colin St John Wilson, ‘Sigurd Lewerentz and the Dilemma of the Classical’, *Perspecta*, 24 (1988), 50–77, republished as Colin St John Wilson, ‘Sigurd Lewerentz. The sacred buildings and the sacred sites. Essential Architecture’, *OASE*, 45–46 (1997), 64–87.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibi*, 60.

<sup>492</sup> On the chapel see also Chapter 3.

<sup>493</sup> Kidder-Smith, *The new Churches of Europe*, 244–7.

<sup>494</sup> Stamp, ‘Postscript’, 51.

<sup>495</sup> William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (1996), 341–2.

<sup>496</sup> Kidder Smith, *The New Churches of Europe*, 60–2.

<sup>497</sup> Maguire and Murray, *Modern Churches of the World*, 70.

<sup>498</sup> Timothy Sturgis, ‘Otaniemi’, *Churchbuilding*, 6 (April 1962), 14–5, see also the editorial at page 3.

<sup>499</sup> Peter Willis, *New Architecture in Scotland* (1977), 32–3.

<sup>500</sup> The theme was investigated by Harry Charrington in his lecture on ‘Alvar Aalto’s Influence and Reputation in Great Britain’ (2016).

<sup>501</sup> Maguire and Murray, *Modern Churches of the World*, 105.

<sup>502</sup> Banham, *Age of the Master*, 136–7.

<sup>503</sup> Maguire and Murray, *Modern Churches of the World*, 8

<sup>504</sup> *Ibi*, 11.

# 8. Between ‘transparent poverty’ and theatrical exaggeration: seeing Italy from Britain

The previous section has demonstrated how the connection between British church architecture and the Continental one in Germany, France and Scandinavia in the post-war period is supported by manifest stylist analogies and theoretical backdrops. On the contrary, the contacts with Italy in the field of church building are far more problematic. As suggested by the almost total silence of literature on the theme, compared to the multiple studies alluding to a German, French or Scandinavian influence, tracing a direct line between British and Italian church architecture in the second post-war period can be a difficult task. The excision is mainly due to different factors, which ranged from politics to religious and cultural evaluations. The purpose of this chapter is to show that, despite the sparser contacts, it is possible to outline relations between English and Italian church architecture. They are mainly based on the analysis of journals, book, reviews, as well as the attendance in international conferences devoted to sacred architecture.

In the years leading up to the war, Italian churches were frowned upon as symbols of the commission between the Vatican and the fascist state. Moreover, the independence of the Anglican Church and the marginality in terms of numbers of faithful of the Catholic Church had certainly not favoured exchanges between the two countries. An exception was the congress of sacred architecture in Bologna in 1955. It was attended by several British critics, architects, diplomats, and journalists.<sup>505</sup> The congress was certainly an opportunity to make the religious architecture projects of some of the masters of post-war Italy known abroad. Their projects, appreciated by Joseph Rykwert, often bore the imprint of a pauperism that Banham recognised within the Brutalist aesthetic. However, the impact of these buildings on English religious architecture is almost nil. As Robert Proctor has amply demonstrated in his book, the Catholic Church in England would in fact follow its own path. Anglican

experimentation seemed insensitive to contemporary developments in the Italian area, remaining more oriented towards Germany, France, or Scandinavia, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. The lack of knowledge of Italian sacred architecture was partly a consequence of the greater difficulty in reaching Italy by car. At the same time, Italian architecture was seen as excessively prone to fashionable excess.<sup>506</sup> This distance to the Italian peninsula, combined with the environmental and cultural differences of the two countries, meant that architecture from the Mediterranean country was viewed with a certain suspicion. A mistrust that is clear in the judgement expressed in books and magazines in which Italian churches are published. This is the case of the glass church in Baranzate, criticised for its sophistication, as well as other churches accused of being linked to a classical and baroque heritage.<sup>507</sup> It was only after the advent of the Second Vatican Council, in the wake of ecumenical rapprochements, that Italian Catholic architecture returned to being appreciated, not so much for its liturgical innovativeness as for its expressive potential.

### **8.1 A fascist heritage**

Throughout the development of post-Reformation English architecture, from 1600 to 1800, the Italianate style had been a preferred model for ecclesiastical architecture. It represented in a sense a certain international taste, as opposed to the ‘national’ Gothic. While Romanesque, Byzantine, early Christian or neo-Renaissance revivals had continued to inspire church designs in the British Isles in the first half of the 20th century to this generalisation, an almost abrupt change in taste was registered in the immediate post-World War II period. The Second World War, which resulted in Italy and the United Kingdom facing in harsh conflicts, such as that in North Africa (1940–3), marked a strong anti-Italian feeling, which continued even after the conflict.<sup>508</sup>

This phenomenon was accompanied by a decline in interest in Italian ecclesiastical architecture, only partially contradicted by the inclusion of a few Italian examples in a volume by Edward Maufe (1882–1974). The British architect often travelled to Italy as principal architect (1944–69) of the Imperial War Graves Commission. In his publication on *Modern Church Architecture* (1948), financed by the Incorporated Church Building Society, Maufe presented three examples built in Italy before the Second World War.<sup>509</sup> It is probable that Maufe directly knew the three examples, all three in Rome or in its surroundings, and ran into them while visiting the Southern Regional Commission in Rome of the IWGC, or in the

road to the Commonwealth cemeteries of Anzio and Cassino.<sup>510</sup> However, in the text, Maufe did not go into the merits of the churches' layout, their liturgical conception or their volumes. Rather, he stopped at details such as the treatment of surfaces or the general atmosphere, very often limited to the façade.

The first selected project was the Church of Christ the King (1920–34) built in Rome by Marcello Piacentini (1881–1960). It was an original central domed space joint to a semi-circular apse and to a frontal narthex with side towers, in a hybridization of Greek cross and longitudinal plan.<sup>511</sup> However, the only picture of the church in Maufe's book showed the brick façade, criticised by Maufe, according to whom 'by building brick courses of three out and two in, has produced a hard, mechanical result and almost nullified the effect of the small brick.'<sup>512</sup> The second was the Church of the Most Holy Annunciation (1933–5) in Sabaudia, designed by Gino Cancellotti (1896–1987), Eugenio Montuori (1907–82), Luigi Piccinato (1899–1983) and Alfredo Scalpelli (1898–1966), also attracted Maufe's attention because of its façade. It was clad in travertine and arranged in two-coloured bands. The English architect was probably referring to them by stating that 'the horizontal tile bonds are interesting as making a virtue of the "lifts" in the concrete.'<sup>513</sup> A higher consideration is reserved to the Church of St Fabian and St Venantius (1934–6) in Rome, by Clemente Busiri Vici (1887–1965), to which the English architects dedicated two entire pages.<sup>514</sup> It was a three-nave church, one of the few in those years to be built in Rome with a plastered façade, devoid of ornaments or brick or marble cladding. As Maufe writes in the text, the apse was decorated by the English artist, theologian and women's rights activist Joan Morris (1901–88). Morris was also the editor of a magazine on *Modern Sacred Art* in 1937–8, publishing foreign artists and critics, including the Italian painter Gino Severini (1883–1966) and the Catholic historian Monsignor Guido Anichini (1875–?). The magazine was the source of many of the illustrations used in Maufe's book, and it is not unlikely that the inclusion of St Fabian and St Venantius was also due to Morris's availability.<sup>515</sup> This does not imply that Maufe did not sincerely appreciate the project, in which he noticed 'a curiously attractive Soane-like quality, not usually associated in the English mind with churches.' The so-called Soane-like quality emerged in its compositional freedom and eclecticism, combining elements of tradition with ease. However, the adjective also helped to present the British public with a building whose monumentality could easily be misunderstood as the exclusive result of regime propaganda.<sup>516</sup>

For Maufe, the risk of publishing churches built during the fascist period was that of being easily accused of rhetoric. That is why, in the preface, he is keen to point out that ‘Frequently we may think that these foreign architects are ‘showing off’; if this really be so, it is a sin, but we must guard against condemning effects which have truly arisen from circumstances very different from our own.’<sup>517</sup> If Maufe found a way to deal with Italian ecclesiastical architecture built during the regime, the link with fascism probably prevented other British critics from investigating the field of post-war ecclesiastical architecture in Italy, which still saw the contribution of architects very close to the regime.

## 8.2 Pauperism, classicism and baroque

The exception is Joseph Rykwert, a Jew of Polish origin, who was particularly interested in modern Italian architecture and its peculiar language of expression.<sup>518</sup> In an article denouncing the absence of religion and churches from the 1951 Festival of Britain, Rykwert contrasts the delay of British ecclesiastical architecture programme with some Italian examples.<sup>519</sup> To support his comparison, he brought up three built projects that had just been published in the Italian magazine *Casabella*: the church of St Vincent de Paul (1951–3) in Matera, the churches of the Nativity of Mary (1953–5) and Our Lady of the Poor (1952–4) in Milan.<sup>520</sup> The two Milanese buildings were also presented in the 1959 monographic issue of *L’Art Sacré* on ‘Miracle a Milan’, citing the title of a famous movie of Italian Neorealism.<sup>521</sup> The three churches mentioned by Rykwert, all built on new properties, reinterpret traditional Italian church typologies with a modern language and functionalist approach. However, the exposed surfaces, the succinct decoration and the use of vernacular techniques in the three churches are an expression of a certain anthropology of poverty, which does not deny the principles of tradition.

The Church of St Vincent de Paul, built by Ludovico Quaroni (1911–87) in the rural hamlet of La Martella, on the outskirts of Matera, was the symbol of the ‘sociological functionalism’ with which the hamlet was designed, according to the provisions of the Marshall Plan and promoted by the Italian entrepreneur Adriano Olivetti. (1901–60).<sup>522</sup> In addition to the expressive simplicity of the interior, what captured Rykwert’s attention was certainly the design’s ability to provide the village with a ‘symbolic point of concentration’, despite embodying a synthesis of the surrounding architecture.<sup>523</sup>

Built on a design by Vico Magistretti (1920–2006) and Mario Tedeschi (1920–2005) in the experimental housing quarter of Triennale 8 (QT8), in a context analogue to the Lansbury Estate, the Church of the Nativity of Mary expressed a more modest elocution if compared to its English counterparts.<sup>524</sup> It consisted of a circular plan based on eccentric circles. After all, the apparently simple but sophisticated circular plan of the church experimented a recurrent layout in the history of church architecture, calling to mind the studies of Rudolf Wittkower on centrally planned church.<sup>525</sup> In effect, Wittkower had exerted a big fascination on Rykwert since his lectures on ‘the Classical Tradition’, attended while still in secondary school.<sup>526</sup>

In keeping with the idea of referencing history for a lesson on proportion and mathematics, Leslie Martin conducted personal research on a church with a central plan, based on a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>527</sup> The result of this experimentation, a wooden model, is undated. However, its geometric principles are probably inspired by Wittkower’s words on Leonardo’s ecclesiastical architecture, which the historian had praised as a ‘grouping of elementary forms’ that resonated with Luca Pacioli’s Platonic mathematics.<sup>528</sup> Similarly, Martin’s reworked version translates a circular plan, probably derived from Leonardo’s design for St Lawrence in Milan, into a conical volume that recalls another design by the Italian master, the Ideal Temple in the Louvre Museum.<sup>529</sup> The result was a building defined by the superposition of five ring galleries, innervated by an outer structure of buttresses and probably concluded by an upper dome or skylight.

The third church mentioned by Rykwert, the Our Lady of the Poor Church built by Luigi Figini (1903–1984) and Gino Pollini (1903–1991) in the working-class district of Baggio, Milan, was instead organized as a traditional basilica.<sup>530</sup> Soon celebrated in the international press, the interior of the church was portrayed in dramatic pictures, the church expressed eloquently the Franciscan poverty recalled by the titration of the church, offering a ‘reinterpretation of the traditional basilica [...] but a reinterpretation in the spare, harsh terminology of modern technique.’<sup>531</sup> The enthusiasm of Rykwert for Our Lady of the Poor was even laid down by the mention to the church in the volume on the history of church building that he wrote (1966) for the series of Faith and Fact Books, promoted by the Catholic Lancelot C. Sheppard.<sup>532</sup>

The churches cited by Rykwert were marked by a sense of ‘simplicity, practicality, a great sobriety, self-control, gravity and dignity’, paraphrasing the words that English historian

Edmund Bishop (1846–1971) used to describe the early Roman rite.<sup>533</sup> In a sense, they fell into the category that would be called 'Noble Simplicity' in article 34 of the Vatican Council's constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.<sup>534</sup> The ascetic plainness and modern austerity of the three churches presented by Rykwert, influenced by minimalism and vernacular languages, expressed the distinctive character of post-war Italian architecture. At the same time, their inherent classicism and visual eloquence embodied the perception of Italian church architecture in Britain, oscillating between a Franciscan feeling of 'transparent poverty' and Mannerist exuberance.<sup>535</sup> This dual interpretation would distinguish the British approach to the Italian model, described by the oxymoronic combination of theatrical eloquence and humble deprivation. Certainly, all three cases selected by Rykwert embodied a harsh pauperist tendency of Italian architectural culture, in line with the severe neorealism of the national film industries. It is probably no coincidence that in the same magazine, the previous year, Maryvonne Butcher had written an article on 'the Future of Italian Films' praising Italian neorealist cinema.<sup>536</sup>

However, despite the neorealist dryness of their unadorned surfaces, Italian churches were often considered the product of "baroque" rhetoric. This view was still alive in 1964, when American photographer and architectural critic George Everard Kidder-Smith published *The New Churches of Europe* in London, with a substantial section on Italy.<sup>537</sup> The Italian section included the already mentioned the Our Lady of the Poor Church by Figini and Pollini, followed by: the Church of St Justina in Mesola (1954) by Pierluigi Giordani (?–2011); the Church of the Blessed Immaculate Virgin in Bologna (1956–61) by Glauco Gresleri (1930–2016); the Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baranzate (1956–8) by Angelo Mangiarotti (1921–2012) and Bruno Morassutti (1920–2008); the Church of the Redeemer in Turin (1956–7) by Nicola (1899–1986) and Leonardo Mosso (1926–); the Church of St Luke the Evangelist in Rome (1955–8) by Studio Passarelli; finally the Church of St Mary Major in Francavilla al Mare, Abruzzo (1948–9) by Ludovico Quaroni.

The author's comments on Italian churches highlighted the theatrical character of the buildings, evoked in the comparison between Guarini's Baroque Chapel of the Shroud (1668–94) and the modern Church of the Redeemer in Turin. The church was based on a single nave bordered by folded brick walls and a mineral-like ceiling of reinforced concrete, faceted into triangular coffers with cut-outs to encourage soft light, which exceeded, according to Smith, its 'angular and mannered exterior.'<sup>538</sup> A similar interpretation can be seen in the use of the adjective 'dramatic' to describe Quaroni's church in Francavilla. The building had an

elongated octagonal plan surrounded by a dark ambulatory and crowned by an expressive large lantern that, by contrast, flooded the nave with light.<sup>539</sup>

Perhaps his reading, accentuated by his training as a photographer, was based on the Italian churches' unrestrained use of light. Indeed, it represented a distinctive element he was unlikely to find in other European countries, and harking back to a Baroque ancestry. Probably for the same reason, Kidder Smith was most impressed by the dramatic integration of direct and indirect light in Figini and Pollini's Milanese church, whose lantern functioned like the lens of a camera capturing light. Captured in a series of vivid black-and-white images, the church opens the Italian section of the book: 'The interior, on the other hand, provides a powerful, near-brutal, statement of strength in church architecture. This power, it should be noted, emanates from the lighting, both natural and artificial, even more than from the structure'.<sup>540</sup>

The church even attracted Banham who, despite having strongly criticized Italian architecture (including Figini and Pollini) for its neo-liberty trend,<sup>541</sup> praised the building in the pages of his *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* of 1966 (which partially recapitulated some articles published in *The Architectural Review* in 1955).<sup>542</sup> Banham, who was particularly critical of the effects of Wittkower's principle on modern design, while acknowledging the church's proportionate Renaissance plan, placed emphasis on its bare walls. The unadorned surfaces confirmed, in his view, the existence of a 'Protestant connection', in the sense of a 'puritan aesthetic' deliberately devoid of 'obvious finishes'. Banham captured the spirit of poverty embodied by the church, even though Figini himself, quoting St Francis and praising the mystical marriage of sacred architecture and poverty, had denied any connection with Protestantism, which he associated rather with misery. In particular, Figini noticed the shadow of Protestant misery in those prefabricated church buildings without inescapable reasons, which represented an unnecessary deprivation of the harmony and spatial richness that stimulated in the faithful a mysterious invitation to worship God.<sup>543</sup>

In contrast to Figini, Banham regarded the concept of proportional harmony as a sure sign of classicism, which he considered among the most dangerous trends in contemporary architecture, both in Italy and England. While being in line with Banham on the frontier against the 'Wittkowerian classicists', Peter Smithson (1923–2003), on the other hand, had

already sought to recover the link between modern and Baroque architecture, asserting the predominance of plastic language over Wittkowerian principles of classicism:

*The great baroque churches are not at all theatrical in the expressionist sense (or Gordon Craig) sense, but rather communicate their meaning primarily by space, and by absolute consistency of plastic language. And these tools are still available – in fact are the only tools of architecture.*<sup>544</sup>

Despite British interest in Italian engineering and design, Rykwert's article and Banham's quick excursions remained among the few glimpses into contemporary Italian church building. For example, among the key British texts on church architecture, *The Modern Church* (1956) by Edward David Mills (1915–98), which was a practical manual on church design and construction, provided a list of exemplary church projects. They were built in England, Switzerland, France, Finland, Sweden, Germany, North America (U.S.A. and Canada) and South America (Venezuela and Brazil), but no church built in Italy was mentioned. Equally, *Liturgy and Architecture* (1960) by Peter Hammond (1921–99), who, as it happens, had also participated in the invasion of Italy, took as examples many churches from Switzerland, Germany, the USA, and France.<sup>545</sup> However, modern Italian examples were almost absent, limited to a mention, within the theme circular plan churches, of the Church of St Marcellinus (1932–5), in Genoa. The church, designed by Luigi Carlo Daneri (1900–72) with a dome calculated by Pier Luigi Nervi, was organized on a circular plan, preceded by a tall pronaos raised on steps. The external sequence of concave and convex surfaces that shaped the cylindrical stone-clad volume was reflected in the internal alternation of solid walls and semi-circular chapels. It was this interior space that raised doubts in Hammond's mind, who observed that 'the way in which the six secondary altars are set in shallow recesses all around the eucharistic room gives the church a decidedly baroque flavour.'<sup>546</sup> The term 'baroque' again seems to imply a negative judgment, especially if one compares the section on St Marcellinus with a passage in *Towards a Church Architecture* (1962) in which Hammond chides Edward Maufe for praising, in his book on churches, the presence of secondary altars in a church to 'greatly improve the value of the design'.<sup>547</sup> Apart from this brief entry on Daneri, when it came to describing post-war church planning in Western Europe, Hammond acknowledged only that 'Italy has in the last few years produced a number of interesting new churches, including two or three based on a circular plan.'<sup>548</sup> He spends no further words describing the contemporary design of church buildings on the peninsula, although he openly acknowledges the fruitful impact on architecture of events such as the international congress held in Assisi in 1956.<sup>549</sup>

### 8.3 The institutionalisation of the debate on liturgy and architecture

The Assisi congress was part of a fervid reflection on the theme of architecture and liturgy, fostered in the country by figures as the bishops Giacomo Lercaro (1891–1976) and Giovanni Battista Montini (1897–1978), who would be Pope (1963) as Paul VI.

Theological studies on liturgy and art, fervently debated in Italy, and their subsequent institutionalization in congresses and committees well before the Second Vatican Council, emerged as a vibrant sign of modernity in the Italian Catholic world. Rykwert himself stressed the relevance of such manifestations of awareness, such as the First National Congress on Religious Architecture, held in Bologna in 1955. Among others, the congress gained the support of many British institutes, such as the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Cambridge School of Architecture and the Pontifical Scottish College in Rome; British journals such as *Architectural Design* and the publishers Faber and Faber; architects such as David Rodney Burles (1906–?) of Burles, Newton & Partners; and architectural historians such as Nikolaus Pevsner (1902–83). Diplomats, including Minister to the Holy See Sir Douglas Frederick Howard (1897–1987), A. D. M. Ross and P. H. P. Thompson, also lent their support. The event prompted a vibrant speech by Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, archbishop of Bologna (1952–68), who praised ‘the spirit and liturgical functionalism of the early Christian basilicas,’ which were to be entrusted to a contemporary language.<sup>550</sup> The program of the Congress, conference proceedings, list of participants and a selection of church projects devised over the past two decades were collected in a book published in 1956, which included translations of the main talks into French, English and German.<sup>551</sup>

The congress had a great echo in the Liturgical Movement and was the source of a consistent renewal of the aesthetics of Catholicism.<sup>552</sup> This was clear to Father Cloud Herman Meinberg (1914–82) of Saint John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, who praised the meeting in his article on ‘the New Churches of Europe’, published in *Worship* and *The Furrow* in 1957.<sup>553</sup> Although presented in American and Irish journals respectively, the text was probably known in English Catholic society. Meinberg, an architect himself before joining the Benedictine order, was an ardent supporter of liturgical reform and used to discuss architecture.<sup>554</sup> The Benedictine father, who had travelled throughout Europe and met such personalities as Cardinals Celso Benigno Luigi Costantini (1876–1958) and Giacomo Lercaro, wrote a commentary on ‘Church Architecture in Europe’ in these journals.<sup>555</sup> Analyzing different

national approaches to the subject, he outlined a difference between the architectural style of northern countries (Germany, Belgium, France and Switzerland) and that of southern countries (especially Spain and Italy). Italian churches showed, according to Benedictine, a Baroque influence that shone through the modern trappings in a revivalist approach that often-neglected pastoral needs.<sup>556</sup> However, he argued that Italy had the potential for sacred architecture ‘worthy of her past,’ capable of embodying the warm spirit of its inhabitants:

*The genius largely is in the south. Italy, where so many of the cultural movements of Western Europe have been born, where men know how to live fully and to be happy although poor, where Catholicism often makes a rather disappointing showing on the exterior but where perhaps the Catholic soul lies deeper – for something must explain the enormous unmatched vitality of this people – this Italy is stirring. So far the new churches of Europe tend to be clear and cold – like the frosty dawn of an early spring. The warm sun of Italy is still to come – I hope.*<sup>557</sup>

#### **8.4 Over-sophistication**

Under the liturgical thrusts of the Second Vatican Council and the miracle of the Italian economic boom, a new dialogue between Italian and British ecclesiastical architecture finally opened. The British attitude toward industrialization became an opportunity to learn about new Italian prefabricated architecture and to rediscover the Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baranzate. The church, designed by Mangiarotti and Morassutti, was erected in a small town on the outskirts of Milan, which was destined for massive development in the 1960s thanks to the construction of industrial factories and social housing.<sup>558</sup> The industrialized context was reflected in the construction of this rectangular technological box-shaped church. The minimalist form was based on a structure of prestressed concrete beams resting on four pillars.<sup>559</sup> Cantilevered beams allowed the pillars to be separated from the facades, which were made of a continuous curtain of opaline glass panes. The floor plan was a single nave, centred on four round pillars that supported the roof. Enclosed by a concrete and stone fence, the church stood on a hill, and its main entrance was accessible via a staircase offset to the left. On the right, at a lower level, the baptistery was framed by a parallelepiped volume entering the hill and marked above by a monolithic stone, carved with the dedication to Mater Misericordiae. An exterior pool, adjacent to the baptistery window, recalled the symbolic iconography of the water. Its reflection on the glass, which, as in a double-exposure photograph, superimposed the images of the baptismal font and the pond, materialised the sacrament celebrated in the Jordan River in a poetic epitome.

The minimalist image of the church and its technological modernity made it stand out in the international context of church building. In fact, the industrial afflatus of the church matched the success of Italian product design. Moreover, it dialogued with international examples, attesting to Mangiarotti's knowledge of American architectures, such as the First Christian Church (1942) in Columbus by Eliel Saarinen (1873–1950) or the Robert Carr Memorial Chapel (1952) by Mies Van der Rohe. Similar formal solutions were taken up in international religious architecture, such as the German Church of St Stephen in Cologne-Lindenthal, built in 1958–61 by Joachim Schürmann (1926–), and the Swiss Church of St Pius in Meggen (1960–6) by Franz Füeg (1921–2019). In Britain, the project was published in major architectural magazines and books. In 1964 it was published in Kidder Smith's already mentioned reportage. Then, it appeared in the pages of *The Architectural Review*, *Churchbuilding* and Maguire and Murray's *Modern Churches of the Word*.<sup>560</sup> In the *Architect's Journal*, Frederick Gibberd praised the building, affirming that it clearly expressed a correspondence between structure and function.<sup>561</sup> Instead, in the article appeared in *Churchbuilding*, the project didn't meet the same appreciation.<sup>562</sup> Indeed, the text article blamed its degraded condition, contradicting the idea of a visual purity:

*Seen from a distance, the church stands out clean and bright [...]. Closer to, the outside of the church is rather depressing, because the building hasn't worn well [...]. The glass is crackling, the glass fibre is going yellow and the paint is peeling off the steelwork.*<sup>563</sup>

A similar remark had already been posed by Kidder Smith, who had recognised that the insulating plastic filler was discoloured and streaked. However, the photographer argued that 'in spite of this unfortunate technological shortcoming, the conception of this church is magnificent. Its refreshing philosophy of radiant light versus the medieval gloom espoused by so many churches is sufficient alone to make it significant.'<sup>564</sup> Kidder Smith's admiration for what he called 'one of the most pristine and elegant structures yet devised' contrasted with the judgment of Maguire and Murray, decrying its fake primitivism concealing an over-refined look. In particular, the pair focused on certain details, such as the curved surrounding wall, a reference to the Taliesin stone wall which Morassutti had built while a student at Frank Lloyd Wright's school, or the pool outside the Baptistry:

*These things [the enclosure], so pseudo-primitive yet highly sophisticated, are closer to Tudorbethan half-timbering than to serious modern architecture. They are without roots or reference to the life of the community [...] the entrance to the baptistery has the same picturesque irrelevance. From the outside a pool of running water reflected in the plate glass window of the baptistery gives the impression that the font is in running water: a clever trick but meaningless as soon as the trick is seen.*<sup>565</sup>

The interior, despite being described as charming and full of light, was accused of giving ‘the impression of a modern building re-ordered for a medieval liturgy’ and was again condemned for its over-sophistication.<sup>566</sup> This judgement was linked to the idea of liturgical backwardness. To support the idea of its backwardness, the Italian church was compared to another foreign masterpiece, the Church of St Christophorus in Koln-Niehl (1954–59) by Rudolf Schwarz. Neglecting its innovative technologies, the comparison seemed to be particularly noxious for the former. According to the writers, the backwardness laid in the ‘feeling’ of a spatial division into chancel and nave, produced by the two frontal columns, and in the presence of an ‘anachronistic’ dorsal hanging on the wall behind the altar. The judgement did not contextualise the church, which even introduced numerous innovations, such as the isolated altar to allow celebration towards the faithful, far before the initiatives of the Vatican II. The text closed with the reaffirmation that although no comparable projects had been built in Britain, the Italian church embodied only a superficial understanding of the Liturgical Movement when compared to German examples.<sup>567</sup>

## 8.5 Concrete and its expressions

Italy’s rarefied experimentation with prefabrication did not convince the British public, accustomed to a more fundamentalist approach to technology, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. The appreciation of Italian mastery of reinforced concrete was different. Sanctioned by the Royal Gold Medal awarded to the Italian engineer Pier Luigi Nervi (1891–1979) in 1960, interest in Italian structuralism encouraged British magazines to publish Italian architecture in reinforced concrete. This trend is also reflected in church architecture. For example, a 1971 issue of *Concrete Quarterly* invited Gio Ponti (1891–1979), who had also collaborated with Nervi, to talk about his Taranto Cathedral (1967–70). The image of the cathedral at night appeared on the cover of the magazine.<sup>568</sup> The cathedral consisted of a large nave, with a raised central presbytery and, behind it, a sloping choir. Externally, the façade, with three portals, rose on a flight of steps that formed a large podium for the building. Its openwork top dialogued with the sky and with the rear ‘sail’ that served as a bell tower. This flat structure, perforated with rectangular and hexagonal holes, indicated the location of the sanctuary and marked the church on the outskirts of the Apulian city. Both the façade and the sail, which represent a kind of evolution of the decorative façade of St Fabianus and St Venantius, would not have been possible without the use of concrete, the material that

‘liberates us from the right angle [...] that assumes the form by which a building stands.’<sup>569</sup> The free use of concrete, with the possibility of being moulded like a plastic sculpture, was even symbolic of a new direction in Italian architecture. This trend recovered its ‘baroque’ roots, clothed in an expressionist flavour, to create sculptural churches that functioned as powerful iconographic tools. The success of Ponti’s modern cathedral can be traced in the perforated concrete screen over the entrance to the Central Church in Torquay, Devon (1971–6). It was a joint Methodist and United Reformed church designed by Edward Narracott, Tanner and André. In addition, the plan of the church, an elongated octagon, recalled Ponti’s polygonal forms. Polygons were emblems of the Italian architect’s idea of architecture as ‘crystal’.<sup>570</sup> They were used, for example, in the plan of the Church of St Charles Borromeo at the Milan Hospital (1964–9). The pitched apse of the Central Church evoked a recurring feature of Ponti churches. It can be compared to the geometry of the façade of St Luke the Evangelist, in Milan (1955–60), or the side entrance of St Francis at Fopponino, in Milan (1958–64).<sup>571</sup>

Just few years earlier, in 1968, the book *New Directions in Italian Architecture* by Vittorio Gregotti (1927–2020) was published in London. It presented few examples of contemporary ecclesiastical architecture, all expressions of a new generation of Italian architecture. The chosen buildings were characterised by an aesthetic that moved away from the bareness exalted by Banham towards a new expressionist afflatus, more in keeping with his Baroque background. The eloquence of this trend was embodied, among others, by Ludovico Quaroni’s design for a church in the Prenestino district of Rome (1949). The church had already been featured in the multilingual Italian magazine *Metron*, in an article that was also cited by the British magazine *Architectural Design* in 1950.<sup>572</sup> Designed before the churches of Francavilla and Matera, it renewed, according to Gregotti, ‘the old ties with certain aspects of German expressionism’, probably considering the link with the German movement more acceptable than a possible baroque background.<sup>573</sup> Similarly, the entry submitted by Enrico Castiglioni (1914–2000) to the competition for the sanctuary of Siracusa (1957),<sup>574</sup> following his ecclesial projects for a church in Montecatini (1953)<sup>575</sup> and for a basilica (presented at the Milan Triennale X in 1954),<sup>576</sup> was praised for its plastic structure. In its organic form, it recalled Baroque architects’ fascination with mollusc shells. The Church of St Peter e St Jerome (1946–53) built by Giovanni Michelucci in Collina di Pontelungo, Pistoia, expressed a still vernacular language, although transforming the transept into a light chamber. Instead, Michelucci’s church of St John the Baptist in Campi

Bisenzio (1960–4), also known as the Highway Church, decisively demonstrated a dramatic eloquence. Not by chance, Gregotti compared the project to the plastic invention of Hans Scharoun (1893–1972) and the more informal experiments of Le Corbusier.<sup>577</sup> The building was defined by a wonderful structure in reinforced concrete, with shaft-like pillars supporting a tent-like roof, clad externally with copper plates. The continuous walls, devoid of angles, defined a sensual floor plan. It traced a Latin cross, with the main altar on the shorter arms and a side entrance, in the manner of a transverse hall of Renaissance and Baroque descent.<sup>578</sup>

On the opposite side, the 1970 issue of *Manplan* dedicated to ‘religion’ mentioned the Church of the Holy Heart [Sic!] by Melchiorre Bega (1898–1976).<sup>579</sup> The project, which actually featured the newly completed (1962–7) Church of St John in Casalecchio di Reno, near Bologna, was presented for its exemplary tone of ‘modesty and calm’ and its extraordinary layout, compared to ‘Italy’s grand basilica tradition.’<sup>580</sup> In fact, the plan of the church divided the congregation into a hexagonal tree-like space around the altar and translated volumetrically into separate blocks clad externally in sandstone. The complex spatiality of the interior, on the other hand, was contrasted by the simplicity of the materials, from the shotcrete finishing to the imposing concrete truss beams arranged orthogonally to the main axis.

Just two pages before, in *Manplan*, the Church of the Holy Heart in Ponte Lambro, Milan, (1962–6) was again praised for its almost Protestant mood: ‘shorn of its baroque past, the form retains immense human appeal.<sup>581</sup> The building, designed by Guido Maffezzoli (1921–), occupied to a narrow lot at the corner between two streets.<sup>582</sup> The plan of the church consisted of a rectangular nave, a lower nave housing the weekly chapel, tabernacle, confessionals and sacristy, and a smaller baptistery on the opposite side of the nave. On the shorter front, a concrete staircase/ramp system led to two portals, one opening into the nave, the other into a side chapel. The longer front is punctuated by the volumes of the nave, the bell tower, a secondary portal and the parish centre. Apart from the portals, the building has no visible windows on the façades. Light came from three shallow lanterns that opened in the length of the nave. The same mechanism was reproduced, on a smaller scale, to illuminate the side aisle. The light reflected off the pale, unadorned walls, emphasising the wide back wall of the chancel, in an almost monochromatic sequence of planes that evoked a Nordic atmosphere. The Nordic influence was also evident in the exterior, comparable to the Torenschool (1928) in Dordrecht by Christiaan Gerrit van Buuren (1888–1965). Like its

Dutch counterpart, the Italian church resulted from an accumulation of box-like volumes. The volumes were clad with brownish stone-crete panels, the only curvilinear surface being in the wall bordering the ramp. The horizontality was emphasised by the elongated side walls and the exposed concrete lower sections, which served as a base and are separated from the stone by a sunken fillet. The verticality was enhanced by the recessed dividing lines between the volumes and by the bell tower, which was reminiscent of the forked tower of Louis Khan's Research building in Philadelphia.<sup>583</sup> An analogical compositional motif characterises the Emmanuel Church in West Dulwich, London, completed in 1968 to a design by Hutchison Locke & Monk, a firm best known for the Paisley Civic Centre (1973) and the small St Luke's, Shepherds Bush (1976–8).<sup>584</sup> The bell-tower of the London church recalled the shape of the Ponte Lambro belltower. The international appeal of Maffezzoli's church was even chosen by the German architect Reinhard Gieselmann (1925–2013) in his book on contemporary ecclesiastical architecture, published in London in 1972, to represent Italy along with its baroque nemesis, Michelucci's motorway church.<sup>585</sup>

The church by Michelucci had already been already praised by Basil Spence: 'Apart from functioning extremely well, it has captured the Italian imagination. It has a deep emotional interior which is to me extremely moving.'<sup>586</sup> In fact, cited by international critics and included among the examples of the new architecture by the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Michelucci's ecclesiastical architecture began to register a growing interest, finally sanctioned by the exhibition that the RIBA dedicated to his work in 1978.<sup>587</sup> The exhibition showed many of his ecclesial projects, including the Church of St John the Baptist (1966–70)<sup>588</sup> in Arzignano and the brand new Church of the Immaculate Conception (1966–78) in Longarone.<sup>589</sup> The latter, built entirely of exposed reinforced concrete, was constructed with a central altar surrounded by sloping circular seats, like a total plastic theatre lit by soft light filtered through the perimeter windows. In the same year, a photo of the building appeared on the cover of the April issue of *The Architectural Review*, with the headline 'Viva Michelucci', while Rykwert wrote about the Italian architect in the *RIBA Journal*.<sup>590</sup> The success of Michelucci's churches in the UK confirmed the growing interest in Italian religious architecture and the gradual dismantling of the 'Baroque anathema' that had cursed the fate of previous Italian churches. The warm sun of Italy had finally started, as it were, to shine in Britain!

## 8.6 Conclusion

The analysis of Italian cases, relating to the British ones, helps to understand the origin of the change in the rite and in its architectural outcome. In Italy, an almost homogeneous context dominated by Roman Catholicism, the rite is guided by the councils, which are open to external influences, as the section on ecumenism has already discussed. However, in such a confrontation it is evident that, when two realities meet, both are unavoidably destined to assimilate extraneous factors. Overturning the entire focus of the thesis, we could affirm that, given the chromophobia and the iconoclasm of the contemporary Catholic churches, even the Roman Catholic aesthetics owes much to Protestant and Anglican architecture. In this shift, the entire Catholic mystery tradition, often relying on the power of images, was influenced by reformed iconoclasm, and reduced to spartan aesthetics. Therefore, churches showed a decrease in the traditional profusion of artworks, ornamentations, and precious fittings. The rejection of these artistical devices that, for years, had provided the faithful with a visual catechism and, in some way, allowed the lower classes to experience the categories of beauty and luxury, attested to the cease of the educational role of churches, which had been taken over by schools and museums. On the other side, as schools and museums, the church was regarded as a functional building, which clashed with the idea of a space stimulating sensory and spiritual experience. In the light of this change, the reception of Italian church architecture by British architects was characterised by a certain caution towards the survival of a baroque dramatics. This tag, which often confused the etymological and historiographical categories of renaissance and baroque, was frequently assumed as a pejorative alternative of tradition, or rather a side of tradition which was regarded as an antonym of the Gothic earnestness in a Puginian sense.<sup>591</sup> At the end of the sixties, the ecumenical rapprochement and the emergence of new contacts with Italy, favoured by factors such as trade, fashion, cinema, art, led to a reconsideration of the judgment.

In this respect, the judgement on architecture was overlapping with that for Italian product design. This comparison is valid for both the merits and faults attributed to Italian design, in which we read between the lines the same merits and faults attributed to Italian sacred architecture, which we have mentioned in this chapter. It may be useful to read the letter that P. Glennie-Smith, director of the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation, wrote to the editor of *The Guardian* in 1960:

*The impact of Italian design in recent years has, of course, spread to other things than fashion in apparel (for example, cars, furnishings, and glass) and [...] a wide section of the public appears to have developed a kind of cult for goods from abroad, whether or not they are well made and designed.<sup>592</sup>*

The response to the letter, by British painter Richard Seddon (1915–2002), is equally significant:

*Italian influence on British design has been interrupted during the last thirty years principally by war and by the unpopularity here of the Mussolini regime. Now that Italy is once more one of the family her predominant influence in design is taking up where it left off. To protest against this influence is like Canute forbidding the tide to come in. Our British artist-designers never refuse these influences but also never absorb them in their original form. In Britain the Continental styles have always been turned into unique British version of the European artistic tradition which Italy has always dominated.<sup>593</sup>*

The answer clarifies how, as with the church in Baranzate, Italian design has been accused of being too linked to aesthetics. This feeling was very diffused in all the 1960s, as proved by the article on Italian design that Fiona MacCarthy wrote for *The Guardian*.<sup>594</sup> There, besides recognising that Italian design sometimes reaches ‘sensational heights’, she claimed the necessity ‘to bring [Italian] industrial design down from its exclusive pinnacle, apply its brilliance and its energy to lower price ranges and more practical products.’<sup>595</sup>

At the same time, moving away from the post-war economy and the pauperistic sobriety of reconstruction, Italian churches began to be appreciated for their formal experimentation. They were now cited for that visual eloquence that made them sculptures on an architectural scale, plastic volumes caressed by the warm Mediterranean light and moulded by the skilful hand of the architect-craftsman. ‘Fantastic and flamboyant, stimulating as controversial’, to paraphrase the definition of a contemporary article on the Italian art of the time, the new churches of Italy were beginning to show their most uninhibited face to the British world.<sup>596</sup> A change in perception that stimulated a gradual process of cultural reciprocity between Italy and the United Kingdom also in the field of ecclesiastical architecture.

## Notes

<sup>505</sup> Centro di studio e Informazione per l'architettura sacra Bologna (ed.), *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia: 1945-1955* (1956).

<sup>506</sup> Reyner Banham, “Neoliberty: The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture”, *The Architectural Review*, 125, 747 (April 1959), 231–6.

<sup>507</sup> ‘Milan & Cologne: Two Churches’, *Churchbuilding*, 12 (April 1964), 8–17.

<sup>508</sup> Terri Colpi, ‘The impact of the second world war on the British Italian community’, *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diasporam*, 11, 3 (1992), 185–6.

<sup>509</sup> Edward Maufe, *Modern Church Architecture* (1948), 46–9.

<sup>510</sup> The Office of the Southern Regional Commission of the IWGC was in Rome, via Lazzaro Spallanzai 1 and, from 1964, in Via Cornelio Celso 4.

<sup>511</sup> On the church see Angelo Arrighi, Claudia Confort et alii, *Cristo Re di Marcello Piacentini 1934/2014* (2

<sup>512</sup> Maufe, *Modern Church Architecture*, 47.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>514</sup> On the church see Luigi Monzo, *Croci e Fasci: Der italienische Kirchenbau in der Zeit des Faschismus 1919-1945*, PhD thesis in Architecture, Karlsruher Instituts für Technologie (2017), 566–7.

<sup>515</sup> Joan Morris, ed., *Modern Sacred Art: An International Annual Review* (January 1938).

<sup>516</sup> We have to admit that Soane’s ecclesial architecture, like St John on Bethnal Green, London, is hardly comparable to the Roman church.

<sup>517</sup> Maufe, *Modern Church Architecture*, 8.

<sup>518</sup> In particular, Rykwert looked at Ignazio Gardella, BBPR, Giuseppe Pagano, Figini and Pollini, and to the masters of Italian Rationalism: Baird ‘A Promise as Well as a Memory: Notes Towards an Intellectual Biography of Joseph Rykwert’, in *Body and Building: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture*, ed. by George Dodds and Robert Tavernor (2002), 18.

<sup>519</sup> Joseph Rykwert, ‘The Church We Deserve?’, *Blackfriars*, 37/433 (April 1956), 171–175.

<sup>520</sup> *Casabella Continuità*, 208 (November/December 1955). Ludovico Quaroni could speak English since he was made prisoner of the British army during World War II and spent more than five years as war prisoner in India.

<sup>521</sup> *L’Art Sacré*, 1959, 1-2 (September/October), *Miracle a Milan*. The movie was *Miracle in Milan* (1951) directed by Vittorio De Sica.

<sup>522</sup> The expression ‘sociological functionalism’ comes from Amedeo Belluzzi, Claudia Conforti, *Architettura italiana: 1944-1984* (1985), 20. For an overview on the church see: Centro di studio e informazione per l’architettura sacra, *10 anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955* (1956), 358–66; Mauro Sàito, *La chiesa di Quaroni a La Martella: Restauro di un’architettura contemporanea* (1991); Andrea Longhi, *Storie di chiese, storie di comunità: Progetti, cantieri, architetture* (2017), 168–75.

<sup>523</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell’architettura moderna in Italia* (1964), 114.

<sup>524</sup> Centro di studio e informazione per l’architettura sacra, *10 anni*, 296-301.

<sup>525</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural principles in the age of humanism* (1949), 11–32.

<sup>526</sup> On Rykwert and Wittkower see Baird ‘A Promise as Well as a Memory’, 13. Many texts have indagated Wittkower’s influence on modern architecture. See Henry A. Millon, ‘Rudolf Wittkower, Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism: Its Influence on the Development and Interpretation of Modern

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Architecture', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (May 1972), 83–91; Alina A. Payne, 'Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (September 1994), 322–42

<sup>527</sup> The model is in the RIBA collection, cat. no. MOD/MART/4.

<sup>528</sup> Wittkower, *Architectural principles in the age of humanism*, 14.

<sup>529</sup> Leonardo da Vinci, *Plan for a Church Based in San Lorenzo in Milan*, post 1508, Paris, Institut de France, Manuscript B; Leonardo da Vinci, *Ideal Temple* (or *Etruscan Mausoleum*), post 1507, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, inv. 2386.

<sup>530</sup> Centro di studio e informazione per l'architettura sacra, *10 anni*, 229–36.

<sup>531</sup> Rykwert, 'The Church We Deserve?', 174.

<sup>532</sup> Rykwert, *The Church We Deserve?*, 171–2.

<sup>533</sup> Edmund Bishop, *Liturgica Historica: Papers On The Liturgy And Religious Life Of The Western Church* (1918), 12–3.

<sup>534</sup> Alan Reid, 'Noble Simplicity Revisited', in D. Vincent Twomey and Janet E. Rutherford, eds., *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Art and Architecture* (2011), 94–111.

<sup>535</sup> The definition of transparent poverty is taken from Marie-Robert Capellades 'Transparent Poverty', trans. Keith Harrison, *Churchbuilding*, 7 (Oct. 1962), 4–8. Originally published in *L'Art sacré* (January–February 1958).

<sup>536</sup> Maryvonne Butcher, 'The Future of Italian Films', *Blackfriars*, 36 (April 1955), 121–7.

<sup>537</sup> Kidder Smith, *The New Churches of Europe*, 190–219.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibi*, 210, 216.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibi*, 190.

<sup>541</sup> Reyner Banham, "Neoliberty: The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture", *The Architectural Review*, 125, 747 (April 1959), 231–6.

<sup>542</sup> Banham, *The new brutalism*, 125. The Protestant churches to which the Milanese building is compared are the Reformed church in Nagele (1960) by Johannes Hendrik van den Broek (1898–1978) and Jacob Bakema (1914–81), and the Markuskyrka in Stockholm (1956–63) by Sigurd Lewerentz (1885–1975).

<sup>543</sup> 'Ormai nel costruire sacro una scelta si impone tra i tre termini scalari in gioco: ricchezza, povertà, miseria. [...] Quanto alla miseria [...] di fronte allo squallore di certe "prefabbricate", (tali anche dove non ve ne sia vera e improrogabile necessità), non si può non pensare per analogia a una certa "forma mentis" di sapore nihilista, affine al "cupio dissolvi", e a un autolesionismo rinunciatario di colore Protestantico [...] Quanto alla povertà, non sarà certo fuori luogo qui, nella terra di S. Francesco, tesserne ancora una volta l'elogio, parlare di nozze mistiche dell'architettura sacra con Madonna Povertà', from Luigi Figini 'La povertà delle chiese', in *Architettura e Liturgia*, ed. by Pina Ciampani (1965), 119.

<sup>544</sup> Peter Smithson, *Spiritual exercise for churchmen and architects*, from a talk at the university of London, autumn 1959, from Hammond, ed., *Towards a Church Architecture*, 10.

<sup>545</sup> Peter Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (1963).

<sup>546</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 65–6.

<sup>547</sup> Hammond, Foreword to Hammond, ed., *Towards a church architecture*, 27, n. 12; Maufe, *Modern Church Architecture*, 9.

<sup>548</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 81.

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<sup>549</sup> Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 79. The first International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy took place in Assisi and in Rome from 18 to 22 September 1956.

<sup>550</sup> On the use of primitivism in modernist architecture see Ernst Hans Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive. Episodes in the History of Western Taste and Art* (2002).

<sup>551</sup> Centro di Studio e Informazione per l'Architettura Sacra di Bologna 1956. On the conference, see also Carla Zito *Casa tra le case. Architettura di chiese a Torino durante l'episcopato del cardinale Michele Pellegrino (1965–1977)* (2013), 21–2. Father Bevilacqua wrote the introduction to the first Italian edition of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Romano Guardini, see Romano Guardini, *Lo Spirito della Liturgia* (1930).

<sup>552</sup> 'Italy: Church Congress', *The Architects' Journal*, 122/3155 (18 August 1955), 226.

<sup>553</sup> Cloud Meinberg, 'The new Churches of Europe', *The Furrow*, 8, 6 (June 1957), 364–72.

<sup>554</sup> He would have, for example, a long dialogue with Marcel Breuer during the construction (1953–61) of his brutalist abbey with the annexed church, which, due to its innovativeness, would have required just few adjustments after the Second Vatican Council. See Hilary Thimmesh, *Marcel Breuer and a Committee of Twelve Plan a Church: A Monastic Memoir* (2011), IX; Victoria M. Young, *Saint John's Abbey Church: Marcel Breuer and the Creation of a Modern Sacred Space* (2014).

<sup>555</sup> In Meinberg, 'The new Churches of Europe', 368–9, the author even cited the significant exhibition on modern German church architecture held at the Lateran Museum in Rome in 1957, sponsored by the Cardinals Josef Frings (1887–1978) and Joseph Wendel (1901–60), with a catalogue introduced by a text Romano Guardini (1885–1968) on 'the Religious picture and the Invisible God'. Few years later, in 1961, Guardini would be asked to enter the Liturgical Preparatory Commission of the Second Vatican Council, while Cardinal Frings would be among the animators of the Council called by John XXIII in 1959.

<sup>556</sup> 'In Italy the issue between the old styles and modern is not clear. Consequently eclecticism is rife – sometimes of Renaissance origins, often of Baroque, and sometimes of modern' or again 'there is still, for example, the multiplicity of altars in parish churches [...] are they the old Baroque shrine-altars mainly for special devotions [...]?', from Meinberg, 1957, 366.

<sup>557</sup> Meinberg, 'The new Churches of Europe', 372.

<sup>558</sup> On the church, see Giulio Barazzetta, ed., *La chiesa di vetro: di Angelo Mangiarotti, Bruno Morassutti, Aldo Favini: la storia e il restauro* (2015).

<sup>559</sup> On the structure, calculated by Engineer Aldo Favini, see Marzia Marandola, 'Il dispositivo architettonico e costruttivo', in Giulio Barazzetta, ed., *La chiesa di vetro* (2015), 17–27.

<sup>560</sup> 'Prefabrication by Mangiarotti', *The Architectural Review*, 136/814 (1 December 1964), 394; 'Milan & Cologne: Two Churches', *Churchbuilding*, 12 (April 1964), 8–17; Maguire and Murray, *Modern Churches of the World* (1965). It was also published in 'Church at Baranzate', *Architectural Design*, XXIX/9 (September 1959), 367–8.

<sup>561</sup> 'Architect Architecture Overseas', *The Architect's Journal*, 143/3 (19 January 1966), 238.

<sup>562</sup> The article was probably written by Maguire and Murray, since it was republished with very few changes in *Modern Churches of the World*.

<sup>563</sup> 'Milan & Cologne: Two Churches', *Churchbuilding*, 12 (April 1964), 8–17.

<sup>564</sup> Kidder Smith, *The New Churches of Europe*, 204.

<sup>565</sup> 'Milan & Cologne', 9:

<sup>566</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>567</sup> 'Milan & Cologne', 17: 'It is also probable that the greater depth of understanding evident in Schwarz's building when compared to the church designed by Mangiarotti and Morassutti [sic] is due as much to the development of liturgical understanding in Germany as to the greater maturity of Schwarz in this respect'.

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<sup>568</sup> Gio Ponti, 'Taranto Cathedral', *Concrete Quarterly*, 91 (October-December 1971), 25–34.

<sup>569</sup> 'Ponti', *Concrete Quarterly*, 91 (October-December 1971), 24.

<sup>570</sup> Gio Ponti, *L'architettura è un cristallo* (1945).

<sup>571</sup> Gio Ponti, *L'architettura è un cristallo* (1945).

<sup>572</sup> *Metron*, 31/32 (June 1949), 50; *Architectural Design* (November 1950), 322.

<sup>573</sup> Vittorio Gregotti, *New Directions in Italian Architecture* (1968), 43 and 45.

<sup>574</sup> Gregotti, *New Directions*, 78. On the church see also *Fede e Arte*, V, 7-8-9 (1957). The jury of the competition also included German architect Rudolf Schwarz.

<sup>575</sup> Centro di studio e informazione per l'architettura sacra, *10 anni*, 180–1.

<sup>576</sup> Centro di studio e informazione per l'architettura sacra, *10 anni*, 176–9.

<sup>577</sup> Gregotti, *New Directions*, 86 and 89 (Michelucci).

<sup>578</sup> A mechanism with aula traversa was used, for instance in Michelangelo's Santa Maria degli Angeli.

<sup>579</sup> *Manplan*, 5, Religion (1970), 226.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>581</sup> *Manplan*, 5, Religion (1970), 224.

<sup>582</sup> On the church see Cleto Gnech, 'Sacro Cure', in *Ventidue Chiese per Ventidue Concili*, 37–41.

<sup>583</sup> The tower is now totally plastered, and its top is covered by a horizontal roof. As showed by some pictures, it was once sustained by a recessed concrete base and its top was opened. The same shape characterised the towers of a project by Chamberlin, Powell & Bon for the University of Leeds.

<sup>584</sup> The Emmanuel Church was conceived as a stacking of boxes, here in brick - a parallelepiped aggregation also found in Figini and Pollini's SS Giovanni e Paolo church, under construction in the same years (1964–8) in Milan - housing a worship space and a large, detached youth centre, connected to the church by an aerial route. The church itself consisted of four parallelepipedal volume, with the taller one working as a lantern flooding the altar with light. A similar lighting device was used in the Reformed Church (1958-60) in Nagele, the Netherlands, by Van den Broek & Bakema. On the church, see 'Emmanuel Church and Youth Centre', *Churchbuilding*, 23 (January 1968), 11–2.

<sup>585</sup> Reinhard Gieselmann, *Contemporary Church Architecture* (1972), 40–2. A sentence of Claudia Conforti on the baroque look of Michelucci's church in San Marino (1961–67) could be easily referred to the highway church: 'I diaframmi diversamente traforati che sfumano le ombre perimetrali; la luce che penetra obliquamente da un taglio del tetto accarezzando gli arconi, lambendo le superfici curve e inclinate, e dileguandosi nell'intensa penombra dell'aula: sono tutti fattori che accostano la chiesa di Michelucci alla grandiosa inattualità di un teatro barocco, più che alla cruda drammaticità di una scenografia espressionista', from Claudia Conforti 'Santuario della Beata Vergine della Consolazione', in *Giovanni Michelucci*, ed. by Claudia Conforti, Roberto Dulio and Marzia Marandola (2006), 308.

<sup>586</sup> Architect Architecture Overseas', *The Architect's Journal*, 143/3 (19 January 1966), 245.

<sup>587</sup> 'Architecture', Encyclopædia Britannica, vol. 2 (1965), 35–9; Fabio Naldi, ed., *Giovanni Michelucci* (1978); For the critical fortune of Michelucci see Roberto Dulio, "quel modern che gli fo io": la fortuna critica', in *Giovanni Michelucci*, ed. by Claudia Conforti, Roberto Dulio and Marzia Marandola (2006), 38–59.

<sup>588</sup> In 1970 the church was already officiated, but it would be fully completed only in 1990. See Conforti, Dulio, Marandola, eds., *Giovanni Michelucci*, 315–21.

<sup>589</sup> On the church, see Conforti, Dulio, Marandola, eds., *Giovanni Michelucci*, etc. 323–35.

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<sup>590</sup> 'Viva Michelucci', *Architectural Review*, 974 (April 1978), 197–8; Joseph Rykwert, 'Giovanni Michelucci, Master of Italian Architecture', *RIBA Journal*, vol. 83, no. 3 (March 1978), 105–6.

<sup>591</sup> On the theme see also David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture* (1977).

<sup>592</sup> 'Letters to the Editor: The cult of Italian design', *The Guardian* (20 October 1960), 10

<sup>593</sup> 'Letters to the Editor: The cult of Italian design', *The Guardian* (24 October 1960), 8.

<sup>594</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, 'Design, Italian Style', *The Guardian* (18 August 1965), 7.

<sup>595</sup> It is interesting to note the fact that MacCarthy indicated Mangiarotti, the same architect of the glass church in Baranzate, as the one in Italy who was fighting crazy forms and 'showmanship in the results', pursuing unobtrusive and efficient design.

<sup>596</sup> Joan Jockwig Pearson, 'Italy: Fantastic and flamboyant, her post-war arts are as stimulating as they are controversial', *Craft Horizons* (1 July 1956), 34–7.

# 9. Conclusion

The first part summarises the aim of the research, its approach and limitations, while drawing conclusions from the discussion in the previous chapters. The following section considers questions to be explored for future developments. Two topics that deserve reflection are then briefly discussed. The first is the evolution of the architectural typology of the church. The second is the existence of a widespread heritage of modern churches, which do not always meet with public understanding, thus risking being tampered with or destroyed. In line with it, the last part considers the topicality of this research and its ambition to contribute to wider discussions on today's cultural and urban policies.

Before proceeding further, it is good to recapitulate the aim of the research. The text has shown how, although heralded by events in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Christian church experienced a rapid development towards modernity in the post-war period. We have considered how the impact of certain factors contributed to this rapid development. At first, these include spiritual and liturgical theories that were reinvigorated, pushing towards their embodiment in architecture. Given the liturgical advances related to the renewal of rituals, the interior space of churches was redefined according to new systems of symbolic and functional focuses. Indeed, the positivist belief in a consequentiality between function and form produced the 20th century's expansive discourse on liturgical renewal. People's participation in the liturgy became the fuel of the Liturgical Movement, emphasising the role of the faithful. In addition to the renewed liturgical function, churches were also signifiers of social impulses. Behind this change was the British tradition of Christian socialism, enriched in the post-war period under the impetus of welfare policies. At the same time, communities of different denominations began to share the same buildings, while new projects were conceived for common, interdenominational use. These mechanisms reinforced identity-building processes, especially in areas of new urban development. At the same time, a gradual transfer to religious architecture of functions traditionally attributed to other secular typologies rendered the notion of a church into that, more fluid, of a parish centre. The church thus became a multifunctional organism, open to different activities. Used daily by communities, not only during services, post-war church architecture acquired a new linguistic register. Abandoning the stylistic revival of previous decades, some new churches introduced forms and materials capable of communicating an idea of modernity,

corresponding to that of a new society. Many others, however, continued to rely on traditional styles, plans or decorations, with differing levels of conservatism according, sometimes, to the aesthetic preferences of bishops, parish priests and priests. The link with historicism was indeed rooted in the notion of Gothic as the English national style. This reading of architecture owes much to Nikolaus Pevsner's *Englishness of English Art* published in 1956 (Figure 1), where he famously stated that 'there is little that is in every respect so completely and so profoundly English as are the big English parish churches of the late Middle Ages.'<sup>597</sup> Pevsner also highlighted another characteristic of English culture: its intermediate nature, suspended between opposite poles. This is particularly evident in the nature of the Anglican denomination. As he argued, 'the Church of England demonstrates how one can be Catholic without being Catholic, and occasionally Protestant almost without being Protestant.'<sup>598</sup> This dual character, as argued in this dissertation, is reflected in the multifaceted directions of Anglican architecture. Indeed, besides detecting elements of local identity, this research investigated the materialisation of transnational trends in the evolution of British church building, with a specific chapter on the approach to church style and design versus that of other European countries, looking at convergences, divergences, inspirations, and mutual influences.

In terms of methodology, one approach could have been to compare and contrast a series of identified case studies. Instead, the thesis emphasises that some instances can be compared, others cannot. In the end, the method merged a bit of both attitudes. In effect, the study shows how this hybrid approach can be useful to identify coincidences and divergences of architectural themes. In the end, the research attempts to resolve the dichotomy between specificity and global visions, searching for a dual register merging the peculiarities of geographical contexts with an international outlook. Like Pevsner's aforementioned work, this research seeks to advance not chronologically, but thematically. Indeed, while setting England as the main focus, the analysis continually shifts back and forth in time, with the following sequence: the link with the revival past; the embodiment of the church in its period; the languages of technology; the fertile exchange with external cultures.

The combination of these themes, supported by some key case studies, aims to disentangle the complexity of an architectural phenomenon that went through different periods. In the twenty-five years between 1945 and 1970, the political, economic, and religious contexts changed significantly, with consequences for the church building programme. For example, church building shifted to suburban areas, while urban centres began to confront the issue of

redundancy. Our journey through post-war church building has revealed how architecture can be seen as an occasion for the manifestation of the cultural components of society and the ideologies that run through nations and peoples. As previously mentioned, to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon the research followed a poly-stylistic method, considering not only the technological or compositional aspects of architecture, but also all the contingencies surrounding them. The reading of ecclesiastical space, in fact, requires an interdisciplinary approach that inevitably moves towards a continuous transversality, including the impact of sacred arts, photography, cinema and the culture of the dynamic image, which have endowed religious architecture with a strong visual eloquence. Given the complexity of the phenomena dealt with here, contextualising the evolution of ecclesiastical architecture in such a period of change has been a challenge. Consequently, the research presented a number of methodological and thematic limitations – useful, at the same time, to circumscribe the field of investigation. The thematic sequence made it possible to analyse a number of issues typical of British architecture. Parallel to the geographical selection, the decision was to compare the Anglican context with other Christian denominations, mainly Roman Catholicism, but with a few references also to Evangelical, Lutheran, and other Protestant churches. This approach has limited the danger of getting lost within a huge number of denominations and, more in general, religious confessions. In particular, the research has not dealt with non-Christian religions like Judaism, Islam, or oriental religions, the influence of which would have required an investigation of which was left out.<sup>599</sup> In addition, the thematic selection has had to leave out topics that would have needed further investigation. For instance, more than other building types, churches appeared as the preferred field for the application of the British taste for ruins, still tangible in post-war architecture. This trend not only involved the restoration of ruined and bombed-out churches, but also influenced the construction of new churches such as Arthur Bailey's Holy Trinity Church in Twydall, Kent (1963–4). This church features a massive, pointed roof derived from the union of two semi-pyramidal volumes, which covers a more fragmented system of lower brick walls and buttresses, clearly reminiscent of a ruin-like composition. Similarly, analysis of church buildings can convey the development of a high-tech trend in British architecture. This is evident in the many churches that displayed their structures in the name of technological modernity. Although one looked to the future and the other to the past, both ruinist and high-tech architectures shared a certain attraction for the physical concreteness of materials, somehow invested by an evangelical concept of 'transparent

poverty'. At the same time, they emphasised the transcendence of religion in contrast to the embodied immanence of religious building.

If the thesis's limitation to British architectures and European models has framed the research in a precise context, the thesis provides a framework for further investigation. This transcends the chosen geographical, temporal, and confessional terms, and includes questions such as the architectural outcome of religious conflicts in Northern Ireland, the remarkable contributions of religious architecture in the United States of America, or the architecture of churches in the British colonies. In particular, the latter case would offer an interesting view on 'tropical modernism'.<sup>600</sup> Indeed, churches built in the British colonies include some real jewels of modernism, such as the Krapf-Rebmann Memorial Church, in Kilifi, Kenya, built (c. 1956) by Richard Hughes (1926–2020), or the Chapel of the Resurrection in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria (1954–61), designed by George Pace.<sup>601</sup> There are also lesser-known projects which deserve a proper study, such as the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka, Zambia, built (1962) by Hope, Reeler and Morris, or the Trinity Episcopal Church in Monrovia, Liberia (1969), by an unknown architect. Or unbuilt ones, such as the project for the Ibadan cathedral or the New College chapel of Igbobi in Lagos, Nigeria, both by George Pace.

The relationship between sacred architecture and music is also a theme which deserves further investigation. The renewed value of music was also evident in the prominent role it played in the life of the Church. For example, during the opening ceremony of Gibberd's Liverpool Catholic Cathedral in 1967, French composer Pierre Henry staged an electronic mass accompanied by contemporary dances in the brand-new concrete cathedral. The electronic mass and the dancers in metallic clothes perfectly reflected the futuristic atmosphere embodied by the architecture. After all, at a time of space conquest, the cathedral itself adopted an innovative language, comparable to the visual strangeness of spaceships, as suggested by an Eagle's cutaway drawing from 1967. With its electronic mass, the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral was a building of its era. This is referred to in the inaugural brochure, which reads:

*Christian art and architecture have always been expressions of Christian belief. The great Gothic cathedrals of Europe reflect the theology and spirit of their age, as do the works of the great Christian painters. The churches of the Renaissance reflect another aspect of Christian architecture. The new Metropolitan Cathedral in Liverpool is built with the same aim and in the same spirit as these achievements of former centuries. It seeks to express for the modern age what was done by the great architects and artists of the past.<sup>602</sup>*

If sacred music looked to rock and electronic sounds as an expression of modernity, secular music, on the other hand, absorbed a certain attitude of mysticism from religion. Combined with social protests, this mysticism would produce a series of visionary works such as Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, first staged in 1971. The success of the musical and the film of the same name attested to the power of British youth culture to export a new concept of religiosity. Another indicator of the cultural success of the British musical invasion was the spread of Beatlemania, which also had an impact on religious music. In Italy, for example, the beat mass, a particular genre of beat music developed in the 1960s, associated Christian themes with beat sounds that appealed to young people. This new approach to sacred music responded to the call of the Second Vatican Council to actively involve the faithful in the liturgy, with the same instrument used in the 16th century oratorio. This was a building, annexed to the church, which St Philip Neri before and St John Bosco later transformed into a place for social and education use, in which music, creative, and physical activities were alternated to prayer, becoming part of the youths' life.

This brief digression on music bears witness to the changes in the language of the post-war Church, which evolved with the language of society. Indeed, music played an important role in the creation of a common inter-geographical and interdenominational network, which inevitably had an impact on the liturgy. The post-war establishment of England as the centre for a certain avant-garde culture in Europe and as a meeting place of trans cultures had clearly also an impact on the social and cultural approach to religion, hence on to church buildings. This approach was not only characterised by an increasing process of secularisation, but also by a mystical influence of Eastern origin. The rediscovery of mysticism was accompanied by a new interest for meditation, boosted by the knowledge of eastern monasticism, as in the case of Peter Hammond's research on the Greek Orthodox Church, or of Indian culture, as in the case the Beatles' famous travel to India in 1968. At the same time, young movements from the United States such as the Jesus People, which combined charismatic worship with hippy radicalism, influenced the way the Church was experienced. Such a radical approach to religion, which favoured informal places such as tents or outdoor settings, and was also evident in sacred music, suggested the setting of sacred activities in secular spaces and, conversely, the setting of secular activities within sacred spaces.

The enrichment of functions also determined the typological evolution. In effect, our analysis of post-war English church building has shown how, even in a limited time span, church building is sensitive to external spatial categories. They mainly derived from foreign

geographies, other religious cults or secular architecture. While the first two factors are addressed in specific chapters of the thesis, the third one can be read between the lines of the entire research. This dual relationship between religious and secular buildings has its prelude in the configuration of the first early Christian churches, derived from the private domus or Roman basilica, the house of civil law. It is therefore unsurprising that, still in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the identification between the places conceived to embody the dictates of God and those representing the law of the state produced a syncretism evident in its architectural outcomes. And so it was that George Edmund Street, who had built many churches, designed the Law Courts in London in 1867 as a monumental monastic complex, with the Great Hall in the form of a Gothic cathedral.

The dialogue between courts and churches is also evident in the juxtaposition of buildings that perform these functions in Birmingham. St Chad's Catholic Cathedral, built to the design of Augustus Welby Pugin in 1839–41, presents an original interpretation of the Gothic style, emphasising the airy interior of the space. Nearby, the Victoria Law Courts, built in 1887–91, which occupies an entire block, displays a similar language. In particular, the main courthouse was in the form of a neo-Gothic red brick and terracotta church. The Law Courts buildings are also adjacent to the Hospital, a late 19th century building reminiscent of a Gothic convent with its tall towers, while on the other side stands the Methodist Central Hall. Apart from the tall bell tower, the Methodist building adopted a very secular language, comprising a modular façade clad in red brick and terracotta, in common with the neighbouring civic buildings, and incorporating elements of Indian colonial architecture. Similarly, the worship space was a large hall, which, as in the Methodist tradition, was devoid of precious ornaments and based on a clear spatial design. The space was indeed shaped by a strict functionalism that highlighted the role of preaching and made it close to spaces for secular assemblies.

This argument could also be extended to other secular typologies. Religious buildings shared symbolic and spatial elements not only with those in which the law was administered, but also with those from which the law was enacted. We are talking in particular about parliaments, whose typology was an evolution of the monastic chapter house, also translated into its refectory and choir versions. The comparison is based on historical data: for instance, after the *Abolition of Chantries Act* (1545–7), the chamber of the English House of Commons was housed in the former St Stephen's Chapel Royal in the old Palace of Westminster, where it remained until its destruction in the fire of 1834. When the Palace of

Westminster was rebuilt, the design presented by Charles Barry, undoubtedly influenced by Pugin, reproduced a kind of monastic architecture. The House of Lords and the House of Commons were laid out as two rectangular spaces, reminiscent of chapels, convent chapter houses or choirs. This pragmatic parallelism between the architectural setting of religion and politics is indeed reinforced by the fact that in England the head of the State is also the head of the Church.

If the monastic heritage is well present in the setting of educational buildings, the post war evolution of church buildings showed, as we have seen, a novel approach to industrial architecture. If the aesthetics of churches in previous centuries could already be compared to those of civic and work buildings, in the case of 20th century religious building, the comparison is even more accentuated. This was mainly due to the functional interpretation of the church as a 'faith factory'. Historically, from a practical point of view, like factories, churches had to accommodate a large mass of users as was also the case in secular buildings such as theatres and cinemas. At the same time, the presence in the worship space of a fulcrum, where the sacred action takes place as in the case of the high altar, or even where the action is concretised by the preacher's words, as in the case of the pulpit, brings the church closer to dramatic spaces. However, the renewal of liturgy required the participation of the masses, groups of people acting together in the space. It is interesting to note how the rebalancing of active roles within the church corresponded to the progressive inclusion of spectators in the active experience of dramas.<sup>603</sup> The assonance between churches and theatres was suggested at several points in this research.<sup>604</sup> Especially when the celebration was directed towards the congregation, the architects had to meet the demands of visibility and audibility.<sup>605</sup> From this point of view, while theatres became temples for the arts, as suggested by the temple-like façade of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden (1857), modernity in churches manifested itself primarily in the influence of buildings such as theatres and cinemas. For instance, the volumes of Cachemaille-Day's St Nicholas in Burnage, Manchester (1932), can easily be compared to the Streamline Modernism of Harry Weedon and Robert Bullivant's Odeon Cinema in York (1937).

The relationship to an always denser urban structure, determining the massive participation of the faithful, above all on festivities, and the reduction of the size of the congregation on a daily basis, required an extended use of church building for secular activities, maximizing the economical effort for their construction. At the same time, it prompted the design of flexible layouts by means of moveable walls, expandable structure or easily de-mountable elements

which adapted the building to its contingent needs. The innovative constructive solutions attested to the advances of the Church's theology which had started an equally flexible inter-faith dialogue towards ecumenic brotherhood. Moreover, they represented the great dynamics of post-war British society, which asked for a continuous evolution of the urban organisation, that was, for instance, at the base of the utopian views of Archigram's 'Moving City', influencing the research on evolving and moveable churches. The subject could equally motivate a specific research direction which crosses the chosen time frame, as demonstrated by the recent chapel-boat designed by Denizen Works for the Diocese of London.<sup>606</sup>

In reference to the evolving typology of the church, we cannot end a journey without referring to its starting point, which is the luminous artwork reproduced on the cover of this text. It is a vivid landscape of the small village of Seaton, Devon, portrayed by John Piper around 1977–8 for a lithographic reproduction. The same landscape can still be experienced today, even though the surroundings have been subject to construction. The spire of the western tower of All-Hallows Church, dating back to the 13th century and rendered through slightly simplified volumes, emerges on the right amidst bucolic countryside. In the other half of the composition, a barn stands in the foreground, outlined in purple and black. Under a barrel roof of corrugated sheet metal, supported by four corner posts, is a parallelepiped volume, probably made of stacked bales of straw. In front, an electricity pole competes in height with the spire in the background. If we had no clue as to its location, we would probably have some doubts in recognising the function of the two buildings: which of the two structures would identify the church? The one on the right or the one on the left? In fact, changing the reference system of the scene, the orange volume could be a medieval defence tower, while the building on the left could easily be a transparent church, preceded by a high cross and arranged around a central volume. The straw bales could be interpreted as an altar with its dossal.

For those who think that such a comparison between a barn and a modern church building is a flight of fancy, St Paul's Church in Sheffield, built in 1958–9 to a design by Basil Spence, can dispel any doubts about the appropriateness of the analogy.<sup>607</sup> Indeed, the de-scription of this modernist church could easily be reversed to describe Piper's subject matter: a rectangular, barrel-vaulted space with a translucent wall, announced by a cross on the façade. After all, the metamorphosis of Piper's barn into a church would not contradict Gill's definition of the church as a 'canopy over an altar', nor would it conflict with George G. Pace or Thomas H. Burrough's conversions of barns into sacred spaces.

This interpretation of Piper's lithograph offers a key to understanding the change in 20th century British ecclesiastical architecture from the Gothic tower, a symbol of military and political supremacy, to the humble refuge, made of modern materials and devoid of ornamentation. It was a shift that changed the way both architects and users acted in religious buildings, one of the slowest architectural categories to change—it is no coincidence that the word temple has been associated with sacred space in all European languages for some 2,500 years. At the same time, it attests to a change in the semantics of church buildings: no more huge cathedrals, but humble buildings reflecting a modern aesthetics.

This change, or the passage from the form of tradition to modernity has represented a real revolution, meeting the suspicion of people still today. Articles, but also entire books, argue against the ugliness of post-war British churches.<sup>608</sup> Although this is a global trend, it seems to be particularly pronounced in Great Britain, especially among high-profile professionals such as journalists and men of culture. This is of course a prejudice that masks a form of cultural ignorance. It is not so much an individual question of the lack of personal knowledge of those who assert it, but a cultural distance to the religious, social, political, and artistic instances that generated such buildings.

To be fair, looking back to the last century, Georgian and Victorian religious architecture did not enjoy a very good reputation either. For instance, St John's Church in Hackney, London, was described by George MacDonald as 'the ugliest church in Christendom.'<sup>609</sup> However, today's opinion about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architecture, addressed by more recent research, seems to have changed. The Hackney church itself, recently restored (2017–20) by John Pawson, is now described as a 'wonderful mixture of simplicity and complexity, art and artifice.'<sup>610</sup> Leaving aside the negative value that until a few decades ago the word artifice would have suggested in the field of religious architecture, Pawson's project, limited to minor interventions, has only accentuated the spatial potential of the building. The discrepancy in judgement is symbolic of a greater knowledge and historical contextualisation of the artefact, which has resulted in a shortening of cultural distances, so that Georgian architecture is perceived as a founding moment of English architectural identity.

In general, the reduction of such distances is a lengthy process, which requires a certain amount of time and, at the same time, must be accompanied by an adequate knowledge of the artefacts. In its own small way, this research aspires to stimulate an awareness of the

artistic, liturgical and symbolic value of post-World War II English religious architecture, a necessary premise for the preservation of a widespread built heritage, too often put at risk by demolitions or problematic adaptations.

Many of the churches presented in this research have been demolished or are currently at risk of demolition. One of the latest such churches at risk is St Nicholas' Church in Radford, Coventry, built in 1953–5 with a concrete membrane to a design by Lavender, Twentyman and Percy. If, as this thesis has argued throughout, church architecture can be read as a register of social evolution, the difficulty in maintaining modern church buildings is emblematic of a society that looks straight ahead but rarely looks back. Is it possible to rehabilitate post-war churches, without reserving conversion only for those neo-Gothic parishes that are converted into quaint flats or luxury swimming pools? Can we also recognise the architectural and artistic value of post-war churches without relying on personal judgments? There are clearly lessons to be learned here. Modern post-war churches may one day be judged as masterpieces of their own time, a complex and rapidly changing time. In the meantime, our aim is to protect them, including through studies such as this one, and to pass them on to future generations. John Ruskin's words come to mind:

*When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for; and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say, as they look upon the labour and wrought substance of them, 'See! This our fathers did for us.'*<sup>611</sup>

Notwithstanding all of the above, this thesis has shown how the architectural expression of church buildings is the materialisation of a transcendental spirit. Architecture's revelatory character is especially valid when it deals with theology and memory, two fields in which symbolical meanings are strictly related to spatial and linguistic expression. Indeed, an ontology of church architecture cannot do without an inquiry into its language and material places. After all, as questioned by Lefebvre, 'What would remain of a religious ideology [...] if it were not based on places and their names: church confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle?'<sup>612</sup> The sentence underlines the correspondence between religion and temporal spaces, in a complementary relation that binds the spirit of a community to a place.

## Notes

<sup>597</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (1956), 81. For an insight into the concept of Englishness in art theory Mark A. Cheetham, *Artwriting, Nation, and Cosmopolitanism in Britain: The 'Englishness' of English Art Theory since the Eighteenth Century* (2012).

<sup>598</sup> *Idem*, 54.

<sup>599</sup> H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Book 3: The Ecumenical Century, 1900 to the Present* (1996). On this theme, Jewish religious architecture has been investigated by scholars: Gerald Adler, 'Reading, Storing and Parading the Book: Between Tradition and Modernity in the Synagogue', in *Modern Architecture and the Sacred* (2020), 108–24; Sharman Kadish, *The Synagogues of Britain and Ireland: An Architectural and Social History* (2011), also in the new edition *Id.*, *Jewish Heritage in Britain and Ireland* (2015).

<sup>600</sup> Lisa Godson, 'Tropical tropes: Irish Modernism in West Africa', *The Architectural Review* (November 2019), retrieved from <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/tropical-tropes-irish-modernism-in-west-africa>.

<sup>601</sup> On the African Chapel by Pace see Tekena Tamuno, History of the Chapel of the Resurrection (University of Ibadan) (2008).

<sup>602</sup> *Opening Celebrations May 18 June 15 1967, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King* (1967), retrieved from <https://www.thedramaofthemass.com/original-brochure/>, accessed February 2021.

<sup>603</sup> Let's just consider the idea of total theatre, or to the role of spectators in Pirandello's notion of 'metatheatre'.

<sup>604</sup> In the American context the phenomenon has been investigated in Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When the Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (2005).

<sup>605</sup> It is probably not coincidental that in its practical handbook, the Italian architect Pasquale Carbonara explains the technical specification of church architecture in the same section dedicated to theatres: Pasquale Carbonara, *Architettura Pratica*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1958).

<sup>606</sup> Lizzie Crook, 'Floating Genesis church crowned by luminous pop-up roof', retrieved from [dezeen.com/2020/10/30/genesis-floating-church-canal-boat-denizen-works-london](https://dezeen.com/2020/10/30/genesis-floating-church-canal-boat-denizen-works-london) (30 October 2020), accessed February 2021; Alan Powers, 'Of Water and the Spirit', retrieved from <https://architecturetoday.co.uk/of-water-and-the-spirit/>, accessed February 2021.

<sup>607</sup> Clive Fenton, David Walker, 'The Modern Church', in *Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects*, ed. by Louise Campbell, Miles Glendinning, Jane Thomas (2012), 108–9.

<sup>608</sup> Among articles, many refers to the Guildford Anglican Cathedral and the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral: Ruth Gledhill, 'Could this be the end for Britain's Ugliest Cathedral?', *Christian Today* (17 February 2017) retrieved from

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<sup>609</sup> George MacDonald, *Guild Court* (1868, edn. 2020), 297.

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<sup>610</sup> Philip Stevens, 'John Pawson redesigns St John at Hackney church for sacred and secular events', *Designboom*, retrieved from <https://www.designboom.com/architecture/john-pawson-st-john-at-hackney-church-restoration-london-01-30-2021/>, accessed February 2022.

<sup>611</sup> John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), 233, 'The Lamp of Memory'.

<sup>612</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1991), 44.

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