Operosam Decoramque Reconstructionem

Disregarding the warnings and legislation of the Holy See, many people have made unwarranted changes in places of worship under the pretext of carrying out the reform of the liturgy and have thus caused the disfigurement or loss of priceless works of art.

Prominently located on one of the most spacious piazzas in Rome is the ancient church of Santa Maria in Trastevere. This three-aisled basilica, constructed with columns from the Roman baths of Caracalla, is said to be one of the first churches in the Eternal City dedicated to the Virgin. It is a poignant example of how the art of different epochs can work together to produce a masterpiece of sacred art and architecture. One of the many patrons who endowed Santa Maria with their beneficence was Pope Gregory IV (827 - 884), who raised the presbytery, constructed a crypt for relics and built a new ciborium over the altar. This substantial opera artis, work of art, can be seen as in harmony with the original basilica as well as giving it a stronger identity. A document of the period refers to Pope Gregory’s interventions as operosam decoramque reconstructionem, a refined and elaborate decorative restoration. Later popes, cardinals and laymen commissioned further elaborate restorations by adding mosaics, coffering, cosmatesque floors, a narthex and side chapels so that today Santa Maria is a work of art produced by the Universal Church down through the ages.

Tradition, as Chesterton has written, is the democracy of the dead, and those asleep in Christ continue to inspire us through countless beautiful churches in Europe and the New World. It is a characteristic of modern cultures, however, that tradition is often seen as posing a barrier to progress, and this is perhaps nowhere more evident than in our treatment of historic churches and cathedrals over the past forty years. In a time when some of our early twentieth-century public works such as Grand Central Station in New York have been elegantly restored, we seem to be witnessing an unbridled Modernist jihad to substantially renovate traditional churches. This is rather shocking within an institution known for its unwavering defense of and embodiment of tradition.

The typical agenda of the liturgical renovators is well known: bring a freestanding altar into the nave, diminish the definition of the sanctuary, replace the high altar with a priest’s chair, move the tabernacle into a less prominent location, have fan-shaped seating, and remove any “non-liturgical” art. The reasons given for these unfortunate and even violent interventions range from encouraging active participation to substantially renovate traditional churches. This is rather shocking within an institution known for its unwavering defense of and embodiment of tradition.

With the potential “disfigurement or loss of priceless works of art” in the words of Opera Artis, would it not be appropriate for the Vatican to call for a moratorium on all renovations of historic churches? Perhaps a “cease fire” is the more applicable term. Yet I believe that if we study the history of Catholic architecture we can glean some principles for a refined and elaborate restoration of our churches and cathedrals. First, architects and patrons must regain a certain humility towards sacred works of the past. They should acknowledge that our sacred buildings are gifts from previous generations. Humility recognizes the quality of churches in all different styles, whether they are our personal favorites or not. Second, any renovations need to respect the existing architecture of the church. Each building has qualities of spatial configuration, orientation, and architectural language which must be respected and maintained. When we propose moving an altar into the middle of the nave or against the side wall we are fighting against the architectural characteristics of a longitudinal church and creating confusion among the faithful. Third, all new works should be in aesthetic harmony with the existing architectural language, so that after a renovation is complete it is difficult to tell what is new. This does not necessarily require that everything must be in the same style, history shows that many of our preeminent churches have been constructed in a variety of styles over time yet can work together to produce harmony. Fourth, whatever is replaced or added needs to be of a similar or higher quality to that which already exists, both in its design and materials. Fifth, it is crucial that we cultivate an appreciation for the sensus fidei, respecting the faithful in their attachment to particular works of sacred art and elements of architecture. For a pastor to decide not to use an ornate pulpit or a marble altar rail is one thing, but to remove these elements means taking away the option for people in the future. Replacing a beloved icon of the Madonna with something deemed more tasteful may not serve the devotion of the faithful.

The Catholic Church, as great promoter of the living tradition, should once again become a leader in the movement to preserve our historic structures. Why? Because Catholicism understands that the Faith is handed down to us by the Church, and likewise the architecture we have been given is a material symbol of that faith, a physical witness of the devotion of our forbears. Perhaps it is time to form a National Trust for the Preservation of Sacred Art and Architecture which could assist bishops in gauging the significance of diocesan art and recommend appropriate ways to restore or renovate the house of God. Churches in Europe often fall under such a governmental review board, but in the United States there is no protection for the interiors of churches. Such an organization should be formed with the American bishops and could make use of the experience of the Holy See in this regard as well as that of the international preservation movement. May we regain our senses, preserve the Church’s rich patrimony and in humility continue to add our own works of art to that patrimony.

Duncan Stroik
Notre Dame, Indiana
## Contents

### Editorial

2  
† O perosam D ecoramque R econstructionem  ................................................ Duncan Stroik

### News

4  
† New Cathedral for the Diocese of Oakland  
† New Cathedral in Houston  
† Holy Sepulchre in Danger of Collapse  
† Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption Being Restored  
† John Paul II Gives Roman Church to Constantinople  
† Growing Congregations Spur Church Construction Boom  

### Feature

10  
† The Church Building and Participation in the Paschal Mystery:  
Assessing the NCCB Document Built of Living Stones  .................................. Timothy V. Vaverek

### Articles

16  
† Christology at the National Gallery  .......................................................... Bruce Harbert
19  
† Faith-Based Land Use Planning  ................................................................. James M. Thunder
20  
† The Church in the City of the Third Millennium  ......................................... Christiano Rosponi
22  
† A Vast, Immeasurable Sanctuary: Iconography For Churches  ......................... David T. Mayernik

### Books

25  
† The Spirit of the Liturgy by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger  .................. reviewed by Dino Marcantonio
27  
† Hawksmoor’s London Churches: Architecture and Theology  
by Pierre De La Ruffiniere Du Prey  .......................................................... reviewed by Robert Woodbury
28  
† Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals 
by Robert Barron  .................................................................................. reviewed by Randall Smith
29  
† The Church of the Holy Sepulchre  ............................................................. reviewed by David S. Heit
† After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950’s  
by Robert Wuthnow  ................................................................................ reviewed by Bryan Clark Green

### Commentary

30  
† Neo-Gothic Architecture Today  ................................................................. Ethan Anthony
The ninth Study Congress on Liturgical Art held in Rome focused on the Church as steward of works of art. Bishop Carlo Chenis, secretary of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Goods of the Church, advised that Catholics “must ... avoid a certain tendency that is creeping up to construct multipurpose places of worship,” he said. “There cannot be something that is right for all.” Bishop Chenis further cautioned against “efficient pragmatism that often leaves one dissatisfied” with church designs. The congress, in fact, called for an end to superficiality and hastiness in design which have resulted in “minimalist” options in new constructions and restoration work.

Switzerland is about to inaugurate an exhibition of Marc Chagall’s works, calling attention once again to this Russian-French artist’s profound relation to Jesus, although Chagall never embraced Christianity. The exhibition, to be held in Lugano’s Museum of Modern Art from March 8 to July 1, highlights Chagall’s religiousness. Chagall was born into a Jewish family in Vitebsk, Byelorussia, in 1887. The artist died in Saint-Paul de Vence, France, in 1985. Chagall’s work is not a criticism of Christianity, Franz Mayer, the famous art critic explained in the 1960s. On the contrary, Chagall once said that since 1908 — the year of one of Russia’s worst pogroms — Jesus became for him a Jewish martyr, a son of his people, in whose life and sufferings he shared.

A “Shrine of Martyrs” designed to hold 20,000 people and boasting a cupola only a few meters lower than St. Peter’s Basilica is scheduled to be built in Guadalajara, Mexico. The first stone for the building will be laid at an October 25 ceremony. The new building is expected to cost between $50 million and $60 million and be complete by the start of 2004. The architectural design includes a large cupola, which is 5 or 6 meters lower than St. Peter’s in Rome. An auditorium will be built on the ground floor with a capacity for 20,000. The second floor will have a number of auditoriums for different pilgrim groups.

A brochure of proposals for a new double monastery in LaCrosse, Wisconsin is available. The project, sponsored by the Institute of St. Joseph in LaCrosse, has twelve designs by architecture students at the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture. For information call 219-631-6137 or email architecture.ach1@nd.edu

A new Cathedral is planned for the Diocese of Oakland. European architect Santiago Calatrava is designing a new cathedral for the Diocese of Oakland, California. Calatrava says the seventy-five million dollar structure’s shape — a luminous, glass-sheathed shell atop an elliptical plan — “is like hands joined in prayer.” Fingers of steel will meet to form a soaring 180-foot canopy glazed with bright stained glass that will fade as it rises toward the skylit top. The roof will be openable, and the eye-shaped plan of the building, oriented on a North/South, East/West axis, provides many entrances into the luminous, 420-foot wide space for people to enter in groups or alone. Inside, in the spirit of Chinese, Buddhist or Hindu societies who choose orthogonal centers for temples, the congregation will sit encircling the altar and cathedral in the middle of the 34,000-square-foot space. The intention is that liturgical “performances” be placed “center-stage.” At night, the cathedral itself will be a central beacon, while an auditorium nearby will be for myriad celebrations. Its gardens will symbolize earth, air, fire and water - all gods within many pantheons. “My ambition is to give Oakland’s cathedral a universal character independent of the Catholic Church,” says Calatrava. “Pluralism is universality,” he explains. Calatrava’s bold projects are popular in Europe and gaining attention in the U.S. In addition to the Oakland Cathedral, he is also commissioned to design the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan, and five bridges in Dallas.

Science is stunned by Virgin of Guadalupe’s eyes. Last January in Rome, results of research into the famed image were discussed by engineer José Aste Tonsmann of the Mexican Center of Guadalupan Studies during a conference at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum. Though the dimensions are microscopic, the iris and the pupils of the image’s eyes have imprinted on them a highly detailed picture of at least 13 people, Tonsmann said. Tonsmann says he believes the reflection transmitted by the eyes of the Virgin of Guadalupe is the scene on Dec. 9, 1531, during which Juan Diego showed his tilma, with the image, to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga and others present in the room. Tonsmann pointed out that Richard Kuhn, a Nobel Prize winner in chemistry, has found that the image did not have natural, animal or mineral colorings. Given that there were no synthetic colorings in 1531, the image is inexplicable.

Before his death at age 93, Count Balthazar Klossowski de Rola, better known to the world as the artist “Balthus,” talked about the profoundly spiritual side of his work. “Painting and praying are the same thing,” Balthus told French Catholic weekly newspaper La Vie. “I have never thought of painting in any way other than as a religious activity,” Balthus stressed. Balthus died this past February in Switzerland. He was a brother of writer Pierre Klossowski, and was born in Paris in 1908 to a family of Polish origin. It was poet Rainer Maria Rilke who encouraged Balthus to dedicate himself to painting.
Construction on Houston's first Roman Catholic cathedral is expected to be completed by fall 2004. It will retain the name of the current 90-year-old Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral, which will be demolished to make way for parking and a plaza. "Long ago we outgrew Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral, which seats less than 800 people," Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston said. "This new cathedral seats 2,100 people." Fiorenza said the cathedral will accommodate large liturgical celebrations such as ordinations as well as ecumenical and civic events. The $50 million cathedral will have exterior walls of imported limestone and marble, architect Scott Ziegler said, and will have balconies at the entrance and in the transepts. The upper level seating areas will be connected by galleries or walkways. A fellowship hall and 200-seat chapel will be below the main sanctuary. Windows around the gold-leaf dome, which will rise 11 stories above the sanctuary, will allow natural light into the worship center, Ziegler said. Sacred Heart was a parish church until the Diocese of Galveston was redesignated the Diocese of Galveston-Houston in 1959. The church was then named co-cathedral with St. Mary's Co-Cathedral in Galveston. Fiorenza said the diocese planned a 1,500-seat cathedral when it launched a $70 million funding campaign two years ago for the new edifice and other diocesan needs. But he was encouraged to construct a larger facility by the 1.3 million-member diocese who pledged $102 million during the year-long campaign.

Controversy has erupted in Lodi, Italy, over plans to build a mosque on municipal land. The Northern League, a party of nationalist tendency, staged a protest at the site where the mosque is to be constructed.

Durer exhibit focuses on suffering Jesus. "Durer's Passions," which opened Sept. 9, 2000 at the Busch-Reisinger Museum of Harvard University, brings together for the first time images from six of Albrecht Durer's (1471-1528) versions of Jesus' passion. Stand-alone images of a pained Jesus supplement four multiframe series based on the Bible's account of the arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. The intended effect, according to Curator of Prints Marjorie B. Cohn, was to expose the viewer to Durer's personal identification with a Jesus who suffered.

In commemoration of a thousand years of continuous praise of God in the monastery of St. Xenophonontos on Mount Athos, Greece, a commemorative volume entitled "Icons" has been released. The volume is available in English and Greek, and presents a scholarly presentation to the public of the unknown treasures of Mount Athos.

More than 200 churches and temples have been torn down or blown up in Wenzhou, China. A further 239 small places of worship, many of them linked to the underground Catholic Church, have been forced to close, according to Britain's The Telegraph newspaper. China's government has stepped up persecution of Christians, particularly Catholics loyal to Rome, since last October, when the Pope canonized 120 Chinese Catholic martyrs of the Boxer Rebellion.

Belief in consumer brands has replaced religious faith as the thing that gives purpose to people's lives, according to a British ad agency. "Brands are the new religion. People turn to them for meaning," the British ad agency Young & Rubicam declared, according to a recent report in The Financial Times. The agency supported their claim by pointing to examples of fanatical loyalty to brands such as Disney, Harley-Davidson, and Ikea. Responding to the assertions, an Anglican Church spokesman pointed out that the Christian faith had one of the oldest and most recognized branding devices in the world, the cross.

On January 6, 2003 John Paul II ended the most anticipated event of his pontificate when he closed the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, thus concluding the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. The closing ceremony was very simple and moving. Afterwards, the Pontiff clarified that, "while today we close the Holy Door, a symbol of Christ, the Heart of Jesus remains more open than ever. He continues to say to a humanity in need of hope and meaning, 'Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

The Vatican has requested Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland to suspend renovation of the Milwaukee cathedral. The plans are to be reviewed after complaints that changes planned for the cathedral would violate church liturgical norms. The planned changes to the cathedral's interior include moving the altar forward, having seating on three sides of it and constructing a separate chapel for the Blessed Sacrament. A Vatican official would not discuss whether or not any particular part of the renovation appeared problematic to the congregation. The Holy See became involved after a canon lawyer for opponents of the cathedral renovation wrote to the Vatican asking for intervention. Archbishop Weakland said he was "totally confused" by the Vatican congregation's intervention. "I am absolutely convinced that I have followed the liturgical norms" in the renovation plans, he said.
Despite protests by the congregation, plans proceed to remake St. Francis Xavier Church in Petoskey, Michigan. The 100-year old gothic church is a historic landmark and attraction for local tourists. A thirty-member restoration committee headed by pastor Fr. James Suchocki has been meeting for some time now in an effort to remake the interior of the church according to the “demands” of Vatican II. Meetings were initially open, but when parishioners voiced protest over proposed changes, they became private. Now the committee only communicates via “press releases.” A majority of parishioners oppose the renovations, and have launched a vociferous counter-campaign including lawn signs and the withholding of donations to the parish. However, Bishop Patrick Cooney of the diocese of Gaylord, MI, announced that the remodeling of the church’s interior would proceed with funds from the diocese. Opposed parishioners are attempting an appeal to the Vatican.

Parishioners Stop Plan To Renovate Guelph Church. Parishioners of Guelph's historic Church of Our Lady Immaculate rallied to stop a drastic plan to alter the awe-inspiring interior of their magnificent church. On Saturday, March 13, pastor Monsignor John Newstead informed parishioners that, after consultation with Bishop Anthony Tonos of Hamilton, the renovation plan—proposed by Fr. Richard Vosko of Albany, NY—would not go forward because of overwhelming opposition by parishioners.

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore is being restored to faithfully reflect the design of 19th-century architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Priority is being given to the restoration of the dome’s skylights, which were removed in the 1940’s. Their removal darkened the interior of the basilica considerably. “The central focus is the dome. It symbolizes sky, heaven. That was Latrobe’s vision of it,” said a Basilica spokesman. “When you’re inside you won’t see anything that looks modern. It will look just as it did, as it was intended to look.”

What criteria should be used in choosing and rendering liturgical music? John Paul II answered the question when he received 200 members of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in January. “The criteria that should inspire every composition and rendition of songs and sacred music is that of beauty, which inspires prayer,” the Holy Father responded. “When singing and music are signs of the presence of the action of the Holy Spirit, in a certain sense, they favor communion with the Trinity.” In particular, John Paul II reminded the musicians that the Second Vatican Council singled out “Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony, and the organ” as privileged environments and instruments for liturgical music compositions.

Pope gives a Roman Church to Constantinople. In a message to Bartholomew I on the feast of St. Andrew, the Holy Father said that he has given the old church of St. Theodore on Rome's Prolatine Hill to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. John Paul said he intends that the church “be dedicated to the worship and pastoral activities of the Greek Orthodox community of the city.”

Easy Street Café in downtown Toledo is returning the gates of a church communion railing to nearby Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The gates were installed at either end of the bar by the building's former owner, who got the gates out of a dumpster after a fire damaged the church in 1975. A parish spokesman said the church also is trying to track down other pieces of its building that have been missing since the 1975 fire in hopes of creating a new altar and pulpit from the materials.

Black Catholics are making a dream come true in the Diocese of Buffalo, NY. The Diocese's first new church in 35 years opened March 11. The building is the fruit of the efforts of the majority African-American congregation, who worked for ten years to have their own church. St. Martin de Porres parish was created in 1993 by merging other congregations in the severely blighted inner-city of Buffalo. Pastor Fr. Roderick Brown says the church brings new life to the community. “This is not only an affirmation of this church community, but of the city of Buffalo as well.”

Rome's “Basilica of the Year 2000” never made it in time for the Jubilee. After a highly publicized architectural design competition and much fanfare, construction on American architect Richard Meier's plans began in 1998 with the intention of opening the church for the Jubilee. However, massive construction setbacks due largely to the basilica's outlandish 27-meter (90 feet) tall concrete “sails” have brought construction to a stand-still. When geological instability was discovered at the site, highly complex foundations with springs and pulleys had to be designed for these “sails.” Then the site was discovered to be subject to occasional high winds, which the concave concrete structures catch quite well, as their nickname implies. After more redesigning and the construction of custom on-site machinery to lower the segments of the “sails” in place, their concrete surface was discovered to be degrading due to corrosive chemical reaction with their zinc-coated interior piping. This problem has seemingly been resolved at this point, but there remain problematic issues with the glass panes that are intended to fill the space between these three concentrically-inset wind-catchers.
Russia will have an Orthodox Church in Rome. On January 17, 2001, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Sergheevich Ivanov unveiled a plaque announcing the church’s construction. Lamberto Dini, Italian Foreign Minister, attended the ceremony, which was held in the Russian Embassy.

On February 10, 2001, hundreds of protesters gathered outside of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, New York to protest plans for its massive renovation. A giant 120-foot banner with more than 3,000 signatures from throughout the diocese, showed graphic disapproval for any plans of dismantling the cathedral’s beautiful interior. The diocese already has hired the Rev. Richard Vosko to direct the redesign of the church. Vosko’s other renovations across the country “all look basically the same, stripped bare, with no statuary,” said Barbara Fredericks, who attends Mass daily at Sacred Heart.

There is much disagreement over what a Catholic Church should look like. That was one of the conclusions of a gathering on Jan 26-28 of various Catholic leaders at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Mass. The gathering, sponsored by the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, included bishops, theologians, architects, and liturgists. By all accounts there was good dialogue, making clear the lack of current consensus in American Catholicism on the principles of church design.

The Washington National Cathedral is now one of the few Gothic-style cathedrals in the world to have both heat and air conditioning. The air handlers—large fans that bring in air from the outside and recycle air from the interior—were installed in the 1970s. But only last year did the Cathedral—which hosts state weddings and funerals and other national events—receive enough money to complete the air conditioning system.

The Circular Letter “The Inventory and Catalogue of the Cultural Heritage of the Church: A Necessary and Urgent Task” was released last March by the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church. The letter urges that diocesan bishops take into account “contextual” conservation because enhancement must be intended in its entirety especially in regards to sacred buildings where most of the art-historical patrimony of the Church is kept. In addition, one cannot underestimate the need to maintain unaltered as much as possible the tie between the buildings and the works of art contained therein in order to guarantee a complete and global fruition.

Success of “Jesus” Exhibit Astonishes even the Gallery Director. The most visited show in Britain last year, and the fourth most popular in the world, was a National Gallery exhibition of 70 portraits of Jesus, “Seeing Salvation: The Image of Christ,” according to the British newspaper The Telegraph. Neil MacGregor, National Gallery director, told the Telegraph on Thursday: “I am astonished.” The show beat out many heavily-hyped modernist exhibitions featuring sexual, violent, or scatological themes. A similar picture emerges in other countries, with no exhibition of a living artist featured in the top 10 places. “Seeing Salvation” boasted paintings of Christ through the ages by Mantegna, Titian, Bellini, and Dali and was the only major cultural extravaganza in the millennium year to focus on celebrating Christianity, the newspaper said.

The Irish church needs a system to preserve its artifacts, says Fr. Tomas O’Caoimh, a member of the Irish government’s Heritage Council and the Vatican’s Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Goods of the Church. “We have no real system in place,” says Fr. O’Caoimh, “In some cases valuable church artifacts are ending up in junk shops or used as ornaments in pubs or hotels.”

Knowing the legacy of past Christian generations helps later generations to remain faithful to the Church, John Paul II said in a message on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Institute of Christian Archaeology. Among other things, the Holy Father said, “I wish to recall how much my saintly predecessor Damasus, whose liturgical memorial is celebrated today, recommended to the faithful, exhorting them to venerate places that preserved relics. To know the legacy of past Christian generations enables succeeding generations to remain faithful to the depositum received, so that at all times and in all places the one Gospel will resound, which saves and gives life.”

The Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh announced the sale of St. Nicholas Church on the North Side to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Bishop Donald Wuerl said that after lengthy consideration and a survey of parish members, he’d agreed to sell the ornate church building, with its elegant marble altar, stained glass windows and carved wooden pews, to PennDOT, which will knock down the building so the highway can be widened and made safer.

Happy undoing of a modernist makeover. Students at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland will once again worship in a beautiful Romanesque chapel featuring high vaulted ceilings, round arches and finely crafted ornamentation, including stained glass windows made in Germany. Last year an alumna donated over a million dollars to remove the 1960's renovations that were obscuring the chapel’s original beauty. In recent months, contractors peeled away all the alterations, including a flat ceiling and metal air ducts that obscured the vaulted spaces above, wood paneling that covered plaster walls, and carpeting that smothered the handsome pine floor. “It’s particularly fitting that this sacred space be unearthed and restored at Notre Dame,” writes Edward Guntz of the Baltimore Sun. “Students shouldn’t have to worship in a setting that looks like someone’s club basement.”
Exempting churches from zoning laws may be a mistake, says columnist Marc A. Hamilton of the New York Times. Hamilton noted that innocent-sounding legislation was poised to pass the U.S. Congress which would make it quite difficult for local governments to enforce zoning laws against religious communities. While in general houses of worship make good neighbors, Hamilton points out that many modern churches are more like malls than chapels, with expansive parking lots, constant activity, and huge structures. It may be good for the health of communities to place some limits on where such facilities are built.

Growing congregations spur church construction boom. The swelling membership of religious congregations across America is fuelling a multi-million dollar construction boom of new and expanded churches. Last year, religious institutions spent $7.96 billion on construction projects, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, a $500 million increase from 1999.

Mueller-Kaiser Plating Company of St. Louis celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. Originally founded in 1911 at the request of St. Louis’ John Cardinal Glennon for plating, restoration, and maintenance of church metalware, the firm has distinguished itself by the restoration of many priceless artifacts, including the silver-gilt chalice of Fr. Jacques Marquette (used at the 1999 Papal Visit) and the altarware from the historic Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Sitka, Alaska, which dates from the late 1700s.

Marking the twentieth centenary of the Birth of Christ, the Emerald Isle, whose history is steeped in Christianity and grace, held a photography exhibit on sacred architecture. The Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland with its colleagues The Royal Society of Ulster Architects presented this exhibit of church buildings, portraying the story of how the inhabitants lived on this island over the past two thousand years. From the famous stone oratories situated in the west in the Skelling Michael to the circular form of St. Aengus at Burt, Co. Donegal, this exhibit displays the ever changing spiritual needs of the Christian church. Sponsored by the National Millennium Office (Ireland) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (UK), the show was held in Dublin this spring.

Pope John Paul II donated $100,000 for an Orthodox Cathedral in Bucharest, Catholic New World reported recently. In November, Romanian Orthodox Church financial officer Bishop V. Grifoni explained that the Church has raised forty percent of the funds necessary for construction, including the gift from the Holy Father. Construction should now be under way.

The Catholic Church in Siberia consecrated its new cathedral this past September on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Catholic Church was only reestablished in this territory in 1990, after the fall of Communism. When Bishop Jerzy Mazur arrived in his vast administration of Eastern Siberia, erected by the Holy Father in May 1999, there was no officially consecrated cathedral, and the existing churches were not sufficient to serve the faithful. Construction of the new cathedral began in June, 1999. The cornerstone was laid on September 5, 1999, by Archbishop John Bukovski, Apostolic Nuncio to the Russian Federation.

Theosophy and the occult helped shape the Bauhaus movement and architectural modernism in the first part of the twentieth century, says Susan Henderson of Syracuse University in a recent article for Architronic. The “Theosophical Society” was started in 1875 in New York by a group of American intellectuals meeting in the home of Russian émigrée and spiritual medium Madame H.P. Blavatsky. The group was influenced by freemasonry and occult practices, and sought to combine modern scientific knowledge with supposed esoteric doctrines from Egypt and the ancient East. Despite the apparent desacralized nature of much of the work of architects of the early modern period, the influence of the theosophical movement on them is surprisingly pervasive, according to Henderson.

“Relic Diplomacy” has been warming Catholic-Orthodox relations, says Catholic journalist Sabrina Ferrisi. Giving relics and icons to the Orthodox to improve relations with the East is an increasingly popular strategy under Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. Late last fall Pope John Paul II gave a relic of St. Gregory to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which went far in promoting cooperation between the two Churches. In 1964, Pope Paul VI returned the head of St. Andrew to Patras, Greece, where the apostle was crucified. Catholic and Orthodox bishops agree that the veneration of the relics of the saints is an important area of common ground which can serve to bring the Churches closer together.

Building the Church for 2010: Continuity and Renewal in Catholic Liturgical Architecture will be held at Mundelein Seminary in Illinois October 25-27, 2001. As the Catholic Church enters a new century, a movement is rapidly emerging to recover the riches of tradition as the basis for ongoing renewal of Catholic liturgical art and architecture. For information contact the Liturgical Institute at 847/837-4542 or www.usml.edu/liturgicalinstitute.

Cathedrals for a New Century: Church Architecture at the Beginning of the Third Millennium. The School of Architecture and the Program of Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame are pleased to announce an interdisciplinary symposium on sacred architecture scheduled for October 21-23, 2001 at the University of Notre Dame. For information contact Michael Driscoll at Michael.S.Driscoll.7@nd.edu or 219/631-7152.

The Frate Sole Foundation awarded the 2000 edition of the International Prize for Sacred Architecture to architect Alvaro Siza for his parish church of Marco de Canevezes, Porto, Portugal.
Building Continuity and Renewal in the Church Catholic Liturgical Architecture for 2010

A conference on Catholic liturgical architecture for pastors, architects, diocesan liturgical commissions, parish building committees, artists, diocesan liturgy directors, craftspeople and liturgical furnishers with the inauguration of the “Church for 2010” project.

PROGRAM:

Also RONALD J. LEWINSKI, M. FRANCIS MANNION, VIRGINIA RAGUIN
FEATURE

THE CHURCH BUILDING AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PASCHAL MYSTERY:
Assessing the NCCB Document *Built of Living Stones*

Timothy V. Vaverek

In November 2000 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) approved a new statement on art and architecture entitled *Built of Living Stones* (BLS). The document is intended to build on and replace *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* (EACW, the 1978 statement of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy) in order to address the needs of the next generation of church building and renovation. In part, the NCCB is attempting to resolve the extraordinary controversy which has surrounded EACW for twenty years. This conflict arose because EACW presented principles and suggestions that had never been advocated by the Church and whose authenticity were questionable. To make matters worse, there was a systematic effort by some liturgical and design experts to foster the impression that the vision of EACW was binding for Catholic church art and architecture in the United States. Ultimately, it became clear that EACW expressed only the opinion of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, not the legislative intent or architectural vision of the American bishops, and that the time had come for the NCCB to address the issue.

If past mistakes are to be avoided and the controversy put to rest, it is imperative that those using BLS accurately assess the authority of its theological, liturgical, and canonical statements. Any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the authority of BLS, as happened with EACW, would inevitably cost the Church in the United States dearly in time, money, and goodwill. We simply cannot afford another generation of confusion and bitterness over church art and architecture.

The present critique of BLS will consider its authority and purpose as a NCCB statement and will then examine its conceptual framework in light of the Catholic tradition. This analysis will reveal that BLS has no normative force and that it fails to provide a fully adequate expression of the Church’s tradition, suggesting therefore that those interested in church art and architecture will need carefully to weigh and supplement BLS in light of the primary sources of the tradition.

The Authority and Purpose of *Built of Living Stones*

BLS discusses its authority in the penultimate paragraph of the Preface:

This document has been approved by the bishops of the Latin Church of the United States and issued by the authority of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 16, 2000. *Built of Living Stones* contains many of the provisions of universal law governing liturgical art and architecture and offers pastoral suggestions based upon the experience of the last thirty-five years. The document presents guidelines that can serve as the basis for diocesan bishops to issue further guidelines and directives for their dioceses. Where the document quotes or reiterates norms from liturgical books and the Code of Canon Law, those prescriptions are binding on local communities and dioceses.

To be more exact, the document was approved by a majority of the bishops in a voice vote. BLS therefore makes no claim to be a general decree having force of law for the dioceses of the United States. Such a decree would have required a two-thirds vote of all the bishops, present or not, and a subsequent recognitio by the Apostolic See. Since BLS is not a general decree, the “competence of each diocesan bishop remains intact” and its suggestions are not binding on a single diocese unless the diocesan bishop determines otherwise.

For this reason, and because the “conference [...] is not” able to act in the name of all the bishops unless each and every bishop has given his consent,” it is imprecise to refer to BLS as “the national guidelines of American bishops.” The NCCB has issued BLS in its own name, not in the name of all the bishops of the United States.

In the text of BLS and the manner chosen for its promulgation (a simple majority vote) the NCCB has clearly indicated that BLS does not establish any new liturgical norms. Therefore, while BLS is weightier than a committee document such as EACW, it has no more authority than the many other statements routinely issued by the NCCB on a wide range of issues (pastoral, sociopolitical, environmental, eco-
nomic, etc.) which express the mind of the NCCB as an organization without ever claiming to speak definitively on behalf of all the bishops. Ultimately, BLS has only the limited authority it claims: to be guidance from a majority of the American bishops offered in the name of the NCCB to help foster a better understanding and implementation of the Church's tradition regarding church art and architecture.

BLS states its rather modest purpose in the Preface:

Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship is presented to assist the faithful involved in the building or renovation of churches, chapels, and oratories of the Latin Church in the United States. In addition, the document is intended for use by architects, liturgical consultants and artists, contractors, and other professionals engaged in the design and/or construction of these places of worship. The text also may be helpful to those who wish to understand the Catholic Church's tradition regarding church buildings, the arts, and architecture. While the suggestions and guidelines within the document have been carefully prepared, they are not exhaustive of the subject matter. They are intended to serve as the basis for decision making at the local level and also become the foundation for the development of diocesan guidelines and legislation governing liturgical art and architecture.

BLS makes no effort to offer an exhaustive treatment of art and architecture, but merely to establish a foundation within the tradition for the development of church designs and diocesan norms. BLS can fulfill this purpose only to the degree that its principles reflect those of the Catholic tradition. Even a relatively minor inaccuracy in the statement of principles would result in a distorted presentation of the authentic canonical, liturgical, and theological heritage of the Church. To borrow an analogy from construction: if a foundation or structural design is defective, then the entire edifice is at risk even if otherwise built of sound material. The defects might be quite subtle and go unnoticed in an inspection, but if they are not corrected neither the skill of the builder nor the quality of the material can secure the structure.

The critique which follows will attempt to show that the principles and schema of BLS do not adequately reflect the Catholic tradition which bases its understanding of church art, architecture, and liturgy on the Paschal Mystery of Christ. BLS departs from this foundation in two major ways:

1) It relates church art and architecture primarily to the liturgical rites rather than to the Church herself, and
2) It relates the rites primarily to the presence of God and Christ rather than to the Church's participation in the Pasch. These defects in turn give rise to inadequate and mistaken design criteria.

Where To Begin: Liturgical Rites or the Identity of the Church?

The Preface of BLS provides an unambiguous statement of the principles that will determine the foundation and structure of the document:

The document begins with a theological reflection on the liturgy and liturgical art and architecture. Since decisions about church art and architecture should always be based upon the theology of the eucharistic assembly and its liturgical action and the understanding of the Church as the house of God on earth, the first chapter is foundational for the chapters that follow. The second chapter outlines the liturgical principles for parish communities to apply when building or renovating liturgical space, and it reviews the spatial demands of the major liturgical celebrations during the year. The third chapter offers suggestions for including art in places of worship...

Notice how often the terms "liturgy" and "liturgical" appear in this passage. Apparently it is axiomatic for BLS that church art and architecture is liturgical art and architecture (no citation from Church teaching is offered in defense of this claim). This leads BLS uncritically to assume in the first chapter that considerations of art and architecture should always be based on the Eucharistic assembly and its liturgical action as well as on the identity of the building as the house of God. This unsubstantiated corollary in turn becomes "foundational for the chapters that follow." Thus, for example, the second chapter is devoted to liturgical principles for liturgical space shaped by the demands of liturgical celebrations and the third chapter considers the use of art in places of worship. The entire development of BLS depends on the integrity of the initial assumption that church art and architecture is first and foremost designed to reflect the liturgical worship occurring in God's house. But this assumption is defective.

To understand the gravity of the defect, consider the treatment of church architecture found in Vatican II and the postconciliar Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar (RDCA). According to these authentic and authoritative expressions of the Catholic tradition, the Church herself, the living temple of God, is "symbolized in places of worship built of stone" so that the church building is a "visible sign of the living Church, God's building that is formed of the people themselves." The church building is meant to reflect the mystery of the Church, which is the communion of God and humanity wrought through the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension; a communion to be fully revealed only on the Last Day in the kingdom which is the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. The entire building is therefore "sacramental" in that it visibly represents the Church, the kingdom of God present now in mystery. Put simply, the church building is an icon of the Church herself and a witness to the kingdom.

According to Vatican II, the Trinity has chosen to accomplish the saving work of Christ's Pasch in and through the Church, for which reason Christ "always associates the Church with Himself in this great work in which God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified." The paschal work of the Church is shared in various ways by all her members, living or dead, under the headship of Christ as the basis for all Christian apostolate and ministry. It follows that daily life and liturgy are equally real participations in Christ's saving work; they are...
both genuine priestly offerings of that “rational worship” by which the Christian prophetically lives and witnesses to the Pasch of Christ, thereby advancing the kingdom. Therefore, it would be an egregious error to limit the realization of the Pasch, the spiritual life of the Christian, or the activity of the Church to liturgical celebrations. There is more to the Church and Christianity than the liturgy. It follows from this sacramental understanding of the building and of the Church’s participation in the Pasch that church buildings must reflect the identity of the Church as Christus Totus: the entire people of God united to Christ its head accomplishing the Pasch in life and liturgy. To design a building that represents only the Pasch and the kingdom would be obscured or lost. BLS heavily favors such a reductionistic approach by limiting its reflections to liturgical art and architecture rather than beginning with the broader ecclesial and paschal vision of Vatican II. The only way it could avoid becoming trapped in a reductionistic vision would be by considering the liturgy in its fullest sense as a recapitulation of the entire life of the whole Church (living and dead) participating in the Pasch. Then the ecclesial and paschal aspects would emerge because the design would reflect the reality encountered in liturgical ritual: the Pasch which lies at the heart of the Church’s life and worship. But BLS has not considered the centrality of the Pasch in the Church and the liturgical rites.

**The Heart of the Liturgy: Ritual Presence or Participation in the Pasch?**

BLS’s reliance on a reductionistic concept of the liturgical rites becomes increasingly evident and detrimental throughout the first chapter. The chapter begins with a section on “The Living Church: God’s Building.” The first three paragraphs are in many ways compatible with the vision of Sacrosanctum Concilium 5-13 except for the crucial difference that BLS makes no mention of the Pasch. It offers no clear statement that the Church participates in Christ’s Pasch such that her whole life (not just the liturgy) is seen to be a priestly, prophetic, and kingly act of worship giving praise to God and advancing the salvation of the world. Instead, the focus is entirely on the Church’s ritual life. For instance, the fourth paragraph states that “every time the Church gathers for prayer, she is joined to Christ’s priesthood and made one with the saints and angels, transcending time and space...,” when the full truth is that she is always joined to Christ’s priesthood, to the angels and saints, in a communion transcending time and space for the purpose of participating in the fulfillment of the Pasch. The text makes it appear that communion with God and His people is the source and summit of Christian worship so that the experience of communion in liturgy “is a window to eternity and a glimpse of what God calls us to be.” But it is impossible to enter the presence of God or to have communion with Him apart from the Pasch of Christ. Therefore, the liturgy cannot be a window to eternity or to what we are called to be unless it is a communion in the Pasch of the Lamb. By ignoring the Paschal Mystery in this discussion BLS has ignored the heart of the liturgy—and of the life of the Church.

For Vatican II, continual participation in the Pasch is the basis of Christian daily life and worship. The Church’s liturgical celebrations, the Eucharistic sacrifice, and the Eucharist itself are each rightly called “the source and summit” of Christian and ecclesial life precisely because they are uniquely privileged expressions and realizations of this ongoing participation in the Pasch. But they are not the only means of participation and, whether in liturgy or out, Christ’s Pasch itself remains the source and summit of our lives. As BLS states it, the liturgical rites would appear primarily to be about recognizing our communion with God and His presence to us. It is difficult to see how an understanding of liturgy based on a theory of divine presence rather than on a sacramental communion in the Pasch could possibly give rise to the full, conscious, and active participation in Christian life and worship sought by Vatican II. To the extent that a theory of presence permits participation, it would seem to focus on participating in the performance of the rites rather than on celebrating the rites as a means of deepening our participation in the Paschal mystery they signify. The ritual presence of God and Christ are wonderful realities, but for Vatican II those presences have a specific purpose: to enable our sacramental communion with Christ in the Pasch which we are to live each moment until we come to its fullness in the kingdom. Participation in the Pasch enables Christian life and liturgy to be distinct foretastes of the communion of heaven. It is precisely this participation which constitutes redeemed humanity as the living church, God’s temple built on the cornerstone of Christ. Here the concept of temple or building must be supplemented with that of a body. The people of God constitute not only a community in which God is present (as in a temple), they are a community which He continually enlivens and works through (as with a body).

The ill effects of the reductionistic approach to the Church and the liturgy are apparent in the second section of Chapter One, entitled “The Church Building.” BLS states that “the house of prayer must be expressive of the presence of God and suited for the celebration of the sacrifice of Christ, as well as reflective of the community that celebrates there.” This is not a holistic vision; it is a concatenation of diverse realities (house of prayer, God’s presence, liturgical celebration, celebrating community) which makes no mention of the extra-liturgical life of the Church or her participation in Christ’s Pasch in and out of liturgy. In suggesting that the church building should be designed to express God’s presence and to reflect the worship of the community BLS offers no insights into the most fundamental meaning and purpose of that presence or worship.

For Vatican II, churches are designed to express the saving Paschal Mystery of Christ revealed and accomplished in the entire life of the Church. This architectural proclamation is meant to continue, like the life of the Church, even outside of liturgical events. Because the building is an image of the paschal kingdom present now in mystery, it is necessarily also an expression of God’s presence through Christ, suited for...
liturgical celebration, and reflective of the entire Church (not just the worshipping assembly). Thus, Vatican II can explain why the building should also be useful for liturgy, whereas BLS cannot explain why anything not immediately required for the rites should be included in the building. Vatican II suggests a comprehensive and coherent vision of the church building; the vision in BLS is incomplete and disjointed.

The fourth section of Chapter One seeks to lay the groundwork for moving from a general consideration of church architecture to concrete guidelines for church design. Given the document’s reduction of church art and architecture to only liturgical considerations, it is natural that BLS should turn to the Mass for guidance at this step. After all, the Mass is the supreme expression of the Church’s liturgical life and the stereotypical ritual assembly of the faithful. This is so, according to the teaching of the Church, because the Mass is the great sacramental participation in Christ’s Pasch. But, as we have repeatedly observed, BLS does not consider the centrality of participation in the Pasch. Instead, it understands the liturgy as the worship of a particular community in which the presence of God is manifested. So BLS chooses to discuss the Mass under the heading “Christ’s Presence in Sign and Symbol” rather than under the heading “Paschal Participation in Sign and Symbol.” The Eucharistic liturgy is presented only in terms of how it realizes Christ’s presence in the assembly through the baptized members, the Word of God, sacramental celebration, and the Sacred Species. Consequently, BLS claims that church designs must begin with a reflection on the relation of the places where Christ’s presence is manifested: altar, ambo, presider’s chair, and space for the congregation. There is no indication that for Vatican II the understanding of church design—and of the Church, the liturgy, and the entire Christian life—must begin with a reflection on the Church’s participation in the Pasch of Christ, God’s saving work by which He gathers a people uniquely His own, sharing His divine life. BLS substitutes experiencing God’s presence for participation in Christ’s Pasch as the basis of liturgy, forgetting that it is only through our share in the Pasch that we have communion with the Father.

Design Criteria: Ritualistic or Ecclesiological?

Having reduced the building to an image of the liturgical assembly and the liturgy to the ritual celebration of God’s presence, BLS has no choice but to base its design criteria solely on the demands of the rites. Chapter One concludes by offering the following criteria:

Liturgical principles for building or renovating churches
1) The church building is designed in harmony with church laws and serves the needs of the liturgy.
2) The church building fosters participation in the liturgy.
3) The design of the church building reflects the various roles of the participants.
4) The church building respects the culture of every time and place.
5) The church building should be beautiful.

These design criteria reflect the rites celebrated at a particular time and place, not the reality of the entire Church participating in the work of the Pasch in time and eternity.

Consider how the same type of criteria might have been expressed if BLS had followed Vatican II’s lead by beginning with the ecclesiological identity of the building rooted in the Pasch:

Ecclesiological principles for building or renovating churches
1) The church building is designed as an image of the Church, which is the kingdom of God present now in mystery and the Body of Christ sharing in His Pasch.  
2) The church building therefore fosters participation in the paschal life and worship of the Church, including the liturgy and public and private devotions. Consequently it accords with liturgical norms.
3) As an image of the Church which fosters participation in ecclesial life, the design of the building reflects the distinct, hierarchic charisms of the members of the Body of Christ, living and dead.
4) The church building therefore reflects the identity and heritage of the Church universal and of the particular Church.
5) The church building, an image of the bride of Christ, should be beautiful.

These ecclesiological criteria are holistic in that they consider the entire life of the Church and situate the liturgical rites within the broader context of that life by staying centered on the Pasch of Christ. According to these criteria the building is suitable for ritual use precisely because it is an adequate image of the Church, not vice-

Sacred Architecture  Spring 2001
versa. The building expresses the unique and hierarchical relation of the members to Christ their head with an emphasis on their continual participation in His Pasch, not only on encountering His presence as they act out various liturgical roles. The beauty of the building is not measured simply as worship space, but in relation to how well the design reflects the Church as she is, as she has expressed herself historically (including in particular cultures), and as she will appear on the last day when the work of the Pasch is accomplished.

Using Vatican II’s ecclesiology it becomes possible to understand why the altar is central (it is the place of the Pasch, the source of the Gospel and the Eucharist); why the tabernacle is placed prominently and visibly in the sanctuary or a chapel integrally joined to the main body of the church (Christ is the head of the Church); why there are images of the saints and angels (they are members of the Church); why the priest’s chair is situated in the sanctuary at the head of the assembly (he presides in the person of Christ the head); and why there is a distinction between sanctuary and nave (there is a distinction of charism among the members)—all these reflect the hierarchical ordering of the Body of Christ, the Church. The identity of the Church as Christus Totus, not the structure of the rites alone, is the key to church design. A building built on sound ecclesiological principles is naturally able to take into account the specific needs of the liturgical and devotional worship of the Church because in worship the Church is herself. But a church designed only for ritual use will not necessarily be able to reflect the complete identity of the Church because her identity is not limited to specific ritual celebrations.

By choosing to base designs on ritual criteria, BLS has not only failed to sufficiently ground itself in the ecclesiology and liturgical theology of Vatican II (both of which are rooted in the Pasch), it has set for itself an almost impossible task. Since liturgical and canonical legislation have generally presumed the existence of church buildings, they have not attempted to present a comprehensive architectural plan for churches. Besides, the liturgical books generally limit their considerations to the needs of specific rites. Therefore, there is no reason to believe a priori that a survey of all the ritual books will provide sufficient criteria for church design, or that the resulting criteria will be entirely consistent. Indeed, one of the reasons for writing BLS was to deal with lacunae and apparent conflicts. The resolution of such problems, if resolutions exist, obviously are not to be found explicitly in the liturgical books. This means that BLS had no choice but to remain silent on such contested issues or to present innovative solutions. However, to be authentic these innovations would have to be developed in complete continuity with the tradition of the Church. Unfortunately, as we have seen, BLS has failed to consider ecclesiological and liturgical principles that are absolutely fundamental to the Catholic tradition. Thus, when BLS offers insights or criteria based on its own principles, it is likely to be offering inadequate guidance and the company of heaven. This is the necessary conclusion of having begun with a “ritual use” conception of church design, rather than with an ecclesiological or sacramental conception.

Worse than this reductionist treatment of the tabernacle and religious images, BLS actually invents a criterion for tabernacle placement utterly unknown in the tradition of the Church: that its location “not draw the attention of the faithful away from the Eucharistic celebration.” BLS makes this assertion without justifying its claim. Surprisingly, it cites the Eucharisticum Mysterium (EM) 55 despite the fact that EM 55 states no norms, never mentions the tabernacle as a source of distraction, and is concerned only with symbolic reasons that recommend placing the tabernacle somewhere other than on the altar. This peculiar citation of EM 55 strongly suggests that once again BLS is being guided by an inadequate understanding of the liturgy based on a theory of presence according to which the rites revolve around seeing or recognizing distinct modes of God’s presence. Apparently BLS is reasoning that the act of seeing the tabernacle (which contains the Eucharistic species) during Mass could somehow preempt or conflict with seeing the Eucharistic species on the altar after the consecration. But we do not see the Eucharist in the tabernacle and, in any event, the liturgy presumes that we are capable of recognizing Christ’s presence simultaneously through a variety of “modes” and images while remaining primarily focused on celebrating our participation in His Pasch (which is the purpose of His diverse presences).

The Eucharist is Christ. His being in the tabernacle does not distract us from our Christian life and worship. Were the reserved Eucharist a distraction from full participation in the Pasch, then we would have to suspend our communion in the Pasch while we prayed before the tabernacle. This would be absurd. The Christian finds
himself more deeply drawn into his daily living of the Pasch while praying before the Lord in the tabernacle. Whether during personal prayer in front of the tabernacle or during the celebration of Mass with the tabernacle visible, we are capable of participating deeply in the Paschal Mystery while being aware of Christ’s presence. The presence of Christ in the tabernacle (or in the assembly, the priest, the Word, or the Host on the altar) cannot in any adequate account of the liturgy possibly distract from the Pasch being celebrated. That BLS could posit a source of conflict between the tabernacle and the Mass—and that it would think EM 55 supports such a claim—are indications that it has radically misconstrued the nature of the liturgy as well as that of church art and architecture. The Church has never posited such a conflict and BLS lacks the authority to introduce one.

Conclusion

The present article has brought to light a number of issues which should be kept in mind by those using BLS in the development of church designs or diocesan norms. First, BLS makes no claim to be a set of national norms issued by the American bishops; it is a statement of the NCCB meant to foster a deeper understanding of the Catholic tradition regarding church design. Given this purpose, BLS does not attempt to bind anyone to its suggestions and it clearly presumes that its readers will continue to rely on the primary sources of the Catholic tradition.

Second, the principles and schema of BLS are based on the mistaken assumption that considerations of Catholic church art and architecture begin with the liturgical rites rather than with the identity of the Church. As a consequence, art and architecture in BLS are not called upon to express the paschal reality of the Church, whose complete life and membership transcend the gathered assembly.

Third, the document’s reductionistic reliance on the liturgical rites is worsened by its uncontrolled acceptance of a liturgical theory focused on the ritual presence of Christ rather than on the Church’s communion with Christ in His Pasch. This leads BLS to present an impoverished vision of the liturgy which fails to reveal the paschal and ecclesial dimensions of the rites.

Fourth, BLS develops specific design criteria based on ritual requirements rather than on the symbolic function of the building as an image of the Church. Given BLS’s emphasis on ritual presence, this leads BLS to suggest a ritualistic rather than a sacramental (and hierarchical) arrangement of altar, tabernacle, images of Christ and saints, and the seating for the priest and the congregation.

From its first statement of principles, BLS fails to articulate and focus on the Paschal Mystery as the foundation of the Church and her liturgy and hence gives insufficient consideration to the paschal and ecclesial aspects of art, architecture, and liturgy. The resulting reductionistic treatment of the building as ritual space and of the liturgy as the ritual presence of God creates a framework which does not adequately represent the Catholic tradition. Therefore, wherever BLS interprets, summarizes, or elaborates on the authentic teaching and legislation of the Church there is the danger of unintended distortions. Claims that are unique to BLS (e.g., regarding the tabernacle) are apt to be attributable to its mistaken principles. Consequently, Catholics interested in church design will need to continue to rely on Vatican II and the Church’s liturgy as the primary inspirations for their work. Such considered reflection on the sources of the tradition will foster the goal of BLS—a deeper understanding and acceptance of authentic criteria for church art and architecture. Only then will our buildings truly reflect the identity and beauty of the Church built of living stones.

Rev. Timothy V. Vaverek, S.T.D. is a board member of the Society for Catholic Liturgy and pastor of St. Joseph’s church in Waco, Texas. (email: frtvaverek@aol.com)

NOTES:
1 See Preface, paragraph 9. All quotations are taken from the internet version of BLS located at the official NCCB web site (nccbuscc.org or usccb.org). No page or paragraph numbers appear in that version. In the present paper citations will refer to the nearest heading and, as needed, to the number of a particular paragraph under that heading.
2 See Canon 455.
3 See Canon 454.4. A bishop is free to use all, part, or none of BLS in the development of diocesan norms.
4 See Canon 455.4.
5 Preface, paragraph 3.
6 Preface, final paragraph.
7 Lumen Gentium (LG) 6
8 RDCA Ch. 1; see also Ch. 2, nn.1-3 and I Cor. 3:9.
9 See LG 1-4 and Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) 5-8.
10 See LG 3.
11 See SC 7.
12 See SC 9 and 12.
13 See SC 10, LG 11, and Presbyterorum Ordinis 5.
14 See the first paragraph of “The Church Building” in Chapter One.
15 See LG 3, 6, 7, and SC 7.
16 See SC 124 and 125.
17 See SC 26; GIRM (1975) nn. 58 and 257; and GIRM (2000) nn. 91 and 294.
18 See SC 122-123.
19 See LG 6; Rev. 19:7-8, 21:2, 21:9.
20 See “The Reservation of the Eucharist” in Chapter Two. Although BLS offers no reference to EACW, it is repeating a claim first expressed in EACW n. 78. EACW n. 78 had cited GIRM (1975) 276 which in turn cites EM 53 and EM 54. However, none of these citations mention the faithful being distracted by the tabernacle.
21 See BLS n. 102. Note that the portion of EM 55 quoted in the footnote begins in mid-sentence without indication that the opening words have been left out. Those words explicitly state that EM 55 is basing its recommendation “on the grounds of sign value”—it is not speaking about “attention.” Also note that BLS has completely abandoned the texts used to support EACW n. 78.
22 Taken out of its narrow context, the rationale of EM 55 could be used to support a novel theory of the liturgy based on the successive manifestation of four modes of Christ’s presence (i.e., assembly, Word, priest, Eucharistic species). This theory is not found in the sources underlying EM 55 (see SC 7 and EM 9). The first draft of BLS explicitly relied on this theory and the final version continues to presume its validity. On the problems with this mistaken use of EM 55, please see Timothy V. Vaverek, “Eucharisticum Mysterium 55 and the Four Modes of Presence: Inadequate Principles of Church Design,” Sacred Architecture 3:2 (2000) 22-26.
In the spring of this year, visiting the Northern Sicilian town of Cefalù, I went to see the famous mosaic of Christ that dominates the apse of its Cathedral. Poised, posed, and static, Christ looks directly and confidently—even sternly—at the worshipper. In his left hand he holds a book on which is written his words recorded in John's Gospel, “I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). This is a powerful Christ who leaves us in no doubt that the initiative is his. He is Christ the Pantocrator, the divine judge.

That same month I saw a very different picture of Christ in London when I went to the National Gallery's exhibition “Seeing Salvation,” which explored ways of portraying Christ in visual art. Prominent among the paintings displayed there was Holman Hunt's “Light of the World,” inspired by the same Johannine text as the Cefalù mosaic, and painted at the beginning of the twentieth century to hang in Saint Paul's Cathedral, London. In Hunt's picture Christ—crowned, wearing a rich cloak and carrying a lantern—knocks at a closed door around which weeds have grown. It is the door of the human heart. Christ awaits a response, but seems ready to move on if the door is not opened. The painter has depicted a moment when the initiative belongs to man. Christ is ready to be rejected and his facial expression, though calm, shows his vulnerability. Here we see a human Christ.

The style of the Cefalù mosaic is one that we now associate with Eastern Christendom. The standard pattern of churches of the Byzantine rite includes a figure of the Pantocrator over the altar, in the same position as at Cefalù. Orthodox icons show Christ in a similar way. They regularly incorporate features seen also in the Cefalù image: the right hand raised in blessing, three fingers held up to indicate the Trinity, and two fingers joined to suggest the two natures united in his person and the two strands of hair on the forehead which also recall the two natures of Christ. But Cefalù Cathedral is a Latin church, not a Byzantine one. Roger I, Norman king of Sicily, built it in the mid-twelfth century, when much of Sicily was Muslim and most of its Christians were Orthodox, as part of his program for the strengthening of Latin Christianity in the island. It was to be the centre of the newly re-established Latin diocese of Cefalù. Cefalù shows how close were the Western and Eastern traditions of Christian art—at least in the Mediterranean region—as late as the twelfth century. As if to suggest that Latin and Greek Christianity are not rivals but complement one another, the Johannine text is written on Christ's book in both Greek and Latin.

The “Seeing Salvation” exhibition told the story of the divergence of those traditions in the second Christian millennium. It showed how Western theology and spirituality—and consequently art—came to focus more and more on the humanity of Christ. In doing so, it highlighted a problem that faced nearly all the artists whose works were exhibited: how is it possible, when focussing on Christ's humanity, also to depict or suggest his divinity? This dilemma was exemplified in the exhibition by a picture painted by the Spaniard Murillo in 1681-2 called “The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities.” In it, the child Jesus, aged perhaps five years, stands on a rock between Mary and Joseph, while above him can be seen God the Father surrounded by cherubs and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The relationships between those depicted are unclear. The face of the Father who looks down on Jesus appears gentle, affectionate, yet not without pain. Jesus looks heavenward, with an expression that suggests both submission and apprehension, while his stance appears confident, as though he is about to move forward. He stands on a rock, which may be intended to suggest an altar. Mary gazes up towards him. He clings to her finger as children will, but she seems ready, even eager, to release him. Joseph looks directly out of the picture towards the viewer with a questioning expression. As the exhibition catalogue rightly suggested, this mysterious picture raises many questions: “In representing Christ's dual nature, Murillo also expresses human ambivalences.”

The suspicions of any reader familiar with the traditional language of Christian theology will be alerted by that last sentence. They will be confirmed by the fact that an entire section of the exhibition bore the title “The Dual Nature,” for it has been recognized since the very early days of Christianity that Christ cannot be understood if his nature is conceived of as an amalgam of divinity and humanity. In him, divine and human natures remain intact and unmixed. Christ...
has two natures, not one “dual” nature. Both Tertullian and Origen taught this in the third century, and it was affirmed as Christian dogma by the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Nevertheless, I found stimulation in this departure from inherited theological language on the part of the organizers of the exhibition. It provoked me to look again at the story they told, and this article is the result.

They sought to interpret images of Christ by exploring theological ideas, intending “to focus attention on the purpose for which the works of art were made, and to explore what they might have meant to their original owners.” A central theme in their account is the well-documented process by which, from the twelfth century onwards, the Western Christian sensibility became preoccupied with Christ’s humanity and his suffering. As the catalogue says, this process is due to the influence of Saints Bernard and Francis. Saint Anselm might also have been mentioned as an earlier source. In histories of art this movement is usually represented as beneficial because it contributed to the growth of “realism.” But Neil MacGregor, Director of the National Gallery, recognizes that, although a third of the pictures in the Gallery are of Christian subjects, many of its visitors are not Christian, and “it is clear that for most this is a difficult inheritance.”

What has been good for art, then, may have been bad for Christianity.

In the thirteenth century, when the Franciscan movement was gathering pace and representations of Christ were becoming more naturalistic, Thomas Aquinas pointed in a different direction. He knew the teaching of Chalcedon, of course, with its assertion that the divine and human natures of Christ remained after the Incarnation “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” But Chalcedon made no definition regarding the way in which the natures were united, and so offered little guidance as to how we should conceive, speak of, or depict the unity of Christ. In the last few years of his life, Thomas developed a keen interest in Chalcedon’s successor, the Second Council of Constantinople, held in 553. Thomas often called it “the Fifth Synod,” because it was the fifth of the council’s recognized as ecumenical. Its proceedings were not well known to Western theologians, but Thomas made the effort to get hold of its documents and study them, and he was impressed. He saw that the Fifth Synod provided a necessary complement to Chalcedon by pointing to the danger of separating Christ’s two natures that the human Christ and the divine Christ seemed to be two different people. Following the Fifth Synod, and using also ideas from Boethius and John Damascene, Thomas developed his mature Christology, according to which Christ’s two natures are united in his one person, his humanity being the “instrument” of his divinity.

A problem remained: when we say that Christ “took human nature,” he obviously did not take all human nature—he did not become every human being. He must have taken a single instance of human nature. But had that single human nature an individual existence prior to its assumption by Christ? Thomas said no. Christ’s human nature owes its very existence, its esse, to its assumption by the Divine Word. Thomas’ preoccupation in developing this metaphysic was to safeguard the unity of Christ. It is hard to understand, as Thomas acknowledged, but he followed his master Albert in reminding his readers that it is not surprising if the metaphysics of the Incarnation have no parallel. His was a lone voice. Most medieval theologians held that Christ’s human nature had its own separate esse.

The problem that Thomas saw, of creating a unified picture of Christ, is the problem faced by many Western artists, as the National Gallery exhibition amply demonstrated. Histories of art show painters of the Renaissance, particularly in Italy, breaking free of the “shackles” of the iconic tradition and learning to portray Christ as a human being. Had Thomas been more influential, Western Christianity might have remained more ready to represent the divine person in art, and have retained more of its Eastern inheritance. We might have had more images where the divine person gazes at us through his human nature, as in the icons or at Cefalù. Not that this thin stream has ever dried up entirely: one thinks of Piero della Francesca’s majestic portrait of the Risen Christ at Urbino, or the image of Christ by Graham Sutherland that dominated Coventry Cathedral, one sketch for which was exhibited at the National Gallery.

If the divine person of Christ has faded from fine art in the West, it necessarily remains in the popular religious art that is required for the purposes of devotion. The low quality of much western devotional art is surely a result of the reluctance of fine artists to represent a Christ who is recognizably divine—that is left to the makers of sickly plaster statues and holy pictures. Painting with the broadest of brushes, we might say that the Christ of the first millennium in Christian art is the divine Christ, and that in the West the Christ of the second millennium is the human Christ. This leaves as an open question the appearance of Christ in the third millennium. The Second Vatican Council encouraged us to look back to early Christian tradition for the sources of renewal. Thomas Aquinas looked back to the sixth century to find a Christ whom the West has largely forgotten. Artists looking for fresh inspiration would do well to follow his lead.

The Cefalù Christ is surrounded by images of saints and angels. Beneath him stands his Mother, her hands raised in prayer. The iconographic complex of which he is the focus surrounds the altar. A worshipper entering Cefalù cathedral finds before him a concrete representation of the Preface in the Mass, which reminds us that we praise God the Father in the company of all the angels and saints. The Cefalù Christ is a Christ in context, and that context is liturgical. The arrangement of the mosaics suggests that when we celebrate the liturgy we are in a sense already in heaven.

This is an ancient tradition. Six centuries before the building of the Cefalù cathedral, in 547, the church of San Vitale was dedicated in Ravenna. There, too, a powerful figure of Christ surrounded by saints and angels dominates the apse in which the altar is set. Near to him stand figures from the time before his incarnation, who are thus represented as types, foreshadowings, of the Eucharist: Abel lifts up a lamb in offering, and Melchisedek a loaf of bread, while Abraham sets bread before his angelic guests and, in another part of the same picture, raises his knife to slay Isaac. Thus the Eucharist is set in a historical as well as a cosmological context.

In some churches, the iconographical scheme extends throughout the building.
One such is the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome (5th century), which contains a series of mosaics representing the history of salvation that extends from the entrance all the way to the altar and apse. The worshipper entering the church, often a pilgrim from far away, is thus invited to see himself as part of the history of salvation, a member of the pilgrim people of God on their journey to the eschaton. A similar marriage of iconography and architecture is to be found in the cathedral of Monreale, Sicily, built some forty years after that at Cefalù. Here not only the apse, but all the walls of the Church are covered in mosaic. The body of the church contains scenes from the Old and New Testaments, while the apse is reserved for the apostles, the angels, the Mother of God, and Christ himself, who dominates the altar.

Further north in Europe, where Greek influence was weaker, the decoration of churches took different forms, but still, in the Middle Ages, sought to integrate individual images into an architectural—and consequently theological and devotional—whole. In many of the cathedrals of medieval France, Christ appears as judge, not over the altar, but over the entrance to the Church. The effect on the worshipper is at once challenging and consoling. He is reminded of judgement, but to enter into the Church is, as it were, to pass through judgement and to be already in heaven.

Theologically, we may say that a church-building that enfolds the liturgy and the worshipper in its iconographical scheme, which sets the image of Christ within the Church while evidently acknowledging him as the Lord of the Church, is itself an image of the church as the totus Christus, the whole Christ. The effect of such buildings, formed by the theology and spirituality of the first Christian millennium, is to encourage the worshipper to see himself as being in Christ, rather than merely seeing Christ. This effect is perhaps stronger in churches of the Roman rite, which allow more continuity, less distinction, between the body of the church and the sanctuary.

Such images were hardly available to the organizers of the exhibition at the National Gallery. Being held in, and largely sourced from, an art gallery, it was inevitably made up from objects that could fairly easily be moved. There were no frescoes, no mosaics, and little sculpture. Though objects of devotion of many kinds were displayed, artistic merit was concentrated mostly in the oil-paintings. Consequently, the Christian art exhibited was mostly of the second Christian millennium, and preponderantly of the latter part of that millennium, the period when techniques of oil-painting were developed and refined. Some of these paintings had been made originally for a liturgical context as altarpieces, but have now been removed to galleries. In particular, Holman Hunt’s “Light of the World” was painted to hang on the wall of a building that has no iconographical scheme. Soon after its completion it was taken on a world tour and exhibited in galleries which offered for it no less appropriate a surrounding than its cathedral home. What we had in “Seeing Salvation” was for the most part the Christian art of the last few hundred years, either detached from its original context, or else produced for no determined context.

Those who have difficulty with the representations of Christ in the National Gallery, or in any art gallery, cannot be said to find the whole treasury of Christian art difficult. Christian art has much to offer, not only in terms of techniques and materials, but in terms of theology and spirituality, that cannot be accommodated in an art gallery.

Painting with the broadest of brushes, I venture to suggest that the Christ of the first Christian millennium was the divine Christ, and in the West the Christ of the second millennium was the human Christ. If Christ is represented as merely human, then he is merely one of us: we cannot see how he could be divine, or how we could be in him and he in us. On the threshold of the third millennium, Christian artists would do well to look back to the first and—finding afresh in the writings and artifacts of that period the divine person of Christ, Head and Lord of the Church which is his body—draw thence inspiration for a revitalizing of Christian art.

Rev. Bruce Harbert is Priest in Charge of St. Anne’s Church, Streetly, in the West Midlands of England. (email: bruceharb@einet.co.uk)
Faith-Based Land Use Planning proposes that our churches, synagogues and mosques become the central buildings of our lives. Why? Because, as believers, our lives must be ones of prayer and service. Like contemporary retail stores, our churches must be designed as “places of destination.” The centrality of a church requires that we rethink the design of the church and, importantly, the design and types of buildings that immediately surround it. Our principles should be: (1) increased accessibility and walkability; (2) openness to the rest of the community; and (3) a balance of privacy and community. These principles dictate that we consider covered walkways, elevators, underground parking, escalators, pedestrian bridges—anything and everything to make our churches more accessible to worship and to service. The papal motto of the Jubilee Year was “Open Wide the Doors to Christ.” We should do this literally and keep our churches open twenty-four hours, seven days a week. We must reassess security arrangements, perhaps re-instituting the minor order of porter.

As to the buildings that surround our churches: If a church is in or near a residential area, even in a suburban or rural setting, the quarter-mile around it should be zoned for high-density dwellings. Conversely, these same principles dictate that more churches need to be sited in nonresidential areas where people spend much of their day: offices, factories, shopping malls, prisons, airports.

The principles of Faith-Based Land Use Planning echo those of the New Urbanism and of Traditional Neighborhood Development. There are some who would argue that it is exceedingly difficult to design a walkable, traditional neighborhood with a church the size of a typical Catholic church with its attendant parking needs. To acquire in this difficulty, however, would mean placing the church outside the residential community rather than right in the center of it.

The public increasingly finds new developments centered on golf courses, recreational boating, leisure, and small landing strips. Reports of planned communities often mention nearby jobs, transportation, and shopping, but rarely churches. Surely, we can develop new and revitalize existing communities centered on prayer and service and find solutions for the automobile.

We should consider, for example, developing a worship-and-service park in which multiple houses of worship would share facilities such as parking, gymnasium, banquet hall and kitchen. Then residences would be in walking distance, within a quarter mile of the park.

There are a large number of examples of places that promote lives of prayer and service and illustrate these principles. One historical example is St. Stanislaus Kostka, Chicago. In the 1890’s it had a church, school, orphanage, home for the elderly, a newspaper, and cemetery. More noteworthy are the charities, new to the world, that flowered once Christianity was legalized in 312 A.D. These were built adjacent to the new churches: xenodochia (inns for travelers), nosocomia (infirmaries), brephotrophia (founding homes), orphanotrophia (orphans, and gerocomia (homes for the aged).

A limited sampling of contemporary examples include:

Misericordia Homes in Chicago, for adults and children with physical and mental disabilities, with its own chapel, gym, bakery, and banquet hall.

St. Anthony’s Village in Portland, Oregon, with a church, housing for seniors, a child care center, parish center, and community park on a 5 acre site. The Society of St. John in Pennsylvania, with church, housing, and college.

Korean Catholics in Olney, Maryland are building a parish church, retreat center, and home for independent living.

United House of Prayer in Washington D.C., with a church (behind a shopping plaza it owns), public cafeteria, and adjacent low-income housing.

St. George Orthodox Church, Bethesda, Maryland, that over the past 25 years has provided lodging for 1,000 families with children being treated at the nearby National Institutes of Health.

Bartholomew House for seniors, on the premises of St. Bartholomew Parish in Bethesda, Maryland.

In a 1943 speech about the reconstruction of the bombed House of Commons, Churchill declared, “We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us.” If our churches are properly designed, and the land uses around them properly zoned, we twenty-first-century believers will have as large an effect on our world as the fourth-century churches and charities, the medieval monasteries, and the California missions had on theirs.

James M. Thunder is an environmental lawyer who reviewed two books about his ancestor, A.W. Pugin, for Sacred Architecture (Summer 1999). He is currently writing a book on Faith-Based Land Use Planning and welcomes comments at: jathunder@earthlink.net.

NOTES:


In recent years in Italy, all debate on the design of new churches has been focused almost exclusively on technical aspects. While the liturgical implications of church design were at times discussed, the field of sacred art was never brought into the mix. This, with the aid of a Vatican Council that assigned to architecture the task of creating new spaces required by a new liturgy, was all that was needed in an era of functionalist architecture to build churches conceived as mere containers, better to host the liturgical "functions" celebrated within. Today, the failure of such a functionalist approach to church design is patent. We can scarcely find a connection between the materials employed (such as exposed reinforced concrete and anodized aluminum) and the functional and typological experiments intrinsic to the floor plans of the new buildings, which are otherwise faithful to the legitimate intent of the Council.

But all objection to this fashioning of churches, however honest, has been reductively criticized as ideological grandstanding or mere obtuseness, and thus the argument between tradition and modernity has degenerated into a glib secular diatribe between "liberals" and "conservatives." Fortunately, the wall separating the two irreconcilable enemies has fallen and dragged down in its rubble the ideologies that have characterized the "brief century" that has just ended. Traditional architecture is no longer considered a cultural version of a cheap ideology, but rather is recognized as a belief that acknowledges the work of contemporary architects and their role in rescuing the language of the great traditions of Europe and the West. In fact, the debate on new church design is far more complex and articulate than much criticism would allow, and requires the contribution of believers and laymen as well as that of architects and artists. The debate takes on a profound dignity by forcing Christians to question the design of churches and to consider the need that these, in the words of the Archbishop of Poitiers, once again act as "remembrance and sign," and proclaim to the world their presence and history.

If we are once again to endow churches with the historical and symbolic meaning of a sign, we must first consider the church's direct relationship to—and interconnection with—the built environment, with the city, and especially with the urban entity it defines by itself: the parish or the neighborhood.

In the new Italian towns founded in the Thirties (Sabaudia, Littoria, Pontinia, Carbonia, and Guidonia) we see how the town plan hinges on two main buildings, the Town Hall and the Church. These indeed function autonomously as "foundational" elements of the whole urban fabric, but also define the adjacent spaces and create, by virtue of their mere presence, the Plaza. Both Town Hall and Church typologies annex the nearby fabric and utilize the elements of a thousand-year-old urban tradition: the tower, the campanile, and the baptistry. In the outlying hamlets of the Italian new towns, which were really agrarian villages, the churches were designed in different styles, recalling the original architecture of the colonial settlers. It is around these churches, along with a few workers' clubs, that the hamlets rise up, and it is these churches, with their differing styles, that are entrusted with the remembrance of the settlers "motherland."

The Armenian churches of the Diaspora work to remind the Armenian people spread out across the globe, in the West as in the East, of their land of origin by evoking and at times directly copying, medieval Armenian churches. Similarly, in post-war Rome, thanks to an enlightened pastor or religious order, church design was deeply and consciously rooted in the concept of "remembrance," a concept that the churches themselves, once built, would embody during the period of Reconstruction. One example is Gaetano Rapisardi's church of San Giovanni Bosco. With a dome second only to Saint Peter's, it rises tall in perfect symmetry, rational in design, clad in traditional materials such as travertine. Built in the fifties, it was placed at one end of a large piazza located in the Ina Casa district of the proletarian Tuscolano quarter of Rome—in the middle of the urban fabric, yet visible from the outlying Roman countryside. Richard Meier's church in the quarter of Tor Tre Teste, on the other hand, symbolizes the current inability to establish a relationship with the adjacent urban environment, and with the neighborhood.

The fall of the Berlin wall has opened...
to view the physical signs of destruction we have inherited from an antithetical understanding of the world. These signs indelibly mark the face of the city: the decay of the historic city in the East, and the outright destruction of it in the West (where it has been replaced by steel-and-glass towers); the immense empty squares in East Berlin, and the great commercial and financial centers in West Berlin; the housing projects in the East, and the fancy housing projects in the West. Let us consider instead the historic role played by the Jubilee in the great urban transformations that have bequeathed Rome with bridges and streets, along with entirely new neighborhoods. While Ignazio Breccia is right in stating that a traditional church today runs the risk of seeming ridiculous—incapable of being a sign, with even the tallest campanile buried from view in a contemporary residential neighborhood composed of thirty-meter tall concrete buildings, it is in this very context, in the city of the third millennium, that the church can work to oppose the decay of the new housing projects and the new suburbs. In this context the church can show its regenerating effect, its power to set in motion an urban rescue that will eventually re-establish the hierarchy of the elements of the neighborhood and create good urban spaces. To focus on the city and the traditional mechanisms of urban creation, we must believe that traditional churches, today merely brave attempts at defying the only line of thought, will some day, not too long from now, act as true urban regenerators, perhaps in the now likely event of replacement of incongruous buildings, even of entire quarters. We must look with favor upon the new urban and architectural trends in all parts of the world that propose traditional neighborhoods made of homes, of squares, of streets, of shops. These will combine to create a city made to man’s measure, and to reestablish the communal nature that has always been the basis for the establishment of cities throughout history. But first we must recreate those spaces required by a church to become a “place” for communities within the larger community, the traditional spaces that physically anchor it in the neighborhood and keep it from becoming an alien object: the courtyard, the piazza, and the campanile.

The Church itself can today choose which “modernity” it will bequeath to future generations. In putting that choice to work, architects must be willing to renounce those tasks that do not properly belong to them and to embrace the one that they have always fulfilled: laying the foundations of our cities.

Cristiano Rosponi is an architect, director of the Agenzia per la Citta in Rome, Italy and co-editor of the catalog Reconquering Sacred Space: the Church in the City of the Third Millennium which accompanied an exhibition of new traditional churches exhibited in Rome during the Jubilee year. (email: crosponi@flashnet.it)
A VAST, IMMEASURABLE SANCTUARY:
Iconography for Churches
David T. Mayernik

The subject of iconography, the creation or study of images with specific narrative or symbolic intent, raises complex aesthetic and philosophical questions for the modern world about the universal legibility of pictorial messages. Are symbols cross-cultural or temporal? Should messages be conveyed by realist, idealized, or abstract art? What messages can we all agree on? This complexity has virtually precluded iconography's relevance to modernist art. But in classical art, and especially in the art of the Church, it has never lost its relevance, because the messages conveyed in religious pictures speak the same messages that have been proclaimed from the pulpit for almost two thousand years.1

In any discussion of creating iconographic images for Catholic church buildings, it is first important to understand what it is that architecture cannot do that painting and sculpture can. A helpful analogy might be that architecture is to music as painting and sculpture are to words; like music, architecture can be “affective,” conveying general emotive or spiritual states: solemn, joyful, serene, inspiring. It can also, like music, be stretched to convey certain figurative/anthropomorphic impressions. Paradigmatically for churches, the Latin cross plan not only alludes to the cross but to Christ crucified. The classical orders rhythmically structure space, and each can suggest a male or female reading (ideally the dedication saint of the church).2 But architecture by itself can not convey specific narrative or allegorical messages. Only the human figure (the timeless, universal narrative “sign”), and a commonly understood symbolic language, can tell a story visually or represent specific characters or ideas.

The Catholic church, born into a pan-Mediterranean, classical Roman culture, having endured three centuries of persecution in Rome, and having inherited that classical Humanist culture after the fall of the Roman Empire, had for almost two millennia (that is, until modernism) seen the visual arts as performing a vital role in sacred architecture. All Humanist art is rhetorical, in the sense that it wants to explain, convince and exhort, and for Catholic Humanist art this is especially true. The Roman poet Horace apherized the relationship between the visual and literary arts as ut pictura poesis; that is, as in painting so too in poetry. Inevitably, if Horace’s poet is a painter in words, then the painter is a poet on canvas (and perhaps, as Leonardo da Vinci claimed, in fact superior to his literary cousin in his power to “represent”). Art historians since the early twentieth century have tried to recover for the arts this literary/iconographic dimension, which was almost eradicated after the Enlightenment. But only recently have they come fully to terms with the ways painting, for example, presents literary material in a unique way from the text itself. It was Pope Gregory the Great who described paintings in churches as “the bible of the illiterate”; but it has been a relatively recent mistake to interpret that relationship absolutely literally. Artists until the nineteenth century were instinctively aware of the ways in which the narrative possibilities of visual art are both limited and liberated by their two- and three-dimensional media. Most obviously, in literature stories are told sequentially over time, but paintings present only a single or limited number of “scenes.” This apparent narrative limitation of painting is transcended by some of its advantages: simultaneity, or its ability to present many kinds of information at one time (setting, facial expressions, gestures, clothing, etc.); drama, and its attendant memorability; and multiplicity, or the showing of multiple events from a story in a single frame. In a nutshell, paintings don’t tell, they show.

As important as the ways of representing a narrative are, in a Church a related, enriching issue is their disposition, that is, the spatial relationship of one painted or sculpted scene to another. The relationships are usually sequential in the case of a narrative shown in several discreet scenes; but an aspect of choice exists in where the scenes begin and end. In a medieval type of disposition known as boustrophedon (“as the cow plows” in Greek, that is, up and down the field, or left to right and then right to left), the initial scene along the upper portion of the nave wall begins at the pulpit as if emanated from the speaker’s mouth, continues down one side and returns to the altar end on the other.3 The distributions can also be dynamic, where relationships are established across a nave, for example, or from ceiling to wall to floor.4 These spatial relationships can create a dense narrative and symbolic web within a sacred space.5

The literal narrative sense or story of a painting, relief or mosaic is often fairly easily grasped, in part because we are familiar with the stories themselves, or other painted versions of the same scene (e.g. The Last Supper). Allegory, however, is a more complex problem, in part because the nature of allegory itself has changed much over the centuries.6 Allegorical handbooks became popular in the sixteenth century, and one, the Iconologia of Cesare Ripa, became the standard reference through the eighteenth century. To a certain extent, these guides contributed little new to the common repertoire of symbolic images. Their job instead

---

1 Roman poet Horace (65 BC - AD 8) is often credited with a famous dictum: Auctores picturae poesis (literally ‘the artistic writers are the poets’) which has been interpreted as a metaphor for the way in which written language is translated into visual language in art. This idea has been influential in the history of art and architecture, emphasizing the relationship between written and visual expression.

2 The Latin cross plan is a fundamental architectural form used in many Christian churches, characterized by a central nave flanked by transepts and a sanctuary. It is often associated with the crucifixion of Christ, with the nave symbolizing the path to salvation and the cross itself.

3 Boustrophedon is a term in Greek (βουστροφοδόν) meaning 'as the plow turns', referring to the way in which text is written in antithetical lines moving in a zig-zag pattern, typically used in Greek manuscripts.

4 Spatial relationship in church architecture can be dynamic, with elements like altars, piers, and pulpitums used to create a sense of movement and focus within the space.

5 These spatial arrangements can create a complex narrative, allowing the viewer to experience both the textual narrative and the spatial movement over time.

6 Allegory in art involves the use of symbols, figures, and narratives to convey deeper meanings or messages, often going beyond the literal, physical depiction.
use of the visual arts is to recover the value of art as a public, hortatory, eloquent articulation of ideas and values. Hopefully, this conveys the danger of thinking of the visual arts in churches as mere "decoration." It can be said that there is a decorative component in what painting, sculpture, and mosaic do for churches, but that is a happy result—not a primary cause—of their presence.

So we must free ourselves from a post-Enlightenment view of art as either documentary or decorative. The sixteenth century’s Ecole des Beaux Arts, with its tendency to systematize and categorize, also left us with a highly restrictive notion of where art belongs in buildings. Essentially, Beaux Arts architects tended to put the figurative arts in boxes: in frames, niches, friezes, etc. Instead, the long history of Catholic art until that time employed highly complex ways to inextricably integrate the arts into architecture. We will spend most of the rest of this article looking at some of the ways that was done.

I have already written of the limited ways architecture by itself can be "figurative"—principally in plan, and by means of the classical orders. But there are ways the figurative aspect of traditional architecture can be amplified. Column capitals, for example, can be explicitly figurated or anthropomorphic (Romanesque examples abound); and the constituent parts of a structure can be seen in metaphorical terms—the ceiling as sky, the floor as the earth, the altar as a table or tomb (or both), and the choir apse as an earthly paradise. To a certain extent, this kind of poetic or metaphorical thinking is necessary before addressing the place of the visual arts per se.

It is with painting, sculpture, and mosaic that truly polyphonic, fugal relationships can be established between art and architecture, between art and the spectator, and between architecture and the liturgy. The following list of how figurative art has traditionally acted compositionally in Catholic architecture is not exhaustive, but rather suggestive:

1. Framed, or in niches; this is how we are most accustomed to viewing painting and sculpture, with its advantage of clarity, and disadvantage of separateness;
2. Framing: figures themselves can also do the job of framing, apparently holding or showing the frame or window (Bernini’s frame for Guido Reni’s Madonna);
3. Superposition: figures atop columns or entablatures emphasize a heavenward directionality, can refer to Stylite saints, and make more explicit the anthropomorphic qualities of the classical orders;
4. Crowning: figures or groups can mark a crescendo to a façade or interior;
5. Substitution: the figure can literally stand in for the column (e.g., the caryatids of the ancient world at the Erechtheion), literally building the temple of saints that St. Paul writes about in Ephesians;
6. Hieroglyphics: by metonymy figurative signs can take the place of texts;
7. Metaphor or analogy: the figure can double the function of architectural elements, making the figure architectural and the architecture figurative;
8. Mise-en-scène: the architecture can be transformed into a stage on which is acted out the sacred drama being presented (for Bernini, in many cases this is the only function of the architecture, that is, to be a kind of datum or backdrop for the figure);
9. Illusion: like the stage, walls can be transformed by the power of illusionistic perspective into windows onto other
places and times, and ceilings can be opened to the sky and to heaven;
10. Transformation; the walls of many Roman apses are transformed by mosaic into images of the garden or city of Paradise.
11. The bel composto: that is, in other words, “all of the above”—this is Bernini’s expression for the integration of the arts into a “beautiful whole.”

Many of the techniques listed above have the goal of breaking down the barrier between the spectator and what is represented. This is not a purely baroque phenomenon, but the desire of every artist who wants to “explain, convince and exhort”—establishing a rapport, rather than a distance, between art and spectator, so that the message of the work will be felt and understood. What largely changed over the centuries was whether that rapport was physical, intellectual, or spiritual.

The strategies listed above relate to the artist’s job of weaving his or her work into its context. There are, of course, highly familiar “types” of sacred or religious art for churches, that are quickly described: altar painting and sculpture, mural cycles, memorials and tombs, stained glass, and stations of the cross. In addition, all the important elements for the liturgy can be elaborated with iconographical content: the altar itself, the ambo or lectern, the tabernacle, or the baptismal font. Ideally, every decorative detail—patterns, carving, etc.—within a sacred space should have some specific meaning or iconographic purpose.

Materials and color can also have symbolic meaning. An example of the symbolic use of materials is Bernini’s use of red Sicilian jasper column shafts in his chapel for the Jesuit novices of Sant Andrea in Rome to represent the blood of the Jesuit saints. Conversely, someone versed in the tradition of seeing in the mind courts, palaces, streets and piazzas as containers for symbols that cue the mind to remember ideas inevitably saw real buildings as repositories for symbols and ideas. A church could therefore be a kind of memory temple, layered with stories and symbols which embed themselves in the mind and heart, something to sustain the soul when no longer there. I am convinced that the belief in the power of places to contain ideas explains in part the deeply reverential, memorable beauty of the great churches of the Catholic tradition. Recovering the potential to memorialize our faith in painting and sculpture should be the basis for recovering the traditional forms of sacred architecture.

This article has focused on two aspects of sacred art: its meaning and its place in context. It has not tackled issues of “style,” either historical or personal. But it should be evident that, entering into a discussion of a two-thousand-year-old tradition, a degree of the ideal and the timeless is necessary so that what is represented speaks to the future and not just to us. Surely, a degree of humility in the face of our great artistic heritage would demand we avoid novelty or reinventing the wheel for its own sake, and see ourselves as extending rather than overturning our traditional art forms. And one of the best hopes for a successful recovery of sacred iconography is an informed group of patrons. Priests and bishops involved in these projects as informed connoisseurs of our artistic heritage must be vital contributors to the process.

In the end, the timeless messages of sacred iconography still require the reaffirmation of the priest during the liturgy, especially in the sermon. Continually pointing out and explaining the theme of a sculpture or a stained glass window makes it come alive for the parishioners, and an art that isn’t worth reaffirming isn’t worth creating. A mural cycle loved and understood by a parish is a continuous call to prayer and contemplation. Its beauty is a vestigium of the beauty of God, and the beauty of the church building is a foretaste of the beauty of heaven. That is the role of sacred iconography.

The power of the memory is prodigious, my God. It is a vast, immeasurable sanctuary.

David Mayernik is an urban designer, architect and fresco painter who divides his time between the United States and Europe. He has designed the TASIS school campuses in Switzerland and England, and painted frescoes in the US, Italy, and Switzerland. He has a website at www.davidmayernik.com.

NOTES:
1 For the subject of iconography and iconology generally, see the writings of Erwin Panofsky, especially Studies in Iconology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

In 1512 Johann Görtz, a wealthy apostolic protonotary from Luxembourg, commissioned a clever artistic assemblage for his parish church, Sant’ Agostino: a column chapel of the sort that enjoyed considerable popularity in his day...[He] requested that Raphael reproduce Isaiah 26:2-3: “Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps faith may enter in. Thou dost keep the gates of righteousness for ever.”...[The] meaning might have revealed itself more or less as follows: by participating in the sacrament of communion at the chapel’s altar, both Görtz and his friends could take part in a symbolic reenactment of the results of Christ’s Incarnation: His Death and Resurrection. Their Christian faith, in turn, held out hope that through Christ’s mediation they, too, might one day enter the gates of Zion in accordance with Isaiah’s prophecy....[T]he Görtz chapel was therefore conventional enough to convey a clear message, but just different enough to stimulate thought, and then, ideally, devotion.
8 See the Old Sacristy at San Lorenzo in Florence, in Shearman, p. 10ff.

Sacred Architecture
AD ORIENTEM: LOOKING TOWARDS THE LORD

The Spirit of the Liturgy

Reviewed by Dino Marcantonio

The Spirit of the Liturgy is Cardinal Ratzinger’s latest and perhaps most ambitious effort to reform the reform, and it comes as a welcome breath of fresh air to architects gasping in the noxious atmosphere of the archi-liturgical establishment. It is the disarming clarity of his meditation that catches the attention of the designer, who by now has grown numb to the equivocations, deliberate ambiguities, and often downright faithlessness of recent trends in liturgical thinking. Though some of his conclusions leave something to be desired, the acrality with which he points out the Emperor’s state of undress is bound to provoke a smile in even the most disaffected reader. Passages such as the following stand out:

In the early days of the Liturgical Movement, people sometimes argued for a distinction between the “thing-centered” view of the Eucharist in the patristic age and the personalistic view of the post-medieval period. The Eucharistic Presence, they said, was understood, not as the Presence of a Person, but as the presence of a gift distinct from the Person. This is nonsense. Anyone reading the texts will find that there is no support anywhere for these ideas. (p. 88)

His lucid meditations, peppered with frank passages such as this, clarify many issues of serious consequence to the designer, issues that have been clouded for almost a half-century now.

Two issues stand out right away for the architect, of course, and they are the altar and the tabernacle. In the case of the altar, Ratzinger relies heavily on the scholarship of Louis Bouyer, making a very powerful case for the ad orientem posture for the Mass. This, he says, contrary to popular wisdom, was the early Christian posture for prayer, and it was a development from the Jewish synagogal practice of facing Jerusalem. When they prayed, Jews oriented themselves toward the Shekinah—the cloud of God’s presence—in the Holy of Holies. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., that tradition continued in expectation of the Temple’s reconstruction and the Shekinah’s restoration with the arrival of the Messiah. To Christians, of course, the Messiah had already come, and the Jerusalem for which they waited and hoped was not an earthly Jerusalem, but a heavenly one. Hence, the Christian posture for prayer took on an eschatological significance: geographical east was the ori-}

Last Supper; and second on the adequacy of the meal image to describe the Eucharist. Turning once more to Bouyer’s scholarship, the ancient meal, he points out, would never have involved the presider facing the other participants. Indeed, they would all have been seated on the convex side of a crescent-shaped table, the other side being left open for service. In either case, however, the meal image is insufficient to describe the nature of the Eucharist. For Christ used the Jewish Passover meal as a framework for the establishment of the new reality of Christian worship, the Eucharistic reference to the Cross, “and thus to the transformation of Temple sacrifice into worship of God that is in harmony with logos” (p. 78).

Ratzinger dismisses the notion that the Council’s admonition for “full, conscious and active participation” implies, or much less requires, Missa versus populum, in his chapter on “The Body and the Liturgy.” There he makes the case that the phrase refers primarily to an interior union with the central action of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer, rather than to general activity. When it comes to the sacramental celebration proper, external actions are secondary, for there space must be made for the actio Christi, and ours is to become “one body and one spirit” with Him. He states, “Anyone who grasps this will easily see that it is not now a matter of looking at or toward the priest, but of looking together toward the Lord and going out to meet him” (sic).

The reader, however, will be puzzled to learn that Ratzinger insists on the ad orientem posture only for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and not for the Liturgy of the Word. The latter, he states, suggests a “face-to-face exchange,” a particularly baffling assertion considering Ratzinger’s heavy use of the work of Bouyer, who points out that in the synagogue God’s word was read facing Jerusalem (Liturgy and Architecture, p. 9). It was more than mere teaching, but rather a “true encounter with God” (Liturgy and Architecture, p. 10). Should we not say the same for the Liturgy of the Word in the Mass? And architects hoping for encouragement to reverse the now thirty-year-old migration of the altar westward will also be disap-
pointed. Eminently practical, if not pastoral, the Cardinal suggests that, in recently renovated churches, the crucifix placed on the altar could function as the orisens of the priest and praying community.

Ratzinger’s discussion on the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is likewise at once rewarding and frustrating. He re-states beautifully the Church’s traditional teaching that the whole Christ is corporeally present under the appearance of bread and wine, defending the so-called “medieval errors” of transubstantiation, adoration and other Eucharistic devotions. He even handily dismantles the corpus mysticum vs. corpus verum argument of the modernist establishment. In the middle ages the use of the two terms switched: where the Fathers used “corpus mysticum” to signify the Eucharist, the medievals now used “corpus verum,” and where “corpus verum” was used to signify the Mystical Body of Christ, now was used “corpus mysticum.” The trade was taken by the modernists to mean that a naturalism had taken hold in Eucharistic doctrine and that a correction was in order. This arrow is in the quiver of almost all liturgical design consultants today seeking to tuck the Blessed Sacrament discretely away in some inconspicuous corner. But, Ratzinger argues, mysticum did not mean “mystical” in the modern sense, but rather “pertaining to the mystery, the sphere of the sacrament.” Yes, there were certain losses in Christian awareness of the corporate character of the Eucharist; nevertheless, the Eucharist can only bring us together to form Christ’s “true Body” because “in it the Lord gives us his true Body” (p. 88). Ammunition such as this will compel an interior cheer in any member of a building committee who has had to duel a liturgical renovator in defense of his fair church building.

Ratzinger then goes on to argue that the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is not opposed to the Mass. Indeed, “Communion only reaches its true depths when it is supported and surrounded by adoration” (p. 90). Furthermore, the Blessed Sacrament brings life to an otherwise dead church. He paints bold strokes in favor of the traditional direct relationship of altar and tabernacle, going so far as to say, “How many saints—yes, including saints of the love of neighbor—were nourished and led to the Lord by this experience [of the Eucharist].” Or so it would seem. Just when we expect him to deliver the coup-de-grace and declare forthrightly that the tabernacle never ought to have moved off the altar, he states wanly that we really ought to find the proper place for the tabernacle. Perhaps the Cardinal was being rhetorical, and said as much as he could say in the current political climate and in light of the fact that the new GIRM states that it is more in keeping with sign value that the tabernacle should not be on the altar on which Mass is celebrated (no. 314-5). Even so those who honor tradition have much to be thankful for in this chapter, as in the whole book. And modernists have much to fear. It is clear that the book was intended as a corrective to the disastrous effects of the modernist architectural and liturgical hegemony. In its preface, in fact, the Cardinal states that he hopes it will spawn a new liturgical movement. We sincerely hope it will.

Dino Marcantonio is assistant professor of architecture at the University of Notre Dame. (email: dino.v.marcantonio.1@nd.edu)
Hawksmoor’s London Churches: Architecture and Theology

Reviewed by Robert L. Woodbury

In 1711, the ninth year of the reign of Queen Anne, the British Parliament established a commission for the building of fifty new churches in London and its burgeoning suburbs. It was an act that united the Church of England and the disparate ideologies of the Tory and Whig parties behind what must have seemed at the time a single ecclesiastical banner. Twelve churches were eventually built, six of those by Nicholas Hawksmoor: St. Alphege, Greenwich; St. Anne, Limehouse; Christ Church, Spitalfields; St. George-in-the-East; St. George, Bloomsbury; St. Mary, Woolnoth. Each of these churches is deeply influenced by the classical tradition in architecture, but taken together they possess a distinctiveness and individuality separate from the other churches of the day. Pierre de la Ruffiniere du Prey explores the reason for this uniqueness in Hawksmoor’s London Churches: Architecture and Theology. This little volume of less than 200 pages is nonetheless rich in text and illustration. A scholarly work, it introduces the reader not only to Hawksmoor and his churches but to Hawksmoor’s world, a world where architecture, faith, and tradition formed an unbroken continuum.

Hawksmoor was an apprentice of Sir Christopher Wren and learned from him a love of history. Together they shared a passion for the wonders of antiquity and the great monuments of the Judeo-Christian tradition. A large body of contemporary writing on the Temple at Jerusalem most assuredly had a bearing on Hawksmoor’s approach to architecture, an example being the altar at St. Mary’s, Woolnoth with its twisted Solomon columns supporting a stunning wooden baldachino in the manner of Bernini. At St. George’s, Bloomsbury, the stepped pyramidal spire surmounting a miniature classical temple is a lighthearted excursion into fantasy inspired by Pliny’s description of the great mausoleum at Halicarnassus.

The early eighteenth century produced a host of Anglican Divines whose writings underlay the commission’s search for an “ideal” Anglican church. These writings—which cite Eusebius, Josephus, and Gregory of Nazianzus among others—not only explored what the theologians understood to be the prototypical period of “primitive” Christianity (i.e. the fourth century) but Old Testament roots reaching back to the Temple at Jerusalem. That Hawksmoor, himself a commissioner, was familiar with these writings is evidenced by the marginalia in certain of his plans and elevations. Matters of east-west orientation, the hierarchical arrangement of churches, the appropriate manner of baptism, and the number of steps to the altar, the proper design of pews were all part of this body of writing that appealed in Anglican fashion to Scripture, Tradition, and Reason.

Hawksmoor lived at a time when—to paraphrase G. K. Chesterton—past generations were extended the franchise. In architecture this required comprehensive knowledge of all the past had to offer. Du Prey reminds us that for Hawksmoor this meant an organic relationship between the classical of ancient Greece and Rome, the Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic. Hawksmoor, astonishingly, saw it all flowing into each other. And, writes Du Prey, “Hawksmoor’s interpretation of history as a continuum may not be all that garbled.” He describes how the architect “as smoothly as he could... created a transition from Christ Church’s classical Serliana entrance portico to the pointed obelisk-spire on top. He succeeded largely because of his repetitive use of the round-headed arches that carried the double meaning of Roman or Romanesque. Up above, the whole composition bursts forth in a Gothic flourish.”

In imitation of the early Christians’ need to adapt and reinterpret architecture in a joyful and at times almost mischievous response to the Gospel, Hawksmoor’s periodic deviations from the classical canon “combined this almost playful freedom to explore solution after solution with a serious mission to infuse architecture with theological meaning.” It must be kept in mind, however, that Hawksmoor’s occasional departure from the canon could be accomplished successfully only because he so thoroughly understood it.

In a period marked by architectural successionism, theological and liturgical relativism, and the desacralization of Christian experience, Du Prey gives us an opportunity to understand the synthesis of influences that must again guide our efforts to give to church architecture the visual language of heaven. We glimpse a brief but paradigmatic period in the history of the English Church which represented a rare conjunction in the history of architecture. Du Prey writes: “On the one hand there was Hawksmoor, an architect of genius, historically-minded but also progressive; on the other, the learned body of his clients who fervently believed in the relevance of the purer faith of the early Christians and who enabled those theological aspirations to be translated into stone... Each church he produced was different, as beftted its physical location and the social status of its parishioners, yet all partook of what he saw as the unity of the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions. Charting his course astutely, he avoided the shoals created by the commissions’ stipulations, on which a less resourceful architect might have foundered. Those stipulations,”Du Prey concludes, “far from hampering Hawksmoor’s artistry, served as the springboard for some of the most inspired churches ever designed in the British Isles.”

Du Prey introduces us to a gifted architect who knew how to capture spiritual and emotional forces which transcend time and place to satisfy the senses and enlighten the soul. This is a book that quickens the spirit and gives voice to those who would rediscover that manner and language of sacred architecture that grows organically from the continuity of Holy Tradition and the finest works of the past.

Fr. Robert Woodbury is Director of Pastoral Care at Saint John’s Home of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
**Meditations On the Medieval**


Reviewed by Randall B. Smith

This is an altogether pleasant little book, written for a popular rather than scholarly audience. If the reader is expecting a hefty tome with a substantial thesis, such as Otto von Simson's The Gothic Cathedral, Émile Male's The Gothic Image, or Conrad Rudolph's more recent Artistic Change at St-Denis, he will be disappointed. This short book is made up of fifteen brief theological reflections on certain elements of Gothic architecture. Most of the comments seem inspired by the author's walks through either the cathedrals at Chartres or Notre-Dame de Paris, although there are several passing references to the cathedral at Amiens, along with one small black-and-white picture of the cathedral of York. (Indeed, if there is one serious criticism to be made of the book, it is that all fifteen of the illustrations are small black-and-white photos.)

The sub-title of the book is, "Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals." Indeed, as long as the reader takes the author's comments about Gothic architecture as expressions of his particular aesthetic feelings about the building in question, then there can be no objection. And so, when the author notes that there are subtle yet important differences between the right and left bell towers and the right and left portals of the facade at Notre-Dame de Paris, though he may be right to conclude that it is "hardly likely" that "the architects were imprecise in their measurements," he is not on firm ground at all when he suggests that, "What the architects wanted in fact to communicate was the imperfection and sinfulness of the universe ..." (p. 58). Notre-Dame de Paris, like all of the great medieval cathedrals, was built over the course of many decades. The notion that the bell-towers, portals, and statuary of a cathedral—built as they were by various artisans and architects often over the course of many decades, even centuries—are all in fact united by a common artistic ideal, is not altogether realistic. The differences between

left and right in a facade might be due neither to imprecise measurements on the one hand, nor to a unified artistic plan on the other. It might just be that the architect two generations later liked squares better than triangles, or worked better with eights rather than sevens, or that the building committee just plain ran out of money and had to settle on a less expensive plan.

Indeed, all such broad generalizations about "what the medieval architects intended" probably ought to be viewed with caution. Why? Because even if we were to restrict our discussion to one Gothic cathedral alone (let alone making generalizations about four or five), we might be looking at the work of perhaps a dozen or more major architects who labored over decades and perhaps centuries of construction, who were aided by sometimes hundreds of auxilliary craftsmen and artists. Not only would we have to distinguish the "intentions" of each of the major players in the work, and the changes in that "intention" as the worked proceeded and the personnel changed, but we would also have to take into account all of the major changes in the political, cultural, aesthetic, and especially theological landscape that had occurred during the years of that construction. Unfortunately, the needed scholarly spadework simply has not been done yet.

In the case of Notre-Dame de Paris, for example, it is not at all clear that the man who planned the flying buttresses and the windows was the same man who put the famous gargoyles on the building. Indeed, many scholars think that the gargoyles weren't added until much later, perhaps as late as the nineteenth-century renovations done under the direction of Viollet-le-Duc.

It was during this time that the nineteenth-century Romantics, in reaction to what was perceived to be the excessive rationalism of the Enlightenment period, became fascinated by what they took to be the dark, mysterious, and lusty—almost barbaric—period then known as "The Dark Ages." They even coined their own adjective for the period; because they thought that it was dominated, not by the rational Greeks and Romans, but rather by the lusty Goths that had overrun them, they called the period, along with its art and architecture, "Gothic." We now realize, of course, that much of this was historical anachronism. The gargoyles on Notre-Dame probably tell us more about what the nineteenth century thought about the Middle Ages than about what the Middle Ages really were. And just as twentieth-century scholars look back with mild amusement at the fantastical imaginings of the "Gothic" that were invented by their nineteenth-century predecessors, so also shouldn't we be careful not to read into the "Gothic" just what we want to find there? If we believe that the Middle Ages has something important—indeed irreplacable—to offer us, shouldn't we do our best to understand these great thinkers on their own terms, rather than forcing them into our social and spiritual categories and constructs?

All scholarly caveats aside, this is really more of a book of theological meditations than it is a book about Gothic architecture. To the extent that what it means to do is to teach the truths "ancient and yet ever new," it does a fine job. The writing is crisp and clear, and the meditations are admirably orthodox without ever slipping into either pious sentimentality or dreary lecturing. In the final analysis, if this book is approached in the right vein, it can be enjoyed with pleasure and become a source of no small spiritual benefit. Warmly recommended, with the stated reservations.

†

Randall Smith is assistant professor at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He has a doctorate in Medieval Studies and has taught at the University of Notre Dame (email: randall.b.smith.11@nd.edu)
A PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Reviewed by David S. Heit

As Roman Catholics in the West, we typically consider St. Peter's Basilica to be the most important church of our faith historically, artistically, and politically. During the recently completed Jubilee year millions of the faithful made the pilgrimage to Rome and Vatican City to see St. Peter's.

However, for Christians worldwide, including Roman Catholics, there is another equally significant, equally ancient church: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Christian pilgrims have been making the journey to this holy site since its consecration in AD 335. Yet, most Roman Catholics, in the United States at least, probably know relatively little about this church.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is believed to be built over the tomb of Christ. In AD 325, upon the orders of the Roman emperor Constantine, recently converted to Christianity himself, the Tomb of Christ was discovered, and a shrine was constructed over it. Constantine's mother, Empress Helena, visited the church during its construction and found what is believed to be the remains of the True Cross. The original structure was consecrated in AD 335. Since then, the Holy Sepulchre has survived fire, riots, earthquakes and attacks by Muslim invaders, including its near total destruction in 1009. Each time, Christians have rebuilt, restored and added onto the church structure.

Throughout the Holy Sepulchre's long history, stewardship of the church has belonged to varying Christian congregations, often more than one at the same time. Even today, unlike most churches, the Holy Sepulchre is served by six communities: Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Armenians, Syrians, Copts and Ethiopians. These six communities worship side by side under an agreement known as the Status Quo dating back to 1852 during Ottoman rule.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre documents the church's history, transformations, architecture, art and the different Christian communities associated with it. The authors draw upon the latest archaeological and historical research obtained during renovation and restoration in the late twentieth century to create the most accurate account of the Holy Sepulchre to date. Separate sections of the book are dedicated to documenting the church's history, art, liturgical rites and each of the six Christian communities present. But the real treasure of this book is the bounty of color photographs, many full page, which accompany the text and visually reveal the beauty of both the church building and the liturgical practices of the faithful present.

David S. Heit is an architect in South Bend, Indiana. (email: daveheit@aol.com)

INSTITUTIONS WHICH DECLARE FAITH

After Heaven: Spirituality in American Since the 1950's

Reviewed by Bryan Clark Green

At first glance, Robert Wuthnow's After Heaven might seem an unusual selection for review in a journal established for the edification of architects interested in the reform of contemporary ecclesiastical architecture. But Wuthnow—one of the foremost interpreters of post-war (WWII) American religion—has written a work that is essential reading for anyone grappling with the problem of creating (or recreating) a traditional architectural language for American churches often seemingly cut adrift in contemporary American society.

Of particular interest to readers of Sacred Architecture is Wuthnow's thesis that the role of religion in American society has shifted from one based on a metaphor of dwelling (pre-1950s) to a metaphor of seeking (1960s to the present). Wuthnow's argument centers on the idea that—since the 1950s—increased professional and social mobility make it difficult for Americans to nurture an active spiritual life because they no longer feel rooted to particular places. To compensate, they set forth on spiritual journeys, "characterized more often by dabbling than by depth." In contrast to "dwelling-oriented" and "seeking-oriented" spiritualities, Wuthnow offers another path, that of those who engage in a "practice-oriented" spirituality, one that is "making a deliberate attempt to relate to the sacred" through disciplines such as reading, prayer, and service. While this third path might seem divorced from traditional religious institutions, Wuthnow argues that the spiritual practices of a practice-oriented spirituality "ultimately sustain these institutions by giving individuals the moral fortitude to participate in them without expecting too much from them."

When Wuthnow writes "[t]he dispersed self is not regarded as a floundering entity in search of its hidden being but one that draws strength from the varied situations in which it exists" it could be read as a call to build sacred institutions which declare faith not just for those who enter in, but even more so for those who simply pass by. Sacred architecture, thoughtfully designed and sited, can bear silent yet eloquent witness to a lived faith that reaches places words might never penetrate.

Bryan Clark Green is Assistant Curator for Prints and Photographs at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, Virginia. (email: bgreen@vahistorical.org)
Our firm is designing buildings today that most Americans would identify as “Gothic” architecture. Some, when shown the drawings, have asked if the building is an existing building we are restoring. When that happens, I admit I feel a glow of rebellious satisfaction, for in that statement they confirm that I have succeeded. The design task began simply enough with the request of my first client: to design a building that would be similar to another church our firm had designed in 1913. “Do it again, only bigger” was the charge. But how was I to go about doing it again? I could not simply enlarge the original but had to design a new larger building that would capture the same feeling the original had sought to capture. This new design had to respect the same origins, feelings and ideas. Together we set out to define what this meant for the new building. Our task was nothing less than to define anew the Gothic as a modern style and the essence of Christian architecture.

The model for the first church was a small country church that was a sonnet in stone. Walls, window frames and roof were all of New Hampshire Granite. Whatever the “style” was, it was a poem evocative and lovely in its simplicity. But what made it meaningful for my client was not only its country loveliness but also its essential Christianity. This, we eventually agreed, rested in a number of important features that definitively set it apart from secular architecture. The pointed arch, cruci-form plan, elevated altar, wooden ceiling, hammer beams, stone wainscot, rough plastered walls, rood beam with its cross and figures, saints and angels, gargoyles and tortured souls, are altogether an immersion in the life of the spirit. For us the absence of these forms and linguistic elements, as well as many others, is the absence of the very essence of Christian space.

Architecture has the capability to define through formal language that we come to identify the activities that occur within by the form of the architecture. The activities and the forms become interdependent. To the extent that the architecture incorporates these forms and linguistic elements we feel at home and comfortable. Our sense of well-being is affected by the architecture. The result of a sense of negative affect—or lack of well-being—may be a tendency not to return to the space, i.e. a loss of interest.

The airline terminal, the casino, and the stadium each express their function through their architecture, and we find that correct and understandable. However, when the modern church descends to the level of a college lecture hall it can no longer project any meaning beyond mere assembly. The stadium wears its symbols proudly in the logos and emblems of soft drink and football team. It is public architecture because it makes a public statement about a private reality, and it is intended to do so. To the extent that the members are proud of their faith, the church building should proudly wear its faith and in so doing make a statement to the larger community the activities that are ongoing inside the building.

In our modern society we must unlearn the toning down of the message that our churches have communicated to us through the language of architecture. In Germany in 1541 John of Muenster and his followers seized the Cathedral of Muenster, beheaded the statues of the saints, threw the illuminated manuscripts into the street and burned them. This has developed into the “modern” church of today, stripped of meaning, devoid of decoration, and mute about faith. We hear all about the eloquence of the play of light over large blank walls, or we must be content to see trees and be “connected” to nature. We see abstraction everywhere and hear how it allows our minds to expand and wander freely to connect with our own innermost thoughts.

When I was in the nave of Westminster Abbey this summer I spent some of my time in wonder at the space and the shadows that allowed my mind to wander freely. I spent the remainder of my time in awe of the art that surrounded me on every side. Yes, it was angels and saints and Doctors of the church on every side. No, I often did not know who they were exactly, but I am certain that as a parishioner there I would happily spend some years among these many symbols. I should never tire of the opportunity to fathom each one individually as I sat listening to the great organ or to an orator.

In like fashion, Our Lady of Walsingham, a new Catholic church to be built in Houston, Texas, does not attempt to fit itself into a picture of modern suburban corporate harmony. Instead, Our Lady of Walsingham hews to the true language of Christian faith. This new church is an exposition of the language and liturgy of Catholic faith. The medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan once said. And in this church the architecture is the liturgy. In the rafters built on the flat in the medieval manner, the true arched and traceried windows, the stone floor and the high altar, the liturgy is celebrated faithfully by the architecture. The power and awe and mystery of the architecture of faith comes again to the new world. This time it is all the more powerful and awe-inspiring for the inclusion of art and faith in the face of science and reason.

Ethan Anthony is the principal of Hoyle, Doran & Berry Architects in Boston, the successor firm to Ralph Adams Cram. (email:eanthony@hdb.com)
A journal committed to the living tradition of Catholic architecture and art. **Sacred Architecture** features articles on contemporary and historic church design along with news, book reviews, and commentary. The journal, now published biannually, contains relevant essays by architects, historians and theologians.

**SUBSCRIBE NOW!**

- Yes! Enter my subscription to **Sacred Architecture**
  - One Year (2 Issues): $9.95*
  - Two Years (4 Issues): $18.95*
- Gift Subscription (recipient below)
- Accept My Donation of $ _______

Name __________________________________________
Address _________________________________________
City/ State/ Zip ___________________________________
E-Mail _____________________________ Fax ______________

If You Build It, They Will Come

Reconquering Sacred Space 2000: The Church in the City of the Third Millennium is the companion book to the second international conference evaluating the ongoing renaissance of sacred Catholic architecture. This year’s catalog features over eighty new projects from architects around the world, essays examining the relationships between church buildings and sacred space, and a foreword by Francis Cardinal George expressing the timely importance of the exhibition. Anyone truly concerned with sacred architecture must read this book.

“The love of beauty as an icon of God’s face informs every page of these reflections on sacred architecture. Reconquering Sacred Space is intelligent, elegant, provocative in its ideas, and a great resource for anyone passionate about renewing sacred architecture and rebuilding the House of the Lord.”

--Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. Archbishop of Denver

“Reconquering Sacred Space comes at an appropriate moment...The projects in the present exhibition indicate the vitality of tradition in the visual arts today, a vitality which draws on the best of the Church’s accomplishments.”

--His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. Archbishop of Chicago

Reconquering Sacred Space 2000 is available now from New Hope Publications for only $29.95.

To order by phone: (800) 764-8444
To order by fax: (270) 325-3091
To order by mail: Send $29.95 + $5.00 shipping to:
New Hope Publications
3050 Gapknob Road
New Hope, Kentucky 40052

The groundbreaking original catalog Reconquering Sacred Space 1999 is still available in limited quantities!