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Architecture for Anglicans

BY STEPHEN SMALLEY

EVEN to think of attempting to produce the perfect design for any and every church building would be a monstrous denial of the basic principle that building for worship demands planning from the centre outwards. It is essential to begin from the situation that exists, in which the building is to take shape ; to consider carefully what the building is for, what action and belief it is to house and express, and where its actual centre is to be found. Clearly this makes it impossible to create any uniform design for church buildings. The most we can expect is a series of guiding principles ; and it is to these we must now turn. If we must be content with principles rather than blue-prints until we start to build, moreover, we should not make the mistake of regarding those principles as too general to be of value.

But, first, let us ask again some basic questions. Do we need churches at all? If we allow that the Christian community needs some kind of sheltering, how much money should be spent on erecting and maintaining church buildings, in view of the Christian obligations of stewardship and mutual responsibility? If "here we have no lasting city", but seek "the city which is to come" (Heb. 13 : 14), are we sure that the design of our church buildings should be lasting, and speak unequivocally of permanence? And how adaptable in any case should these buildings be, in the light of the ecumenical climate which prevails today, particularly in the younger churches of Africa and Asia?

If our answers to the first two questions permit us to build at all, we must then reckon with the fact that at the moment we are going to build as Anglicans. The answers we give to the second two questions just posed may make us cautious about the final shape we decide upon. But we cannot be unrealistic, or design our churches in a vacuum. Our architecture at present is architecture for Anglicans. Very well, then, what are our precise needs and beliefs as Anglicans? To answer this will bring us to our first guiding principle in building for worship.

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(a) *Theological and Liturgical*

Theology and liturgy, what we believe and the way we worship, belong together as we have seen. And if one is truly the expression of the other, they cannot be separated when we come to build for worship. Theological and liturgical considerations will therefore form our starting-point, as they should ; and they will form it together, as they must.

The Anglican Church is both catholic and reformed. Its doctrine is that of the historic Christian Church, as contained in Scripture and the early creeds. But the worship as well as the doctrine of the Anglican Church exist on this side of the Reformation ; and the formularies of the Prayer Book, articles, and canons, thus reveal a discontinuity as well as a continuity with the Christian Church before the sixteenth

century. That which is distinctive in our Anglican heritage should surely be reflected in our architecture. For we as Anglicans cannot express our protestant, reformed doctrine properly until we are free from the medieval, Roman shape of church buildings to which for traditional reasons alone we still tend to cling. Let us have a reformed architecture to match our reformed doctrine and worship.

The character of that doctrine and worship we have already noticed. Above all it involves a deep understanding of the Church as a body, a community. And in classic terms, the "marks" of the true Church were defined at the time of the Reformation as "the pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments".¹ Any building for Reformed worship, therefore, Anglican as much as any other, should still provide a clear statement of the togetherness of the body of Christ, and of the balance between the ministries of Word and sacrament.

First, an Anglican church building is *not* simply, as Peter Hammond claims, a "eucharistic room".² The community assembles for worship not only round a table, but also around a pulpit and a font. Important as the table is, it is by no means axiomatic that it should form the centre of every church building plan. As Professor Whyte says, "the Church is in Christ, and Christ is in the midst of His beloved people in word and sacrament".³ Careful consideration of the placing of pulpit, table, and font is therefore required. These must be properly related to one another, and exist together without confusion. The otherwise admirable design of the Church of St. Paul, Bow Common, London, which is truly planned from the centre outwards, fails at precisely this point. It makes no real provision for the proclamation of the Word.

What then is the liturgical centre of an Anglican church building to be? Around what are we to build? What are we doing in church? If the community is assembling to hear the Word preached as well as to share in the administration of the Lord's supper, should not these two focal points, table and pulpit,⁴ form the centre? We take pulpit and *table* together, rather than pulpit, table, and *font*, because the service of holy communion is in fact more central than that of baptism to the ongoing life of the Church. All these three focal points are in any case functional symbols which gather together the Church's worship just as worship itself gathers together the whole of life.

As we saw in the last chapter, however, it is difficult to achieve a satisfactory statement of the balance between pulpit and table when they are taken together as an architectural starting-point. The whole history of Anglican building shows that the table has usually overshadowed the pulpit; whereas in non-Anglican (but non-Roman Catholic) traditions the reverse has generally been true.

One way of avoiding this imbalance is by placing the table between the pulpit and the lectern,⁵ and making these last two the same shape. This has been attempted in the Church of the Redeemer, Baltimore, although there the table still receives greater emphasis by being placed well forward of the flanking centres of the Word, which are not in fact identical in design. The idea is more satisfactorily worked out in the reconstructed Church of St. Mary's, Islington; particularly as

during holy communion the lectern and pulpit are there used for the reading of the epistle and gospel. The new Guildford Cathedral, which is a monumental example of building for the twentieth century in a style that belongs to the Middle Ages, also has a matching pulpit and lectern ; but there the unreformed division between chancel and nave, and the arrangement of the chancel itself, make any statement of the proper balance between Word and sacrament, let alone of a biblical doctrine of the Church, quite impossible.

If table and pulpit are together at the centre, font and reading-desk must now be related to them. There is something to be said for placing the font at the entrance to the building, as a standing reminder of the Christian's initiation into the community with its deep obligations. But this presents difficulties if baptism is administered during public worship, and the congregation is facing away from the font. There is hardly any justification for a separate baptistry, even (as in the Chapel of the Resurrection at Ibadan) at the entrance to the church ; since this tends to isolate the service of baptism from its essentially corporate setting, and to foster the illusion that it is a private and individual affair.

Perhaps the best solution is a portable font, which can be placed at the centre of the worshipping congregation for the moment of baptism without permanently obscuring table or pulpit. Many contemporary church buildings in Europe and America, particularly of the non-Anglican (but non-Roman Catholic) tradition, permanently place all three centres, table, pulpit, and font (often with the addition of a reading desk) in close juxtaposition to one another at the liturgical east end. The difficulty of this arrangement is that there is no real focus ; or if there is, one dominates the rest misleadingly.

The re-modelled United Church of Christ building at Washington Park, Denver, Colorado, uses this style, but has an interesting answer to the problem it creates. Font, table, and pulpit (north to south, in that order) are placed more or less in line at the east end. But all three are drawn together by a huge iron cross which rises out of the ground, otherwise unsupported, in front of them all. The symbolism is effective ; the death and resurrection of Christ are shown to be intimately related to both Word and sacrament. And in addition a gathering point is provided, to which the eye is immediately drawn, holding all three centres together in tension.

There is, finally, to return to Anglican church buildings as such, the question of the placing of the reading desk,⁶ and with this the relation of the clergy to the congregation. We noticed that the Anglican Reformers were concerned to place the minister in direct relation to the rest of the people of God, in the medieval-styled churches which they inherited, both by bringing him into the nave and by bringing the congregation into the chancel. As then so now, our church buildings should provide a firm statement of the unity of the worshipping body, and make it abundantly clear that in both ministries, of Word as well as sacrament, the community is engaged in dialogue and action, not monologue and recitation.

Wherever the minister is placed therefore, he (and his actions, when they occur) must be visible. Sometimes, as in the Church of the

Redeemer, Baltimore, reading desk and lectern are combined. It is equally possible to combine pulpit, desk, and lectern. But a desk need not obtrude upon the liturgical scene, and is in any case a good place from which to conduct parts of most services. Preferably it should be placed at right angles to the congregation, and thus to the main axis of the building. This is difficult, obviously, if the ground plan (as with the T-shape) involves more than one axis; and in this case a position facing liturgical west for the conduct of all services should be seriously considered.

A correct theology of the clergy, to summarize, should result in a proper positioning not only of table and pulpit, font and reading desk, but also of the minister himself in relation to the congregation. But Anglicans also need a correct theology of the choir. Almost without exception the "traditional" Anglican church houses its choir, dressed up to look like amateur clergymen, in front of the congregation and (if there is one) in the chancel. There it effectively distracts the attention of the worshipper from the visible symbols of Word and sacrament, and interrupts the relation between the congregation and the centre of the worshipping activity in progress. A choir placed in this way within sight of the congregation is aesthetically as well as theologically completely out of place.

The people of God does not gather around a group of singers, however highly trained. It gathers around the places where the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered. Furthermore, the choir is a part of the congregation, and neither placing nor fancy dress should be allowed to suggest otherwise. The choir is there to lead the congregation in worship, not to be gazed at as in a theatre or listened to as in a concert hall. Then let the choir occupy its proper place, *behind* the congregation. There is no reason why it should not be literally a part of the congregation, on the same level; although practical considerations suggest that a separate choir gallery at the liturgical west end of the building is convenient. There the choir members can be closely related to the organist and choir master, since this is where the organ console, and probably also the pipes, should be placed. And there arms can be waved if they have to be, and music shuffled and dropped, with a minimum of distraction.⁷

We cannot leave the theological and liturgical principle of church building without mentioning the very important issue of seating the congregation. If the people of God "gather" for worship, what is the most natural and fitting way of providing for this? Almost certainly the worst possible way is the one with which we are all familiar. Rows of fixed pews extending from one end to the other of a rectangular room isolate most of the worshippers from each other and from the centre of the action, and choke the floor space. Moreover, when the worshippers are few (as in many English, but not American, churches today), the empty pews "take over", and speak more of the absent community than of the one which, however small, *has* assembled for worship.

An important article by Robert Maguire on "Seats in Church",⁸ has reminded us of the all-important principle of allowing for "movement" in worship; movement between celebrant and people, people

and table, people and people, and so on. Whether or not this movement is physical, as sometimes it is,⁹ it is imperative not to erect barriers which stifle it ; and this is exactly the effect of lines of pews.

Most crowds in fact assemble on three sides of the centre of attention, whatever that may be. Those who have spoken in Hyde Park in London, or been among the crowds there, will know this to be true. Again it is impossible to lay down fixed rules, but the natural, radical character of that grouping should be borne in mind when seating a congregation for worship. The members should if possible be placed on three sides of the liturgical centre, and within sight of each other. This is of first importance in the case of the Church's central act of worship and fellowship, the holy communion or Lord's supper. To go no further, the body of Christ in this service gathers for a *meal* around a *table*. For this very reason it is fitting if the congregation can therefore be on three or even four sides of the table itself.

And since pews as such tend to destroy rather than create a sense of togetherness, it is worth considering instead the use of individual seats. These have a double advantage ; they can be adapted freely to the action of the moment, and they can exactly accommodate a small as well as a large number of worshippers. In spite of practical difficulties, we might go one step further, and ask with Robert Maguire whether we need seats in church at all. Without them, a maximum of flexibility and togetherness can be achieved.

The theological and liturgical principle of building for worship, to conclude, maintains that Anglican architecture should harmonize with and express Anglican belief. It should be properly suited to its function, which is to shelter a Christian community with certain convictions about the God who is being worshipped and about the nature of that worship ; a community whose doctrine of Church, Word and sacraments is a Reformed doctrine.

* * * *

(b) *Architectural*

It is obvious that the clear-cut divisions suggested by the names given to these principles for church building, are ultimately impossible to make. Inevitably they overlap, and they should indeed cohere. The first principle we have considered, the theological and liturgical, is fundamental, since it makes the important connection between belief and function and design.

The second principle to be considered, the architectural, is closely related. But here we are more concerned with the over-all shape of the church building, and indeed with its final appearance. If a church is genuinely planned from the centre outwards, its exterior shape will be largely but not entirely determined by its ground plan. And just here comes the temptation, which is all too seldom resisted in contemporary American churches, to choose an exterior shape (such as a fish, or an inverted ship) which in fact "takes over", and in the end forces the ground plan to conform to *it*, rather than the reverse.¹⁰

It should by now be unnecessary to say that gimmicks of this kind should be eschewed. To build in accordance with a predetermined and inflexible design is to begin in the wrong place, and to risk a total

disregard of the real purpose of the building as well as of its context.

This is not to say, however, that the final appearance of the building does not matter. The functional aspect of church architecture is primary, but the aesthetic aspect is (though subordinate) important. Its appearance should attract the person outside to come in ; and it should also encourage the person inside to understand and to worship. No neutral, indeterminate, or ugly building is likely to do either of these things. The line of the building needs to be pleasing, and the colour and kind of materials used in its construction need to be carefully chosen. Dark exteriors in the tropics are as unsuitable as white walls in Manchester.

It should not be forgotten, also, that part of the function of a church building is to be a symbol, and not simply a shelter. As we have seen, a church will always say something to those who look, even if it says the wrong things. In this case appearance cannot be ignored by those who build. The shape of the church building as a whole can indeed, like the liturgy it contains, become an evangelistic medium. And the visual appearance of its structural component parts can also have the same effect. This is true, for example, of the tablets of the Word which are let into the pillars of Coventry Cathedral, and also of the less articulated but still eloquent baptistery windows, designed by John Piper, in the same building.

We have already noticed the importance in Anglican architecture of visibility and audibility. The centre of the people's worship is God Himself in Christ ; but the symbols which form the focus of the liturgical action of worship at any given moment should be clearly seen. In the same way, the person who leads the worship should be clearly heard. These two considerations, of visibility and audibility, will obviously affect not only the interior plan but also the over-all design of the building.

The use of space, finally, belongs to the architectural principle. It is important to allow sufficient clear space, particularly around focal points, for a church to "breathe". To clutter every inch of floor space destroys flexibility and prevents clarity of architectural expression. Like silence in worship and rests in music, properly used space in building, vertical and horizontal, liberates the spirit and sharpens the effect of what is being presented.

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(c) *Artistic*

Again, this principle overlaps with the last, since the artistic content of any building cannot or should not be divorced from its architectural structure. The architect is in fact an artist as well as a builder ; the prominence given to the functional character of churches does not for one moment mean that their aesthetic and artistic aspects can be ignored.

But apart from this general consideration of constructional artistry, there is the question of what may be termed "embellishment". A church building inside and out affords ample scope, as we know from the past, for the consecrated use of artistic skill. Floor design, stained glass, lighting, murals, pictures, sculpture in metal and wood, and the

general use of colour can combine to enhance the significance as well as the beauty of church architecture.

Sometimes, as in the case of the font designed by Alan Boyson in the Church of the Epiphany, Corby, Northamptonshire, the symbolism of a liturgical centre which is already a symbol by itself can be enlarged and articulated by adding colour and design. At other times, as in the case of the Ben Enwonwu sculpture in the Chapel of the Resurrection at Ibadan, an art-form can be used as a further symbol.

Less direct artistry, such as floor design and lighting, can achieve definition and emphasis. The sanctuary area of the church of St. Paul, Bow Common, London, is picked out by a large square lantern in the roof, a corona of rolled steel sections overhead and a change in the floor material from precast flags to white flint bricks. In the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Liverpool the central tower expresses the sanctuary and high altar, which glow in natural light admitted through thick coloured glass set in concrete, as well as in indirect, artificial light. And again, an overhead canopy of light metal in the form of crowns defines the central space.

Examples of artistic decoration, both correctly and incorrectly used, in contemporary as well as ancient church buildings, are endless. Once more we must attempt to discover some guide lines. Not all of course will agree that anything needs to be added to the main shell of the church; some Anglicans will argue that art is a secular and not a sacred activity. That this is a mistaken view cannot be argued here; it must be assumed.

But given the value of consecrated skill of this kind, the strictest possible discipline in its use is demanded. First, art-forms must be integral to the total function and design of a church building. Almost certainly the Christian convictions of an artist, as of an architect, will make a difference to what is produced. In any case, however, artist and architect must work absolutely in harmony, and with a firm eye to the purpose of the building. There is no question of the artist being allowed to run riot in a finished design, in order to "dress it up". Careful planning on the part of both, to see the building whole, is needed from the very beginning.

This means that art-forms must never be "applied" to the design of a church building. Always they must *arise from* that design, in order to express it more adequately. This is obviously true when the liturgical centres of table, pulpit, and font are involved. But it is equally true of the areas in which it is easy and apparently harmless to introduce unrelated and detached ideas and shapes. Stained glass and metal-work, wood and stone, must have a message of their own which is consonant with the message of the total structure. In this sense we are *not* speaking of "decoration"; we are saying that the purpose of art in this context is to focus and express what is already present in the shape and meaning of the building.¹¹

As a result, we may conclude that art in church building has both a functional and symbolic part to play. It must be rigorously subordinated to the essential purpose of the building, and it must always point away from itself to the truth it is artistically expressing. A cross related to a holy table (and if one is used, it should not be *on* the

table, but over or behind it), is not there to speak of artistic imagination, but of the risen Christ. A mural or a tapestry is not there to fill up empty wall-space or to cause us to wonder how it was executed, but to reveal a little more of the meaning of its subject. This may appear to be giving to art an unacceptably relative value. Art always has a life and value of its own, needless to say. But in the context of church architecture it is only by dying that it can live; only by harmonizing with a voice that is ultimately greater than its own (since a church is built to house and symbolize spiritual values) that it can speak at all. Applied irrelevantly, art-forms become like sweet bells jangled, out of tune, meaningless and harsh.¹³

One final word about art in church buildings. If we are to capture the tension between poverty and richness, between servanthood and majesty, that belongs as we have seen to the dimension of Christian worship, we need to be very careful not only about the extent of the artistry and symbols employed, but also about their materials. Why use imported marble when local wood not only costs less but says more? And this holds true for the main building materials, as well as for interior and exterior embellishments.

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(d) *Sociological*

We come to our last main principle, which again cannot be detached from the others we have considered. We have thought of the influence which should be exerted on the over-all shape as well as the interior plan of Anglican church buildings by the theological and liturgical, architectural and artistic principles. We have also noticed the importance of the total concept of any church building. It must say one thing, not conflicting things, even if it says this in different ways. Individual structural and artistic features must be integrated to the function and symbolism of the whole building, and not cause its fragmentation.

But there is one further influence on the design of any church building which must be taken into account, and that is its social context. When we earlier studied the biblical meaning of worship, we say that amongst other things a double rhythm is involved; a movement which is outwards as well as inwards. And again it must be insisted that we do not and cannot build our churches in a vacuum. They must be a unity as buildings; but they must also be related to the world around. Those who worship inside them must be prepared to go back into the society in which they exist. Those who pass by outside them must be addressed, and even attracted inside.

It is in this respect that the new Emmanuel Church at Dulwich, London, is so successful. The social and physical environment of this building has moulded its shape in a unique way; and in turn the church itself has been carefully related to its surrounding features; the footpath and youth centre, for example, are incorporated into the total design in a way that draws together the inside and outside of the church, both the community within and the wider community beyond.

The sociological principle of Anglican as well as other church architecture, therefore is a plea for relevance. We need to ask of any new

church building for what community it is being designed, and what it will say to those who do *not* enter it as well as those who do. We cannot build in ignorance of the ethnic, historical, social, and even temperamental characteristics of that community, or in contradiction to them. And when a site is chosen for a new church building, or exists already, the physical and geographical context must also and obviously be carefully considered—as it has been to such effect in the case of the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral.

A church building should never, in fact, be a detached edifice, standing in splendid isolation from its surroundings. If possible it should be related (as it often is in America, and as it is in the Church of the Redeemer, Baltimore) to a complex of buildings, such as offices, halls, kitchens, and classrooms, of which it is one part. In this way it can testify to a Christian concern for the whole man, body and mind as well as spirit. And certainly, as we have suggested, it should be related to its general social context; although this does not mean of course that there should be *no* difference between a church building and any other building in the area. A church, after all, is not a cinema or a town hall or anything else.

One way of stating the connection between a church building and its environment, both physical and human, is by the use of local materials and local craftsmanship. This has happened in All Saints' Cathedral, Onitsha, Nigeria, where the holy table, for example, has been made and carved locally at Awka. It has also happened to a remarkable extent in the new church of St. Michael, Hamworthy, Dorset, England. The reredos of this church, for example, depicting Michael and the dragon and made in faience, has been constructed and given by Poole Pottery. Several carvings in oak on the holy table and pulpit were executed by a woodwork master at the local Secondary Modern School. Kneelers in the church were made from local materials by the young wives' group, and the entrance doors were given and carved by members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, who have a camp in the parish.

The use of local materials and talent in church building need not be confined to furnishings and interior decoration alone. All the insights and skills of any community, professional and otherwise, can be drawn upon for the design and construction of the whole building. In this case, however, the over-all plan must still remain in the hands of someone who will make sure that the final design does not disintegrate or become incoherent.

We wish to add two footnotes. First, the Anglican communion today is, as we know, world-wide and theologically comprehensive. It is recognized that one result of this fact will be disagreement about the actual content of Anglican doctrine. For this reason our starting-point has been the Bible itself, and the insights of the Reformation enshrined in the English Prayer Book. These surely are or should be the basis of Anglican belief and worship anywhere in the Anglican communion. And *if* they are, they should then affect the fundamental way in which we as Anglicans build for worship.

Second, we must never lose sight of the fact that *any* church building, Anglican or otherwise, is intended above all to be the house of God for the people of God; and there is a close identity between the two.

It is no accident that in the New Testament, temple, building, and house can refer both to the people of God *and* to the local expression of that spiritual community. Our churches should accordingly be living, not static, symbols. They are built to accommodate a worshipping community which is itself alive with the life of God in all His fulness, creating, redeeming, and sanctifying, that God who is Lord, and who alone is worthy to be worshipped.

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We have considered the subject of building for worship in the past and in the present. We have also tried to formulate some principles which should underlie church building at any time. What about the future? What will the churches of tomorrow look like?

If the principles which have been suggested are taken with any seriousness at all, one conclusion is that predictions of this kind become impossible to make. Indeed, to imagine that there is any predictable "shape" to church buildings, past, present, *or* future, is to fall into the common error of stereotyping church design without regard to its purpose or setting. This, as we have seen, is a serious misunderstanding of what we are doing when we build churches.

But while it is both misguided and impossible to attempt to visualize the shape of tomorrow's church buildings, there is one respect in which it is not altogether out of place to have an eye to the future. We are speaking and building now as Anglicans; and indeed this is right, since we can do no other. But who knows the future of Anglicanism? In India Anglicanism has already died to live; in Nigeria this would also have happened by now but for a number of delaying factors. In England conversations are afoot on all hands, and the target date for reunion of 1980 is being bandied around.

This is not the place to discuss the merits and demerits of ecumenical action, or to underline its attendant difficulties. But the possibility of some measure of reunion, however remote, should surely be taken into account if the church buildings we put up are intended to stand—as presumably they will be—for more than even ten years or so. Reunion will imply, amongst other things, a bringing together of the liturgical and architectural as well as the theological insights of different traditions. It seems bad stewardship to design Anglican churches today which will be unable to accommodate the worship of other traditions tomorrow.

However, this is not a plea for neutrality of design. It is easy to be so concerned to say everything that we end by saying nothing at all. But it *is* a further plea for flexibility. If we build churches with careful attention to their main function of housing a worshipping community, we shall in any case provide for congregational "movement", an imaginative use of space and the possibility of gathering the people around more than one liturgical centre. Here are the ingredients for a genuinely flexible church design, which will be fitted and can be adapted for use by other traditions than the strictly Anglican. The Chapel of the Resurrection at Ibadan is a good example of building with this kind of sensitivity to denominational inter-change.

It is important, then, to be genuinely contemporary in the design of

church buildings. But what does this mean? It certainly does not mean that we totally disregard the architectural heritage of the past, which represents failure as well as positive achievement. But nor does it mean that we remain fettered to the past. The Christian Church has all too often looked back rather than forward. The early Christians were above all people on the move, those who eagerly looked forward to the future hope of resurrection and life in Christ at the End. Today the tendency is to look *back*, both theologically and architecturally, to past glories, instead of facing the demands of the present. So we build churches in a style that recalls the past; and we do so for sentimental not functional reasons, simply because this gives us the illusion of security and permanence.

This is not the debt we owe to the past. We are to progress, not regress. But part of our progression will be a willingness to learn from the past, from its mistakes as well as its successes, as we seek to design for the present. This is a very different matter, let it be said, from taking over the architectural legacy of a former age and dressing it up to look "contemporary". Yet at least two Anglican cathedrals built in this century demonstrate precisely this mistake to perfection.

It is utterly astonishing that we should build cathedrals for the twentieth century in a style that belongs to the Middle Ages.¹³ Guildford Cathedral, England, and Grace Cathedral, San Francisco,¹⁴ share the distinction in our day of being major architectural disasters and tragically missed opportunities. Both perpetuate the Gothic "style", and both are essentially medieval in their separation of nave and chancel. No amount of modern embellishment can disguise this fact, although in both cases the attempt is bravely made.

The design of Coventry Cathedral, England, for all its impressively contemporary elements, can be criticized for exactly the same reason. This cathedral has deservedly attracted a great deal of attention since it was built, and it certainly represents an attempt to relate the shape of a church building to its function and environment. Yet its ground-plan remains fundamentally "traditional"; the over-all shape is a rectangle with the sanctuary area at one extreme end, and the choir in the chancel separating the sanctuary from the nave. The holy table as a result has a *visual* rather than a functional role to play in the total design. It is there to be looked at rather than gathered round; and this is emphasized by its astonishing length (over twenty feet), and by the overpowering backdrop of Graham Sutherland's tapestry of Christ in glory against which it is set.

One of the entries in the competition for the design of the new Coventry Cathedral, by Alison and Peter Smithson, was not even commended by the judges. It represents, however, a plan which is by contrast eminently functional and lucidly simple. Basically the lay-out is diamond-shaped, with the main axis of the building running between opposite corners. Since the holy table is near one of the corners, the congregation is able to gather on three sides of it.¹⁵ This design was rejected in favour of two which do not begin to come to terms with what Cathedral building is all about, and the winning design, by Sir Basil Spence, which is hampered by its self-imposed limitations.¹⁶

What, then, is a genuinely contemporary design? It is not a matter of returning to the past, even though we can learn from there. Nor, secondly, is it a matter of building *merely* for the present. Church building will be and must be intimately related to the needs and surroundings of the moment. But it cannot speak of those alone. We should think, and think radically, each time we build, in the light of our contemporary situation. None the less, a church building will speak of the things of eternity as well, and point us not only beyond the present but also beyond time itself. Any attempt to be "modern" for its own sake, without regard to the deeper dimensions of building for the worship of God, is doomed quickly to become meaningless and dated. A "contemporary style" relentlessly pursued as an end in itself can become as traditional as the so-called "medieval style".

Let us remember that "architecture for churches is a matter of gospel",¹ and that the faithful proclamation of the Gospel of salvation has its architectural counterpart. Ours is a reformed worship; very well then, let us have a reformed architecture in which it can be properly housed and expressed.

¹ D. J. Bruggink and C. H. Droppers: *Christ and Architecture* (Grand Rapids, 1965), p. 445.

² P. Hammond: *Liturgy and Architecture* (London, 1960), p. 28.

³ J. A. Whyte: "The Theological Basis of Church Architecture", in P. Hammond (ed.): *Towards a Church Architecture* (London, 1962), p. 188.

⁴ Since we meet for a meal and not a sacrifice, the holy table should be a table, simple, elegant, and uncluttered. Nothing need be placed on it, flowers least of all, until the time of holy communion.

⁵ Sometimes pulpit and lectern are combined. In any case, let us move away from the ponderous brass eagle.

⁶ Or desks, if more than one is required.

⁷ See the excellent and timely chapter on "Choirolatry" in D. J. Bruggink and C. H. Droppers: *op. cit.*, pp. 387ff.

⁸ R. Maguire: "Seats in Church", in *Churchbuilding* 12 (April, 1964), pp. 18-22.

⁹ At one point in the communion liturgy of the East Harlem Protestant Parish, New York, during the "fellowship hymn", the members of the congregation walk around the church greeting one another.

¹⁰ The Chapel of the Resurrection at Ibadan captures the biblical "tent" motif in its over-all shape; but this arises from its functional design and is secondary to it.

¹¹ A good example of this principle applied to details is provided by the Reformed Christuskerche, Düren, Germany. The wooden handles on the glass doors of the main entrance are carved to represent the four evangelists; and this is a reminder of Scripture's place in leading us to Christ, and so to fellowship with the members of His body.

¹² The colour and design of stained glass can most easily produce discord of this kind, particularly when sentimental "memorial" windows are added to an extant church building without regard to its over-all significance.

¹³ Perhaps it is more astonishing that we should build cathedrals in the twentieth century at all.

¹⁴ For an illustrated description of Grace Cathedral, see A. Britton: "At the Crossroads of the World", in *Anglican World* 5.1 (Epiphany/Lent, 1965), pp. 30-34.

¹⁵ For a full description, with drawings, see *Churchbuilding* 8 (January, 1963), pp. 2ff. The over-all exterior shape of the building was to have been that of the now familiar hyperbolic paraboloid.

¹⁶ The architect, however, was himself limited by the requirements of the competition.

¹⁷ D. J. Bruggink and C. H. Droppers: *op. cit.*, p.1.