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Murray Rae

There is an obvious convergence, in the spaces used for Christian worship, between the practice of architecture and the concerns of <u>Christian theology</u>. Even the most utilitarian of spaces – an old warehouse, a community hall, a converted office building – when adapted for use in Christian worship, require decisions that involve theological judgement. What prominence is given to the worship band, the preacher's lectern, a communion table? How are the seats arranged? Does the arrangement suit an audience of spectators or a gathered community entering into fellowship with one another and with God? Are any symbols of the <u>faith</u> to be included – a cross, a font, a decorative banner? The way spaces are configured for worship reveal theological judgements, often made unwittingly. At the other extreme from the converted warehouse, almost every detail of the Gothic cathedral – the cruciform plan, the use of light, the statuary, the representation of the Trinity in trifoils and of the four evangelists in quatrafoils, and so on – reveals design decisions that are explicitly theological. However elaborate or simple the architecture, whether purpose-built for Christian use or not, the spaces used for Christian worship speak of theological meanings and values.

The convergence between architecture and theology extends well beyond buildings used for worship, however. Everything that we humans build is a response, whether acknowledged or not, to God's cultural mandate to fill the Earth and subdue it. Everything we build prompts the question: how are we to inhabit wisely the world that God has made?

This article examines first the biblical mandate to inhabit the Earth and considers the role of architecture in responding to that mandate. It then explores the architecture of the <u>temple</u>, followed by a consideration of how architecture dedicated to worship has evolved within the Christian tradition. The biblical injunction to seek the welfare of the city is then considered, alongside the role that architecture and urban design play in the wellbeing of a city's inhabitants. Finally it examines the ways in which architecture might prompt fresh reflection and offer new insight into the subject matter of Christian theology.

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1 Scripture

Architecture does not appear, at first glance, to be a theme that receives much attention in the writings of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament. Exceptions to the general impression exist, in the detailed specifications given in 1 Kings 6 and 1 Chronicles 28 for the building of Solomon's temple, in Ezekiel's vision of a new temple in Ezekiel 40–44, and in the vision of a new Jerusalem offered by John of Patmos in Revelation 21. Yet, beyond these prominent instances of biblical concern with architectural endeavour, we find numerous indications in scripture of the importance of architecture for the development of human culture, and indeed as an expression of theological conviction.

The first reference to human architectural endeavour appears in Genesis 4, but it is not an auspicious beginning. After murdering his brother, the fugitive Cain builds a city 'away from the presence of the Lord' (Gen 4:16). Jacques Ellul sees this city building as an act of defiance – the substitution of God's Eden with a dwelling place of Cain's own making (Ellul 1970: 5). Accordingly, this city offers no security or peace. More killing follows among the descendants of Cain (Gen 4:23). The city is marked by bloodshed and by alienation from God. J. W. Rogerson and John Vincent observe that 'this founding story in Genesis exposes the dark side of the city, the city as the place where inhumanity can use the resources of the city for evil not for good' (Rogerson and Vincent 2009: 22). The second instance of building is similarly fraught. It is the story of the city and the tower of Babel, first referenced in Gen 10:10 and then described in more detail in chapter 11. Babel was constructed so that its builders might 'make a name for themselves', and its centrepiece was 'a tower with its top in the heavens' (Gen 11:4). This architecture is an expression of human pretence which God sees fit to curtail (Gen 11:8). Ellul reads the story of Babel as a further indication that no good can come from human city building: 'Babylon, Venice, Paris, New York – they are all the same city, only one Babel always reappearing' (Ellul 1970: 21). Ellul gathers further biblical evidence in favour of this assessment and concludes that the only city in which the purposes of God may be fulfilled is the heavenly city, built by God (Ellul 1970: 6). Against this judgement we might consider the mandate given by God to the people of Israel in exile, in Babylon no less: 'Thus says the Lord [...] seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare' (Jer 29:7). The divine mandate includes the specific instruction 'to build houses and live in them' (Jer 29:5). City building may be seen here as an act of obedience rather than of defiance. The purposes of God are to be pursued here and now within the earthly city, rather than merely hoped for in a city yet to come.

A similar (if much more modest) example of architectural endeavour undertaken in faithful response to divine instruction occurs in the practice Abraham establishes of building altars to the Lord. These altars mark places of divine encounter, first at Schechem (Gen 12:7), then at Bethel (Gen 12:8), by the oaks of Mamre at Hebron (Gen 13:18), and at Mt Moriah

(Gen 22:9). While the altars built at Schechem, at Bethel, and by the oaks of Mamre are built in grateful response to the Lord's guidance and provision, the altar at Mt Moriah was built in response to the fearful command to sacrifice Isaac, the child of promise, Abraham's beloved son. Abraham and his family had set out upon a journey, uncertain of where it would lead and with much to learn of the God whose command they sought to obey. The altars that Abraham builds mark in the landscape the places of divine encounter, but they function also as coordinates of an emerging theological paradigm. Religious architecture has served this purpose throughout human history. Beyond the pragmatic concern to provide places for gathering that shelter people from the elements and carve out space for the ritual celebration of faith, religious architecture serves also as a material expression of particular theological convictions.

It is worth pausing to note, however, that already in these opening chapters of Genesis we are alerted – through the contrast between Abraham's altars and the cities of Enoch and Babel – to the possibility of architecture serving both evil purposes and good. This is a feature of human culture in general, of course. In architecture, as in all human endeavour, our human industry, our creativity, and our art can conform more or less well to the good purposes of God. Architecture can be undertaken as an act of defiance and pretence or as an act of obedience and praise. Images of the good and the evil city appear frequently in scripture, sometimes in close proximity. The prophet Micah, for instance, denounces Jerusalem on account of the evil and injustice that occurs within its bounds, and warns that the city 'shall become a heap of ruins' (Mic 3:12). The architectural fabric of the city, destined to lie in ruins, becomes an emblem of Israel's disobedience. Yet the book of Micah immediately proceeds to offer a vision of Jerusalem restored, a place in which the word of the Lord shall be heard once more and to which the nations of the world will stream, having beaten their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks (Mic 4:1–4). This may be an eschatological vision, to be realized in days yet to come (Mic 4:1a), but it expresses the hope that the city may become after all a place in which the purposes of God are fulfilled.

While it can be easily recognized, as noted above, that religious architecture gives expression to particular theological convictions, so too can architectural endeavour more generally. When Nehemiah set out to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (which had lain in ruins for 140 years since their destruction in 587 BCE), he and those he enlisted to assist him set to work, not on a religious building as such, but certainly as an act of religious devotion – as penance for Israel's sins of the past and as a necessary step in the regeneration of Israel's allegiance to the Torah. Once the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the priest Ezra was called upon to bring the book of the law of Moses and to read to the assembled crowd who had gathered in the square before the Water Gate (Neh

8:1–3). The rebuilding of the walls was a powerful architectural symbol of Israel's call to faithfulness and of the divine promise to 'establish his name' in Jerusalem (Neh 1:8–9).

2 The temple

The biblical writings record details of three successive temples built on the same site in Jerusalem, those of Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod. Biblical texts, especially 1 Kings 5–8 and 2 Chronicles 2–7, provide a good deal of detail about the architecture and decoration of the Solomonic temple, but architectural description of the second temple – built after the return from exile – is rather meagre. Herod's temple, which involved an elaborate remodelling of the second temple, is the temple referred to in the New Testament, but while numerous features of the building are referred to there is nothing comparable to the detailed architectural specification of Solomon's temple found in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. What is known about the architecture of Herod's temple comes largely from extra-biblical witnesses such as Josephus, and from some parts of the building that remained after its destruction in 70 CE. Despite some variation in the scale and grandeur of the three temples, their purpose, symbolism, and basic ground plan appear to have been consistently maintained. Some general claims may be made therefore that apply to all three temples.

Within the city of Jerusalem the temple stood as the paramount expression for Israel of what had earlier been embodied in the simple altars built by Abraham. The temple was a place of divine encounter, of ritual sacrifice, and of worship. It was the most substantial architectural marker in the landscape of the covenant relationship into which Israel had been called. As David Stubbs points out, the temple in Jewish understanding was multivalent. It was the dwelling place of God, the intersection of <u>heaven</u> and Earth, the place where the relationship between humanity and God was set right, a conduit for the reign of God throughout <u>creation</u>, a reminder of the past, the garden of Eden, and a sign of that future day when God's reign would be fully realized throughout the Earth (Stubbs 2020: 57–58). It was also understood as the place from which creation sprang forth and as a microcosm of the whole created order. As Jon Levenson reports, however, this cosmic symbolism, which was by no means unique to Israel, is 'more developed in rabbinic literature than in the Hebrew Bible' (Levenson 1985: 120).

2.1 The dwelling place of God

The idea that God dwells in the temple has its origins in Yahweh's instruction given to Moses: 'Tell the Israelites to make me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them' (see Exod 25:1–9). Although the temple was understood to be the dwelling place of God, this did not involve the naive belief that God was physically located there or confined by the temple walls. Solomon dispels such a misconception: 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that

I have built!' (1 Kgs 8:27). Accordingly, Solomon's temple, in contrast with other temples of the Ancient Near East, contained no anthropomorphic representation of the deity. To speak of the temple as the dwelling place of God, therefore, was to acknowledge and gladly receive God's promise to associate himself with the temple, to 'put his name there' (Gen 12:5; 1 Kgs 8:19–20). Solomon's temple was therefore built with extraordinary attention to detail, precisely in order to reflect appropriately the high purpose to which it was dedicated. While the people of Israel readily acknowledged that the whole Earth is full of the glory of God (Isa 6:3), the architecture of the temple provided a tangible representation of that divine glory and a place where the covenant relationship that God had established with Israel could be acknowledged and enacted.

2.2 The meeting of heaven and Earth and centre of creation

While there is no explicit explanation of the symbolism accompanying the detailed specification of the elements of Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 6–7 and 1 Chronicles 28–29, it is widely accepted that the temple was regarded as the centre of creation and a microcosm of the whole heaven and Earth. The carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers indicate the flourishing of creation and the coming together of heaven and Earth. The temple was also likened to the garden of Eden; it was a representation of paradise where God dwells with his people (Stubbs 2020: 69–71). Elizabeth Bloch-Smith proposes that 'the sacred tree was represented in the Solomonic Temple to recreate the Garden of Eden' (Bloch-Smith 2002: 83–94, 87). The prevalence of cosmic symbolism is further emphasized by the Psalmist, who declares that the Lord 'built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the Earth, which he has founded forever' (Ps 78:69). According to Josephus, the veil in the second temple that separated the holy place from the holy of holies was 'like an image of the universe […] The woven cloth was embroidered with the spectacle of the whole heaven' (Stubbs 2020: 63). In the Psalms and in rabbinic literature the temple is regarded as the source from which the fountain of life flows, and the place at which light was created. (Levenson 1985; Beale 2004: ch. 2).

The cosmic significance of the temple is reflected in John's vision of the new heavens and the new Earth found in Revelation 21–22. Again the promise is heard that God will dwell with his people in a new Jerusalem from which the water of life will spring forth. The glory of the Lord will be seen there and the lamp of the new Jerusalem will be Christ the Lamb. Yet according to John's vision, there will be no need of a temple in the city because the function served by the temple will be extended to the whole of creation. The architecture of the temple once built with human hands is replaced by a city that descends from heaven and becomes in its entirety the dwelling place of God and the theatre of divine glory.

2.3 Liturgical space

Alongside the rich theological symbolism of the temple architecture, the building also provided a place in which particular things could happen, above all the ritual sacrifices of thanksgiving and atonement. Solomon's temple and those that followed it became the centre of Israel's <u>liturgical</u> life. The temple was the place where the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people was acknowledged and celebrated and where, in light of humanity's unfaithfulness, the 'drama of rehabilitation' (Brueggemann 1997: 661) was enacted. It was the place, Walter Brueggemann explains, where 'all of life – cosmic, political, personal – was brought under the rule of Yahweh' (1997: 161). The temple architecture provided the stage for this drama to be enacted, with all its symbolic features, and in its graduated arrangement of space from the outer court of the Gentiles through the succession of inner courts for Israelite women, for Israelite men, for the priests, and to the holy of holies. The specifications for the construction of the temple found in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles, like those for the tabernacle in Exodus 25–28, describe an architecture quite unlike that which the people would encounter in their homes or in other mundane buildings. This is a space made ready for the presence of Yahweh; it engenders reverence and awe; it speaks of the holiness of God; and it reminds Israel of God's <u>sovereign</u> rule over all things.

2.4 Visions of a new architecture

The Bible in both Testaments looks forward to a day when the covenant relationship will be realized in full. In that day God will dwell with his people, his glory will shine throughout the Earth, and his people will defile his name no more. It is remarkable that two of the most vivid expressions in scripture of that eschatological hope involve detailed descriptions of a divinely ordained architecture. The first is Ezekiel's vision of a new temple (Ezek 40–44), and the second is John of Patmos' vision of a new Jerusalem descending from the heavens (Rev 21:1–22:7). After a lengthy specification of the form and proportions of a new temple delivered to him in a vision, Ezekiel is brought to the east gate of the temple. 'And there', Ezekiel says,

> the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory […] I heard someone speaking to me out of the temple. He said to me: Mortal this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will reside among the people of Israel forever. The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name. (Ezek 43:1, 7)

Similarly in Revelation, a city whose architectural features are precisely specified is declared to be the place where God will dwell with his people.

> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his

> peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' (Rev 21:2–4)

We need not examine here the specifications of the temple or the city portrayed in these biblical visions, but it is salutary to note in each case the mediation of divine presence and glory through architecture. The covenant relationality between God and his people is not realized through abstract metaphysical propositions or mediated through some otherworldly spiritual experience. Covenant relationality between God and humanity *takes place*; it requires space (and time) in which to unfold and grow and to be realized in full. We are not speaking here of utopia, which means 'no place', but of the concrete realization of God's promise to dwell with his people in the very place created for them to be. The temple in Ezekiel's vision and the holy city in Revelation are architectural expressions of the realization of that promise. We might say that religious architecture in our own time – temples, synagogues, and churches – are responses to that promise. They are places in which the promise is received, renewed, and celebrated, and where its full realization is anticipated through the liturgy of the people.

3 Church architecture

Church buildings serve, in the first instance, the practical function of providing a place for the gathering of Christians to worship God. For the first three centuries of Christian history, however, private homes – sometimes adapted for the purpose, as in the famous third century example excavated in Dura Europos – fulfilled this practical need. Some examples of purpose-built churches from the third century have been discovered, but it was not until the fourth century, when the Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity, that substantial new buildings began to be constructed (or large secular buildings adapted) to serve the liturgical needs of rapidly growing Christian communities.

3.1 Building form

The building type most readily adopted for ecclesiastical architecture was the basilica, or royal assembly hall. These buildings were rectangular in form, with a large central aisle and an apse which gave prominence to and provided a distinct space from which the king or other speakers could address the gathered crowd. When adapted for Christian use, the apse was commonly located at one end of the basilica and provided a location for the altar, which was the centre of liturgical attention. The aisle facilitated the development of processional liturgies whose pageantry and scale derived from the ceremonies of the imperial court, befitting the dignity and splendour of a church which in the fourth century became the religion of the state (Mauck 2002a: 18–21, 19). The royal associations of the basilica were readily transferred to Christ the King, yet the addition of side apses creating a cruciform plan provided an architectural reminder that the kingly rule of Christ

passes through the cross. The transept and the crossing formed by the side apses served also, perhaps inadvertently to begin with, to separate the main apse from the nave and so distance the laity from the altar and from the priest celebrating the Eucharist. Other forces no doubt contributed as well, but the architectural innovation at least supported and possibly encouraged the development of a hierarchical ordering of the ecclesial community. Further architectural developments, especially the addition of altar rails, then rood screens, elevated apses, and choirs, accentuated the hierarchical organisation of the church's life and liturgy.

These architectural innovations had a further consequence: the form of ecclesial architecture became more and more aligned with the temple form, with its graduated configuration of spaces culminating in a holy of holies that no lay person was permitted to enter (Turner 1979). This temple arrangement became the dominant form of church architecture in the West for well over a thousand years, being preserved through a succession of architectural styles from the Romanesque through Gothic and into the neoclassical churches of the Renaissance.

The development of the Gothic style owes much to Abbot Suger who, in the twelfth century, rebuilt the Abbey Church of St Denis in France. Suger's vision for the church, as became typical of Gothic church architecture, was that the worshipper entering the church should gain a glimpse of heaven. Suger described the renovated choir, completed in 1144, as an embodiment of 'the mystical vision of harmony that divine reason has established throughout the cosmos' (cited in von Simson 1988: 144). The realization of that vision involved bringing together a number of architectural innovations, especially the flying buttress, ribbed vault, and Gothic arch, all of which when used in combination made easier the Gothic aspiration to fill church buildings with light. The symbolism of light became, and has remained, a staple of church architecture. It is notable, however, that until the latter half of the twentieth century light was admitted to church buildings well above the eye-line of those who gathered within. Light from a transcendent source flooded into the buildings, but it was not thought necessary or appropriate for worshippers to look to the outside world. The church was a place of sanctuary, a place in which one set aside the cares of the world and gave one's attention wholly to the presence of God. The Abbey Church of St Denis quickly inspired widespread use of the new architectural style, first in France and then further afield.

The Gothic style was predominant in new church architecture through much of Europe until the reclamation of classical form took hold during the Renaissance. The Florentine architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and architectural theorist Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) were pioneers of the classical revival. They applied their convictions about the attainment of beauty and harmony in architecture through the utilization of strict mathematical proportions to many church projects, including, in Brunelleschi's case, the

church of San Spirito in Florence. This is a much purer example of classical style than his celebrated Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, also in Florence, which draws upon both Gothic and classical traditions of building. While better known as an architectural theorist, Alberti was also responsible for the design of a number of churches, the most impressive of which are the churches of San Sebastiano and Sant' Andrea, both in Mantua. Alberti believed that the secrets of harmony and beauty were to be discerned through the study of nature. Architecture ought to follow nature, not through imitation of its organic forms but rather of its proportions, and through the the arrangement of all parts of a building in harmony with one another. A generation after Alberti, Donato Bramante (1444–1514) carried forward the reclamation of the classical orders of architecture. He entered the service of Pope Julius II and began to implement through architecture the Pope's vision of a Holy Roman Empire. Numerous projects were undertaken throughout the city of Rome, not least of which was the building of the new Basilica of St Peters to a plan conceived by Bramante and then brought to fulfilment by Michelangelo.

Bramante's strikingly innovative Tempietto, built on the traditional site of St Peter's martyrdom, became the inspiration for the dome of St Paul's Cathedral in London, built at the turn of the eighteenth century by Sir Christopher Wren. John Summerson writes that 'Wren's dome is no mere enlargement of Bramante but an imaginative extension – just as Bramante was an extension of the antique' (Summerson 1980: 42). Beneath the dome of St Peter's in Rome sits the altar at which is celebrated the Mass, the centrepiece of Roman Catholic liturgy. Beneath the dome of St Paul's in London, however, Wren placed the pulpit and lectern, thus reflecting the Protestant emphasis on the preaching of the Word. It was an emphasis that Wren himself endorsed. He wrote:

> The Romanists, indeed, may build larger Churches, it is enough if they hear the murmur of the Mass, and see the Elevation of the Host, but ours are to be fitted for Auditories. I can hardly think it practicable to make a single Room so capacious, with Pews and Galleries, as to hold above 2000 Persons, and all to hear the Service, and both to hear distinctly, and see the Preacher. (cited in Whinney 1971: 48)

That commitment to the audibility of the preacher was a factor no doubt in Wren proposing a Greek cross for the plan of St Paul's, only to be overruled by the ecclesiastical authorities who insisted on a Latin cross, the better to support liturgical processions down the elongated nave. Wren had his way, however, in favouring a square plan in many of his other churches. A further note of interest in Wren's specifications for church design is that: 'A Church should not be fill'd with pews, but that the Poor may have enough room to stand and sit in Alleys, for to them equally is the Gospel to be preach'd' (cited in Webster 2017: 153).

Examples of the classical style in church architecture can be found throughout London, and from there the classical style found its way to the 'new world', to the United States,

Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. The orders of classical architecture, the Doric, the Ionic, and the Corinthian, reflected (so it was believed) the order of the cosmos and so indeed the order bestowed upon the cosmos by God. Wren's influence upon ecclesiastical architecture in England remained strong through to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when a massive building programme was undertaken by the Church of England. The late-Georgian style of the era adhered to the principles of the classical form. Soon afterward, however, the Ecclesiologists of the Victorian era subjected these late-Georgian churches to withering criticism. The Ecclesiologists 'despised the late-Georgians' "rational religion", their bland functional services and the "preaching box" churches built to contain them' (Webster 2017: 147).

The Ecclesiologists proposed instead that the Gothic style was the appropriate architecture for church buildings, thus giving considerable impetus to the Gothic revival of the nineteenth century. John Cragg, an industrialist much involved in the building of churches, expressed the renewed enthusiasm for Gothic style in a pamphlet published in 1814. Webster paraphrases the argument thus: 'However much an observer "might approve of Grecian architecture for purposes of social life", Gothic architecture produces "a frame of mind that fits him for prayer and contemplation"' (Webster 2017: 173). This measured estimation of the relative merits of Classical and Gothic style contrasts markedly with the impassioned rhetoric of Augustus Pugin, who despised the use of 'pagan' architecture for the building of churches and, in a treatise titled *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* published in 1843, railed against the 'gigantic piles of unmeaning masonry' evident in Classical architecture (Pugin 1843: 11). Two years earlier Pugin had published *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, in which he defended the view that the 'pointed' or Gothic style was the only properly Christian architecture. Key among the principles Pugin describes is the principle of propriety, according to which 'the external and internal appearance of an edifice should be illustrative of, and in accordance with, the purpose for which it is destined' (Pugin 1853: 35–36). The Gothic style developed in Christian Europe honours this principle, Pugin contended, far more judiciously than the 'pagan' architecture of ancient Greece and Rome.

Pugin, an adult convert to Catholicism from the Presbyterianism of his upbringing, translated his convictions into architectural form through the building and renovation of many churches, both Catholic and Anglican, throughout England, and further afield in Ireland and Australia. Pugin championed the return of images and holy symbols in churches, noting that their veneration as idols so feared by the Reformers had no place in true Catholic doctrine. 'The use and intention of sacred images', he wrote, 'is to raise the heart of the spectator from the figure to the reality, and to instruct the faithful in the mysteries of religion by lively representation' (Pugin 1843: 30).

Pugin's protestations against Classical architecture notwithstanding, church builders continued to employ the Classical style as well as the Gothic through the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not only in England but also in the far reaches of the expanding British empire. Churches of both styles generally maintained the distinctive elements of the temple form. The worshipper entering such a church typically negotiates a narrow entrance, reminding them that the way to eternal life passes through a narrow gate (Matt 7:13–14). The right to enter was secured through baptism, a sacrament of initiation that, during the medieval period, was often provided for in a separate building adjacent to a cathedral. The first example of a baptistry, a separate building for the sacrament of baptism, is the Lateran Baptistry, built in 440, adjacent to the church of San Giovani in Rome. The Lateran Baptistry, like many baptismal fonts, is octagonal in form, eight being the number that signifies the first day of a new week and thus the day of resurrection. Other prominent examples of external baptistries appear beside the cathedrals in Florence, in Pisa, and in Canterbury. From around the ninth century external baptistries became less common. Fonts were installed in church porches and then just inside the nave.

The worshipper, then, is baptized as a sign of entry to the church; thereafter the font at the point of entry reminds them of their baptism at every subsequent visit. Later still, in Reformed churches, the font was placed at the front of the church in close proximity to the communion table and the pulpit, both so that the celebration of baptism would be more visible to the congregation and in order to stress the necessary association, in Reformed theology, between the celebration of the sacraments and the preaching of the Word.

Having passed by the font, the worshipper in the elongated temple form of church is then invited to direct their gaze vertically to the heavens, often represented by soaring vaulted ceilings, and horizontally to the distant chancel and to the altar which yet remains out of bounds to the laity. When pews are added to the temple form – a later development – a long narrow aisle is formed which presents the Christian life as a pilgrimage. Worshippers commonly, and perhaps subconsciously, take up a position closer to or further from the altar that accords with their own sense of proximity to or distance from the presence of God. The Christian life is portrayed as a journey with the promise of rest in the presence of God only at the end.

3.2 Architecture in the Orthodox tradition

The basilica form was widely used in the Eastern church, especially following the conversion of Constantine in the early fourth century. From around the sixth century, however, a different style of church architecture emerged. The basic plan form adopted in the East was a square, sometimes extruded slightly on all four sides to form a Greek cross, surmounted by a dome. The dome, later to become prominent in Western church

architecture as well, represented the firmament above, or the heavens. The most elaborate early example of a domed church built in the sixth century was the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, now Istanbul. The interior decoration of domes over the centrepoint of the cross, or of apsidal semidomes, typically depicted the starry heavens, heavenly creatures, or Christ the *pantocrator* sometimes surrounded by saints and martyrs. Chapels in side apses are often included.

Churches of the Orthodox traditions typically maintain the dark interiors that were also common in Western church architecture through the early medieval era. One of the most distinctive points of difference in Eastern churches is the iconostasis, a screen containing <u>icons</u> that traditionally shielded the sanctuary from the view of the congregation, except in the moment in the liturgy when the doors of the iconostasis were opened to reveal the altar at which the Eucharist is celebrated. Parallel to liturgical reforms happening elsewhere, however, there has been a move in recent decades to stress the openness and accessibility of the Eucharistic altar, and so the doors are left open throughout the liturgy, or iconostases are made more transparent.

Although the dome remains one of the most distinctive features of the architecture of the Eastern Church, variations in form reflect the vernacular architecture of different regions, especially in the Middle East. Elsewhere the Byzantine influence remains strong.

3.3 Missiological imperatives

Dwindling attendance at churches in the West during the second half of the twentieth century prompted a change in <u>missiology</u> that was soon followed by adaptations in church architecture. Outreach, service to the world, and opening up the church to the surrounding community became hallmarks of the new missiology, and this is reflected in church architecture which in recent decades has much more commonly provided a strong visual connection – often through the use of floor to ceiling windows – both from the outside in, so as to convey the accessibility of the church, and from the inside out, so as to stress the church's missiological imperative to 'go out into the world'. In a related missiological innovation, the 'narrow gate', typical of church entrances in earlier times, has frequently been replaced by capacious entry foyers that incorporate facilities for gathering and hospitality, and by forecourts offering architectural gestures of welcome. Richard Giles' book *Re-pitching the Tent: Reordering the Church Building for Worship and Mission* (first published in 1996 and revised and expanded in 1999) has become a widely consulted guide in Great Britain and beyond for churches seeking to adapt their church buildings to better accommodate the liturgical and missiological developments of the present age.

3.4 The meeting house

The recent dismantling of the temple form of church architecture is not without precedent. As Harold Turner has pointed out, the other obvious antecedent for Christian church architecture, other than the temples of antiquity, was the Jewish synagogue. The synagogue is not a place for the ritual sacrifices of the temple but a place of gathering to hear the reading of the Torah and its exposition by the rabbis. The scrolls of the Torah were certainly accorded a prominent place architecturally, but equally important was the lectern or reading desk from which the scriptures were expounded. The gathered community of worshippers had to be seated in close proximity to this centre of liturgical action so that they could participate fully in what was going on. This meeting house form has also featured in the history of church architecture, explicitly in the Quaker tradition, but also more broadly in Protestant and especially Reformed churches that give priority to the reading of scripture and the preaching of the Word over the celebration of the sacraments. An altar or communion table may still be the centrepiece of the meeting-house form, but it will be set in much closer proximity to the people. Some hierarchical arrangement of space remains, as is necessary if prominence and visibility are to be accorded to particular elements of the building – the communion table and the pulpit for instance – but the arrangement of space encourages worshippers to gather around table and pulpit rather than being isolated from them by great distance or by screens.

The meeting house form was readily adopted by churches that emerged out of the Protestant Reformation, especially by those that stressed the priesthood of all believers and that sought to flatten hierarchical ecclesial structures. Church architecture followed the newly emergent theological and ecclesiastical convictions. But the meeting house form has also had an impact on Catholic church architecture, especially after the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). The liturgical reforms following Vatican II, picking up on a trend initiated by the liturgical reformers of the early twentieth century (Mauck 2002b: 22), called for more involvement of the laity in the celebration of the Mass. Altars were moved from their remote positions in screened-off chancels to positions in closer proximity to the gathered people, and priests who once celebrated the Mass with their backs to the people now stood behind the repositioned altars and faced the people (for a fuller account of the impact upon church architecture of the liturgical reforms commended by Vatican II, see Hackett 2013). In some cases, as in St Patrick's Basilica in Dunedin, New Zealand, the central aisle leading to a remote chancel and altar has been abandoned in favour of an arrangement that allows worshippers to gather around the altar which has been placed in the midst of the nave (see Fig. 1). This reconfiguration of space creates some tensions architecturally, but makes it easier to recognize that the image of the body of Christ applies not only to the consecrated bread of the sacrament but also to the gathered community. Fellowship with one another, now given architectural support, becomes an important feature of corporate worship.

Figure 1. Photograph of the nave and altar in St Patrick's Basilica, Dunedin, New Zealand.

3.5 The auditorium

Two further forms of church architecture were developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These are the auditoria typically used to house megachurch congregations, and what might be called the village-centre model. The auditoria of contemporary megachurches typically employ very little of the architectural vocabulary developed through the preceding centuries of church architecture. A cross is often the only overt Christian symbol found anywhere in such buildings. Yet the architecture does express and provide support for a particular understanding of the nature of Christian worship. The focus of attention, as is appropriate for an auditorium, is usually the preacher, who is centre stage, sometimes at an elaborate lectern but sometimes without. Prominence is also given to the music group who are often the principal curators of the liturgy.

3.6 The village centre

The village-centre model has emerged in recent-years in response to the missiological imperative for the church to serve the community. The village centre is a gathering place, not just for worship on Sundays but for all manner of activities during the week. Such

buildings include multiple spaces for cafe dining, children's activities, formal meetings, informal conversations, social service functions, social housing, weekend markets, and the like, but they also feature a dedicated space for worship and include in the architecture explicit representations of the Christian story and traditions of faith. Examples can be found in the Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, USA, or in the Oxford Terrace Baptist Church in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The village-centre form of church architecture is not without precedent. For centuries throughout Europe the church often did lie at the centre of urban life, both physically and socially. Churches frequently opened out into a public square in which the communal life of the town or city was concentrated. Although it is a patriarchal cathedral rather than a village church, the Basilica San Marco in Venice offers a good example. The cathedral faces the grand Piazza San Marco which serves the role of a church nave, 'a vast outdoor container', David Mayernik observes, 'for the precious reliquary that is San Marco which was positioned almost like an altar of this outdoor church' (Mayernik 2003: 108). Mayernik further supposes 'that the architecture, as it was being conceived, must have foreseen its role as public stage and auditorium (Mayernik 2003: 100). Albrecht Classen likewise observes that many different religious plays, staged in the public urban realm, 'provided a medium for communicating with the citizens regarding their religious values and morality' (2009: 89). Cafes and shops surround the square, sheltering in its cloisters and spilling out into the square itself. The outdoor 'nave' of San Marco provides a setting for the vibrancy of Venetian political, social, and commercial activity, and so connects the sacramental life of the church with the liturgy of everyday life.

Michael De Montaigne, in his visit to Siena in the mid-sixteenth century, was similarly impressed by that city's Piazza del Campo (see Fig. 2):

> The square in Siena is the most beautiful that is to be seen in any city. Mass is said there every day in public, at an altar in view of all the houses and shops round about, so that the artisans and all these people can hear it without leaving their place and abandoning their work. And when the elevation [of the Eucharistic body of Christ] takes place a trumpet sounds to give notice to all. (de Montaigne 1983: 159)

Figure 2. Photograph of Piazza del Campo.

3.7 Indigenous forms of church architecture

The adaptation of church buildings to changing missiological imperatives is also very evident in the emergence of Indigenous forms of church architecture. In New Zealand, for example, a traditional carved Māori meeting house in the small town of Ōhope, used also for Christian worship, is restyled so that its carvings now tell stories not only of legendary Māori figures of the past but also of biblical characters and themes. This meeting house follows the tradition of representing an ancestor, but the ancestor represented here at Te Maungarongo (the name means the bringer of peace) is Jesus Christ. Thus the carved figure of Christ at the apex of the gable does not bear a weapon, as would traditionally have been the case, but rather a cross (see Fig. 3). Likewise, the carved posts supporting the gable ends, which represent warriors guarding the house, are here the 'warriors' of love and care. This narration through architecture of the Christian story, blended with the stories of the local people, continues throughout the elaborate decoration of the interior.

Figure 3. Photograph of Te Maungarongo Meeting House Ōhope, New Zealand.

The use of Indigenous architectural vocabulary in the design of churches throughout the world reveals the gospel message finding new modes of expression within Indigenous cultures. In a *Missionary Annual Report* of 1900, a letter written by a Rev. Turner describes the construction of the Kanghwa Anglican Church in Korea. Turner writes:

> The building will be Koreans [sic] in style and will be more pleasing to Koreans than a foreign erection. It also has the advantage of being able to stand the heavy rains of our Korean summer, which no foreign building can do for any length of time. Being in Korean style we are enabled to employ native labour so the Koreans take more interest in it and look on it more as their own than if we were putting a building of Gothic style. (cited in Lee 2011: 161)

Nothing suggests the inaptness of Christian faith in a foreign context quite so markedly as a building for Christian worship that is wholly unsuited to local conditions. It is essential too that architectural vocabularies are utilized which are intelligible to the local people. Thus,

in the church at Kanghwa, a gambrel roof typical of Buddhist temples is used, thereby identifying the building as a place of worship. Dragons' heads, traditionally used in Korean architecture to ward off misfortune, adorn the roof structure of the church. Here adapted to Christian use, the twelve dragons represent the twelve apostles who are understood to protect the church (Lee 2011: 188). Jeong-ku Lee describes the further use of local architectural techniques and decorative forms drawn from Buddhist, Confucian, and Shamanistic traditions, all of which, he explains, were deliberately utilized 'in order to give the educated class' to whom the mission in Kanghwa was especially directed, 'a sense of familiarity' (Lee 2011: 196).

Likewise in Nigeria, the Classical, Gothic, and Renaissance styles of church architecture introduced by Catholic missionaries in the nineteenth century have, since Vatican II, given way to Indigenous architectural forms. The Dominican Chapel in Ibadan, designed in the 1970s by Demas Nwoko, 'is based on the traditional West African tent form', while 'the interior materials and symbols are reminiscent of the traditional artistry of the Yoruba and Benin ethnic groups' (Asojo and Asojo 2015: 8). The West African tent form and traditional artistry of the Yoruba people is also used in the *Societas Missionum ad Afros* Church in Ibadan, which was built during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Asojo and Asojo observe that

> [t]he two churches depict an African expression of Catholicism in Nigeria. The building form, spatial organization, interior artwork, priest vestments, decorations, icons, and symbols as well as the Mass translated to the local languages of various Nigerian ethnicities are some recurring examples of how the Catholic Church has adapted to Nigeria (Asojo and Asojo 2015: 16)

In instances such as this, repeated frequently throughout the world, architecture can be a powerful expression of Indigenous theological insight and of the gospel taking root in Indigenous soil.

4 The believer and the community

The examples referred to above, of San Marco in Venice and the Piazza del Campo in Siena becoming open-air naves for the celebration of the Eucharist, illustrate the more broadly applicable point that architecture serves as a stage for the performance of everyday life. In the era that the Piazza San Marco in Venice and the Piazza del Campo in Siena were built, Christian faith provided the narrative and the conceptual framework within which everyday life was lived. That is much less evident now than it once was, particularly in the Western world, and yet much of the architecture supporting the Christian theological narrative remains intact throughout Europe.

4.1 Cityscapes

In the late medieval and Renaissance eras, European city planning was profoundly shaped by explicit theological commitments. Much city building in Europe took place under the conviction that the earthly city should provide a foretaste and anticipation of the heavenly city. The foremost expression of this theological ambition was the city of Rome, redemptively transformed – so it was believed – from its pagan and often brutal past to a holy city. In the mid-fifteenth century, the painter Enguerrand Quarton was commissioned to paint an altarpiece for the church of the Carthusians in Villeneuve-les-Avignon. The commission called for a representation of paradise beneath which should be shown parts of the city of Rome, including such notable architectural features as the church of St Peter, the bridge of Sant' Angelo, part of the walls of Rome, and the Castle Sant' Angelo. From Rome a river was to flow down to the sea, on the other side of which Jerusalem should be depicted. Further afield, various other biblical scenes were to be shown (Holt 1947: 298–302). The ordering of the scene places the city of Rome as the nearest thing on Earth to the heavenly paradise. Pilgrims journeyed to the holy city in order to experience in the *civitas terrena* (earthly city) something of the *civitas dei* (city of God).

Pilgrims who visited the holy city might take as their guide the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, which is described in the English translation of 1889 as 'the standard guidebook of the more learned visitors to Rome from the twelfth to the fifteenth century' (*Mirabilia Urbis Romae* 1889). A later edition of the guidebook, titled *Graphia Aureae Urbis Romae*, identifies the Porta Maggiore as 'one of twelve gates to the city', a claim that was numerically inaccurate but (as Herbert Kessler and Johanna Zacharias explain) which served the theological purpose of identifying Rome with the heavenly Jerusalem, to which, according to Rev 21:12–13, twelve gates provide access (see Kessler and Zacharias 2000: 10). The same claim was made about the city of Florence. Florentine statutes of 1339 insist on there being twelve gates to the city, even though there were in fact fifteen city portals (see Sheldrake 2007: 56).

The Christian narrative shaped the architecture of the city in multiple other ways as well. Any self-respecting European city of the medieval and Renaissance eras seeking to fulfil the biblical imperative to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger would make generous provision for the care of the vulnerable. Temporary lodgings called *Ospedale* were built for the poor and the sick all over Europe by the Knights of St John, while city benefactors or political authorities trying to win the favour of their citizenry would spare little expense in building hospitals and orphanages. In 1456, for instance, the Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza, who was eager to win the affection of a citizenry whose city he had recently overthrown, commissioned the renowned architect, Filarete, to design a hospital for the poor. The Magna Domus Hospitalis, subsequently extended by others, remains one of the most magnificent buildings in the centre of Milan. Its architectural merit is rivalled by the Ospedale Degli Innocenti in Florence (see Fig. 4), designed by

the great architect Brunelleschi who was also working just two blocks away on his great structural masterpiece, the dome of the Florentine Cathedral. The Ospedale was built to house orphans and abandoned children in the city of Florence, thus making clear that the Christian faith manifested through the worship of God in the Cathedral had also to be expressed in care for those in need. This pattern of magnificent architectural provision for the works of Christian charity was repeated throughout Europe.
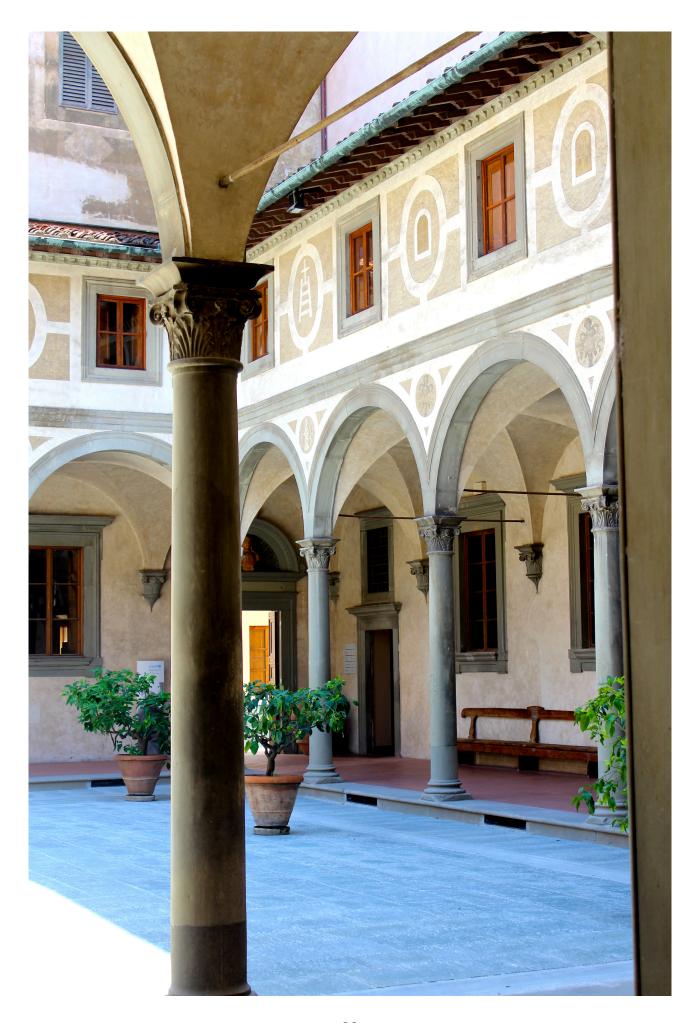
Figure 4. Photograph of Ospedale Degli Innocenti in Florence.

Support given by the built environment for the performance of Christian life was also evident in the frequent feast day processions that wound their way through city streets, frequently pausing for prayer at holy sites and shrines housing relics, or marking the burial place of saints and martyrs. Lewis Mumford observes that,

> [w]hatever the practical needs of the medieval town, it was above all things, in its busy turbulent life, a stage for the ceremonies of the Church. Therein lay its drama and its ideal consummation […] For the key to the visible city lies in the moving pageant or the procession; above all, in the great religious procession that winds about the streets and places before it finally debouches into the church or the cathedral for the great ceremony itself. Here is no static architecture. (Mumford 1961: 277)

This was the architecture of Christendom, characteristic of an era when the church had the wealth and the civic power to shape the city according to a particular Christian vision and polity. The Christian influence extended throughout the built environment, leaving its imprint upon schools and universities, libraries, court houses, and numerous other civic buildings.

4.2 The welfare of the city

In the contemporary Western world the influence of the church is waning, and its capacity to shape the built environment through explicit architectural representations of the Christian theological narrative is much diminished. And yet, Christians from multiple fields of expertise concerned with the shaping of the built environment are still guided by the biblical imperatives to seek the welfare of the city and to love one's neighbour. Christians are often to be found at the forefront of social housing initiatives, for example. Architectural solutions to the lack of quality housing for the poor and the disadvantaged will not solve all the social and economic problems that have consigned people to live in substandard housing – or indeed on the streets and under bridges – but such problems will surely not be solved without appropriate housing infrastructure. Many examples can be found of churches and para-church organisations leading urban regeneration and social housing projects.

The Yeast City Housing (YCH) initiative in Pretoria, South Africa, for instance, began with local churches using their existing land and buildings to provide housing on a small scale for people in need. It has since grown to become a major developer of social housing, most recently the Thembelihle Village which houses over two thousand people. The architectural brief required a village that was socially inclusive and included mixed-use buildings, as well as housing that could serve as an example of urban innovation.

In Baltimore, USA, an <u>ecumenical</u> group of churches established BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development) which has been working for over forty years to improve housing quality in the city and to rebuild schools and neighbourhoods, and to address related issues such as employment, health, education, and social amenities. ReBUILD Metro is one such project that has housed 350 families in formerly derelict and abandoned buildings in East Baltimore. The architecture is not overtly Christian, inasmuch as there is no Christian iconography utilized in the buildings themselves, but architecture is placed in service here of a Christian vision of human dignity and of human flourishing. The role architecture can play in contributing to human wellbeing is borne out by the testimony of a resident of Tau Village, one of the Yeast City Housing projects in Pretoria: 'Before we lived in Tau Village, I used to get home at 8:30 at night, after a long bus trip. I could not check my children's homework, and they would put themselves to sleep before I got home.' Stefan De Beer, one of the founders of YCH, explains that this woman

> then speaks of how the housing unit she was able to access at Tau Village did a number of things for her: it enabled her to be within walking distance from the space in which she trades in shoes; it helped her to have grandchildren with her and to help them with their school work; it offered her the possibility of financial freedom, as it cut out transport costs; and she now has excess time in which to plan for and support her family more optimally. As she says, 'Never mind it is small, it is next to my heart. It is home. I am free'. (De Beer 2004: 16–17)

Initiatives like YCH and BUILD, along with many others like them, are doing biblical work; they are imagining and helping to construct places that enable the wellbeing and the flourishing that is intended by God.

Both YCH and BUILD recognize that human wellbeing requires a good standard of housing but it also requires good neighbourhoods where people have access to essential services and to amenities for leisure, education, physical exercise, neighbourly interaction, and religious observances, including worship. The way built environments are arranged can facilitate or inhibit access to such human goods. While these human goods were relatively simple to provide in small scale cities and in the towns and villages of the pre-industrial age, the rapid growth in the size and populations of cities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – along with exponential growth in car ownership – dramatically changed the urban environment, often in ways that have rendered cities in the modern era far less hospitable to those activities and interactions that are vital to human wellbeing. Urban sprawl, increasing reliance on vehicle transport, environmental degradation, and the pursuit of private interests rather than public benefits in the built environment, are prevalent characteristics of contemporary urban environments. James Kunstler attributes much of the damage done to the dehumanizing philosophy of architectural Modernism:

Modernism did its immense damage in these ways: by divorcing the practice of building from the history and traditional meanings of building; by promoting a species of urbanism that destroyed age-old social arrangements and, with them, urban life as a general proposition; and by creating a physical setting for man that failed to respect the limits of scale, growth, and the consumption of natural resources, or to respect the lives of other living things. The result of Modernism, especially in America, is a crisis of the human habitat; cities ruined by corporate gigantism and abstract renewal schemes, public buildings and public spaces unworthy of human affection, vast sprawling suburbs that lack any sense of community, housing that the un-rich cannot afford to live in, a slavish obeisance to the needs of automobiles and their dependent industries at the expense of human needs, and a gathering ecological calamity that we have only begun to measure. (Kunstler 1994: 59–60)

4.3 Sustainable living

Kunstler has been joined by many others, including Christian theologians, who are seeking to reimagine the urban environment so that it contributes more successfully to the flourishing not only of its inhabitants but also of creation as a whole (see Ecological Ethics). Creating and implementing a new vision for the city is the work of multiple scholarly disciplines and professional competencies. Architects, city planners, engineers, environmental scientists, and landscape architects are just a few of the technical experts required for the rebuilding of our cities. But their expertise needs to be informed by an agreed vision of what constitutes the good life, of what human wellbeing consists in, and of how human habitation of the environment might be undertaken in ways that enable the whole of creation to flourish. These are theological concerns, for they are rooted in God's creative and redemptive purposes for the world. The urgency of the problems facing humans as we seek to inhabit the world more responsibly and to build cities more humanely has generated a growing body of literature on theology and the built environment.

T. J. Gorringe has played a prominent role in this discussion with his book *A Theology of the Built Environment* (2002), followed by *The Common Good and the Global Emergency* (2011). In 2009, a group of theologians in Britain produced a series of essays on the question of what makes a good city, and explored the role that churches can play in contributing to such a city (Graham and Lowe 2009). This followed earlier reports from a Commission and an Advisory Group to the Archbishop of Canterbury on Urban Priority Areas (1985; 1990). The reports had a broad remit, but both recognized that substandard housing and poor-quality built environments were major impediments to human flourishing. The 'New Urbanism' movement in the United States, which directs its efforts towards the development of good neighbourhoods, offers a further example of architectural contributions to the welfare of the city being informed by careful theological deliberation and insight (see, for example, Jacobsen 2003; 2012; Bess 2006).

One of the urgent challenges facing the world today, in which architecture plays no small part, is the question of how to live more sustainably within the created order. Post-industrial architecture, its materials, construction methods, and the energy resources required to render buildings habitable, have taken an enormous toll on the environment. Christian conceptions of environmental stewardship, and a theological commitment to the flourishing of creation as a whole, have much to offer as people explore more sustainable ways of constructing the built environment and dwelling within creation. While he does not draw extensively upon theological wisdom, Jonathan Rose, a leading thinker and practitioner in sustainable urban development, notes the positive role that religion can play in tempering humanity's exploitative inclinations (Rose 2016: 48). Rose's five qualities of what he calls 'a well-tempered city' align closely with biblical wisdom about what makes a good city. Those qualities are:

(1) Coherence – cities need a framework for integrating their various features.
(2) Circularity – cities have metabolisms: energy, information, and materials flow through them. We need circular metabolisms to maximise efficiency and reduce waste.
(3) Resilience – the ability to bounce forward when stressed. A more harmonious relation with nature is crucial.
(4) Community – pervasive prosperity, security, health, education, social connectivity, collective efficiency, and equitable distribution of these benefits.
(5) Compassion – essential in order to have a healthy balance between individual and collective wellbeing. (Rose 2016: 48)

These are all qualities upon which the Jewish and Christian theological traditions have reflected deeply and still have much to offer. T. J. Gorringe has again been at the forefront of contemporary theological thinking about such matters (2011; 2002: ch. 9). Rose comments further:

> At the physical level, the well-tempered city increases its resilience by integrating urban technology and nature. At the operational level it increases its resilience by developing rapidly adapting systems that co-evolve in dynamic balance with megatrends, preserving the wellbeing of both the human and natural systems. And at the spiritual level, temperament integrates our quest for a purpose with the aspiration for wholeness. (Rose 2016: 23)

In confronting the substantial challenges involved in living responsibly and sustainably in our built environments while ensuring equitable access to housing and other architectural infrastructure that supports human wellbeing, theology is brought into conversation not only with architecture but with multiple fields of human enquiry and expertise. Theology here exercises its vocation to study God and all things in relation to God.

5 Architecture and theological inquiry

Theology has much to offer in thinking about how architecture might serve the wellbeing and the flourishing – not only of human beings – but also of creation as a whole. But there is value too in exploring how reflection upon architecture might enrich the study of theology's subject matter. One of the contributions that the arts make to human life is to expand our horizons, to offer new insight into the true, the good, and the beautiful, and into the depths of our fallenness, and to help us imagine what might yet be. Architecture can serve such a purpose, inasmuch as it reveals something of our deepest convictions, expresses our aspirations, for better and for worse, and carves out in wood and stone particular visions of what constitutes the life well-lived. As the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa puts it: 'Art and architecture articulate and structure our being-in-the-world' (Pallasmaa 2009: 24).

Architecture may also offer models and metaphors for the expression of doctrinal truth, new ways of seeing and understanding the reality with which theology is concerned, a glimpse of 'meanings we had not suspected'. This phrase is taken from Rowan Williams (2002: 28), and the more general point about the value of undertaking theology in conversation with the arts comes from the pioneering work of Jeremy Begbie (see for instance Begbie 2002). Sigurd Bergmann contends that 'the built environment offers us a genuine "locus theologicus" to be taken as seriously as the "liber naturae" and the "liber bibliae"'. 'Built space', he continues, 'functions as a partner in doing theo-logy' (Bergmann 2009a: 12). The focus here is on the capacity of architecture to portray and to aid in the discovery and articulation of theological truth.

As discussed above, and as many books and articles attest, church architecture has long been a medium of theological expression. The form of church buildings, the decoration, the configuration of space, the design and placement of furnishings, the use of colour and light, are all standard features of architectural design that have been used to convey theological meaning and to give expression to the Christian narrative. But secular buildings are also full of theological interest.

The Jewish Museum in Berlin designed by architect Daniel Libeskind provides an example. The plan of the museum is based upon the star of David, but the star is broken and contorted, unfolded to create a zig-zagging plan form housing the artefacts of Jewish history in Berlin. A straight line,

> representing perhaps the unwavering determination of genocidal logic, intersects the broken but infinite line of the Star of David and where it does so it forms a series of voids running the full height of the museum's layered galleries. The voids speak of the fate of

> those six million Jews who became victims of a logic that was itself nihilistic, empty and utterly bereft. (Rae 2014: 144)

The victims are represented further by thousands of hollow steel sculpted faces over which visitors are invited to walk, so creating a clanging sound that echoes the clanging of steel doors locked against those who perished in the gas chambers of Nazi Germany. The architecture speaks powerfully of sin and evil, but in the distorted yet still recognizable star of David it also speaks of the enduring reality of divine election. The stairs descending into the basement level galleries speak of remorse; yet, in the thin shaft of light that finds its way into the concrete chasm of the 'holocaust tower', the architecture suggests that the darkness of evil cannot finally overcome the light. Libeskind's architecture here invites consideration of the nature and persistence of divine election, and of the forces at work in the world that oppose God's purpose. It invites consideration as well of whether there is reason to believe in the possibility of redemption. Here is an instance of architecture prompting fresh thinking about the subject matter of theology.

Whether providing places for worship, directing us to the presence and the glory of God, contributing to the welfare of the city, or prompting reflection on humanity's place in the world, architecture is endlessly interesting and worthy of serious theological consideration.

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