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*Roots of  
the Sacred*



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**On the cover:** David Heald's photograph of the nave of the Cistercian abbey church at Trois-Fontaines, France, looking east, photographed in 1990.



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# EDITOR'S PAGE

By *Michael J. Crosbie*




“**R**oots of the Sacred” is this issue’s unofficial theme. From the collection of articles that we assembled, the theme of roots—those traditions and core beliefs that hold us together as faith communities, and which also provide spiritual and artistic sustenance—became apparent.

The recent IFRAA conference in Cleveland, Ohio, “The Treasures Within,” suggested this theme as well. The two-day event offered an opportunity to visit with and understand how cohesive congregations of widely varying denominations (Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, Reformed Jewish, Russian Orthodox, Pentecostal) spread their roots into the community and draw nourishment from it. As roots hold the soil together, so do these religious institutions help to hold neighborhoods together, at a time when local, state, and federal support for domestic programs has shrunk or disappeared altogether. The church or temple becomes a focal point for people—even for those who do not worship there—and helps to give a place an identity. Other institutions, such as those dedicated to preservation, the arts, and cultural history, also lend their support to help maintain the sacred material fabric.

An undercurrent in the conference was how faith communities expand or contract, wither or thrive as demographics change. Families of belief are defenseless in the face of population migration from the city to the suburbs. Some die, but others are reborn. The faces in the pews change, the language of worship shifts, and the community of believers evolves into something new. In Cleveland, St. Michael’s Church has slowly transformed from a predominantly German congregation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to one now mostly Hispanic. Trinity Episcopal Cathedral is forging new links with its immediate surroundings, and is having an impact on new commercial development. St. Stephen’s Church has helped a troubled neighborhood turn the corner, and is a catalyst for rehabilitation. As the conference showed, many houses of worship have firm roots.

In this issue we turn to the roots of the sacred as they shape the environments we create through art and architecture. Architect Sherman Aronson writes about the ancient Tent of Meeting—one of the earliest forms of sacred space—and the way it continues to influence the design of houses of worship. Sociologist Robert Scott examines how the medieval Christian concept of the sacred is reflected in the Gothic cathedral, and how it was nurtured and preserved through art and architecture. Naomi Miroglio offers our readers—clergy and congregants as well as artists and architects—advice on how to organize and conduct restoration projects so that the spirit of an old building is sustained while making way for new uses. And photographer David Heald, through his truly stunning photographs of Cistercian abbeys in France, captures some of the most embryonic qualities of sacred art and architecture, distilled to the essences of light, shadow, and texture.

The agenda of this issue is to invite you to revive your energies and your commitment to the creation of sacred environments through an appreciation of their ancient touchstones. 

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*The Grunewald Church, Berlin, Germany. Designed by Johannes Schreiter.*

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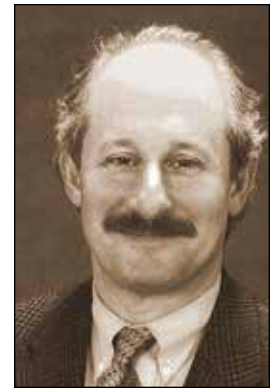
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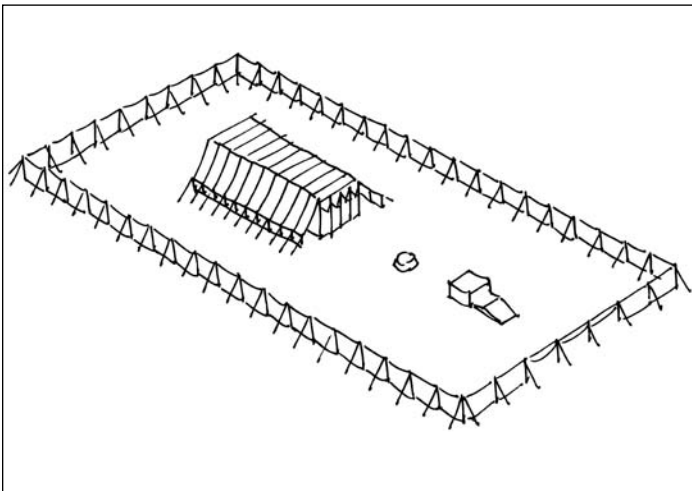
# THE TENT OF MEETING

By Sherman Aronson, AIA



The Biblical “Tent of Meeting” and its Tabernacle are ancient images of one of humankind’s earliest creations of sacred religious structures. What architectural thoughts and observations do these images bring to mind today, what influences could have been at work in generating this type of structure, what basic human responses to the divine are represented by similar constructions in other cultures and epochs, and what relationship, if any, does this architecture have to modern worship spaces? This article considers the design of the Tent of Meeting and discusses powerful holy places from other civilizations. By comparing floor plans and sketch illustrations we can see a strong commonality among their spatial organizations. This commonality offers insight into the effect of architecture in all ages.

The “Tent of Meeting” is described well in the Torah, the Old Testament. Imagine a large level clearing on the plain set at the foot of Mount Sinai. Surrounding the perimeter of this clearing are the tents of the Jewish tribes liberated from Egypt. The Tent of Meeting area is enclosed by wood-framed panels covered with linen curtains, is open to the sky, and is about one-quarter the size of a football field. Not a vast area, but large enough to be imposing both from within and from without.



Layout of the Tent of Meeting in the Sinai Desert during Biblical times.

The entrance curtains were at the narrow end, facing east. At the far end of the enclosure was the Tabernacle, with the space in front called the Court. The Tabernacle was covered with layers of finely woven fabric and animal skins, creating a watertight, opaque roof. The Tabernacle itself was subdivided into two rooms: the outer space entered from the

Court being the Holy Place, and the room at the far end being the Holy of Holies. This space was a perfect cube. It protected the Ark, which held the stone tablets. Only Aaron and his sons, the priests, were allowed within the enclosure, and only to perform sacrifices and blessings.

Try to imagine the sense of space that the Tent of Meeting could have possessed: A simple, elegant, modular rhythm of beautiful, flowing curtains, making a distinct separation from the crowded, rough-hewn camp of the wandering Israelites. A place of visual repose set within this rustic environment. But, being open to the sky, it would not be much quieter than the surrounding area. Then imagine the Tabernacle as a fully enclosed room at the end of the Court. The front room would be relatively dark and significantly quieter than the Court. The Holy of Holies would have been almost totally dark and nearly silent. This is a space, we are told, that only Aaron entered once a year to make a blessing over the tablets.

For me, this sequence of space from light to dark, from loud to quiet, from open to closed, from large to small, is a powerful communication of human emotion. It is perhaps the most profound way that we have to use our hands and tools to fashion a special place for our most important things.

I find a parallel to our own sense of personality and human spirit, where we sense important cultural ties as “deeply felt” or “deeply within” our subconscious mind. Certainly it would be important for all of the Jewish people to know in confidence that the Ark exists within the sacred place, even though individually they would not go into the space themselves. It seems that this common cultural protection of shared important and sacred things is part of our sense of community. This brings to mind the real separation that the Tent of Meeting created between Moses, Aaron, and the priests from the rest of the people. It appears that the people never went within the Court. They passed sacrificial animals through the curtains to the priests. They observed from the outside that the rituals were taking place.

Now this notion, that the Temple is a holy place removed from the people served by the priests, is a common phenomenon among many ancient peoples. In fact, this sequence of spaces, from open to closed, light to dark, public to deeply protected, is repeated in innumerable forms across the globe wherever people made a place to worship their gods.

Consider the Egyptian tombs and temples that the Jewish slaves helped to build. During the reign of Sety I and Rameses II, funerary temples were built at Deir el Bahari and Karnak. These temples are composed of a series of outdoor spaces, leading to a chamber carved from the rock of the cliff face. This outer chamber stood guard to a short tunnel leading to a smaller, darker, more sacred place deep within the rock walls. As we are told by history, the temple rituals were performed outside of these chambers, in the forecourt, open to the sky.

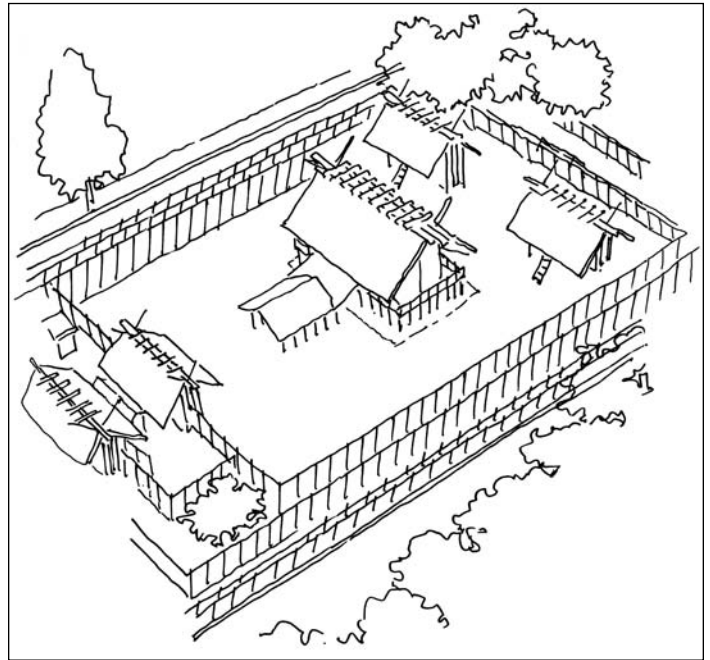
SHERMAN ARONSON, AIA, is a partner in the firm DPK&A Architects, LLP in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Similarly, in ancient Greece, at temples such as the Parthenon, built to the goddess Athena, and even at the early temples at Paestum, the colonnaded perimeter separates the holy place from the people. The rituals were performed outside of the stone structures. The temple is set on a raised base within a walled enclosure within the city. The entrance is oriented to form an imposing view from outside of the enclosure, marking the presence of the sacred place to the entire community.

These examples in Egypt and Greece are ways of making sacred places of which the early Jews may have been aware. The Egyptian culture had in addition a way of making portable tents for important government figures to observe the work going on throughout the kingdom. These utilized wooden poles and decorated fabric coverings to set up temporary headquarters. This technology would have been essential in the nomadic condition of the people of the Exodus. This building method was used for the Tent of Meeting, which was a knock-down and reassemble type of project, not a permanent structure.

Other cultures have created similar types of sacred places. In ancient India some of the first Buddhist prayer halls covered and protected a burial mound, or Stupa, as early as the first century C.E. These simple

rooms were carved from within stone walls, making a cave with a single entrance at the short end of a rectangular room. At the far end was a domed chamber with a small entrance. Again the deepest and darkest place is made for the sacred objects. Even as their architecture evolved into magnificent temples and monasteries in the 11th and 13th centu-



*Layout of the Ise Temple in Japan in 685 C.E.*

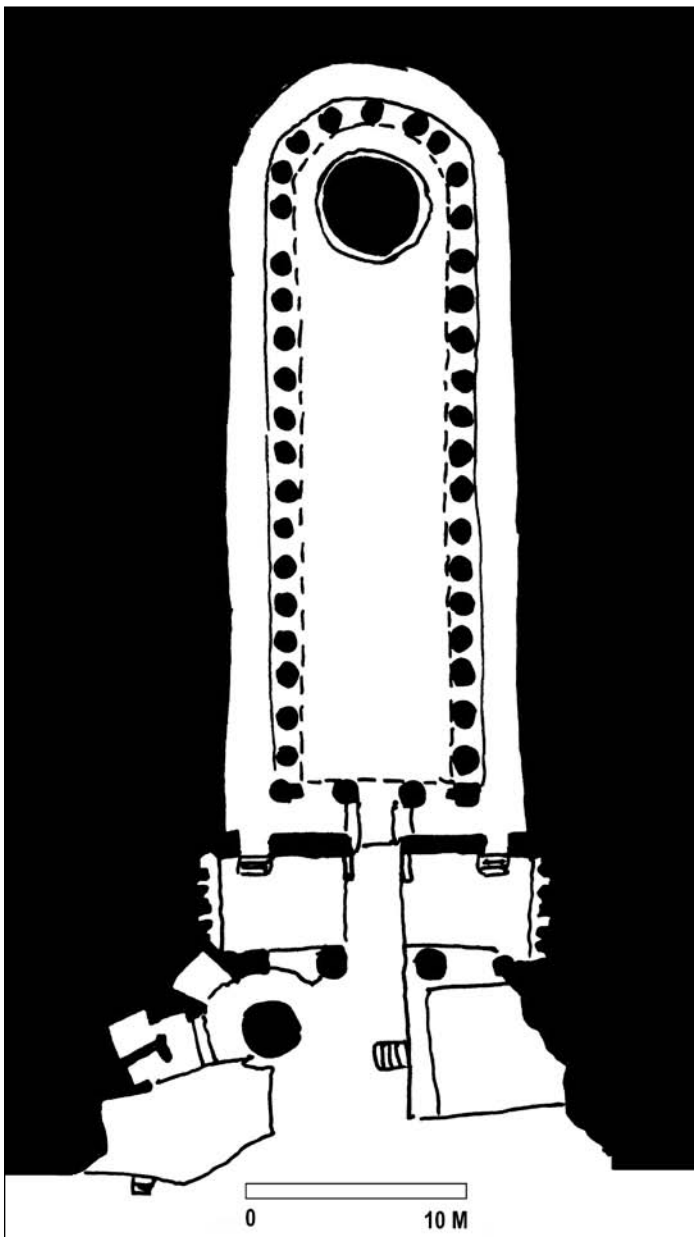
ries, this simple spatial sequence—large, outer chamber guarding a smaller, windowless inner chamber—remains a nearly constant building formula.

In China and Japan the evolution of the Buddhist shrine and monastery developed in a similar way. Simple, rectangular rooms housing the essential religious objects or functions are separated from the forecourt and entrances by a series of enclosures. In the larger shrine complexes, the layers of enclosure multiply into many rings of walled and fenced areas, open to the sky, between the most accessible portions of the complex and the most sacred rooms.

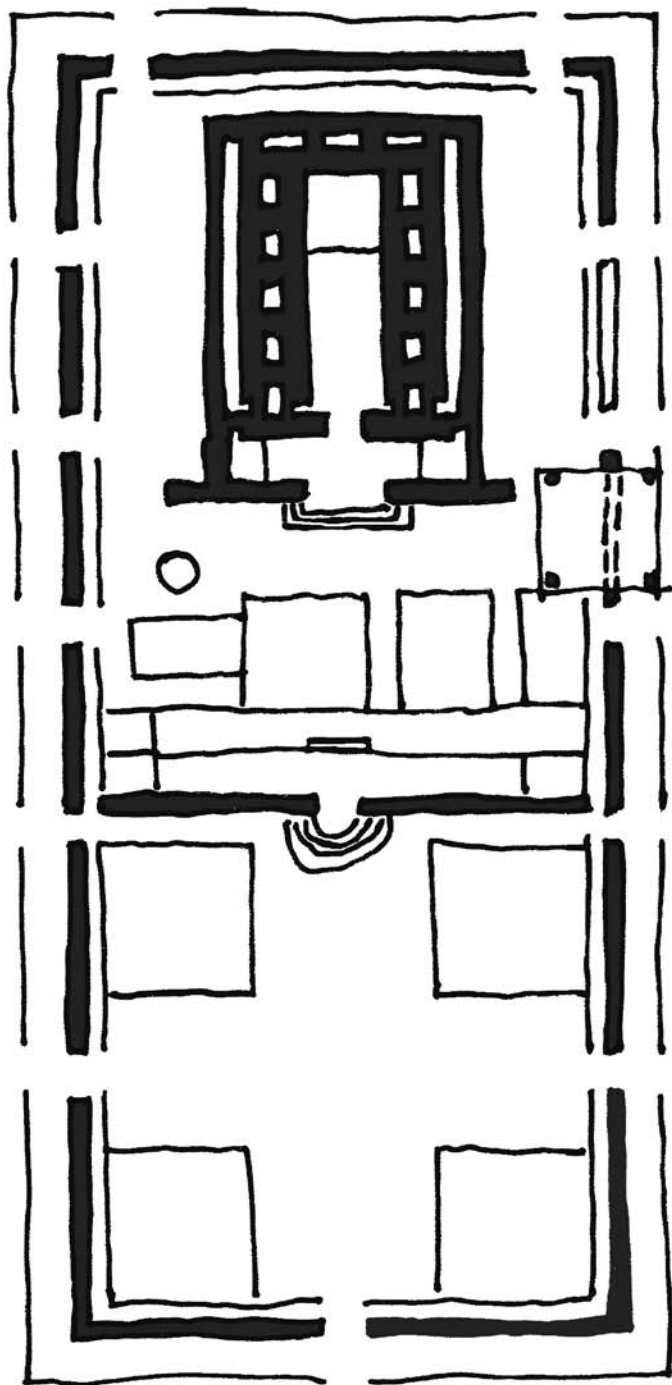
In Japan, the Shrine at Ise is rebuilt every generation on the site adjacent to the existing shrine, which is then dismantled. The proportions and sizes of the building components seem to be developed to suit people's hands and carrying ability, much like the structural elements of the Tent of Meeting must have been.

The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, built in 950 B.C.E., was a permanent structure based loosely on the design principles of the Tent of Meeting. I think that there is less detail given in the Torah about this Temple, but we do know that it was a stone structure, with the same 100-by-50-foot overall size as the Tent of Meeting. However, the thickness of the stone and the technology for supporting a roof reduced the interior to 20 cubits wide, about 30 feet. Still, with a height equal to its width, and with tall clerestory windows set high in the wall, the large "Court" of the main space would have been very imposing.

The large rectangular room was again subdivided, with a smaller covered room at the far end, and with, yet again, a smaller Holy of Holies set in that space. It appears that this deepest room had a lowered roof, under the daylight source, making a dark chamber. During the 16th and 17th centuries, scholars and artists created wonderful illustrations of the Temple of Solomon and the last Temple of King Herod. These illustrations, however, would have been colored by contemporary religious



*Plan of Buddhist Chaitya-hall at Karli, India, in 100 B.C.E.*



0 10 M

Plan of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

spaces, including medieval Christian churches, the way our modern sensibilities affect how we picture earlier art forms and cultures.


One thing this points to is the distinction between the Temple and the Synagogue. Remember that the Tent of Meeting in the desert and the Temple in Jerusalem were administered by the priests. They were not interior gathering places for group worship. The need for another type of structure for Jewish prayer apparently developed around the time of the construction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. By that time, 70 C.E., there were millions of Jews in far off places within the Roman Empire and the Greek world, remote from Jerusalem. Jews were prohibited from

making sacrifices, except those performed within the Temple grounds by the priests. So what did they do?

In Alexandria, Egypt, for instance, we know that there was a tremendous synagogue with a large wealthy congregation. What did they use as a model for this space? They needed a room for a group to gather and hear a speaker tell the stories of the Torah. Research indicates that there was no such religious space within the known world at that time. However, the Greeks had developed a Council Chamber, the *bouleuterion*, for political meetings, which included benches built along three walls, and a blank wall shielding the entrance vestibule, forming a backdrop for the speaker. It appears that the Jewish congregations used this model and created a new building form—a proto-synagogue—of which several ruins remain.

In the beginning this initial synagogue was very different from the Temple. In fact, there was no permanent place for the Torah scrolls. Eventually the scrolls found a place in a stone niche, serving as an Ark, at the far end of the space, across from the entrance. This arrangement hinted back to the small enclosure, the Holy of Holies, at the far end from the entrance curtains in the Tent of Meeting and the Tabernacle. This early synagogue plan served as the model for the early Christian churches in the Middle East, and later evolved into the great feats of religious architecture throughout Europe.

The American architect Louis Kahn often discussed the way a room affects people's behavior, and emphasized the importance of making a room well. That should sound like an obvious notion, but in the modern world of shiny appearance, fashionable facades, and flexible spaces, the idea that as architects we are making rooms for people needs to be said often. He noted that the character of a room helps guide the events that can take place in that room. The shape of the space, the quality of its natural daylight, the place of arrival, the interior arrangements—all can encourage people to speak in certain ways, and encourage silence when appropriate. The nature of a room can express how a people relate to their shared values and experiences.

Kahn also emphasized the search for agreement, and for commonality of human needs, for those elements of architecture that could be timeless, rather than timely. We should appreciate lessons from other cultures and places, especially as they illuminate the nature of the religious experience and the creation of sacred spaces. This does not mean that we need to recreate examples from our ancient past as we make new sanctuaries and worship spaces today. Many of the ancient sites were used in ways that are extremely different than our religious practices today. Today we often strive to unite the community and the religious leaders, to create spaces that encourage participation and shared experience within our churches and synagogues. Yet, we can rediscover the human yearnings that generated the Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle, and the Temples. We can see the effect of individual spaces on their communities, and the ways that architecture responds to religious needs in every time and place. 

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# CISTERCIAN ABBEYS OF FRANCE

*Photographs by David Heald*



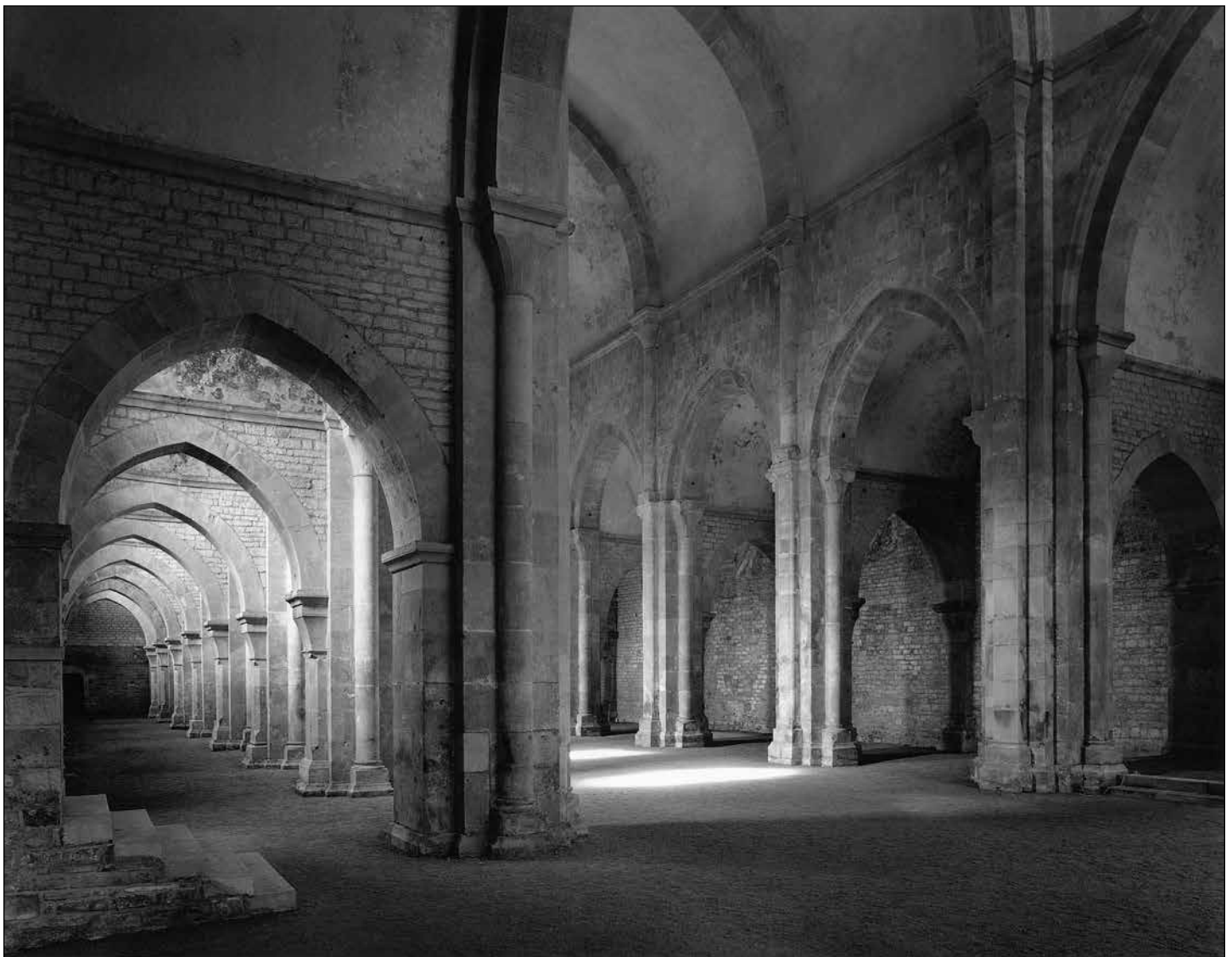
All great art renders the invisible visible. David Heald's photographs of Cistercian abbeys occupy that realm. A photographer for the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Heald has for more than a decade traversed the French countryside to capture the spirit of Cistercian abbey churches and buildings. A few years ago Heald collected some of his pictures in a beautiful volume, *Architecture of Silence* (Abrams, \$60) and he has also rendered these beautiful images on note cards. Heald has also assembled a traveling exhibit of his work (for more information you can visit his website at: [www.davidhealdphotographs.com](http://www.davidhealdphotographs.com)).

The tritone photographs, a few of which we present here, are arresting in their simple, quiet testimony to these 12th- and 13th-century sacred

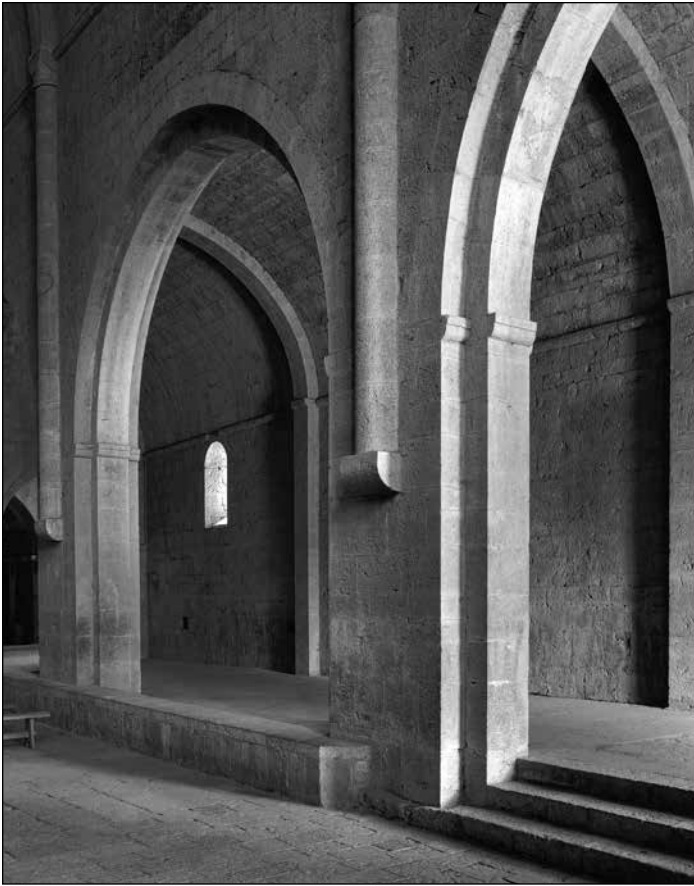
spaces. Heald's images show us essences, those truths in stone and light, which make visible the power of belief and faith.

Heald's photographs of abbey interiors seem to echo with the prayers of generations of Cistercian monks, while the exteriors place these religious environments in the greater context of the natural world. They present, simultaneously, a vision of architecture and spirit entwined, while also capturing those small, precious places where we are told God resides: in the details. A delicately carved column capital, the egg-and-dart molding trailing an arch, the stone-upon-stone of a shattered dome, all of these Heald's photos offer up as praise sung in human artifice.

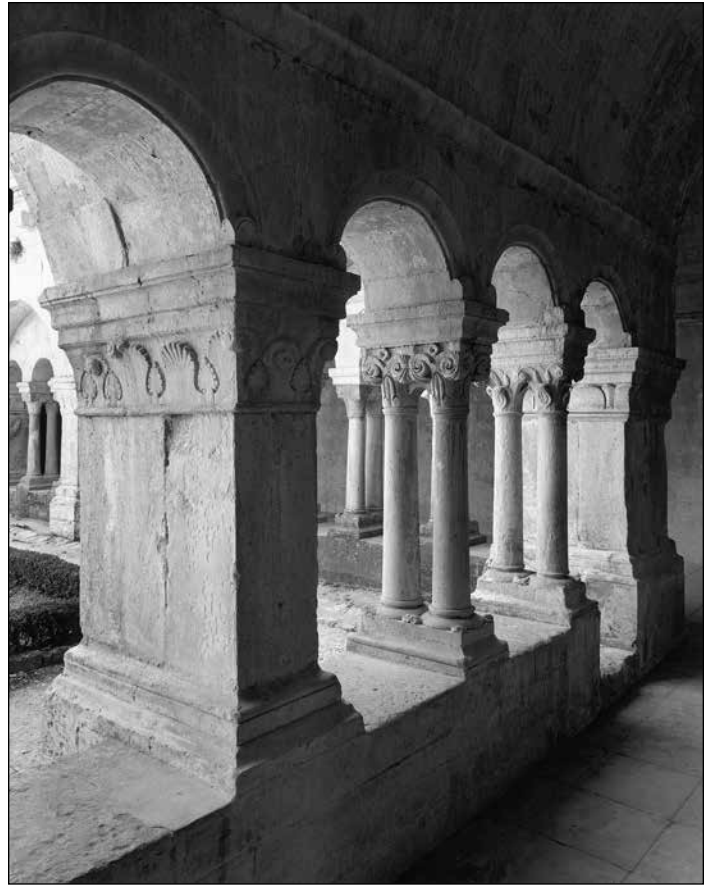
—Michael J. Crosbie



*South aisle and nave looking west, Fontenay, photographed in 1990.*



Nave and south aisle, Le Thoronet, photographed in 1986.



Nave and south aisle, Le Thoronet, photographed in 1986.



Capital in the cloister, Fontfroide, photographed in 1995.



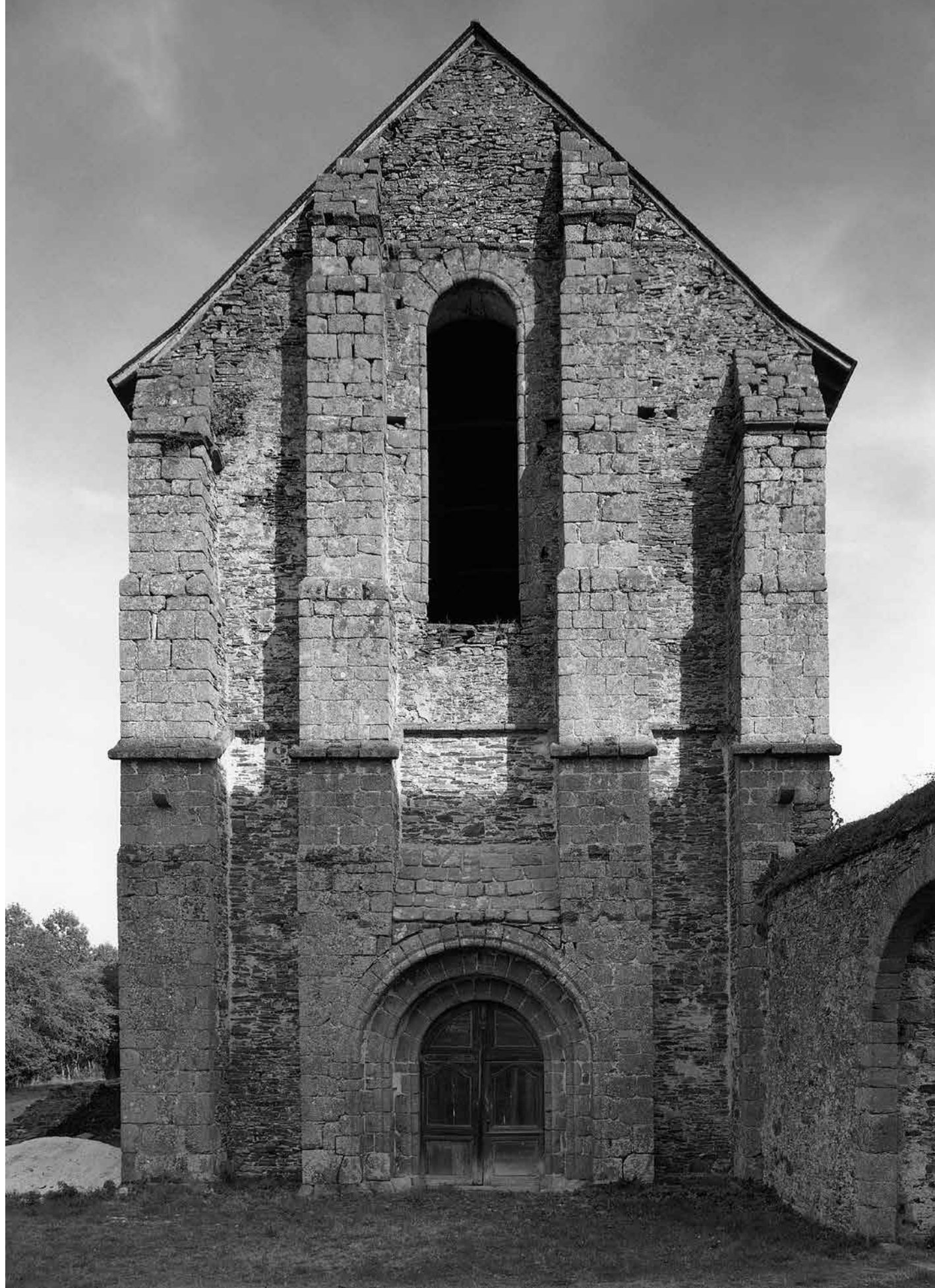
Refectory, Noirlac, photographed in 1990.





*Domed vault of the church, first bay of the nave, Boschaud, photographed in 1989.*





*Façade of the church, Clairmont, photographed in 1990.*

# SACRED FORCE AND SACRED SPACE

By Robert A. Scott



My colleague William Mahrt, a professor of music at Stanford University, specializes in medieval church music and liturgy. I once asked him what a cathedral is for. A cathedral, he replied, exists for the performance of liturgy. He then explained that liturgy refers to the language, gestures, and actions that members of a religious body use to commune with and venerate God. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines liturgy similarly, as the authorized forms of rites, observances, and procedures prescribed by the church for public worship. Communication with God is engaged in as an end in itself and also in the hope that God will adopt and retain a benevolent attitude toward those who worship Him and toward the groups on whose behalf they pray.

Most people probably imagine God as a force that is omnipresent. At the same time, people also believe that God is uniquely present and available to them in certain places for veneration and worship, and that the divine is uniquely concentrated in certain objects. Such places are sacred spaces, and such objects, sacred objects. Gothic cathedrals, of course, are prime examples of sacred spaces, and the relics, statuary, altars, and other material objects they contain are examples of sacred objects.

Understanding how people conceive of a place, say a cathedral, where the sacred spirit is uniquely present requires an understanding of what people imagine the essential nature of the divine to be. Where exactly does its sacred force come from? What is its form in its natural state? How does it come to inhabit particular spaces and objects on earth but not others? Once there, what keeps it from leaving, and how should a person behave in its presence? Answers to these questions yield valuable insights into cathedrals as socially constructed spaces: how they are designed, what existential project the space is created to accomplish, how the space is arrayed, who is permitted to enter it, what takes place within it, and more.

To understand cathedrals, then, we must understand the idea of the sacred. The *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of the word sacred includes such terms as "made in awe," "revered," "considered deserving of veneration," and "consecrated." Terms such as "holy" and "hallowed" are employed in elaboration. A conception of a force that evokes such emotions and feelings in people seems to be universal. Though the specific content of ideas about the sacred varies across different peoples and historical eras, most students of religion agree that societies everywhere have such a concept.<sup>1</sup>

Libraries abound with scholarly works on the nature and role of the sacred in human society. Those most relevant to my interests disclose the common core of ideas that humans hold about the sacred and the key dilemmas they face in their efforts to venerate and communicate with it. For me, one of the most instructive works on the topic is Emile Durkheim's classic *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Although I first read this book long ago in graduate school, only now—in my search for an understanding of the sacred—did I truly appreciate its brilliant insights.

Durkheim's approach to the study of religion and society is analogous to that of the cell biologist who attempts to understand complex life forms by studying single-cell organisms. He examines the religious practices of small tribal societies (mainly in Australia) in an attempt to expose the fundamental anatomy of ideas and practices associated with the sacred that he believes are common to human groups everywhere. Of Durkheim's many observations about the sacred, the following points gleaned from my reading of his book are particularly germane to interpreting cathedrals as socially constructed spaces.

The divine, from which the quality of sacredness emanates, is typically conceived to be without shape or form. It has no persona. It is basically shapeless, anonymous, impersonal, and enduring. It is imagined to have existed long before those experiencing it were born and to persist long after they have died. Generations will come and go, the places where humans worship it will crumble and decay, but the force itself endures.

Even though it is imagined as being incorporeal, people do not experience it in this way. Through their words and actions, they clearly seem to regard the sacred force as being as tangible, as concrete, as the wood, stone, and metal of the temples or the statues and other objects they believe the sacred has come to occupy.

However, people's belief that the divine is both omnipresent and also localized in certain spaces and objects means that the force is external to places where it alights. That is, it does not inhere in the places and objects to which it attaches; rather, it enters them from without and above.

This impression in turn suggests that originally the raw materials used to create sacred spaces and objects or employed in the enactment of holy rites were indistinguishable from other, ordinary materials of their type. At a certain moment, however, they became infused with a divine presence, transforming them from something ordinary into something sacred. For example, the high altar of a cathedral is considered the most sacred location in the building and the great cross sitting atop it, its most sacred object. Neither exists in nature; both had to be manufactured by ordinary craftspeople

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working with common metals and woods. The sacred force thought to occupy them was not there in the raw materials from the start. It entered only at a certain moment.

Rituals are required to effect the transition from ordinary materials to sacred objects. Human notions about the sacred and the nature of this transition from ordinary to special occur in all religions and are powerfully illustrated by a passage from David Freedberg's book *The Power of Images*, which presents a prototypical example of such a ritual. He explains that Ceylonese (now Sri Lankan) Buddhists believe that the spirit of Buddha enters his statue only when the eyes are painted on it. Until this happens, it is regarded as just ordinary material. Once the eyes are added, "bringing an image to life," it is considered to be sacred, the equivalent of a god. As Freedberg describes:

"The ceremony is regarded by its performers as very dangerous and is surrounded with taboos. It is performed by the craftsman who made the statues, after several hours of ceremonies to ensure that no evil will come to him. This evil...is imprecisely conceptualized, but results from making mistakes in ritual, violating taboos, or otherwise arousing the malevolent attention of a supernatural being, who usually conveys the evil by a gaze (balma). The craftsman paints in the eyes at an auspicious moment and is left alone in the closed temple with only his colleagues, while everyone else stands clear even of the outer door. Moreover, the craftsman does not dare to look the statue in the face, but keeps his back to it and paints sideways or over his shoulder while looking into a mirror, which catches the gaze of the image he is bringing to life. As soon as the painting is done the craftsman himself has a dangerous gaze. He is then led out blindfolded and the covering is only removed from his eyes when they will first fall upon something which he then symbolically destroys with a sword stroke."<sup>2</sup>

Once the divine force has been localized in a now sacred space or object, however, it is not bound to remain there. It is imagined to have the capacity to go elsewhere or, for that matter, to disappear entirely. As a result, even while venerating and worshipping the divine force, humans worry that it might, at any moment, leave. (In ancient Greece, once a statue was invested with life, it was sometimes chained down in order to stop the god who occupied it from escaping!)

In addition, a sacred force is also thought to have a radiating quality; that is, its power is believed to diffuse and radiate out, in the process occupying objects and spaces adjacent to it. The power is believed to diminish with distance, so that the farther one is from the source, the weaker its effects. This idea permeates beliefs about saints' relics. Such objects were thought to have a quality similar to radioactivity that affected anything they touched. The belief was that the farther one stood from the object, the weaker was the effect. Thus, a person who hoped for a miracle cure needed to have direct or near-direct physical contact with the relic.<sup>3</sup> Because of this tendency to radiate, if a sacred object is left unconfined and exposed, its powers will dissipate, like oil being carried along the surface of a running body of water. For this reason, care must be taken to construct a container to house it that is made of materials appropriate to the task of holding and containing the sacred force.

These last observations hint at the magnitude of the existential project entailed in designing and building a space for the sacred to occupy. The design and appearance must attract the sacred and induce it to settle and to stay. At the same time, the space must be substantial enough not only to contain and confine the sacred, but also to ensure that it will remain strong, vibrant, and alive—keeping its powers from dissipating. Accomplishing all this entails a delicate

balancing act; indeed, it is difficult to imagine a more daunting human enterprise.

Embracing the concept of the sacred and believing that it is uniquely present in a particular place automatically sets up another, opposing type of place and realm of existence—one that is not sacred. Just as "up" implies "down," the sacred implies the profane, or secular. In most religions, this distinction between the sacred and the profane is absolute and antagonistic, in the sense that things may belong to one realm or the other but not to both. Sacred things must then be set apart in special places to protect them from becoming polluted or tainted through physical contact with things that are profane, and clear boundaries must mark where one realm ends and the other begins. Finally, rituals are needed to cleanse, purify, and prepare those coming from the realm of the secular before they enter the realm of the sacred.

Durkheim shows us that practices designed to commune with and venerate the divine are almost always communal activities. Even in the early monastic communities, where worship was sometimes performed in solitude, the form, content, and process of worship were often communal. Thus it is accurate to say that most religious practices take place in group settings, assemblies arranged in an attempt to evoke, maintain, and recreate particular states of mind about and experiences of the sacred among group members. Religious worship is therefore constitutive of the collective. To use Durkheim's apt phrase, such ceremonies "make the collective happen" by setting collectivity in motion.<sup>4</sup> People experience the sacred most intensely when they are in the company of other people, united around the same ideas, with the same focus of concern and the same forms of action. When acts of collective worship end, members go their separate ways, returning once again to the secular world. As they do, their sense of the collective begins to fade and lose its vibrancy and sharpness. The periodic gatherings that religious practice provides for and requires enliven it again. Through group experience, the experience of the sacred is renewed, largely because groups serve as the vector that arouses these sentiments in the first place. In this respect, Durkheim reminds us, the true function of religion is not to make us think, but to make us strong and to help us to live by strengthening our experience of belonging, thereby enabling us to better endure the inevitable trials of existence and to overcome them.<sup>5</sup>

### Creating Sacred Space

We have seen how, in the minds of those who designed and built them, Gothic cathedrals were intended to mirror heaven as medieval theologians imagined it to be. The cathedral was supposed to be a setting in which humans could glimpse heaven, thereby experiencing a foretaste of the hereafter. It served to draw people toward heaven. Durkheim's ideas about the sacred, however, suggest a different, almost opposite view of the cathedral's purpose in which the cathedral is a place designed to draw the divine down among people.<sup>6</sup> We might say this is done by creating a congenial habitat for the divine. Working within the limits imposed by ordinary materials, builders aim to erect a setting reminiscent of the place from which the divine emanates. People then enact rituals in this space that they believe will please God, encouraging the divine spirit to enter the building and occupy it. In this sense, the Gothic cathedral is akin to a great lens created to gather the diffuse ambient light of the divine spirit and focus it to a particular geographical location, where it becomes available for human worship and supplication.



These two views may seem antagonistic, but I do not believe they are. Each appears plausible yet incomplete. A fuller understanding of the Gothic cathedral requires us to view it both as a place where humans were meant to cast their eyes toward heaven and as a setting in which humans endeavored to lure the divine into their midst. The second endeavor is actually reflected in the building's design and layout, as well as in what transpired within it.

To people in the Middle Ages, it was obvious that sacred spaces had to be created and that the act of creating them demanded the highest forms of artistic expression of which human beings were capable. The medieval worldview did not lend itself to the idea, present in other cultures, that natural places—caves, tree hollows, or forest glens—might be suitable settings for attracting the divine into the human midst. On the contrary, they believed that fashioning a sacred space in a setting of God's very own creation might be viewed by Him as demeaning or a slight. It was taken for granted that sacred spaces had to be built. Moreover, such spaces had to be constructed of materials that could be seen as suitable to the purposes at hand. In theory, all that is required to create a sacred space is a place apart and separate from the secular world; the boundary lines between secular and sacred realms could be marked by mud, twigs, or mounds of dirt, and processional ways designated with chalk or pebbles. But in the mind of the medieval cathedral builder sacred spaces demanded substantiality. Stone, whenever available, seemed required, and, in its absence, wood or brick. Of all natural materials available during the Middle Ages, stone was preferred because it alone had the requisite qualities of durability, heft, timelessness, and permanence that a house meant for the sacred demanded.

The philosopher John Sallis captures the nub of this sentiment in his fascinating book *Stone*. "Stone," he explains, "is ancient, not only in the sense that it withstands the wear of time better than other natural things, but also in the sense that antiquity is of the order of the always... Stone comes from a past that has never been present, a past inassimilable to the order of time in which things were and go in the human world."<sup>7</sup> Its appearance of invulnerability to the whims of history, human foibles, or the winds of change, its marked capacity for providing safe shelter and protection, ideally suited it to the task of creating a sacred space.

In the medieval world, a sacred space demanded art—not just any art, but the most beautiful, exquisite, and refined expressions of human artistic endeavor available. Abbot Suger voiced this idea when he said of his plans to renovate the Abbey Church of St. Denis that "everything that is most precious should be used above all to celebrate the Holy Mass."<sup>8</sup> The German philosopher Hegel helps us to understand why. Art, he suggests, originates when humans produce through their own resources a new object, one capable of presenting a spiritual content that does not appear in natural things. It reflects the deep human need to make something special.<sup>9</sup>

The very existence of art made it imperative to use it in decorating sacred spaces. People feared that a failure to use the best of human creativity might be interpreted by the divine as a slight, an indication of something less than full devotion. Therefore, medieval people felt compelled to draw on all of their artistic, engineering, and craft-based creative impulses to create the finest space of which they were capable. Doing so allowed them to make manifest a highly personal expression of their piety and devotion, one that belonged to their community alone. When Abbot Suger announced his plans to build a new choir for his abbey church, his longtime friend and fellow abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux, criticized him for wanting excessive opulence. Bernard asked,

"What is the good of displaying all this gold in the church? ...You display the statue of a saint...and you think that the more overloaded with colors it is, the holier it is. And people throng to kiss it—and are urged to leave an offering; they pay homage to the beauty of the object more than to its holiness...Oh vanity! vanity! and folly even greater than the vanity! The church sparkles and gleams on all sides, while its poor huddle in need; its stones are gilded, while its children go unclad; in it the art lovers find enough to satisfy their curiosity, while the poor find nothing there to relieve their misery."<sup>10</sup>

Here is Suger's reply:

"We maintain that the sacred vessels should be enhanced by outward adornment, and nowhere more than in serving the Holy Sacrifice, where inwardly all should be pure and outwardly all should be noble...If, according to the word of God and the prophet's command, the gold vessels, the gold phials, and the small gold mortars were used to collect the blood of goats, the calves, and a red heifer, then how much more zealously shall we hold our gold vases, precious stones, and all that we value most highly in creation, in order to collect the blood of Jesus Christ."<sup>11</sup>

Everything about the medieval cathedral—from its physical design, including its special use of light, through its decorations, to its daily rituals of prayer, including the texts used, as well as the music, vestments, processions, and incense—reflects this effort to use art to help make the space worthy of and welcoming to the divine. Soaring heights, delicate arches, magnificent stained glass, and fine stone and wood carvings are there for all to see. But there were also subtler, less obvious ways in which the intended perfection of the building was expressed. I know a young woman named Jenny Jacobs, a stone mason who specializes in restoration work. She has worked on many recent projects, including the restoration of the tower, spire, and west front of Salisbury Cathedral; the west front of Bath Abbey; and the interior of St. Paul's Cathedral. She once told me that she finds the finest expressions of spirituality in these buildings not in spaces that can be seen up close, but high in ceilings and on towers. She also describes exquisite works of carpentry and masonry out of sight in the attic areas beneath roofs and above vaults or behind the massive stones forming west fronts. There are also stained-glass windows high up in the clerestory, not visible from the floor level. She especially admires the west front statues that are "back-carved"—carved in the round, including the areas that do not show. Occasionally, she has even uncovered bits of wonderfully carved statuary concealed in places where no one may have seen them for hundreds of years. Why are they there, and what purpose do they serve?

Her interpretation, which I accept, is that works of fine craftsmanship done to exacting standards are found in concealed places for good reason—they allowed the craftsmen who built the cathedrals to declare emphatically that the building was intended as a monument to God, created by humans solely for His benefit. Few humans may ever see these examples of artistic expression, but God, as witness to all things, can. (Of course, to make this point, it is necessary to reveal the existence of these works. They are the worst-kept secret about Gothic cathedrals I know!)

Before all these delightful treasures could be appreciated, medieval designers had to attract the divine to the cathedral. To do so, they aimed to demarcate the realms of the sacred and the secular, and show that the sacred would be protected from adulteration. The physical layout of the building clearly reflects this intent, beginning with massive walls that form the boundary separating the sacred

from the profane. Entrance into the walled-off enclosure of sacred space is gained through the great doors of the enormous west front, often referred to as the “Gates of Heaven.”<sup>12</sup>

On entering a Gothic cathedral, however, a person does not confront the full essence of the sacred immediately. Instead, the cathedral’s interior space is divided into zones of successively more concentrated sacredness from the westernmost to the easternmost end of the building. The transition from one zone to the next is always marked in some way, most commonly by one or more steps, which signal an increase in the degree of hallowedness. The part of the nave where one enters at the western end of the cathedral is customarily the lowest level of the main interior space. Typically, at the eastern end of the nave, up one or more steps, a massive stone screen separates the nave from the eastern arm of the building. Called a “choir screen,” it marks the western perimeter of the building’s sacred core, which was enclosed by walls on the other three sides as well. The choir screen denotes a new zone of sacredness, denser in concentration, so to speak, than that found in the nave, and in medieval times it underscored the distinction between the clergy and the laity. Entry into the space east of the great choir screen was generally restricted to those who were officially designated as spiritual mediators, that is, members of clergy, such as canons and monks, who used it as a special setting for performing their daily round of prayers. Within this area, called the “presbytery,” is another set of steps marking off the high altar. The high altar is the most sacred of all spaces within a great church’s inner sanctum, the place where the power and concentration of the sacred force are said to be most intense. For this reason, it is reserved for the holiest of sacred objects, such as the image of Christ affixed to the cross.

The choir and presbytery are often surrounded by ambulatories separating them from the building’s outer walls. These were used for processions and, in cathedrals and abbeys that housed the shrine of a saint or a special chapel devoted to Mary, they served as pathways to guide pilgrims as they made their way from the great west front to the eastern end of the building, where shrines and lady chapels were typically placed.

\* \* \*

William Mahrt explains that the configuration of sacred space within a Gothic cathedral is both axial and concentric in design.<sup>13</sup> It is axial in the sense of a movement, as just described, through zones of increasing degrees of sacredness from the westernmost to the easternmost end. It is concentric in the sense that the fortress-like exterior walls separate the outside world from the inner world, where the sacred may be found, and the nearer to the heart of the interior space one gets, the more sacred the space is considered to be. Thus the choir and presbytery area amount to a walled-in inner sanctum surrounded by ambulatories, which are themselves encased by exterior walls, and these in turn, at least in English cathedrals, are enclosed within the walled domain of the cathedral close. In most cathedrals this sense of encapsulation is heightened further by roof vaults, which seal the inner vessel from the exposed timbers of the roofs.

Within this space of increasingly concentrated degrees of sacredness, various techniques were used not only to create a space to accommodate a divine presence, but to heighten the impression that the divine was indeed there. The aim was to evoke astonishment, disbelief, and awe. Heavy pieces of stone were made to appear light, delicate, even ephemeral, to float and soar in ways that seem impossible. The rich tones of the primary colors used in stained glass, the sound of music written to resonate with the inner chords of the soul,

and the manner in which the building drew the visitor into it—all combined to make a Gothic cathedral one of the most astonishing settings ever built.

A particularly interesting way of enhancing the impression of a divine presence in medieval times was the use of exclusion. Laypeople were generally barred from the cathedral’s inner sanctum, where the clergy performed in honor of the divinity. The laity could hear the service from the nave, where they were permitted to stand, but the service was recited in Latin, a language they could neither speak nor understand. The arrangement seemed calculated to evoke an even deeper sense of the mystery of the divine, thereby enlivening and enriching people’s experience of it. As theater—complete with stage sets, scripts, costumes, dramas, and musical works—great cathedrals evoke what they are meant to evoke perhaps more successfully than any other forms of architecture. An additional confirmation of the sacred force’s presence came through the occurrence of miracles. That cathedrals, which often housed the remains of saints and other holy figures, were the site of ongoing miracles served as proof of the divine’s presence and that the efforts to ensure its benevolence had been effective.

As I mentioned earlier, the fear persisted that the sacred force might abandon the spaces humans had created for it. The power of this fear is evident in accounts of the fire of 1194 at Chartres, which destroyed the entire city along with its treasured cathedral. Chronicles of the event tell that the people fell into a state of general despair because they believed that the fire indicated the Virgin’s extreme displeasure with the citizens of Chartres, whose immoral and heretical conduct had caused her to destroy the basilica she had previously considered to be her earthly home. She had even allowed the destruction of their most sacred relic, the tunic she wore at the time of Christ’s birth, as an indication that she had decided to abandon the city and migrate elsewhere. The tunic was subsequently discovered unburned—taken as miraculous proof that she intended to remain but preferred a grander edifice.<sup>14</sup>

Another expression of this fear appears in Patrick Geary’s fascinating book about relic thefts, *Furta Sacra*. He recounts the history of the robust, profitable, and widespread trade in stolen relics during the medieval period. Part of what fueled this trade was the fact that every cathedral, abbey church, and monastery required some sort of sacred relic as a magnet for pilgrims, a need that developed at the very moment when the Church of Rome was endeavoring to regulate what had fast become an unwieldy collection of saints. The tension between these two developments fostered a flourishing market in stolen relics, which were believed to be more valuable than ones that had been gained legitimately. The reason was that the monks at the relics’ new home could claim that the saint had deliberately, though clandestinely, arranged for the theft in order to be moved to a preferred site. This site was, of course, the setting preferred by the purchaser of the stolen relics.<sup>15</sup>

These examples suggest that medieval people accepted the idea that a sacred force could leave a structure to which it had been drawn. This danger called for actions to ensure that it would not leave. The clergy, who were charged with mediating the relationships of ordinary individuals to the divine, needed to devise ritual practices meant to communicate to the sacred spirit at a particular site that it remained admired, esteemed, and continuously welcome. Above all, everyone was to avoid giving it any reason to leave. This brings us to the principal activity that engaged almost all of the time and energy of members of a monastic order or cathedral chapter: the performance of liturgy.

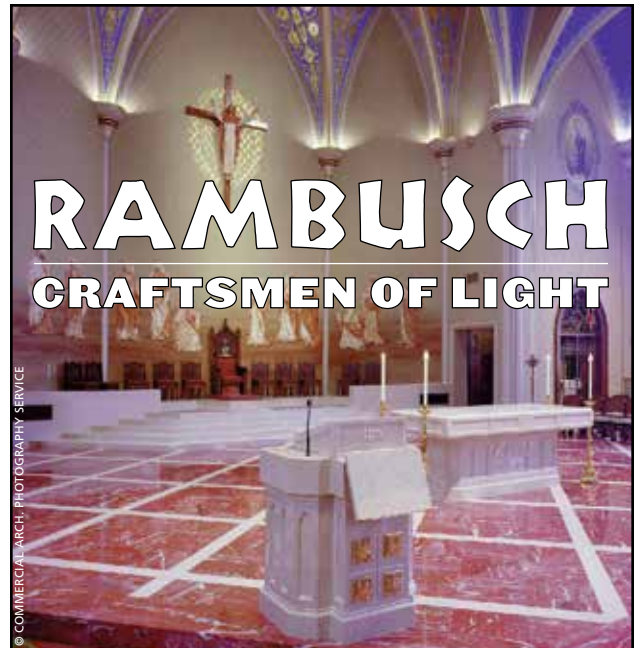
## Protecting Sacred Space

Liturgy comprised daily, weekly, seasonal, and annual cycles of worship engaged in by the canons of a cathedral community. Enactment of liturgy took place each day of the year and demanded the energies of chapter members during most of their waking hours and even into the night. Each day was organized into a sequence of eight prayer services termed the Divine Office; the core of each service was a recitation from the Book of Psalms, and all 150 psalms were sung in their entirety over the course of a week. Alongside the Divine Office was the Mass, which each appointed member of the cathedral community was obliged to celebrate every day. Overlying this principal cycle of daily prayer were supplementary liturgical observances, including special psalms, a daily office of the dead, and a daily little office of the Virgin, not to mention the annual cycle of liturgical seasons and feast days.<sup>16</sup>

All of these activities resulted in an extremely complicated, tightly ordered calendar of prayer services that lent structure to the entire year. In one widely adopted form of the liturgy, the *Sarum Use* (named for the cathedral church at Sarum, i.e., Salisbury), one of thirty-five different possible calendars was selected as a guide for each particular year.<sup>17</sup> According to this densely packed calendar, most of the day and significant parts of the night were spent in prayer. Each service had its own set of rules. These were contained in two sets of books: the *Ordinal* and the *Customary*.<sup>18</sup> Each ran to fifteen volumes and regulated in detail the behavior, demeanor, stance, expression, intonation, posture, and dress of each participant, as well as the text, music, and actions of each service. Together, these books stipulated the where, what, and how of a foundation's entire round of worship for each day of the year. The cathedral, as a setting to which the sacred force presumably had been drawn, provided the ideal space for carrying out this complex project.

Devotion to such a program of worship, day in and day out, over the course of an entire year sent a clear message that in this place the divine was valued above all else.<sup>18</sup>

1. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. "sacred." See also Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained*; H. Knoblauch, "Phenomenology of Religion," 13093-96, esp. 13094; Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*; and Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*.
2. David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies to the History and Theory of Response*, 85-86.
3. Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, 1-38.
4. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 418.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. John Sallis, *Stone*, 26.
8. Quoted in Georges Duby, *The Age of the Cathedrals*, 98.
9. See Sallis, *Stone*, 32-79.
10. Quoted in Duby, *The Age of the Cathedrals*, 122-23.
11. *Ibid.*; quotation at 98.
12. See Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 109-15.
13. William Mahrt, unpublished lecture, "Sacred Space, Sacred Time, and Music in the Processions of the Sarum Rite," delivered to our seminars and travel study groups, most recently in July, 2001.
14. See von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 160-64.
15. Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, xii-xiii, 14, 32-35, 44-45, 56-63, 65.
16. See John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century*, 45-57.
17. *Ibid.*, 5-17, 121-50.
18. For discussions of the *Ordinal* and the *Customary*, respectively, see Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, 206-7, 227-29, 231-32; and 168, 197-98.



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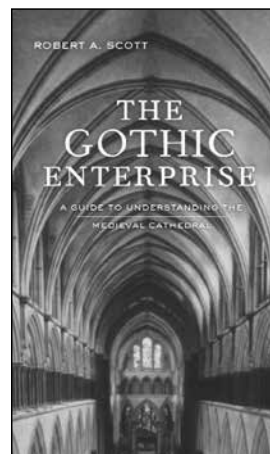
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# TEAMWORK IN HISTORIC REHABILITATION

By Naomi Miroglio, AIA



Large institutions that own historic buildings tend to have informed, experienced staff to work with architects on renovation and seismic strengthening projects. Religious communities and small seminaries, however, often have volunteer committees assembled on an ad hoc basis. These committees play an extremely critical role in realizing a building project, and working together with an architect requires a strong emphasis on communication and consensus building, and a capacity for each side to educate the other.

## Committee Building and Consensus Building

Successful historic rehabilitation projects result when the building committee for a religious facility is composed of members who are good listeners and great communicators. The architect may not be able to make presentations to every group in the congregation, so the committee members are key liaisons to communicate plans to the faith community and gather their feedback.

The best committees include a variety of users — for instance, someone familiar with how the congregation uses the kitchen, someone with intimate knowledge of religious school needs, someone deeply involved in the music program. Usually the committee also includes a clergy member, someone from the governing board, and a member of the congregation who is also an architect.

Having a strong leader, or co-chairs, for the committee is essential for a successful project. In some cases, clergy may provide that leadership. In others, it may come from members who are experienced in business, or comfortable with decision-making. They need the respect of the other committee members and the trust of the congregation's leadership, especially the pastor.

For example, at San Francisco's Calvary Presbyterian Church two co-chairs brought their own expertise to the table. Larry Gardner, Director of Administration at Calvary and a building committee member, notes: "One of the leaders was experienced in construction and hands-on project management. The other was a management professional with extensive experience bringing people and their ideas together. This arrangement worked for us." Jude Laspa, who has worked at Bechtel for many years, and was one of the co-chairs, supports the idea of two leaders. "Because I spent a career in the engineering and construction of large projects I was able to offer that knowledge. I was comfortable dealing with all the service suppliers and how a complex project can come in on budget and schedule. I was not as familiar with what goes on inside the church, especially in the core areas such as music and children's programs. In our situ-

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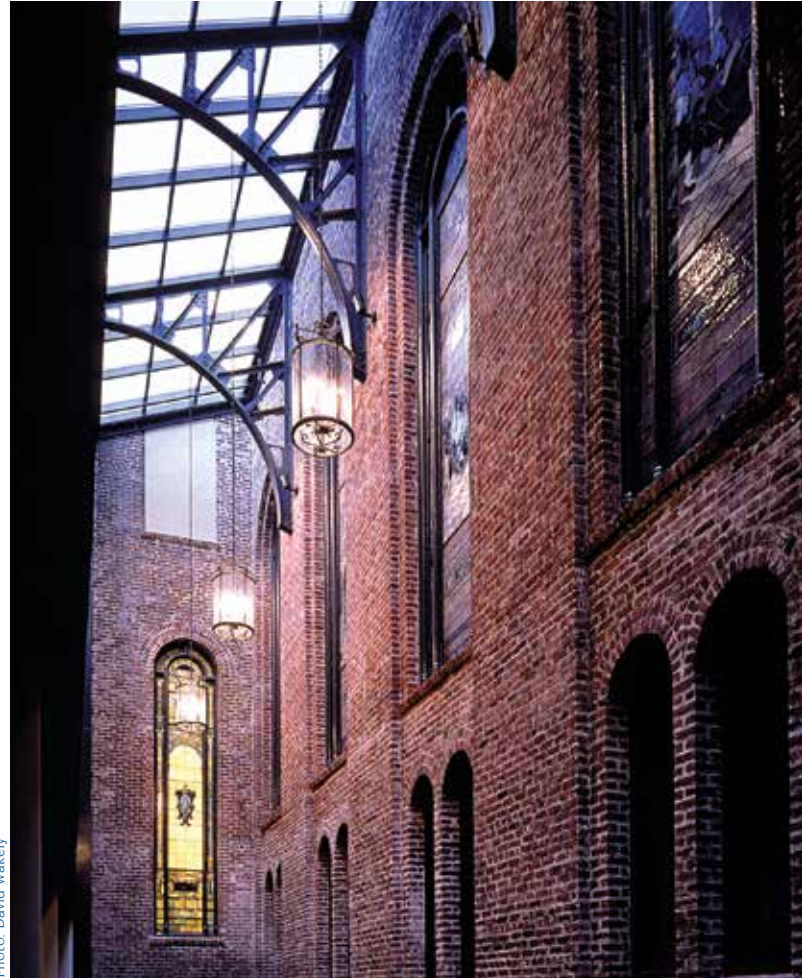


Photo: David Wakely

Exposed bricks are now part of an interior wall in a new lobby space at Calvary Presbyterian Church.

ation it was key to have a co-chair, in the person of Carol Porter, whose own business experience and volunteer experience inside the church gave us the insight and the relationships we needed." If the architect has access to the leaders before selection, he or she can help develop a balanced committee composition, which can save time and money down the road.

The trend is for building committees to hire a professional project manager (PM). As a trained architect, engineer, or contractor, the PM serves as a point of contact for the building committee and handles all meetings, communications, budgeting, and presentations. The PM also conducts fee negotiations with the architect and subconsultants. As an independent voice, the PM can challenge the architect,

or even the congregation when needed. Jude Laspa feels that using professional PMs for renovation and historic rehab projects works. "Volunteer committees really do not have the time or in-depth knowledge that is often required. The independence of the PM from the other service providers, especially on a large project, provides the checks and balances that are very helpful." Gardner continues, "One of the keys to the success of our project was the team of the architect, contractor, and the PM and how they worked together. They made the church's vision a reality." We have worked successfully with project management consultants Hixson & Associates.

When Architectural Resources Group undertook the renovation of Calvary Presbyterian, many on the committee did not have experience reading architectural drawings. At a key point in finalizing the construction documents, the architects took the committee from room to room to explain how the drawings related to the proposed design. It's important to emphasize to committees that the look of the drawings may not necessarily correspond exactly to the finished result. For instance, in the atrium at Calvary, the original brick wall had been covered with plaster which subsequently had been removed. The restoration called for cleaning off the remaining plaster. The committee understood that the cleaning process might leave the bricks with a rough finish. As it turned out, the cleaning method worked very well, but if it hadn't, the committee was prepared.

The Calvary committee also planned to move Sunday school programs to the basement beneath the sanctuary. There was extensive discussion in building committee meetings about the need and relative cost of providing an acoustic separation in the ceiling between the basement and the sanctuary. The team found it difficult to reach consensus on the issue, so it was decided that live testing should take place. A preschool program being held in the existing Calvary complex was invited to go into the basement and sing, dance, jump, and scream. The sound transmission of these activities was recorded in the sanctuary by an acoustical engineer, but, more importantly, the design team and the committee viscerally understood the value of allocating resources for the acoustic treatment.

For the renovation of Scott and Montgomery halls at the San Francisco Theological Seminary (actually located in Marin County), members of the committee also worked closely with the architects and project management team. "Our approach involved meeting with the building committee at the initial stage of the project to express the project's goals and clearly communicate that the scope and program were flexible, while the budget and schedule were already set. Early in the project, we worked with the committee to develop a flexible wish list," says Julie Siegfried of Hixson & Associates. "The key was to get a true cross-section of input from the users. In our meetings, we utilized that wish list to evaluate, prioritize, and determine program needs. The consensus-building and early 'buy in' were critical to keeping the project proceeding within budget and on time."

Because the building committees from religious institutions usually consist of people new to the architectural process, they don't generally have experience reading architectural drawings. As a result, architects can more effectively communicate with a "hands-on" approach. For example, at the seminary the team took short trips to other sites to test items under consideration. Contemplating a potential budget reduction by installing a "hole-less" elevator, the team rode a similar one at a retail outlet to get a sense of its speed and noise. They visited an office building to test a model of an acoustic divider they were considering to provide separation between



Photo: David Wakely

*Restored rotunda space at the San Francisco Theological Seminary.*

classrooms. When it was time to review seating, several different chairs were brought in for the committee to test.

### Responding to Seismic Issues or Damage

Many projects begin out of necessity—for example, a municipality requiring code improvements, such as seismic upgrades for unreinforced masonry buildings, or a structure destroyed by fire. The best way for a congregation to build its enthusiasm for these projects (and generate excitement for fund raising) is to include related improvements, such as the addition of a multipurpose space, or improved mechanical systems.

When Calvary Presbyterian Church needed to seismically upgrade its existing building, the congregants realized that they had an opportunity to redesign the historic and contemporary spaces to better meet the growing church community's programmatic needs. Circulation was confusing, and the basement space was so unappealing it went unused. In the conceptual design phase, the architects identified the possibility for creating a new space between the historic building and the education wing—a new lobby and pre-function space. This new atrium (a feature that was not part of the original program) became the central focus for creating excitement about the project and raising funds.

### Mutual Education

Working together, congregations and architects can educate each other. Building committees can educate architects about their history and priorities for the future. In many cases working on historic buildings, people's attachments and prejudices have to be



addressed. For instance, the congregation might have fond attachments to a space that has outlived its usefulness. At Calvary Presbyterian, restrooms existed in the space proposed for the atrium. Many members of the congregation expressed concern over losing them, in spite of the dramatic improvements the new space would offer. In order to address the issue, new restrooms were installed on the same level as the existing ones.

In some cases, congregants may not initially be open to ideas of utilizing spaces that have been problematic in the past. For example, the professors at the San Francisco Theological Seminary were convinced that since the main rotunda in Scott Hall had leaked for 50 years, it could never be water-tight, and a student center should not be located there. The leaks were related to a skylight, and the architects emphasized that when it was properly repaired the problem would cease (it did). Through careful analysis and sensitivity to the committee member's opinions, architects can help building committees understand the design and construction process, the value of their historic buildings, and all the complexities of codes and budgets. They can also suggest possibilities the committee has yet to consider.

For example, the San Francisco Theological Seminary had put off renovating Scott and Montgomery halls under the assumption that the cost would be too high for a small seminary, and the Board of Trustees was reluctant to raise funds to restore buildings that weren't in use. However, a 1996 master plan found that the campus badly needed conference facilities and more classrooms, and that the administrative offices were dispersed. Surveys also revealed that students felt the campus had no core, no central gathering place, and no strong sense of community.

A 1998 feasibility study concluded that both buildings could be seismically upgraded at a moderate cost. Centralizing administrative offices in Montgomery Hall would free up the conference center for its original use, and Scott Hall could be transformed into a student center with classrooms. Because the historic stone buildings were seen as giving the campus a revived center and identity, it proved easy to raise the necessary funds from alumni and elsewhere. Since the restoration, enrollment has increased.

St. Peter's Catholic Church in San Francisco, a Victorian-era wood-frame church built in 1880, suffered significant fire damage in 1997 that destroyed most of the roof and a portion of the altars. Many in the congregation were less interested in restoring the historic fabric of the building than in developing a more contemporary layout for worship in the nave.

Working with a liturgical consultant, parish-wide sessions were held to gather feedback about what the members wanted for the new space. The altar platform was brought closer to the congregation, and the old chancel space in the rear was converted to a chapel. The architects listened carefully and reacted to these concerns in their design, which did not replicate the original layout. After building trust with the congregation, they were able to communicate the value of the original decorative plasterwork, paintings, and other historical features to the experience of the worship space. When a disaster spurs the renovation work, it can be helpful to involve the community in the research and discovery process. For example, several parishioners brought in wedding photographs that were studied under a magnifying glass to gain information about the pre-existing conditions.

### Balancing Design Goals

With church rehabilitation projects, it's important to determine early on where the greatest cost impact is likely to be. With this



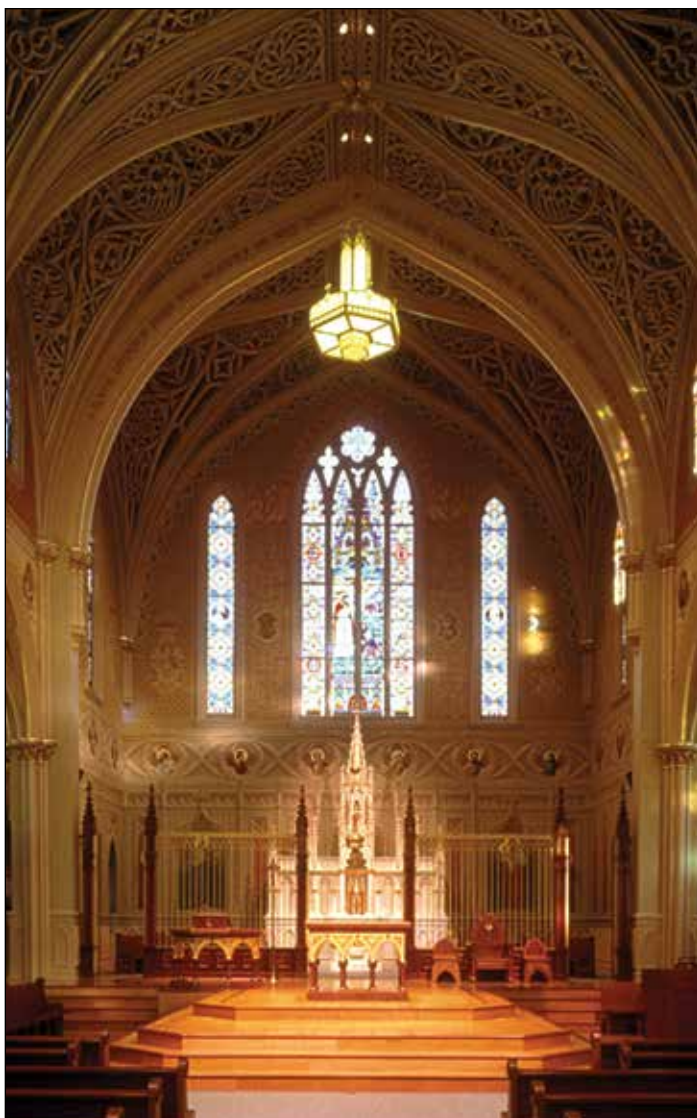
Photo: Archdiocese of San Francisco

*Fire damage to the nave of St. Peter's Catholic Church in San Francisco, sustained in 1997.*

knowledge, the designers' resources can be focused during the design development phase on documenting those areas with the greatest thoroughness. Focused design development documents help committees know where the project impacts are the greatest on the budget so they can decide whether to defer other desired renovations for a later phase. In some cases, phased construction has the advantage of providing congregations with a tangible finished result within budget, which provides a boost for implementing future phases (and fulfilling long wish lists).

Such an approach was used at the San Francisco Theological Seminary. After the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the rubble stone walls of Scott and Montgomery halls were declared seismically unfit and the buildings abandoned. By the time renovations began in the late-1990s, the slate roofs were leaking to such an extent that mushrooms were growing on the walls. Early in the design process the architects researched the Seminary archives and found letters from the original architect addressing roof leaks that began the year after the building was completed. This indicated that the current water problems were related to a flaw in the original design and not a deferred maintenance issue. Poorly packed mortar and deteriorating stones exacerbated the roofing problem. During design development, the new roof design and repointing work was thoroughly






*Restored nave of St. Peter's Church, partly recreated with the aid of historical photos.*

detailed, which helped ensure accurate bids from contractors and kept the project on budget.

At Calvary, the main concept in the early stages was the creation of an interior atrium lobby between the historic church and a modern education building constructed immediately adjacent. The major risk in this case was the potential for scheduling delays that would result from addressing San Francisco's complex code requirements. The proposed atrium was possible only if the City of San Francisco would allow removal of fire-rated construction that existed between the buildings and treat the individual buildings as a single structure. Extra attention during design development, and working with San Francisco's pre-approval process was crucial to make sure the concept was viable. The process included meetings with the city officials to review past approvals, property line research, and complete application of the building and fire codes for preliminary design. The agreements made during the pre-application process were documented and included in the ultimate permit submittal, but the process gave the design team and the committee the confidence to move forward with the design. And when the community knew the dramatic interior space was part of the upgrade it was easier to fund raise.

## Conclusion

Architects working with church building committees encounter a wide variety of experience levels and dynamics. Some groups are divided on whether to tear down or restore a potentially historic building. Other committees are very sophisticated about the historic value of the structure and even know where to find replacement materials. In the end, however, communication is the most important factor. If the committee leader, architect, and in some cases a professional project manager have a strong relationship from the beginning, they can bring the committee to consensus, and the committee can then communicate with the congregation. The resulting synergy is most likely to produce a building that preserves its historic value while meeting the demands of contemporary worship. 

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# Notes & Comments

## Jubilee Church is Dedicated in Rome

Photo: Andrea Jemolo



Richard Meier's soaring white Jubilee Church was dedicated as part of the festivities surrounding the celebration of Pope John Paul II's 25th anniversary as pontiff in October. Located in the Tor Tre Teste area of Rome, the gleaming church features concrete, stucco, travertine, and glass and three dramatic shells or arcs evoking gliding white sails. The concrete arcs are graduated in height from 56 to 88 feet. According to Meier, "With the Jubilee Church, we have worked to create a new Roman Catholic church for the 21st century – a landmark that upholds and builds upon the city's rich architectural tradition." The Jubilee Church complex contains both a church and a community center, connected by a four-story atrium. The glass ceilings and skylights of the church span the entire length of the building, drawing parishioners' eyes upward. Natural light flows generously inside and plays on the wall surfaces throughout the day. At night, the building emanates light from within creating an ethereal presence and animating the landscape.

The four-level community center is an integral component of the overall design of the Jubilee Church, and it functions as a key gathering place for social, educational, and recreational activities. A paved pedestrian approach or sagrato on the east, near the center of the adjacent Tor Tre Teste housing project, encourages parishioners to gather in the piazza as was done in the sagrati (churchyards) of medieval Italy. In 1996 the Vicariato di Roma awarded the commission to Meier following an invited competition, which included Tadao Ando, Gunter Behnisch, Santiago Calatrava, Peter Eisenman, and Frank Gehry. Construction on the Jubilee Church commenced in July 1998.

## Quote of Note

*"An instinctive taste teaches men to build their churches in flat countries, with spire steeples, which, as they cannot be referred to any other object, point as with silent finger to the sky and star."*

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge

## Tilt-Up Churches Win Awards

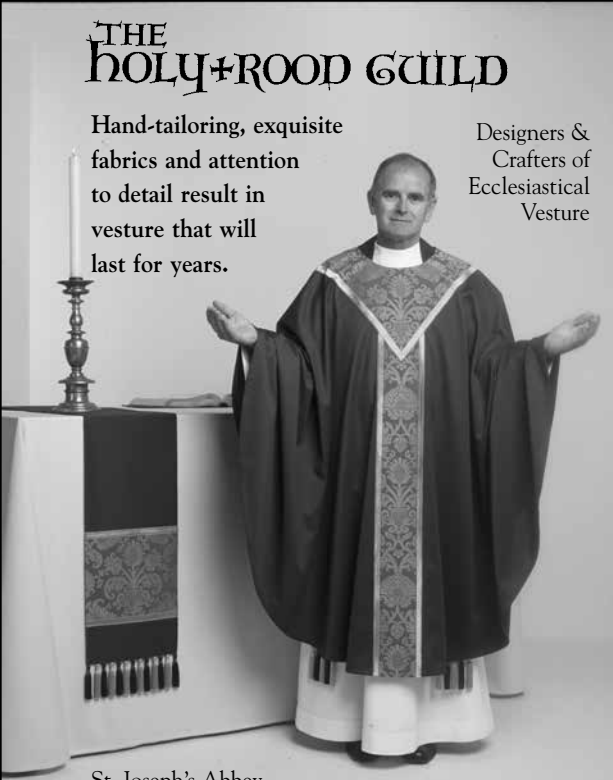


Two religious buildings are winners of the 2003 Tilt-Up Achievement Awards, sponsored by the Tilt-Up Concrete Association. Sunset Christian (*above*) in Rocklin, California, is an 83,000-square-foot facility that was built at a cost of \$85 per square foot. Complicated by the varied end-uses of the facility – from a 2,000-seat religious sanctuary to administrative and educational areas and a gymnasium – as well as a limited construction budget, tilt-up construction offered durability, speed, and economy. Constructed in only 270 days, it was essential that the facility stand out from the surrounding retail and commercial buildings.

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# Notes & Comments

The other winner, All Saints Chapel in Dallas, Texas, uses interior concrete tilt wall panels finished with a smooth plaster coating. The edges of the panels were formed to 90-degree corners instead of standard beveling. On the exterior, the panels were covered with a thin concrete coating to seal the concrete and provide a uniform texture. It is estimated that the tilt-up construction saved approximately \$500,000 in construction costs.

## Faith & Form Seminar in Switzerland

Switzerland will be the base for the 2004 Faith & Form Seminar, September 15-29. This will be the eleventh art and architecture tour lead by Prof. Donald Bruggink. Churches and museums, some old and magnificent, many modern and open to evaluation, will be the focus of the tour. For more information contact: donb@westernsem.edu.

## Harold Fisher, 1901-2003

Harold Fisher, a founding member of the Church Architectural Guild, predecessor to IFRAA, died on November 4, 2003 at the age of 102. Active in his Detroit firm Harold H. Fisher & Associates into his 101st year, he won several awards in recent years, including IFRAA's Edward S. Frey Award for outstanding achievement in religious architecture. He often said that architecture kept him alive, and that religious structures offered the greatest opportunity for creative expression, with their integration of architecture, art, and sculpture. He will be missed by his large family, and by the hundreds of friends and colleagues who loved and admired him.

## Exploring Cleveland's 'Treasures Within'



Photo: Rev. Carl G. Harkins Jr. AIA

The Park Synagogue in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, one of the few works in the U.S. by German architect Erich Mendelsohn, was one of seven sites visited during the recent two-day IFRAA conference, "The Treasures Within," which explored the symbiosis between communities of faith and the larger neighborhoods around them, in which each helps to support the other. The conference combined visits to sacred sites throughout the Cleveland area with talks on their history and connections with the ethnic, social, and civic context.

## Send Your News to Faith & Form

The editors of Faith & Form want to bring its readers the latest news of those involved in the fields of religion, art, and architecture. Send press releases and materials to the attention of Michael J. Crosbie, Editor, Faith & Form, c/o Steven Winter Associates, 50 Washington Street, Norwalk, CT 06854; fax: 203-852-0741; email: FaithNForm@aol.com.

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# JUST ONE MORE THING...

By Betty H. Meyer



Have you ever noticed how often there is no mention of an architect's name in what may be a long feature article in a newspaper about a project? I have long regretted this. I was reminded of this kind of thoughtlessness recently when I visited an historical society and was impressed with some striking stained glass, but I looked in vain for the names of the artists or studio that created the glass. Nearby was a placard describing the historical period, the symbols, and the figures included, etc., but no mention of the artists. I was indignant and my thoughts were filled with blame for this lack of recognition and appreciation.

Why does it seem that the professions of the architect and artist are almost invisible in our culture? I puzzled about this and wondered what can we do about it? Architect Robert Rubin in a recent letter to *Architectural Record* wrote: "Education is a primary responsibility of every profession. To profess is to teach, as we see in the word professor." Have we failed as professionals to teach? Have we failed as educators? The architect/artist communicates through images and design but apparently these are not sufficiently understood by professionals in other fields and certainly by the general public. Conversely we are not always receptive to their language and partly because they have not lived up to their responsibility to teach, but practically we have to be concerned with the language of the theologian, the clergy, the seminaries, and of course the building committee from all varieties of fields. Hopefully we will be willing to educate and to be educated. How shall we begin?

Dr. Ken Olson, a clinical psychologist and clergyman, has said that to be really educated you must be willing to hang loose, to let go of long-held prejudices and absolutes. These can be idolatrous. We must not judge and pigeonhole people, but accept that they have a position too, and are searching for an intellectual form that will give them some peace of mind in this troubled world. A parishioner wants to feel at home in his new church where he will relive his memories in his meditation and prayers. However, the architect can help him realize that memories should not be fixed in time but must be made available to others, who in time will cherish their own memories. A design can call for action outside all memories into the demanding present. Thus, the coming together of the architect/artist, the clergy, and the building committee is an imperative to educate each other, to learn the others' languages, and to know that we are not monopolizing the conversation with our own language.

Steps to keep in mind might include:

- Examine the differences among you;
- Listen to negatives as possibilities;
- Be prepared with knowledge;
- Realize you may flounder awhile;
- Explain and believe in your position;
- Imagine creative solutions;

- Remember the power of healing laughter;
- Remember all are working for community acceptance and for the culture at large.

Finally a solution will emerge that will represent the many engaged in the dialogue.

The following poem was originally published in *Architectural Digest*, and I congratulate them:


*To set in order—that's the task*

*Both Eros and Apollo ask:*

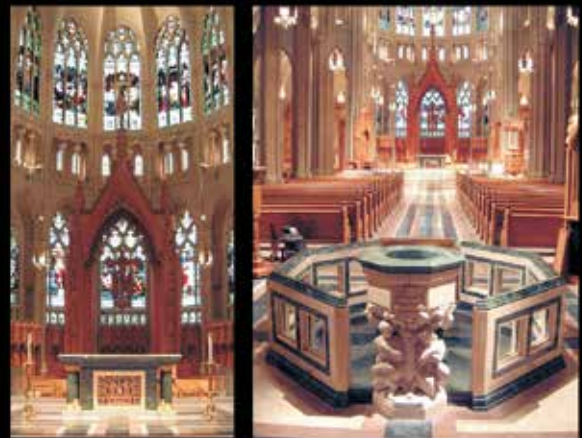
*For Art and Life agree in this*

*That each intends a synthesis.*

I would like to end with words from John Dillenberger in his book, *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities*: "This stretching of sensibilities of all parties will require energy and courage but pluralistic perceptions will add new dimensions to a secular society with transcendent yearnings."

Celebrate diversity, but remember it expresses itself in many languages, and ours is only one. Hopefully, others will do the same and give credit that is due to the artist, architect, and clergy. 

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