bizarre sounds have come to find them agreeable, even though there is nothing about them capable of giving pleasure."

One could argue that the very mission of the Académie in Blondel’s mind was to exterminate Gothic and replace it with a noble, rational classicism. The academician Jean-François Félibien is likewise presented as an early champion of Gothic because he wrote the first systematic history of it (36ff.); yet his very purpose in doing so (as his subsequent "Dissertation touchant l’architecture antique et l’architecture gothique" made clear) was to move beyond idealist condemnations of Gothic like Blondel’s in favor of a more convincing historical demonstration of its inferiority.

At times, Roustau-Chambon’s insensitivity to conflict leads her into outright error. She asserts, for example, that the important academic architect Robert de Cotte composed happily in either Gothic or classical, depending on the situation (86ff.). The basis for this claim is a series of Gothic project drawings for Orléans Cathedral and Notre-Dame de Bonne-Nouvelle in Orléans, where de Cotte served as royal advisor and nominal overseer. In fact, as Georges Chenesseau, Robin Middleton, Robert Neuman, and others have indicated, these designs were the work of de Cotte’s local site architect, Guillaume Hénault, who unlike de Cotte was something of a Gothic enthusiast. Indeed, what happened at Orléans Cathedral is that all the local parties wanted the church to be Gothic, while academicians like de Cotte tried repeatedly, though in vain, to impose classical designs.

These sorts of conflicts cannot be erased if one wants to understand what was at stake in the use of Gothic during the period under discussion. This was an architecture whose very name was a synonym for barbarism among the metropolitan and academic elites, yet which people continued to love and to use. Any appraisal of Gothic during these years, or of the statements about it by theoreticians, architects, churchmen, or amateurs, should take account of this basic reality. Roustau-Chambon has done a real service in highlighting the extent and nature of postmedieval Gothic architecture, and in fleshing out several very interesting hypotheses. But for those anticipating a consideration of this architecture in its fuller cultural and ideological contexts, the wait continues.

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**Note**


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Bruno Adorni, editor

**La chiesa a pianta centrale. Tempio civico del Rinascimento**


The centrally planned church in the Renaissance has been the subject of far more literature than churches of the Latin-cross type. This interest reflects the fascination of architects of the period with the type and the large number of examples they built, and has been continued in celebrated modern scholarly articles written by Wolfgang Lorz, Staale Sinding-Larsen, and Rudolf Wittkower. The present volume is composed of two sections: a series of general essays, of varying usefulness, followed by studies of single churches. In the first section, Paul Davies offers observations on a number of little-known churches—including Madonna del Sorbo, Formello, Madonna della Quercia, Viterbo; S. Maria delle Lacrime, Trevi; and S. Rocco, Bagnaia—in which the need to maintain the original location of the sacred image governed the shape and orientation of the church around it. Amedeo Belluzzi surveys the references by architects to centralized churches, reminding us that such plans had the blessing of Vitruvius and Christian theologians such as Durandus and Sicardus, and were linked to prestigious precedents like the Anastasis Rotunda in Jerusalem, the Pantheon in Rome, and others of smaller scale.

Most Renaissance architects enthused over the form of the centrally planned church. Michelangelo’s new St. Peter’s Basilica provided a much-copied model for the Greek-cross type on a large scale, although after prolonged and fierce arguments a nave was added. Extending to small-scale churches, the liturgical problems created by the centralized scheme arose from the necessity for a sacristy, as Bruno Adorni discusses in his treatment of S. Maria della Steccata in Parma, as well as from the location of the main altar and its relationship to minor altars. Francesco di Giorgio, who presented the most incisive discussion of the subject, cited Augustine (probably *De civitate dei*, 10: 4–5) in declaring that placing the altar in the center of the church was a pagan practice. Others objected that it was typical of antique mausolea and preferred the Latin cross because of its liturgical convenience, its consonance with an ever-increasing Catholic literature on the cross as a symbol, and its correspondence with the basilicas of Constantine at the beginning of institutionalized Christianity.

In the studies devoted to individual churches, the emphasis is on the events and byzantine machinations leading from an initial miracle to the construction of the church, rather than on formal analysis of the architecture or the church’s status as a civic temple. Fabrizio Tonelli presents a lode of new material on S. Maria della Ghiera at Reggio Emilia, designed by Alessandro Balbo to commemorate the miracle of a deaf mute who was cured in 1596, following more than a century of squabbles between laymen, clergy, and the diocese for control over the building. Similarly, Elizabetta Susani brings new information to the consideration of the background and patronage of S. Maria Incoronata at Lodi, designed initially by Giovanni Battagio in 1488 on the site of a brothel.

Discussion of some of the most spectacular central-plan churches of the age reappears within the context of these case studies. Riccardo Pacciani analyzes S. Maria della Pietà at Bibbiona, exploring the probable role of Francesco di
Tommaso Soderini, along with S. Maria delle Carceri at Prato, where the choice fell first between an oratory or a hospital, and then between a longitudinal church and a round one, as at Madonna della Ghiera in Reggio Emilia. The little drawing by Leonardo da Vinci of S. Maria at Bibbona may not necessarily tell us what the church looked like initially, although the tympanums in his drawing may have been part of the original structure (they also appear at S. Maria delle Carceri and in the chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal at S. Miniato). However, the Brunelleschian cupola may be an addition by Leonardo, who was fixated on it and used it frequently for his church drawings in MS. B of the late 1480s. The absence of any competent treatment of Leonardo’s centrally planned church designs in this book may be forgiven since he did not build anything himself. Adorni retells the story of S. Maria della Croce at Crema, in which Battagio’s debt to Leon Battista Alberti’s S. Andrea at Mantua is clear and the drum of the ground-floor exterior of the church appears to be a convex version of the courtyard of the house of Andrea Mantegna at Mantua.

Arnaldo Bruschi returns to S. Maria della Consolazione at Todi and attributes a change of plan in 1511–12 to Donato Bramante. The surviving wooden model presents similarities to Bramantesque architecture, and in 1574 bishop Pietro Camaiani mentioned a model made by the architect. Yet, there is no contemporaneous documentary proof of Bramante’s presence in Todi in 1511–12. New contracts were made at that time because the building had not yet been completed in the manner already agreed on (“non essendogli finora messa in esecuzione nel modo gia convenuto”), which suggests the desire to continue with a design developed before 1512 (by Bramante?) rather than to proceed with a new scheme. The architect, whoever he was, derived the large niches of the ground-floor interior from the Roman Nicchioni at Todi—an interesting quotation of the nearest available ancient monument. Georg Satzinger discusses S. Biagio at Montepulciano, outlining the patronage of Antonio del Monte and the apparent rivalry with the Calcinaio at Cortona, another theme that emerges from Adorni’s essay on S. Maria di Campagna in Piacenza, which was intended to emulate the Steccata at Parma. Belluzzi restudies the Madonna dell’Umiltà at Pistoia with the convincing argument that despite the long building history and changes of architect, what we see today results predominantly from Giuliano da Sangallo’s plans of the early 1490s.

Other authors bring new research and material to bear on little-studied churches. Caterina Cardamone considers S. Maria in Portico a Fontegiusta in Siena, begun before 1478 and completed in the 1490s, explaining in detail the dedication and reasons behind it. As the author notes, it is difficult to find illuminating parallels or sources for the structure—a square with four very tall stone columns and composite capitals supporting cross-vaults with meeting rooms above. If there were some connection with German church-types, such as S. Maria della Pietà al Camposanto in Rome, it would be interesting to know why the Sieneese drew on a foreign architectural tradition. Perhaps further investigations by the author will establish whether the exterior of the church, which has pilasters without capitals and architraves with only two fascias, has any links with the work of Francesco di Giorgio. The erudite Matteo Ceriana discusses the beautiful Miracoli at Brescia with its baldacchino on the street marking the original position of the miraculous image. The architect is unknown, but it seems likely that Gaspare da Coirano, who worked at the Loggia at Brescia, was involved. Ceriana’s investigation convincingly identifies the building as one of the most sophisticated examples in northern Italy of the way in which local designers, armed with a rich knowledge of all’antica decoration derived mainly by indirect means from the ancient world, used methods similar to those of Giovanni Antonio Amadeo at the much less sophisticated Colleoni Chapel in Bergamo of the 1470s to recreate imaginatively the look of an antique building. The Miracoli and its kin, with their urbane and inventive designs, represent buildings that do not deserve the neglect they have suffered because of the vagaries of Anglo-Saxon taste.

Antonello Alici examines the church of S. Maria di Macereto near Vico, built from the 1520s. On the outside, it is an irregular octagon with a tall ground floor with an order surmounted by an attic story, while the interior is configured as a Greek cross with four triconches. The author identifies similarities with the Consolazione at Todi and persuasively suggests links with Ambrogio Barocci and Francesco di Giorgio. Indeed, the church has elements in common with the bizarre building in the background of the Nativity panel by Francesco from the church of S. Domenico in Siena.

Finally, Debora Antonini’s essay on S. Sebastiano in Milan (written with Aurora Scotti) includes an unpublished document that enables her to reflect on the financial aspects of the project, a continuation of her recent study of the church. This powerful structure was originally conceived as a two-story cylinder with a Pantheon-like cupola lit by small windows let into the coffers as in Bramante’s choir at S. Maria del Popolo. It was then changed (by Pellegrino Tibaldi?) so that the upper story acquired a fenestrated drum with a cupola of smaller diameter and the architectural decoration became richer. In other words, S. Sebastiano constitutes a perfect counterexample to the widely diffused hypothesis that post-Tridentine patrons were in some way aiming at “poor” ecclesiastical architecture.

La chiesa a piana centrale contains a wealth of material that, by turns, revisits well-known monuments from different perspectives, expands the view to include worthy but obscure buildings, and introduces new research based on fresh analyses and documentary finds. As a whole, it complements, but does not entirely replace, Sinding-Larsen’s captivating and still-fundamental arti-
cle on central-plan churches (with its slightly fractured English) of nearly forty years ago.

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Notes

Jeanne Halgren Kilde
When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America

Jeanne Halgren Kilde’s impressive new book is a Rosetta stone for an undervalued genre of American ecclesiastical architecture. This well-researched and tightly argued study insightfully interprets and contextualizes the American neomedieval auditorium churches built in the Gilded Age. Kilde provides an in-depth, interdisciplinary analysis of these novel and ubiquitous religious structures, which were constructed by middle-class congregations of Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians in the years between the Civil War and World War I. Large numbers of buildings in this genre were erected in the 1880s and 1890s, but it fell out of fashion with both architects and architectural critics in the early years of the twentieth century, at least partly through the influence of Ralph Adams Cram and other champions of a more strict and studied Gothic architecture. Kilde’s work adds complexity to our understanding of both American religious architecture and American religious history.

When Church Became Theatre posits that the architecture of neomedieval auditorium churches expressed a tripartite religious agenda that formed the basis of late-nineteenth-century evangelical Protestantism. The three prongs of this agenda were worship, family ministry, or the Christian nurture of all members of the congregation; and missionary work, or Christian outreach to individuals outside the church. She argues that a commitment to this program, as well as a shared architectural form, bound disparate denominations into a unified evangelical culture during the period of her study.

Kilde asserts that the characteristic form for the sanctuaries of these churches, described as an inverted cone in which preachers spoke up to audiences rising around them, was a revolutionary rejection of traditional Protestant worship spaces, in which elevated ministers expiated down to congregations seated in rectilinear matrices. She convincingly demonstrates that this spatial departure was rooted in Charles Grandison Finney’s urban revivals of the 1830s. By examining three sanctuaries designed for Finney—the Chatham Street Chapel (1832), created from a playhouse in New York City; the Broadway Tabernacle (1836), also built in New York City; and the Oberlin Meeting House (1844), in Oberlin, Ohio—the author explores the dialectical relationship between transformations in worship spaces and systems of power among congregations and preachers. She positions this architectural transformation amid shifts in society occurring in Jacksonian America, including an expanding populist activism, the increasing charismatic authority of religious leaders, and the diminishing importance of traditional social hierarchies.

Following the Civil War, new auditorium sanctuaries were erected in middle-class suburbs surrounding urban centers as congregations followed parishioners out of downtown districts increasingly relegated to commerce and the working classes. Although the central worship spaces of these edifices were innovative in that they included individual upholstered seats arranged in curvilinear rows, and facilitated musical performance by including expanded organs and choir lofts, they were clad in neomedieval exteriors that spoke of the rootedness of the Christian tradition by using either Gothic or Richardsonian Romanesque motifs. Resonances with the arsenals and armories being built across the country in these styles during the same decades allowed the churches to express a martial Christianity that could be counted on to both battle sin and defend institutional order. Kilde argues that in the Gilded Age, during which Americans became discerning consumers, interior amenities and ostentatious exterior ornamentation were significant factors in a church’s ability to attract congregants successfully, as were the allure of its pastor and the quality of the musical programming. By serving as the window dressing for the goods within, a church’s physical plant thus contributed significantly to its financial viability.

Kilde further contends that church interiors and domestic spaces approached each other asymptotically during these years, as the sacred quality ascribed to each contributed to the character of the other. Just as the cult of domesticity elevated the importance of the family dwelling, a church came to be seen as a home, both for the inhabitation of the deity and for the nurturance of the congregation’s individual members. As a result, furnishing patterns of churches changed, and new spaces such as kitchens, parlors, and Sunday-school rooms were included in building plans. These spaces, newly enclosed under church roofs, served the second point of the evangelical agenda, that of family ministry, which Kilde sees as mediating between the era’s masculine public sphere and its feminine domestic realm. Women played an active role in making the church a second home for their families. Kilde links the inclusion of parlors and kitchens in church buildings to a burgeoning of women’s participation in church affairs and thus also to an expansion of women’s circumscribed behavior.