In 1864, the English Catholic hierarchy commissioned Edward Welby Pugin (hereafter Pugin) to design a new church for its seminary in Rome, the Venerable English College (Figure 1). Pugin’s vision of the collegiate chapel, St. Thomas of Canterbury, as a Gothic Revival church in the heart of the papal city and within sight of St. Peter’s is a testament to the newfound confidence of English Catholics in the mid-nineteenth century. It can be regarded as a mandate not only for the reawakening of religious fervor—and devotional practices and the degree of social and political tolerance that such requires—but also for the restoration (in both senses of the word) of past principles of architectural style.

The choice of Pugin as architect and his designs for a medieval religious building in Rome to symbolize the future of Catholicism in Britain is an important, if curious, story. By tracking the development of this major church-building project, the emergence of a legitimate English Catholic identity as distinct from a Roman Catholic one can be traced. The project underlines the intrinsic link between stylistic preferences and moral and religious attitudes as depicted in the built—and rebuilt—environment. The commission to design the new Church of St. Thomas is well documented in the correspondence between Pugin and the English College, which is preserved in the college archive in Rome. The archive holds material dating from the fourteenth century to the present day and is a particularly rich source of commentary on the nineteenth century, when the English College served as a barometer of the changing religio-political relations between Britain and Italy, and the papacy and Rome. These records reveal a historical context fraught with dichotomies: allegiance and divergence, continuity and conversion, retrospection and revolution, union and persecution. That the development of St. Thomas reveals so much about the issues of its day is even more remarkable given that Pugin’s commission to design the new church ultimately failed.

This article is thus an account of profound learning punctuated by failure. The checkered history of the Church of St. Thomas provides a unique historical lens for studying the somewhat symbiotic relationship between the evolution of the Gothic Revival movement and the reestablishment of Catholicism in England. The Gothic Revival—the anticlassicist trend toward a return to the building styles of the Middle Ages characterized by pointed arches and high levels of craftsmanship—was practiced throughout northern and central Europe. Although early interpretations and reproductions of Gothic architecture appeared in the eighteenth century, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century, when architects moved away from purist imitation of Gothic models toward the creation of original works based on Gothic principles, that the Gothic Revival reached maturation. Since then, the status of Gothic style within the Roman Catholic Church has fluctuated in large part due to changing emphases in Catholic styles of worship. As Catholicism made a comeback in England, Roman forms of ritual...
strengthened while lay influence weakened in the Catholic Church, contributing to the devaluation of the English Gothic style as propounded by Pugin’s father A. W. N. Pugin and the Ecclesiologists. Pugin’s commission to design the new Church of the Venerable English College in Rome occurs at the nucleus of this transformation from English to Roman Catholicism and attests to the concurrent and correlate nature of Gothic Revivalism and English Catholicism.

A. W. N. Pugin and the Gothic Revival

A key proponent of the return to first principles of Gothic architecture was the renowned English architect, designer, and writer, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–52), whose passion for Gothic design was underpinned by his powerful conviction that architecture, morality, and faith are all interconnected. His study of ancient ecclesiastical architecture caused him to convert to Catholicism in 1834, a faith from which he never wavered. In *Contrasts*, published in 1836, A. W. N. Pugin argued that art and architecture in Britain were in a poor state because they had been divorced from the Catholic Church; Gothic, he declared, was the only suitable style of architecture for the expression of Christian—and specifically English Catholic—social values. His ideas appealed to numerous Catholic patrons, most notably John Talbot, sixteenth Lord Shrewsbury, for whom he built in Staffordshire numerous churches, convents, and an ancestral home.
A. W. N. Pugin's vision of English church architecture looked only at English and northern European sources and restricted itself to the centuries preceding the Reformation. It did not incorporate the fundamental changes in Catholic liturgy and devotion that, following the Council of Trent (1545–63), permeated church building throughout mainland Europe because, by 1570, Catholicism in England had been banned under Elizabeth I, and the construction of indigenous Catholic churches was halted.5

A. W. N. Pugin's popular brand of Gothicism espoused a style of architecture—and a sense of self—that emanated from, and was sympathetic to, the English soil and local resources. One of his clearest statements on the subject of English Catholic identity is a letter from 1842 in which he declared, “our ancestors were not Roman Catholics. They were English Catholics and our course in communion with Rome. We have had an English church from the days of the Blessed Austen. Our liturgy was not Roman but peculiar to England... [Never] acknowledge yourself a Roman Catholic.”6 This advocacy of a distinct English Catholicism pervaded A. W. N. Pugin's architectural standards, as was reflected in his vociferous aversion to baroque architecture. When visiting Rome in 1847, he did not like what he saw, describing the churches there as “frightful” and St. Peter’s itself as “more ugly than I expected” and “vilely constructed.”

The following anecdote, recorded by Benjamin Ferrey in his 1861 biography of A. W. N. Pugin, exposes the deep divide in Catholic taste that the younger Pugin was to encounter in his own career.

When [A. W. N.] Pugin was in Dorsetshire, engaged in rebuilding a chancel and parsonage, a friend started him upon a subject on which he knew that Pugin felt very uneasy just then, viz. the Italian taste that was rife amongst the Roman Catholics in England. To the utter bewilderment of those present he began vehemently to denounce the Romanizers; and, in his vociferous aversion to baroque architecture. When visiting Rome in 1847, he did not like what he saw, describing the churches there as “frightful” and St. Peter’s itself as “more ugly than I expected” and “vilely constructed.”

The following anecdote, recorded by Benjamin Ferrey in his 1861 biography of A. W. N. Pugin, exposes the deep divide in Catholic taste that the younger Pugin was to encounter in his own career.

By the time Pope Pius IX reestablished the English Catholic hierarchy in September 1850—there had been no English Catholic bishops since the last had died during the reign of Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century—Gothic must have seemed as if it were the official style of English Catholicism. But A. W. N. Pugin’s outspoken integration of religion, nationality, and design with his vivid public endorsement of the Gothic Revival was potentially threatening to religious order in England. In the late 1840s, his stubborn insistence that a chancel screen should be included in the Cathedral of St. George, Southwark, alienated the Roman Catholic clergy and represented the demise of his position as leading Catholic architect.7 In 1851, at the climax of the rood screen controversy, the preeminent Cardinal Wiseman chastised him for asserting English Catholicism over Roman Catholicism.8 Paradoxically or prophetically, A. W. N. Pugin’s untimely death in 1852 coincided with escalating momentum for the Gothic Revival in Britain.

A. W. N. Pugin’s championship of all things Gothic and English Catholic was a controversial legacy to leave to his son. Yet, Pugin adopted the cause enthusiastically and, much to his credit, transformed the relationship between architecture and religion from one of nostalgic purism to a kind of pragmatism fit for a modern age.

Pugin and the Succession of the Cause

Pugin (1834–75) was the eldest son of A. W. N. Pugin and his second wife, Louisa. He received no formal schooling and was trained as an architect and designer under the tutelage of his illustrious and industrious father. The two enjoyed a particularly close relationship. Pugin was only seventeen when his father died, an event which occasioned his first independent work—the tomb monument for his father.9 As designated head of the family, Pugin took over the Pugin practice and quickly established himself as an architect and designer in his own right, extending and altering his father’s projects while developing his own portfolio.10 Between 1852 and 1861, Pugin added to his father’s work at Oscott College and St. Edmund’s College and, in 1856, he designed the junior seminary at Ushaw.11

Like his father, Pugin was an energetic, uncompromising, and incessant worker, and his contemporaries acknowledged him as an important figure in the Gothic Revival. In 1853, Adolphe-Napoléon Didron, the French archaeologist and writer, declared that A. W. N. Pugin “lives on in his older son.”12 However, Pugin has received little modern scholarly attention, and his father’s fame casts a long shadow over his career.13 The literature generally concentrates on Pugin’s completion, embellishment, and extension of his father’s works at the expense of his own projects.14 However, recent campaigns to save and restore two of his more impressive works, the Granville Hotel in Ramsgate...
A friend of Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman and architect to many of his father’s ecclesiastical and secular patrons, Pugin determinedly sought recognition from the Roman Catholic establishment in England, and he longed for the status his father had acquired as an architectural authority in Roman Catholic circles. He succeeded in 1858 when Pope Pius IX awarded him a knighthood in the papal order of St. Sylvester, in which he was invested by Wiseman, for his design for the Church of Our Lady at Dadizele, Belgium. Our Lady at Dadizele was one of a number of projects Pugin undertook on the Continent where his father’s reputation ensured his own welcome.

Pugin’s vigorous commitment to the Gothic Revival, continuing the legacy of his father while casting it in a new light, is represented in a large body of work. Between 1852 and his premature death in 1875, Pugin completed dozens of projects, including more than seventy churches in England and Scotland, and his obituaries refer to more than one hundred religious and secular schemes. Pugin was an ambitious businessman with offices in England, Ireland, and briefly, the United States. The nature of his profession meant he worked on multiple projects simultaneously, and in order to maintain productive output, he enlisted partners, assistants, and pupils. In 1859, he took on his Irish pupil and brother-in-law George Coppinger Ashlin as a partner to run the Irish side of the business, but even this franchise approach was insufficient protection against inevitable financial crises. Furthermore, Pugin was a difficult man; like his father, he was often involved in quarrels, and libel cases with his patrons and fellow architects were common. The most famous was a dispute with Alfred Barry, son of Sir Charles Barry, the architect who employed A. W. N. Pugin to help design the Palace of Westminster.

Pugin’s precise contributions to the Gothic Revival still elude historians. He was interested and involved in so many facets of building and design that it is difficult to extract his specific input from that of others. However, some historical accounts recognize the individual nature of his accomplishments. For example, Nicholas Pevsner rather grudgingly described Pugin’s achievements: “fussiness was, of course, the curse of E. W. Pugin. . . . [Yet, his work] is undeniably splendid.” Pevsner was probably referring to the extensive use of color and the variety of materials that characterize Pugin’s projects and distinguish his architecture from that of his father. These features reflect Pugin’s assimilation of Gothic Revival trends of the 1850s, epitomized by the polychromatic brickwork and lavish interior at William Butterfield’s All Saints, Margaret Street, London. Roderick O’Donnell has gone as far as to suggest that Pugin’s “style and plans became normative for Roman Catholic churches in the British Isles in the second half of the nineteenth century.”

A primary motivation for writing this article is the desire to reinforce Pugin’s unique contribution to the world of architecture and design and to broaden the understanding of the interrelationship between societal and architectural dimensions of history. The Venerable English College commission provides a useful vehicle for doing this as it embodies Pugin’s heroic attempt to reconcile an ancient architectural lineage with a modern Catholic liturgy.

The Venerable English College
The full significance of the Venerable English College commission to the revival of the Gothic style and to the reemergence of English Catholicism can be best understood against the historical backcloth of the college’s development as an institution and the site of the new church. Since its establishment some three hundred years before the new church commission, the English College maintained a pivotal but largely unrecognized role in diplomatic relations between England, Rome, and the papacy. The college was
founded in 1579 in the hospice buildings of the Confraternity of the Holy Trinity and St. Thomas of Canterbury, which since the fourteenth century had existed “for the care and comfort of poor, sick, needy, and wretched Englishmen.”

The hospice had provided accommodation for English students studying at Rome’s universities as well as pilgrims from England and elsewhere who came to the Holy City to perform their devotions. But the persecution of Catholics in England under Elizabeth I compelled Pope Gregory XIII to convert the hospice into a seminary to educate priests for the reconversion of England and Wales. The English Hospice was united with the English College, and the old hospice was gradually extended into a new college complex. Thus the Venerable English College was formed.

The complex included a modest late fifteenth-century church on Via di Monserrato. The church was soon associated with martyrdom, as some students trained at the college returned to England and their deaths, the first in 1581. By 1585, the college was known as the “nursery of martyrs,” and its church became a sacred container for the relics of the English martyrs.

In the seventeenth century, Cardinal Philip Howard acquired the old papal prison, the Corte Savella, which adjoined the property to the west, and replaced it with a palace designed for political hospitality. The two buildings were consolidated in the eighteenth century, and today they extend for some 115 meters west along the Via di Monserrato, from the convent of St. Bridget of Sweden on what is now the Piazza Farnese to the Via di Montoro (Figure 3).

The late eighteenth–early nineteenth century was a watershed for the Venerable English College in Rome. Already in a ruinous state, in 1787 the church had been deconsecrated. In 1796 Napoléon invaded Italy, and in 1798 General Berthier entered Rome. The college was emptied of its staff and students, and the college buildings were turned into a barracks and the church into a stable. All available timber, including the church roof and the trees in the garden, was commandeered to repair and heat the buildings during the French occupation. Amazingly, the college survived the Napoleonic period. In 1819, demolition began on what was left of the fifteenth-century Church of St. Thomas; despite some attempts at rebuilding, necessary because the church adjoined the college buildings, the official apostolic visit in 1824 confirmed that nothing of the old church could be reused apart from the high altarpiece and a tomb monument.

With the restoration of Catholic bishops in England in 1850, there was a strong case for redefining the role of an English College in Rome. Some believed that a seminary in Rome was no longer necessary because priests could be trained in England again. Yet, the Venerable English College in Rome continued to expand from an average of twenty-three students in the 1840s to forty-four students by 1864. This growth may be attributed to two factors: Pope Pius IX’s encouragement of national seminaries in the city to provide a thoroughly Roman training to students from all nations, and the increasing number of aspirant English priests.

In 1863, Frederick Neve, who enjoyed Wiseman’s support, became rector and decided to have the old college church rebuilt.

The fundraising appeal launched by Neve in 1864 for the construction of a new college church stressed both the prac-
It was within this changing historical context and spiritual climate that the new church project was conceived. Its purpose was twofold: to celebrate the advances of the last decade, and to meet the expected growth in the number of students. But behind these uncontroversial objectives lay a divisive battle for the identity of the Catholic Church in England, a battle that touched directly upon the relevance of the Gothic Revival to church architecture. The question was, what sort of Catholicism was to be celebrated: English or Roman? The English College’s choice of architect for the new church would effectively determine the outcome.

The Commission
For Pugin, his appointment as architect for the new church of the Venerable English College in Rome was a mixed blessing. That the thirty-year-old Pugin should have been invited to submit plans for the English seminary in Rome was not in itself surprising. Work on the major seminaries in England was an important responsibility of the reestablished English Catholic hierarchy and a significant feature in the architectural careers of both Pugins, father and son. Pugin clearly imagined the commission to design the centerpiece of the Venerable English College in Rome as the prize in his portfolio. He mixed in the same ecclesiastical circles as his father and cultivated relationships with important members of the English Catholic hierarchy. The Venerable English College was a part of that intimate world. Three figures in particular deserve special mention: Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, Bishop Thomas Grant, and Monsignor George Talbot. Archival evidence suggests that each played a part in the commission and had direct connections with both the college and the Pugins. While Wiseman and Talbot were more concerned with ensuring the college’s close alignment with Rome than with architectural style, Grant was instrumental in convincing the English Catholic leadership that Pugin was the man for the job. These three men acted in concert to support Pugin’s commission.

Cardinal Wiseman was a past student and rector of the Venerable English College. He had been among the first group of students to return to the college when it reopened in 1818, and he stayed there for twenty-two years, doing much to promote the college in Rome and in England. Wiseman later traveled regularly between England and Rome, first as coadjutor of the Central District from 1840 (living at Oscott where A. W. N. Pugin was a tutor) and then as cardinal archbishop of Westminster from 1850. It was Wiseman’s vision of the relationship of English Catholics to Rome that dominated the restored hierarchy: many of the bishops and other important figures in the

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newly established administration of the English Catholic Church came from his circle. Although Wiseman seems to have been careful not to privilege his old college over the seminaries in England, he often appointed “old Romans,” or those with similar opinions, to their staff. He believed that the quality of education available to seminarians in the Jesuit colleges in Rome was unparalleled because only in Rome could an official education with papal sanction be guaranteed, as though the student were “under the direct tuition of the Holy See.” Wiseman also sought to bring Roman forms of devotional practice to England—processions, exposition of relics, and vigils—and encouraged the introduction of new religious communities and lay orders.

However, Wiseman’s overtly Rome-centric leadership of English Catholics did little to encourage good relations between the papacy and the British establishment. His first instinct was to promote the idea that England was ripe for reconversion, downplaying the real crisis of the church as it was transformed by Irish Catholic immigrants who fled famine, especially after the terrible harvests of 1845, and sought work in Britain’s new industrial cities. Wiseman spelled out some of his ideas in a tactless pastoral letter written from Rome entitled “Out of the Flaminian Gate of Rome,” which was printed in The Times newspaper on 29 October 1850 (Lord Shrewsbury called it the “pompous pastoral”). The letter provoked a wave of hostility in England against Catholics. England, Wiseman declared, “has been restored to its orbit in the Ecclesiastical firmament . . . and begins now anew its course of regularly adjusted action round the centre of unity, the source of jurisdiction, of light, and of vigour,” in other words, Rome.

As the first archbishop of Westminster and as a cardinal, Wiseman had as much interest in building new Catholic churches in England as in building the English College in Rome. At the height of the rood screen controversy, preaching at the Oratory in King William Street, London, in May 1851, Wiseman reflected upon how the Church should “express her inward feelings in external form.” His own preference was for Gothic, but he believed that style should be subservient to matters of theology and liturgy: style was “a mere indifferent matter of taste,” not a guiding principle. He and his associates seem to have misjudged the strength of feeling for the Gothic cause in some circles. As their choice of a renowned Gothic revivalist to design the English Catholic stronghold in Rome was later to prove, style does matter; it matters greatly.

After A. W. N. Pugin’s death, Wiseman remained in contact with the younger Pugin. In 1858, Wiseman invested him as a knight of St. Sylvester at the fiftieth anniversary of Ushaw College. In November 1862, Pugin hosted a soirée at the Pugin home, the Grange in Ramsgate, at which Wiseman was the guest of honor. Most significantly, in April 1864, and on behalf of the Venerable English College, Wiseman personally commissioned Pugin to design the new college church. The relationship between the archbishop and the architect must have been strong, for it was able to withstand the failed commission: in 1865 Pugin claimed to have designed Westminster Cathedral for Wiseman, and he later designed Wiseman’s tomb.

Wiseman’s apparent indifference to the style of the new Roman Catholic churches was not so much an expression of disinterest in church design but rather of a higher concern for matters of principle; he valued compromise, tolerance, and obedience over the celebration of English Catholicism. The functionality of Pugin’s designs for the new church in many ways reflects this temperance of feeling.

A second key figure in the commission was Thomas Grant, bishop of Southwark. His diocese extended from London to Kent, encompassing Ramsgate where the Pugin family lived. A student at the English College during Wiseman’s tenure, Grant later became rector of the college in 1844 and was appointed a bishop in 1851. During his rectors’hip, relations between England and the papacy improved, including papal recognition in 1849 of the foreign seminaries in Rome as belonging to the nations they represented. Grant’s in-depth knowledge of canon law and of ecclesiastical affairs in Rome was a valued asset in negotiations with the British political authorities to reestablish the English hierarchy. When he returned to England as bishop, Grant was influential in the commissions for several churches designed by Pugin, including SS. Henry and Elizabeth, Sheerness (completed 1864), and St. Theresa of Avila, Ashford (1862–65). It is likely that Grant recommended Pugin for the new church commission.

A third notable personality was the manipulative and strong-willed George Talbot. Talbot was confidential adviser to the pope on English affairs, pro-protector of the English College, fifth son of Lord Talbot of Malahide, a convert to the Catholic faith since 1846, and a vehement supporter of centralist, ultramontane Catholicism. He trained for the priesthood at Oscott, which A. W. N. Pugin had helped design. In December 1849, at the cost of 120 pounds, he ordered from A. W. N. Pugin a gilt brass and enamel reliquary for the new Cathedral of St. George, Southwark, to store small relics of St. Thomas of Canterbury. Talbot advertised his gift to Catholics in England in The Tablet, describing Pugin’s beautiful drawings for the reliquary. In August 1846, Talbot assisted Bishop Wiseman at the consecration of St. Giles, Cheadle, and in 1847, it was Talbot who procured A. W. N. Pugin an audience...
with Pope Pius IX. In 1850, Talbot left parish work in Southwark to live permanently in Rome as Wiseman’s agent. The influential position he quickly achieved in Rome and at the curia made his support for the scheme to rebuild St. Thomas essential, and the idea for it is often attributed directly to him.

The Site Visit

In 1864, Pugin traveled to Rome, presumably to inspect the site for the new college church. In a letter dated 7 April 1864, he spelled out the principles that would inform his plans.

From the letter, it is clear that Wiseman had assumed the new church would be a Gothic building in the Italian manner. For Pugin, it was self-evident that an English church, even one far away in Rome, should be in the English Gothic style, not the Italian. The church located in Vercelli, east of Milan, which Wiseman had proposed as a model, was most likely the Italian Gothic Church of Sant’Andrea (Figure 4). From what is known of Wiseman’s relative indifference to architectural style, however, his comments were probably offered more as an informed suggestion than as a strict command to Pugin to follow Italian Gothic models. The Church of Sant’Andrea (1219–27) was among the earliest in Italy to incorporate elements of Gothic design, and Wiseman may have visited it on his many travels. The church also had English connections: its construction was funded by income from the benefice of the Church of St. Andrew at Chesterton, near Cambridge, and it was built by English workmen. In addition, Sant’Andrea had been the inspiration for the winning design by William Burges for the Crimean Memorial Church in Istanbul (though it underwent radical “anglicization” before it was completed). Pugin would no doubt have read about the implications for using the Sant’Andrea model for an English church abroad in The Ecclesiologist of 1857.

Pugin was primarily interested in the national implica-
tions of the style of St. Thomas. While opposed to “the Italian type” of Gothic that Sant’Andrea represented—with its compartmentalized cross vaults, tau-cross plan, and many chapels, unlike the uniformed vaults and continuous wall surfaces of High Victorian Gothic—he was nevertheless willing to adapt his ideas to the Italian environment. Pugin’s nationalist argument in favor of an English style, or at least his own style of English Gothic Revival, for a church in Rome contradicted his father’s thesis that a building should be true to its place and to local materials. However, those principles found some application, albeit in a diminished form, in Pugin’s practical response to the Italian climate. Knowing that a Gothic Revival church with large traceried windows would be inappropriate for Rome’s hot summers and cold winters, he opted instead for smaller windows in the nave and the use of double glazing or darkly colored stained glass to help regulate the interior temperature (see Figure 1).

Pugin may have traveled through other Italian sights en route to Rome to gather ideas for the Church of St. Thomas and forthcoming projects. His designs, rather than documentary evidence, point to travels outside Rome. The bold stripes of the interior compound piers in his drawings for St. Thomas are reminiscent of Italian Gothic cathedrals such as Siena and Orvieto, with their distinctive green and white marble bands (Figure 5). In the plans for St. Thomas, the third and fourth bays of the north aisle wall are pierced to extend into two side chapels and are suggestive of the arcade that divides the thirteenth-century Lupi Chapel from the south aisle of the Basilica of Sant’Antonio (the Santo), Padua (Figure 6; see Figure 5). The slender offset bell tower that rises over the westernmost compartment of the south aisle is a feature Pugin employed throughout his career, as can be seen at Shrewsbury Cathedral (1852) and St. Coleman, Cobb (1868–1915), where he draws it without a spire in the likeness of a Victorian campanile (see Figure 1).
After visiting Rome, Pugin returned to Ramsgate to design the church and raise money for the commission. While it was not an architect's obligation to secure project financing, Pugin most likely recognized the benefits of his influential position and connections and took it upon himself to raise funds to help ensure the success of his commission. Pugin encouraged the college to publish a list of benefactors, headed by the pope, as "on this list will depend the position which the matter will take in the view of the Public. . . . [It will] do an immensity of good and crush all opposition." A pamphlet advertising the appeal was published shortly afterwards. Pugin himself was a donor, giving twenty-five pounds, while the pope contributed one hundred.

Nevertheless, the new church project was beset with financial and political difficulties from an early stage. After only one year, in May 1865, Pugin wrote to Talbot that he had made the plans for the college church less ambitious: "The Church is now in hand, and I trust will turn out to be one of the most successful, as well as being one of the cheapest Churches ever built. I hope to forward Dr. Neve [the English College rector] my reduced plans for St. Thomas towards the end of next week." Just two months later, it seems the English College commission was back on track, albeit in modified form. On 25 July 1865, Neve wrote to Talbot: "I have heard from Pugin who says that he must throw away all his work upon the places he has hitherto made. However it is certain now that the Church will be built."

The Design

Pugin's revised plans dated 1868 for the Church of St. Thomas survive in good order in the English College archive. The plans, which detail every part of the proposed church from crypt to vault, are drawn in Pugin's elegant and energetic hand. The building he designed would have been an imposing addition to the college and an impressive center for the English community in Rome despite compromises on a number of levels. His plans were constrained by severe site restrictions, modern forms of devotional practice, and the need to satisfy a resident community in the college, pilgrims, and other English residents in Rome. Thus, despite Pugin's assertions that the new church would be a very English church, his design betrays strong Continental influences.
Bounded by college buildings on three sides, the confined size and location of the vacant site was a major factor in the plan and its associated costs. Earlier at the Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Cork (1859–66), Pugin had overcome a similar challenge by designing a church that is effective when viewed from an oblique angle. Without its own precinct, St. Thomas was to rise directly from the street, a distinguishing feature of many Continental (especially French) urban churches, but also a feature admired by Ruskin and advocated by Street in his 1850 article “On the Proper Characteristics of a Town Church.” The shallow aisles would not have disturbed the verticality of the south flank, as the upward thrust was emphasized by the buttress piers and buttresses rising to pedimented gables and topped with angel finials that would have dominated the view from the street. Rather than sacrificing one or other of the aisles as his father might have done—A. W. N. Pugin’s smaller churches often include a nave and single aisle—Pugin made the nave and the aisles of the church narrower but longer. As a result, the elongated plans would have necessitated the destruction of a substantial part of the surrounding college buildings.

Given the site restrictions, the liturgical west end would have abutted other buildings, precluding any façade and the effects he achieved elsewhere with rose and lancet windows. Instead, Pugin exploited the lack of a west facade by contrasting the dark west end, the nave dully lit by small windows to keep the Roman heat out, with the bright apse lit by tall two-light traceried windows. The apse design was similar to the apses he included in other churches, such as All Saints, Barton-upon-Irwell (1865–68); St. Gregory’s, Longton (1869, demolished 1970); and SS. Peter and Paul, Cork (Figure 7). The dramatic lighting would also have suited Pugin’s adherence to the Roman forms of devotion so actively encouraged by Wiseman, which dictated that the focus of the church be the high altar. The drawings clearly show that Pugin planned to have the altar raised well above the nave and surmounted by a Gothic ciborium of a type common in Rome’s medieval churches but a departure from his pinnacled reredoses included at Dadizele, Cork, or St. Francis, Gorton (Figure 8). The theatrical lighting of the interior, unlike his father’s “dim religious light,” was a distinguishing feature of the scheme and a trademark of Pugin’s churches.
Figure 8  Pugin, Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury (unexecuted), Rome, transverse section, 1868
Pugin’s plans were progressive structurally as well as decoratively. With a diverse resident community to serve, the different meanings and uses of the church made it appropriate to unite the entire space under a single unbroken vault with the nave, enlarged choir, polygonal apse, and altar articulated as zones. The spatial arrangement Pugin proposed for the new church accords both with Tridentine reform and the contemporary fashion that a church should not be a preaching box but should give precedence to the chancel.64 Pugin’s design does this in every way it can—through changes in level, lighting, and intensity of decoration—so that the high altar and its ciborium are the focus of the interior (see Figures 5, 8). This was Pugin’s “complete revolution in church-building”: the creation of apsed basilicas as unified Gothic Revival spaces, distinct from his father’s compartmentalized plans.65

Steps between the nave and choir emphasize the hierarchical arrangement of the space and create separate zones for the congregation of English nationals and the college community while negating the need for a dividing screen favored by A. W. N. Pugin.66 The “all-seeing” principle, attacked by Pugin’s father in the rood screen controversy, pitted Wiseman’s Roman forms of devotional practice against A. W. N. Pugin’s adherence to late medieval English models. The elder Pugin believed that the faithful should learn about medieval ritual in order to learn to use the churches he designed properly.67 Pugin took the opposite view and preferred to adapt church design to accommodate human considerations. Thus, while A. W. N. Pugin designed relatively open screens that did not entirely obscure the view from nave to chancel, his son’s churches prioritized the visibility of the altar over dogmatic concerns with historical or archaeological accuracy. Pugin may have been more in touch with Continental liturgical practice than his father, but he was also a more pragmatic, and occasionally entrepreneurial, businessman who could not afford to continue his father’s futile battles of will.

The wealth of ornament Pugin proposed was, however, costly and not pragmatic. Both inside and out, sculpted figures standing on brackets in spandrels were to decorate the wall spaces (Figure 9). Every available material was to be employed to enhance the decorative richness: the vaulted roof in wood suspended from hidden iron ridges; the piers in strips of light and dark stone, possibly marble; the ciborium and altar in polychrome wood or stone; the choir stalls in ironwork and wood—all of it lit by magnificent stained glass windows. Pugin imagined the new church for the English College in Rome in the most splendid terms.

The incorporation of the design’s wooden vaulted roof was typical of Pugin’s 1860s churches, the most notable being the impressive oak and pine construction originally destined for Alton Castle but eventually raised in All Saints, Barton-upon-Irwell. Vaulting church roofs bestowed practical advantages and aesthetic qualities: in the 1850s John Henry Newman planned the Birmingham Oratory from the outset with a “closed” roof to be more effective for music and for preaching.68 Previously, vaulted roofs had been problematic. When the Ecclesiologists included a vaulted nave in their first church project in 1841–42, designed by Edmund Sharp, it was deemed “presumptuous” by its reviewers.69 Although A. W. N. Pugin might have preferred more structurally honest open roofs, financial limitations often excluded the possibility of stone or wooden vaults in most of his projects.70 By the 1860s, vaulted ceilings were generally encouraged; in 1861, the Anglican A. J. Beresford-Hope, president of the Ecclesiological Society, envisioned in his book The English Cathedral of the Nineteenth Century “cathedrals” built for the new masses of church attendees as large, enclosed, unified spaces under stone vaults.71

Pugin’s plans for the Church of St. Thomas demonstrate his exceptional talent for surmounting the physical challenges posed by climatic, spatial, and functional considerations while fulfilling the stylistic expectations of grandeur, comfort, and spiritual significance. His innovative use of Gothic design not only provided an appropriate stylistic framework, but it also gave the building thematic substance—the Gothic Revival as a signifier of Englishness. There was never any question in Pugin’s mind that the new church would be in anything but “our own style of Gothic.” It was, after all, an English Catholic church, even if it was in Rome. That said, his architectural style was not typically English, nor was it comparable with his father’s Gothic; Pugin’s version of Gothic was chiefly inspired by his experience of buildings on the Continent, primarily in France and in Belgium.72

Evoking the Continental fashion of the day, many of Pugin’s buildings were of altogether different proportions from those of his father, and his design for St. Thomas is a case in point.73 Unlike the squat, massed volumes of his father’s parish churches, with their regular and relatively ponderous arcades, St. Thomas is a work of High Victorian Gothic, marked by its insistent verticality, slender proportions, and wealth of surface detail inside and out. Its sophisticated contours and elaborate features lend an air of Continental, and thus more Catholic, design. Pugin’s plan is conventional in that it reflects the eclectic range of sources that inspired High Gothic architects in the 1860s. But it is also exceptional in that it moves away from the High Victorian English “muscular” style, with its massive
Figure 9  Pugin, Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury (unexecuted), Rome, east end, 1868
medievalism of Northern Europe, toward the finer proportions of the French royal churches and Italian models.

We can perceive Pugin’s intent to create a refined and distinctive design for St. Thomas in the contract drawings for the Cathedral of St. Coleman, Cobh (formerly Queenstown) in Ireland, which he produced together with Ashlin; these plans also survive and are dated 1867–68 (Figure 10).74 At St. Coleman a similar, if less slender, offset tower and transept dominate the south flank while the proportions, aisle windows, and steeply pitched roof are virtually identical to St. Thomas’s plans. Pugin’s designs for both Cobh and Rome owe much to the stylistic ideal epitomized in the late thirteenth-century French models based on Chartres, Reims, and Amiens designed by Jean-Baptiste Lassus and promulgated in the first edition of Didron’s *Annales Archéologiques* in 1844, a periodical to which the Pugins subscribed (Figures 11, 12).75 Lassus’s designs could be reduced (English College) or enlarged (Cobh) as necessary. For St. Thomas, the elongated plan was borrowed, minus the crossing, transepts, and corona chapels. Pugin reduced the size of the windows in each bay to regulate the temperature, echoing the combination of rose and lancet in the aisle windows. Pugin’s design for St. Thomas is, in fact, more chapel than church: its vertical emphasis and steeply pitched roof make it reminiscent of Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, restored by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc in the 1840s. Lassus worked with Viollet-le-Duc at Sainte-Chapelle, an influential project widely regarded as a catalyst for official recognition of the Gothic Revival in France.76 The reason for the close relationship of the Rome and Cobh designs was more practical than ideological, however: the plans for St. Thomas and St. Coleman were made at the same time (1867–68), the former never to be executed and the latter the last project of the Ashlin-Pugin partnership.77

**Pugin Loses the Commission**

In February 1865, less than a year after Pugin’s first involvement with the English College church, Cardinal Wiseman died. Henry Manning called the cardinal’s death “an event
Figure 11: Jean-Baptiste Lassus, “Église du XIIème siècle,” ground plan, from A. N. Dideron, Annales Archéologiques (1844).

Figure 12: Lassus, “Église du XIIème siècle,” longitudinal section, from Dideron, Annales Archéologiques (1844).
which closes a period,” and his words ring particularly true for Pugin. But Wiseman’s death was only one of many factors that conspired against the project, the change in direction of the church leadership and the competition for funds being foremost among them. Manning’s installation as archbishop of Westminster ensured that ultramontane views dominated the English Catholics’ relationship with Rome. It was soon apparent that Manning had little time for the Gothic Revival or for any architecture aside from what it could offer in terms of its function. As to the question of what sort of Catholicism was to be celebrated in the form of a new church for the English College in Rome, the initial preference for English Catholicism was supplanted by Roman Catholicism; Pugin lost the Venerable English College commission to a Roman architect designing in the Italian style. On 30 December 1865, The Builder reported:

After all that has been said and done respecting the new church to the English college, in Rome, the subscription for which has long been in progress, after the announcement of this decision for a Gothic type in architecture, and the all but decided commission of the work to Mr. Pugin, we hear that the plan has undergone considerable modification; that the Gothic has been abandoned, and the Byzantine style preferred; and that no English architect, but a Roman, Count Virginio Vespignani, long engaged by this government, and the author of many church restorations in this city, is chosen for the undertaking desired to be conspicuous for scale and splendour.

Manning had strong opinions on most matters, but a major obstacle for the Gothic Revival in the service of the Roman Catholic Church was the expense of the decoration. Pugin had stressed from the outset that the English College church would be “one of the cheapest Churches ever built,” a difficult promise to keep considering the lavish materials and skilled craftsmen needed to construct his design. The Church of St. Theresa of Avila at Ashford cost the relatively modest sum of one thousand pounds. Pugin’s parish churches often cost between three and four thousand pounds, although the new Church of St. Thomas was always expected to be more expensive. Writing to Talbot in October 1867, Pugin snapped, “You state that £10,000 was the sum proposed to be expended but you seem to have forgotten that I distinctly told you that a building of the size and style you require could not possibly be erected under £15,000, to which the Cardinal and Italian community agreed.

Pugin was incensed by his loss of the commission and threatened to sabotage the new plans. For the next eight years, he searched in vain for a clear explanation of his removal as architect. Given his increasing propensity for paranoia and tendency toward litigation, it is difficult to tell if his reaction was warranted. In any event, the ecclesiastical authorities tried to make amends. Having lost the college commission, Pugin was bought off with the promise of another commission, Westminster Cathedral, but this also came to nothing. A year later, in the absence of any other satisfactory explanation, Pugin concluded that his loss of the contract was due to the animosity of Archbishop Manning. In a message to Talbot he lamented, “From all I hear I firmly believe that the Archbishop has been in this, as well as in everything else my unrelenting enemy, and probably the principal cause of my not having the work. I wish you could discover and let me know the cause of this extraordinary persecution.”

In retrospect, even before the English College commission, Pugin was convinced that Manning, who preferred the Roman style of worship and architecture, had deliberately excluded him from interacting with London’s religious elite. In a letter to Cardinal Wiseman dated 1862, Pugin voiced his suspicions that Manning and his followers were having a negative influence on his career:

It is a strange fact that in spite of your Eminence’s kindness and efforts in my favour, I have never received a single commission except from personal friends, or from buildings in which I have been instrumental in getting erected in the archdiocese. This is the more to be wondered at, as I have numberless communications from almost every diocese in England, and am also building in Spain, France, Belgium and Australia, I can only attribute the fact to the unjust animosity of Dr. Manning and the Bayswater clique.

“The Bayswater clique” was a community of priests known as the Oblates of St. Charles, which Manning had established in 1856 with Wiseman’s encouragement at St. Mary of the Angels on Moorhouse Road, in the Bayswater district of London. There Manning’s experience of the Church would have been quite different from that of the Pugins. Manning lived and worked among the Catholic working classes, most of them Irish. His “Widowers’ House,” as the old English Catholics called it (a reference to the number of convert priests who, like Manning, had lost their wives before their conversion), irritated many of the English Catholic clergy. The glories of the Gothic Revival were far removed from Manning’s concerns with the urban poor and with ensuring English Catholicism focused on Rome. The Oblates of St. Charles, named after St. Charles Borromeo (whose reforms had done so much to enact the decrees of the Council of Trent in the late six-
teenth century) were modeled on communities of diocesan clergy that Wiseman had encountered in Rome. Like Italian orders including the Oratorians, the oblates were supported by the leadership of the English Catholic Church. Dr. Louis English, then rector of the Venerable English College, was recorded in 1857 as saying the college was able to “look on Dr. Manning as our best and most powerful friend,” and he hoped that some of the students might join the oblates.86 However, the oblates were mistrusted by the more nationalist English Catholic laity and clergy, Pugin among them, because of the Romanist character of their religious practices.

Lady Elizabeth Herbert of Lea, who had converted to the Catholic faith in 1866, was among those who spoke up for the English College cause.87 In 1868 following a reissue of the appeal, she wrote that “no appeal has, in fact, been ever made to English Catholics which is more strictly national in its character, and which should properly enlist the sympathies of the English people. There is not a Catholic on the face of the earth who does not instinctively turn to Rome as his home—as the centre from which emanate unity, strength, and peace, like the rays from the summer’s sun.”88

The Renewed Appeal

The renewed appeal for the new college church in 1867–68 received more enthusiasm than support. In England, Roman Catholic church building continued to stretch the limited resources of the tiny minority of Catholics—less than 5 percent of the population and most of them Irish. The significance of the college church as a defiant symbol of Pius IX’s determination to resist external forces was brought to bear, but the crisis of the papacy as it lost the Papal States and the revenue they provided to the Italian League also taxed the resources of English Catholics.

The ongoing hostilities within the Catholic Church in England affected Pugin. In addition to fearing that specific individuals had conspired against him, Pugin reasoned that the failure of his commission was down to the nationalities involved. He surmised that in Rome, Roman—not English—precedents were preferred. “I firmly believe that this matter has caused you as much pain as myself and that you have had no other alternative than to comply with the wishes of Cardinal Antonelli and the Roman authorities,” he wrote to Talbot in July 1868.89 The experienced architect may well have been correct in his detection of interference from Rome. Cardinal Antonelli had advised Cardinal Wiseman to be wary of too much auspicious display in his activities as it might antagonize English Protestants, and as papal secretary of state, his views held sway.90 Still, Pugin continued working on his designs for the English College church, and in July 1868, Talbot reported that “[a]fter a considerable deal of consideration I have made an offer to Pugin of £100 now and another £100 within five years. As yet he has not accepted. Nevertheless he is finishing his designs as he wishes them always to remain in the English College. This I have promised him would be the case. They will be beautiful.”91

In September 1868, Talbot tried to bring the sorry affair to a close. He wrote to Pugin, “The reason why you could not be employed as architect was that [which] I mentioned to you when we met at Hanover Lodge. The Archbishop had nothing to do with the decision. Circumstances obliged us in Rome to come to it, which I alluded to in our conversation.”92 It is a pity that the conversation was not recorded. However, it would be fair to assume that Talbot’s explanation hinged on the assertion that Pugin’s plan for the new church was too expensive and that it had become completely inappropriate for the struggling papal city.

Despite continuing financial difficulties, in February 1874 the college finally found the money to pay off Pugin.93 Whether Pugin had hoped that through perseverance he could recover the commission, rather than solely his professional investment, we do not know. However, his determination to finish the drawings despite his removal and to lodge them safely with the college archives does demonstrate an enviable sense of pride and resoluteness.

The fallout Pugin experienced between 1864 and 1873 from the failure of the college church commission coincided with the decline of his practice. From its height in the 1850s, the business fell into an uncontrollable tailspin. In 1867 he owed five thousand pounds, and by 1872, that figure had risen to two hundred thousand.94 In October 1872, after several speculative ventures, including the technologically advanced Granville Hotel in Ramsgate, Pugin declared himself bankrupt. He left for America where he set up an office briefly in New York.95 Yet, he soon returned to his family home in Ramsgate and his office in London. On 5 June 1875, in the year following his receipt of compensation for the St. Thomas commission, Pugin died suddenly at the age of forty-one. He may have been, like his father, simply worn out with work and worry, or he may have been poisoned through the habitual use of chloral hydrate as a sleeping draught.

In 1888, a decade after Pugin’s death, the new Church of the Venerable English College in Rome was completed. However, even Vespignani’s building design was not executed in full; to save costs, the apse was removed from the plans and substituted with a flattened east end that abutted rather than replaced the neighboring buildings, therefore
occupying almost exactly the same site as the fifteenth-century church (Figures 13, 14).

While not the only nineteenth-century Gothic Revival monument planned in Rome, the English College church was one of the first, and comparison with the other English Gothic Revival churches that followed shortly after in the papal city underlines the bold statement it represented. Prominent Protestant churches were unimaginable in Rome where, since the sixteenth century, the papacy had done all it could to exclude the “Protestant heresy.” That changed in 1870 when Rome became the capital of the newly unified Italy and was wrested from the papacy. In deliberate defiance of the papacy, Garibaldi had already authorized the establishment of an Anglican church in Naples in 1860. In March 1872, Street began his work on the church for the American Episcopal community, St. Paul’s Within the Walls on the Via Nazionale (Figure 15).96

In the same year, Street also started designing for the Church of England community the Church of All Saints, on Via Babuino, near the Spanish Steps and an area of the city long associated with the English. Street’s use of the neo-Gothic style in Rome asserted both the national identity of the communities who worshipped there and the fact that they were not Roman Catholic. By 1875, Thomas Cook was even able to organize a “Baptist pilgrimage to Rome” to celebrate the recently opened Baptist chapel on a prime site at the end of the Ponte Sant’Angelo, defiantly facing the papal fortress.97

**Continuity and Conversion**

A. W. N. Pugin still dominates contemporary scholarship as the champion of the noble Gothic that was ultimately unable to withstand external Roman forces. But, as Judith Champ and others have pointed out, the traditional distinction between “Goths” on the one hand and “Romans” on the other is too simplistic a reading of the ideological stances adopted by English Roman Catholics in the nineteenth century.98 The very fact that Pugin was commissioned to design a church in Rome demonstrates just how problematic the distinction between “Goths” and “Romans” was by the 1860s and how inadequate it remains for the study of Roman Catholic church architecture in Victorian Britain. An important group of Catholic writers, among them Daniel Rock, Lord Shrewsbury’s chaplain, promoted ideas of continuity with the past, “the olden faith whole and unbroken,” extending from the English Middle Ages so favored by A. W. N. Pugin back to the arrival of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England from Rome.99 A significant number of priests and bishops in England, among them Rock and Wiseman, had experienced this continuity firsthand as students and even as rector of the Venerable English College in Rome. Consequently, they expected the new churches in England to keep up-to-date with religious conventions on the continent. To achieve this, Wiseman urged tolerance and compromise that nevertheless respected the primacy of Rome.100 Pugin, unlike A. W. N. Pugin, was willing to compromise to meet these new architectural expectations by synthesizing the aspirations of his father with the needs of the Catholic Church in his day.

From studying Pugin’s commission, it is possible to see how the Gothic Revival and the English College represent continuity—the Gothic Revival emphasizing the succession of the Roman Catholic Church in England, the English College in Rome keeping alight the lamp of faith when English Catholicism was outlawed in England. At the same time, they also speak for conversion—Pugin adapts the Gothic style for new purposes, turning his father’s “purist” Gothic into “pragmatic” Gothic; the English College attracts and instructs some very high-profile converts. Yet, the messages these underlying themes of continuity and conversion ultimately deliver are not quite what we might expect. As Rome comes to represent centralization and not the local church, the Gothic style becomes detached from its rural traditions and the English College becomes detached from its role in signifying a discrete English Catholic identity.

The key insight this story offers from an architectural historian’s perspective is that of transference. The failed commission demonstrated that, while the English Gothic style could be transported from England to Rome, it did not possess the same meaning there as it did at home. Situated among innumerable basilicas, churches, chapels, and oratories, the power of the new college church to convey allegiance to Rome was diminished, as was the ability of the Gothic style to communicate the newfound confidence of the English Catholic Church. Among the valuable lessons to be drawn from the failed commission are two: context matters, and so does style.

**A Matter of Style**

The writings of Catholics, architects, and ecclesiologists in the 1850s through the 1870s regularly reflected on the problems of the Gothic style for church building. As early as 1850, *The Rambler*, the lay Catholic periodical which was associated with the more liberal views of the converts, dis-
Figure 13  Count Virgilio Vespignani, Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury, Rome, proposed interior to east end, lithograph, ca.1870

Figure 14  Vespignani, Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury, Rome, view from Piazza Santa Caterina della Ruota and Via di Monserrato
discussed cheaper, more practical alternatives to A. W. N. Pugin’s Gothic, provoked by the architect’s insistence on a chancel screen for St. George’s, Southwark. A. W. N. Pugin’s arguments for historical—and moral—veracity and continuity as represented by the Gothic style were rejected as “a mere whim of modern times, unheard of until a section of antiquarians took to deifying the architecture of a certain three centuries, and seemed disposed to elevate it into a kind of eighth sacrament.” However, with the benefit of hindsight, in 1859 The Rambler conceded that A. W. N. Pugin’s lifelong ambition to revive Gothic principles had been achieved: “there is scarcely one [Catholic architect] that dares emancipate himself from the traditions imposed by him.” Certainly, the Gothic style was still an important consideration in 1864 when Pugin was asked to provide plans for the new church of the Venerable English College in Rome, but by then other styles such as Romanesque and Byzantine were becoming increasingly fashionable.

Charles Eastlake, secretary to the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, reflected on the gulf between the Roman Catholic Church and the Gothic Revival in his enduring essay of 1872, A History of the Gothic Revival. He considered the part which the Church of Rome has taken in the Revival [as being] a peculiar one and not devoid of historical interest. But for all this, the Church of Rome has never so earnestly or consistently identified with the Revival as the Church of England. It is well known that [A. W. N.] Pugin’s views on ritual and ecclesiastical usage towards the latter end of his life gave offence to many who shared his faith, and after his death there was a reaction in the artistic predilections of the Romish clergy from the influence of which they have never been thoroughly relieved. . . . Regarded broadly, the association of Roman Catholicism with the Revival may be attributed more to the accident that many eminent architects, including Pugin, have belonged to that faith than to any supposed sympathy between the Church of Rome and medieval art. . . . There was a time when the pointed arch bade fair to become a symbol of extreme views in theological controversy. But that period has long since passed.

Eastlake astutely detected three principal reasons for the failure of the Gothic cause in the Roman Catholic Church, each of them relevant to the failure of Pugin’s plans for the English College in Rome. The first centered on the rapid expansion of Roman Catholicism in British towns and cities as a result of Irish immigration. This demographic change necessitated a surge in Catholic church building from the 1850s onwards, making it even more difficult for the English College to compete for the hearts, minds, and purses of wealthy English Catholics. The financial implications of Pugin’s lavish designs, even in their modified form, became increasingly critical to the point where constructing an internationally recognized symbol of English (as distinct from Roman) Catholicism’s acceptance into the Catholic fold was no longer tenable.

The second catalyst was the introduction to Britain of religious orders that had originated in Italy. The Redemptorists, Passionists, and Oratorians encouraged the spread and adoption of Italian architectural fashions. By 1864, Gothic had ceased to be the exclusive style of English Roman Catholics. Although the Church of St. Chad at Birmingham (1839–41) was one of A. W. N. Pugin’s masterpieces, by 1865, the London Church of the Oratorians at
Brompton had been planned as decisively Roman (consecrated 16 April 1884), and the new Westminster Cathedral (1884–1903) was eventually designed by John F. Bentley in the neo-Byzantine style. This ebb tide of the Gothic style in England is in stark contrast to the wave of important Gothic Revival churches that were being built for Roman Catholic dioceses throughout the Continent, United States, and Australasia in the same years.

The third reason for the failure of the Gothic cause for English Roman Catholics was, according to Eastlake, Cardinal Wiseman’s preference for “Renaissance art.” However, Wiseman’s sponsorship of a variety of architects suggests that this is an oversimplification, for he and his colleagues did not promote one style of architecture over another. His leadership of the Church sought compromise and collaboration between the different ideological camps that distinguished Catholics in England. In his legendary sermon of 1851, Wiseman neatly summarized the debate about Gothic style that featured regularly in Catholic periodicals and other writings during the 1850s: “If on Gothic principles a sanctuary could not be erected where every rubric of the modern Church might be literally obeyed, then we would discard Gothic, for it is the modern Church that must save us—These externals must be reduced to what they are, a mere indifferent matter of taste, and all things must give way to the exigencies of the rubrics of the church, and to the spirit of modern devotions.”

In January 1874, The Dublin Review, which had since Wiseman’s death in 1865 represented Manning’s uncompromising ultramontanism, published an article entitled “Church Architecture.” The editorial attempted to end the debate about what constituted appropriate architectural style. It contended that architecture existed to serve the needs of the Church and not dictate them. Echoing Wiseman’s sermon of 1851 and without overtly condemning or supporting either the Gothic or the Italian style, the article proposed a compromise: architecture should support “saintly memories of the past” without being controversial or anti-Roman and should avoid anything that distracts from the function of the church and employs architecture for its own sake. In accordance with religious thought of the time, and in particular Newman’s belief that doctrinal development was a more satisfactory model of historical change than simple revival, Gothic architecture was demoted as only one of many external signs of the endless evolution of the Church.

Instead, the Church should look “forward to other developments and greater glories of religious art than any revealed to us in the course of the centuries which are gone. Nullum tempus occurrit ecclesiae.”

The Church exists outside time, so arguments about a specific architectural style representing a return to a particular period are irrelevant.

Certainly by the mid-1860s, Gothic was no longer associated exclusively with the paradigm of restored English Catholicism. The very public failure of Pugin’s designs for the Venerable English College relegated the Gothic style to being just one of several options available to serve the needs of the rapidly evolving Church of Rome.

As for Pugin, his last recorded contact with the Venerable English College reiterated the national bias of his English Catholicism as well as that indomitable Pugin inability to admit defeat: “For my part I always thought I said that building the Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury at Rome was a mistake. What was the use of building the 366th church in Rome? The true thing would have been, to have sold off the property and have founded a College in England.”

Notes

1. The dedication of the fifteenth-century church was to the “Most Holy Trinity, St. Edmund and St. Thomas of Canterbury.” This was extended to the new church, but it is referred to as “St. Thomas of Canterbury” in the nineteenth-century documents.

2. The Archive of the Venerable English College is maintained for the primary purpose of training priests, not hosting scholars. Access is therefore strictly limited. The church is generally open for Mass at 10 am on Sundays (Via di Monserrato, 45).


4. A. W. N. Pugin, Contrasts; or, a Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day, Shewing the Present Decay of Taste (London, 1856); see, e.g., the discussion in Denis Gwynn, Lord Shrewsbury, Pugin and the Catholic Revival (London, 1996), 34.


19. On his investitures as a knight of St. Sylvester, see Giacomo Antonelli to George Talbot, 9 July 1858, Talbot Papers 9, Archive of the Venerable English College, Rome (hereafter VEC). On the Church of Our Lady, Dadizele, see B 288 F63–4 and K103 (plans), Bruges Cathedral Archives (Bisschoppelijk Archief te Brugge); and Jean van Cleven et al., _Neogotiek in België_ (Ghent, 1994), 98–99. The church was begun March 1855, destroyed in 1939, and subsequently rebuilt with some alterations.


29. The original bequest is cited in Bernard Linares, “The Origin and Foundation of the English Hospice,” in _Allen, The English Hospice_, 15–42. Also see George Bruner Parks, _The English Traveler to Italy_ (Rome, 1954), 339.


32. _Scritture 61/1, VEC_ (see n. 19). “Relazione o sia Foglio di Risposte alle dimande transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda transmesse dalla Sagra Visita Apostolica il 26 Giugno 1824. La dimanda tras...
dall’Anno 1787, perché minacciava ruina, e dipoi desseccata, e distrutta l'oggetto della sua istruzione nell’Anno 1531 fu’ per servire all’Ospedale ed Ospizio dei Pellegrini Inglesi, fintanto che nel 1579 l’Ospedale, ed Ospizio furono dal Papa Gregorio XIII convertiti in un Collegio per l’educazione del Clero d’Inghilterra.

“Nel 1820 sono state riedificate da fondamenti le Mura, ed il tetto per la conservazione di detta Chiesia, che forma corpo con il Fabbricato del Collegio situato in Via di Monserrato Numero 45, a per manianza di fondi non si è potuto completare. Attese le note passate vicende non si è possuto ricuperare di detta Chiesia, che un Quadro rappresentante la Suma Trinità dipinto da Durante Alberti, ed un Deposito di Marmo del fa Cavaliere Dereham Fatto da Pietro della Valle, che si conservano nel Collegio.”

33. The evangelization of the 1840s and 1850s and Catholic conversion of senior members of the Oxford Movement, most notably John Henry Newman in 1845 and Henry Manning in 1851, persuaded English College representatives in Rome to prepare for a different kind of student, one in need of “Romanization” in the papal city. See Williams, The Venerable English College, 112–16, 118–19. These recent converts tended to be older men, some with long experience as Protestant clergy. In 1852, a new college was established near the Vatican in Piazza Scozzacavalli for these older English Catholic students. Originally called the Collegio Ecclesiastico and renamed Collegio Pio (after Pius IX), it was run at first by an Italian administration, but by 1855 it moved into the Venerable English College and contributed to the jump in student enrollment.

34. Frederick Neve (?), “The Rebuilding of the Church of St. Thomas” (see n. 34).

35. Williams, The Venerable English College, 100–1, 121.

36. See Chadwick, A History of the Popes, 267. “In 1864–70 the Catholic Church converted the resistance to the Italians into a resistance against European society that could produce a phenomenon like Italian national­ism.”

37. A. W. N. Pugin saw the design and construction of seminaries in the Gothic style as ideal opportunities to educate up-and-coming priests about his Gothic Revival. He worked on many of the major seminaries in England and Ireland—Ossott (begun 1837), St. Peter’s College, Wexford (1838–41), St. Cuthbert’s College, Ushaw (1844–51), St. Edmund’s College, Ware (1845–50), and St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth (1846–53)—and with the encouragement of Lord Shrewsbury, he became professor of Ecclesiastical Antiquities at St. Mary’s College, Ossott, in 1837. See Roderick O’Donnell, “Pugin as a Church Architect,” in Atterbury and Wainwright, Pugin: A Gothic Passion, 79 (see n. 12); and Michael Fisher, Pugin-Land: A. W. N. Pugin, Lord Shrewsbury, and the Gothic Revival in Staffordshire (Stafford, 2002), 37.

38. Williams, The Venerable English College, 96–97, 100.

39. Nicholas Wiseman, Recollections of the Last Four Popes (London, 1858), 22; and Williams, The Venerable English College, 100–1, 121.

40. Gwynn, Lord Shrewsbury, Pugin and the Catholic Revival, 112 (see n. 4).


43. Nicholas Wiseman to Edward Pugin, 22 Nov. 1862, MS.L.50-1982/21/2, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum. In this informal letter, a response to an invitation from the architect to visit his offices in Ramsgate, Wiseman asks for advice about the best train to take. Also see Blaker, Edward Pugin and Kent, 16 (see n. 11).

44. Dublin Builder 7 (1865), 96, discussed in O’Donnell, “The Later Pugins,” 262 (see n. 12). Wiseman’s tomb was constructed at Kensal Green Catholic Cemetery in London and, in 1907, was moved to St. Peter’s Crypt at Westminster Cathedral. See The Tablet (1867), 20; and O’Donnell, “The Later Pugins,” 262, 300 n. 29.


46. In a letter of 1860, Odo Russell, the British envoy to Rome, described Talbot as one of Pius IX’s “crazy foreign prelates”; see Noel Blakiston ed., The Roman Question: Extracts from the Dispatches of Odo Russell from Rome 1858–1870 (London, 1962), 131.

47. George Talbot, The Tablet (1848), 529, and Atterbury, A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival, 299–300.


49. Williams, The Venerable English College, 120–21.

50. Edward Pugin to Edward Henry Howard (?), 7 Apr. 1864, Scritture 81/4/1, VEC (see n. 19).

51. In 1217, Cardinal Gaula Bicheri was given the church at Chesterton as a benefice by King Henry III (r. 1216–72) in return for his help in pacifying the competing forces following the death of King John. See Martina Schilling, The Thirteenth-Century Abbey of Sant’Andrea in Vercelli: The Gothic Architecture and its Historical Context (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2001).

52. “Competition for the Memorial Chapel at Constantinople,” The Ecclesialogist 18 (1857), 98–99. See also Germann, Gothic Revival in Europe and Britain, 111. In the end, the church was built to a design by G. E. Street because it was thought to be more suitable for a distinctly English memorial.

53. For a discussion of these principles, see Stanton, Pugin, 81 (see n. 16).

54. The implications of building an English Gothic church in hot or tropical climates was debated by architects and ecclesiologists in the 1840s and 1850s. See Benjamin Webb, “On the Adaptation of Pointed Architecture to Tropical Climates,” in Transactions of the Cambridge Camden Society 3 (1845), 199–218; and the discussion in Germann, Gothic Revival in Europe and Britain, 109–10.

55. See the discussion in Street, Memoir of George Edmund Street, 81 (see n. 15).

56. Edward Pugin to George Talbot, 27 Apr. 1864, Scritture 81/4/2, VEC.

57. Neve (?), “The Rebuilding of the Church of St. Thomas” (see n. 34).

58. Edward Pugin to George Talbot, 31 May 1865, Scritture 81/4/3, VEC.

59. Frederick Neve to George Talbot, 25 July 1864, Talbot Papers 758, VEC.


62. Fisher, Pugin-Land, 147 (see n. 17).


65. The Failer (1859), 54; and O’Donnell, “The Later Pugins,” 266.

66. See n. 9.


69. The *Ecclesiologist* 1 (1841–42), 235–36.


73. Hall, “The Rise of Refinement,” 112 (see n. 61).

74. O’Donnell, “Pugins in Ireland,” 154–55 (see n. 13); and O’Dwyer, “A Victorian Partnership,” 60–61 (see n. 23). There are plans for St. Coleman’s in the library of the RBA and slightly later ones (ca. 1869) in the Irish Architectural Archive.


81. Edward Pugin to George Talbot, 24 Oct. 1867, Scritture 81/4/5, VEC.

82. Edward Pugin to George Talbot, 21 July 1868, Scritture 81/4/9, VEC. “[The] work of the signore the professional gentleman in question, not only in your case, but in anything he has touched, shows a wealth of decadence which can only be described as deplorable. If my work had been replaced by something more worthy of the occasion, I should have had but small right to complain, but when I was for what thanks been set aside, I can no longer repress my indignation, not only on account of myself but on account of the cause... [T]he essays of a Church and it does not even pretend to be a collegiate chapel... What single characteristic mark has it to show its origin? Where is the point of departure between this, and that monstrous St. Peter’s Hatton Gardens, or Evans’s music Hall at the Bedford? They are all the same.”

83. Edward Pugin to George Talbot, 4 Sept. 1868, Scritture 81/5/12, VEC.


86. Louis English to George Talbot, 8 July 1857, Talbot Papers 258, VEC.

87. Lady Herbert was a friend of Manning who had converted to the Catholic faith in 1866 following the 1861 death of her husband, the politician Sydney Herbert.

88. Lady Herbert, open letter supporting the appeal, 1868, Scritture 82/3, VEC.

89. Edward Pugin to George Talbot, 21 July 1868, Scritture 81/4/9, VEC.


91. George Talbot to Henry O’Callaghan, 18 July 1868, Scritture 81/3/11, VEC.

92. George Talbot to Edward Pugin, 5 Sept. 1868, Scritture 81/5/13, VEC.

93. Edward Pugin to Henry O’Callaghan, 2 Mar. 1874, Scritture 81/5/21, VEC.


95. On the Granville, see ibid., 38–49; and for Pugin in the United States, see Margaret Henderson Floyd, “A. W. N. Pugin and the Gothic Movement in North America,” in Atterbury, *A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, 208 (see n. 14). The only church designed by Pugin in the U.S. is the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Roxbury, Boston.


100. Champ, “Goths and Romans,” 299.


105. Take, for example, the Cathedral of St. Patrick, New York (1858–79), and the Cathedral of St. Patrick, Melbourne (1858–97). See John M. Farley, *The History of the Cathedral of Saint Patrick* (New York, 1908); and Brian


109. Edward Pugin to Henry O’Callaghan, 2 Mar. 1874, Scritture 81/5/20, VEC (see n. 19).

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