Metaphors in Action: early modern church buildings as spaces of knowledge

Introduction

When a building copies or references a model, it becomes an analogous space: regardless of how exactly the model is invoked, or whether the model ever existed, elements of the new building stand for an original that is not present, yet can be read, understood or remembered by means of these elements, their arrangement, or use. If it is quite easy to accept that analogies of this kind exist, it is harder to establish how exactly they are established. What defines the connection between the building and its analogue? How is this connection recognized or activated? On what does it depend, on the design of a building, its use, its descriptions, its context?¹

It is the aim of this article to examine this connection by comparing how, during the early modern period, Roman Catholic churches and those of the Church of England were constructed, used and read as analogous spaces. As we will argue, churches act as analogous spaces because by definition they incorporate important symbolical and historical meanings. They are used and often described following well-established practices, which should allow the beholder or reader to grasp the construction of the analogous space. By adopting a comparative perspective across confessional lines, we hope to establish some of the factors that determine the modalities of the analogous space. After all, among the major points of the confessional debate were the use of images and the appropriateness of architectural splendour, as well as the exact nature and meaning of liturgical rites. These issues directly affect the design of church architecture and the way it is able to incorporate references or analogies. Finally, as we will show, Roman Catholic churches and those of the Church of England are 'analogous' to the same prototypes. The question then is whether and how the

confessional context differentiates the analogy of early modern churches with those prototypes.

To examine these questions, we will first address in general terms how early modern churches operated as analogous spaces. Then we will examine in more detail how Roman Catholic and 'English' churches embodied analogies with models or prototypes. In our conclusion, a comparison of these two traditions will allow us to propose a preliminary topology of the analogous spaces in early modern religious architecture.

The symbolism of churches and historiography

The renaissance treatises written from the mid fifteenth century onwards in emulation of Vitruvius' *De architectura libri decem* (ca. 20 BC), such as Leon Battista Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria* (published 1486), almost invariably deal with churches. Generally places of worship are classed as the most important and dignified building type, and it is there that the architectural principles underlying the treatise become applied to their fullest extent.

The body of early modern literature on church buildings is, however, not confined to these treatises. Early modern church historians, archaeologists, dignitaries, priest, preachers, poets and image-makers, be they Catholic or Protestant, have produced a wealth of descriptions, poems, speeches and histories that deal more or less directly with church buildings.² Nevertheless, this body of literature considers churches less as a topic of design, as the Vitruvian treatises do, than as bearers of meaning, be it religious, historical or political. Abbey chronicles, for instance, often provide detailed accounts of church buildings, yet not as an object of architectural design, but as an integral part of the life and history of a religious community.³ A speech delivered at the dedication of a church building, to give another example, is much less concerned with providing a detailed and accurate description of every detail of that building's design, let alone with laying out the designer's intentions

and procedures, than with the possible significations that the actors involved in constructing the church might attach to making a building in that particular time and place.

This body of material is not easily summarized, but even a necessarily incomplete survey leads to a simple observation: it is deeply marked by the confessional struggles dividing Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet very homogeneous in its frame of reference. Except for the more extreme Puritan factions in the Church of England and Protestantism in general, all confessions, whether Protestant or Catholic, describe churches in very similar terms, for instance as re-foundations of the Temple of Solomon, the second Temple erected as a permanent shrine to the Ark of the Covenant, or as pre-figurations of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the perfect city built of gems and gold at the end of time.⁴ This body of metaphors is, of course, shared by all Christians, since it lies embedded in the Bible and early Christian literature.⁵ Moreover, the idea that the architecture of a church is prone to an allegorical reading where different parts of the building stand for either doctrinal or historical aspects of Christianity was well established by at least the thirteenth century. Around 1255 Wilhelmus Durandus wrote the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, the most influential liturgical manual in Europe until well into the twentieth century.⁶ The Rationale considers the church building as one component of the apparatus accommodating worship, and invests architecture with a symbolical charge similar to liturgy by offering a detailed allegorical reading of the building's architectural elements, such as the doors, the windows, the pillars, etc. As such, the *Rationale* codified a much older and widespread practice to read buildings as allegorical texts.

This practice persisted in the early modern period, as is illustrated by the following example.⁷ An emblem (a composition of an image with a motto and an epigram) published in honour of Pope Gregory XIII (1572-85) as part of the *Allusioni, et imprese sopra l'arme di*

Gregorio Papa XIII shows a small domed church.⁸ It refers to the Cappella Gregoriana, the first part of new Saint Peter's to be decorated and finished in 1583. (Figure 1)

Quite probably the emblem serves to commemorate the dedication of the shrine, since it takes as its motto 'Urbs beata Ierusalem', the first line of the hymn sung at the dedication of churches. The hymn portrays Jerusalem as a vision of peace built from the living stones of the faithful, descending from heaven on earth like a bride entering her nuptial chamber or tabernacle. It evokes the role of the master builder at length, and his artifice is praised as he constructs his holy edifice, walled with gold and gems, on the cornerstone of Christ. By joining an image evoking the chapel (itself a pars pro toto for the new Saint Peter's) with the dedication hymn, the emblem suggests how this precious building serves as a mirror for the ideal building of the Temple, but also for the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and its heavenly model, the Jerusalem of Revelation. Indeed, according to the legend of the emblem, the small church is, 'the symbol of the church triumphant and militant, and the Roman pontiff, in imitation of the heavenly Jerusalem, as is described in Revelation 21'. In the sonnet that completes the emblem, by serving as its epigram, the chapel is described as a stunning compendium of the most precious materials, the heavenly image of a resplendent edifice. Marginal annotations gloss each of these elements as one constituent part of the Church and its history. The emblem thus identifies the particular architecture of the Cappella Gregoriana with the artifice of the Temple and, as such, renders it liable to allegorical interpretation; through its artifice, the building becomes an image of the Roman Catholic Church.

With the confessional struggles, the allegorisation of architecture as performed in this emblem became part of a new agenda; comparison of the new building to its first prototype now served to legitimize the decision to build the church, its existence and, by extension, the community that decided to erect the place of worship. In other words, one function of the references to biblical or other prototypes that permeate the early modern literature on churches is to define an origin, and to establish a lineage between the new building and that point of origin. The very existence of this lineage then proved the legitimacy of not only the act of building, but also of the builders.

It is this preoccupation with origins that could be considered as the most consequential effect of the early modern confessional struggles on the discourse regarding church buildings. To establish these origins, however, symbolical references did not suffice. They had to be substantiated by means of historical proof. Historiography became one of the most important battlegrounds of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation.⁹ Between 1559 and 1574 the *Magdeburger Centurien* were published in Basel,¹⁰ to show by means of meticulous historical research that the Roman Church and especially the papacy stood in no historical connection at all with the primitive church established by Christ and Saint Peter. This attack on the very legitimacy of Catholicism spurred a group of historians in Rome to write a counter-history of Christianity, now to prove the prerogatives of Rome and the Catholic Church. This led to the publication of the *Annales Ecclesiastici*, or Annals of the Church, by Oratorian Cesare Baronio and published between 1587 and 1607.¹¹

The motivation underlying the conscious attempts to reform Catholic historiographical practise is explicitly stated in the introduction to the *Annales*. Baronio wanted to

Demonstrate for every age that the visible monarchy of the Catholic Church was instituted by Christ our Lord and founded upon Peter and his true and legitimate successors, the true Roman pontiffs, and that it is preserved inviolate, religiously guarded neither broken nor interrupted but continuous, for ever.¹²

Simon Ditchfield has argued that the motivation for Baronio's historiographical endeavour resided as much in the post-Tridentine reform of liturgy as in the controversial use of historiography by the Protestants. Roman Catholics saw history as the best instrument to prove the provenance of liturgical rites, the existence of saints and the continuity of their cult: the very elements of their religion that Protestants contested. Because rites are accommodated in spaces and buildings that not only house the present cult but also carry the traces of older devotional and liturgical practices, the writing of history in the service of liturgy became intimately linked with the recording of places. As a consequence, Baronio's historiographical enterprise led directly to the development of an auxiliary discipline, Christian archaeology. This practice is not only one of the suppressed roots of modern architectural history, but also a lively proto-scientific endeavour that fused humanist archaeological interest – one of the areas of research underlying Renaissance architectural theory – with Counter-Reformation apologetical literature.¹³

This quest for the material origins of Christianity immediately translated into a programme: the past not only served as a source of justification, but also as a incitement for imitation. This idea – yet another humanist trope – permeated a plethora of texts. An important example is Carlo Borromeo's *Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae*⁻¹⁴ It is an administrative document drawn up to assist parish priests and bishops of the archdiocese of Milan in the design, construction and maintenance of their churches, published in 1577. In the introductory letter to the reader, Borromeo writes:

> In these *Instructiones* we also advise an imitation of that ancient piety and reverence of the faithful (which originated in the time of the Apostles) and which clearly shone forth in the construction of those sacred buildings and the admirable disposition of their sacred furnishings. The remains which are to be seen today indicate that there once existed large and numerous ecclesiastical structures. There was also a large and valuable abundance of sacred vestments and vessels. ... We have learned that all of these ecclesiastical furnishings were of extraordinary value, not only at Rome, Jerusalem or Constantinople, but also at Milan (which fact should have the greatest effect on our piety). ¹⁵

The claim on the heritage of the primitive church was, however, as little a prerogative of the Roman Catholic Church as was the body of symbols and allegories available in the Bible and later religious literature. The Church of England, likewise, attached much importance to the Golden Age of Christianity: the Primitive Church of the first five centuries. Within the Church of England, the link with Early Christianity not only had to justify the detachment from Rome and the Pope; it also served to establish the National Church and preserve her from dissenters. Especially the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries marked the summit of English patristic scholarship.¹⁶ If the doctrine was to be based on the interpretation of Scripture only, the reading of the early Fathers could help to overthrow the corrupt opinions of the Church of Rome. Laudians even gave a more prominent role to the Church Fathers stressing that 'consent of antiquity was the best exposition of Scripture'.¹⁷

Patristic testimony was important for the apologetics and ecclesiology of the Church of England. Generally spoken, the English scholars thus focused on (ante–) Nicene Fathers, Greek and Byzantine writers. Like the continental Protestants and contrary to the Roman Catholics, the English preference mainly went out to the Christian writers of the first centuries. The reformers commonly assumed that after the times of Augustine (354-430) and the Four Oecumenical Councils – Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) – human traditions had started to pervert the Church. The six first centuries of Christian Antiquity, however, played a major role in the Church of England, even more than in continental Protestantism. The major use of the Fathers made by the Church of England, was to retrieve the basics of Christian doctrine, as opposed to both the new Tridentine definitions and personal opinions of continental Reformers. The Early Fathers were essential to establish the Church of England as *via media* and sole true heir of Christian Antiquity. Although important for the Church of England as a whole, the patristic studies became especially important for the High Church men after Restoration.¹⁸

This association with Primitive Christianity not only served to legitimize the rupture from "the corrupt" Roman Church, but it also set out guidelines for the interpretation of the newly established worship. If the first Articles of the Church of England remained mainly inspired by Catholic doctrine, Church of England worship became a truly reformed one under the reign of Edward VI (r. 1547-53), declaring the Roman Church as superstitious and idolatrous.¹⁹ The Church of England's liturgy, established in the Book of Common Prayer (1549 and revised subsequently until 1662), focused on a corporate liturgical worship centred on the 'service of the word' and 'the supper of the Lord'. The latter in particular was inspired by the rites and usages of the Primitive Church, which guaranteed the grandeur of the Christian truth. The origins of the Church received a lot of attention in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' English treatises.²⁰ All books attempted to a description of the morals and customs of the early Church. If they do not set it explicitly as an example for the Church of England by immediately applying it through examples, all pay special attentions to contemporary concerns and controversies such as are idolatry, the use of bodily gestures, unity and discipline of worship and the ground plan and liturgical use of the church building. In a passage that shows striking parallels with the admonishment of Carolus Borromeo, the ecclesiastical historian Joseph Bingham wrote in 1708-22:

> The subject of the present discourse, being an essay upon the ancient usages and customs of the primitive church, and a particular account of the state of her clergy, is such as, being considered barely by its own nature, I know I cannot but be approved by a person of your Lordship's [Jonathan, Lord Bishop of Winchester] character; whose care is concerned not only in preserving the purity of the primitive faith, but also in reviving the spirit of the ancient discipline and primitive practice....The matters here treated of are many things of greatest importance, which when plainly set in order and presented to public view, may perhaps excite the zeal of many in the present age, to copy out

those necessary duties, by the practice of which the primitive church attained to great perfection and glory, and as I may say, still provokes and calls us to the same attainments by so many excellent rules and noble examples.²¹

Across confessional boundaries, the double claim to the Primitive Church as origin and model, led to an important production of treatises about the Primitive Church and the true worship of early Christians, all of these paying much attention to the origin and necessity of places of worship. In the Roman Catholic sphere, an early treatise is Jean de Marconville's Traicté contenant l'origines des temples des Juifs, published in 1563 and translated into Italian by Raffaello Borghini in 1577.²² (Figure 2) Robert Bellarmine extensively discussed the appropriate church building in his sixth chapter of the Disputationes, the De ornatu templorum.²³ Later examples include the work of the priest Michelangelo Lualdi, who argues that superstition, heresy, idolatry or iconoclasm stem from eronneous conceptions of worship and its accommodation,²⁴ Francesco di Simone's *Delle glorie de'sagri tempj e del* culto, che ad essi si deve from 1734,25 or the oeuvre of the abbot Giovanni Marangoni, whose Delle cose gentilesche, e profane transportate ad uso e adornamento delle chiese subtly fuses contemporary antiquarian views with the history of religion.²⁶ Finally, seventeenth-century Rome saw the most important update of Durandus' work in Giovanni Bona's *Rerum liturgicarum libri duo*, first published in 1672, which incorporated the recent historiography and archeology.²⁷

As a result, the historical frame of reference for churches acquired the same status as the symbolical; a common 'history' is not only put to use but also actively promoted as an argument by opposing confessional camps. Again it is not hard to see why both the Roman Catholic and the Church of England would avail themselves of the same examples; after all, they lay claim on the same origin. But if these same examples serve to draw a distinction, it is worth asking whether they are read, interpreted and applied in the same way.

Analogous spaces in Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism

Roman Catholicism

Catholic historiography and archaeology made available a body of texts and images that could facilitate the task set by Catholic Church authorities, namely to reinforce the symbolical attachment to the true model of every space of worship – the biblical prototypes – with historical references to specific architectural models able to carry and ventilate the apologetic agenda of the Counter-Reformation Church. Cesare Baronio, the author of the *Annales Ecclesiastici*, put his agenda into practice in his architectural patronage, most famously in the restoration of the church of SS. Achileo e Nereo in Rome²⁸. Alessandro Zuccari has rightly termed Baronio's approach here 'philological', drawing attention to the close parallel with Baronio's scholarly treatment of written sources, and the care with which he places each of the church building's constituent elements in accordance with their original historical value.²⁹

Baronio's restoration of SS. Achileo e Nereo fits into the widespread attention for both early Christian and Medieval churches emerging in Rome and elsewhere from the late sixteenth century onwards, and the adoption in church architecture of elements with early Christian origins, like the *confessio*, an open crypt giving access to the space underneath the altar where the relics of a church's titular saint are kept. Important examples are the restoration of Santa Cecilia in Rome by Cardinal Emilio Sfondrati in 1599, or the rebuilding of the San Sebastiano fuori le Mura, by Cardinal Scipio Borghese in 1608.³⁰

In this context it is worth also noting a less well-known restoration campaign, instigated by Cardinal Ludovico de Torres II (1551-1609), because it particularly addresses the analogy of text and architecture. De Torres was an important clergyman who was closely connected with, amongst others, Cesare Baronio. In 1588, he was nominated Archbishop of Monreale, the city South of Palermo that is home to the magnificent medieval cathedral. To celebrate his appointment, de Torres, adopting the name of his secretary Giovanni Luigi Lello, published an extensive description of the church, the *Decrittione del real tempio, et monasterio di Santa Maria Nuova di Monreale*³¹ (Figure 3). The 33-page-long description very briefly introduces the construction of the cathedral, before leading the reader through the nave to the crossing, and from there to the altar area, choir, tribune, transept and transept chapels. After a short description of the floor, attention turns to the famous mosaics in the nave. In a fifteen-page section, these mosaics are listed by their inscriptions. The description then deals with the church exterior. A three-page enumeration of the church's measurements then follows, arranged from large to small; the length, width and height of the building are progressively broken down into the different units that compose the building. The text returns to the interior to describe the altars, baptismal font and the tombs inside the church. A remark on the lighting in the church is followed by a description of the monastery.

The *Descrittione* was published again in 1596, now as part of the *Historia della chiesa di Monreale.*³² Probably heeding Carlo Borromeo's admonishment to bishops to concern themselves with the historiography of their diocese, this book consists of three parts: the description of the building, brief descriptions of the lives, or *gesta*, of the archbishops of Monreale up to Torres, and a treatise on the privileges accorded to the church and diocese of Monreale. The description is based on the text of 1588 but has been expanded to include Torres' numerous involvements with the church building between 1588-96. Again in obvious imitation of Borromeo's interventions in the Cathedral of Milan, two of Torres' actions mirror the second part of the 1596 *Historia*, the *Vite de gli Arcivescovi or gesta episcoporum*: in the apse, Torres installed an inscription listing all the arch-bishops of Monreale since the inception of the diocese,³³ and Torres decorated his most important intervention in the church, the construction of a chapel dedicated to San Castrense, with a portrait cycle of his predecessors.³⁴

Why he did so can be gathered from a short treatise inserted into the *Historia*, which recalls 'that the continuous succession of bishops is considered an important argument for the truth of the Catholic Church against the fables of heretics', and that it was therefore common to install books or tablets recording the names of deceased bishops, and to have their effigies painted in the church. The point is underscored with citations from the Church Fathers and Scripture, and a short bibliography of other modern compendia of *Gesta Episcoporum*.³⁵ Torres' attention to the motivation behind his collection of bishops' lives betrays his indebtedness to Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici*.

It is probable that the *Historia di Monreale*, containing both the first description of the chapel of San Castrense and the *Gesta Episcoporum*, was published to celebrate the dedication or at least the construction of the chapel. The book thus simultaneously provided accurate information concerning Torres' intervention, and its precise meaning: the chapel should be understood, according to the *Historia*, much less as an early baroque addition to a medieval church than as the result of an act entirely similar to the interventions that gave the church its present shape. The *Gesta Episcoporum* of the 1596 edition offers a historical framework that unveils the true meaning of the church's art and architecture. The church exists because it was formed by a long and continuous succession of capable men who administered the church and her diocese. Torres follows in their footsteps when he assumes the care and embellishment of the building.

The example of the description of Monreale allows one to identify three aspects of the Catholic attitude towards Early Christianity and its construction of analogous spaces. First, according to the description, the new chapel of San Castrense incorporated early Christian elements, like the *confessio* or the *ciborium*, a vaulted canopy placed over the altar. The

chapel was also fitted out so as to fully accommodate its liturgical functions, as it was provided with all the necessary reference works and instruments. In other words, the chapel was built to imitate early Christian religious practice. Second, the chapel looked very much like a contemporary late sixteenth-century building. Like most of its Roman counterparts, the chapel of San Castrense was a conscious emulation of early Christianity but without any hint of primitivism. The analogy between the present and the past was not established by means of form, but by liturgical use. Even more so, it could be argued that to men like del Torres, the analogy between the chapel and its model was reinforced by the 'modernity' of the new intervention, because it demonstrated a similar dependence of form on historical context as had the early Christian places of worship. Finally, the literary or descriptive method to connect the present with the past, through the building, is biography. Since the single building embodies the lives not only of the patron saint but also of its successive patrons, it expresses the unchanging continuity of Christian faith.

Seventeenth-century Roman Catholic literature contains many examples of 'descriptions as biographies'; here, we will briefly discuss one very explicit case, to illustrate how the notion of the 'life' gives unity and meaning to church buildings with long and complicated histories. In 1680 Bianco Negri published a book entitled *Basilica Petroniana ovvero Vita di San Petronio*.³⁶ Despite its apparently paradoxical and equivocal title, 'the Petronian basilica or/that is the Life of Petronio', the book offers exactly what it promises. The biography of the fifth-century Saint Petronio seamlessly evolves into an account of the invention of his saintly body in 1141, the construction of the church from the late fourteenth century. onwards, the description of the actual state of the still unfinished building and short biographies of all known canons of the church, illustrated with their coats of arms. The narrative encompasses – without any hint of friction – the events from the saint's life and the subsequent commemoration and veneration of his acts through building and liturgy. As the

title of the book implies, the biography of the saint and the description of his titular church permeate into each other. However, since Petronio's life belongs to the past and the church exists in the present, the book turns the church building as it stands in the seventeenth century. into a mirror image of Petronio's fifth-century life: the design of the church, its inscriptions and works of art become vivid testimonies of his actions; its foundations and stones, already sanctified by the presence of the saintly corpse, become a living image of his body; those who administer the church become at once Petronio's pupils and successors. The painstakingly constructed linear history, meant to prove the continuity between Petronio's life and seventeenth-century cult, finds its *rationale* in the eternal and immutable presence, first bodily, then architecturally, of Petronio.

While the 'biographical description' acts as a textual analogue to the 'real' building, the underlying idea – that it is possible to discern an unchanging truth within the contingencies of historical forms – influenced architecture as well. As noted above, restoration of early Christian or medieval churches rarely, if ever, attempted to recreate 'old' forms. Rather, existing elements were transformed and recomposed into new and previously unknown forms. A famous example of this procedure is the Baldacchino, built in Saint Peter's in Rome by Gianlorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini between 1626 and 1633³⁷ (Figure 4). The construction (built above a *confessio* installed earlier) incorporates references to the twisted columns, kept in Saint Peter's, which were considered to be elements from the Temple of Solomon. In the Baldacchino, they are made much larger and of bronze, thus embodying another reference to the Temple, but now to its twin columns, Jachin and Boaz. These four behemoths carry a baldachin, originally a portable canopy made of brocade and carried on staves, serving to cover relics, the Eucharist or dignitaries in procession. The incorporation of many other references contributes to the meaning of the Baldacchino, but for the present argument it should be stressed that all these are conflated into a single

construction that was, in the eyes of contemporary observers, essentially novel.³⁸ To those same observers, it was exactly the expressive application of old forms that proved the legitimacy of the present Church, at least if the beholders were Catholic. When the English poet John Milton visited Saint Peter's in 1638 he seems to have been particularly impressed by the basilica's interior and the Baldacchino. In fact, several scholars have argued convincingly that Milton's description of Satan's palace, Pandemonium, in *Paradise Lost*, is actually modelled on the Baldacchino.³⁹

The Church in England

Besides a re-edition of Eusebius' Church History in 1577, the few English church histories dealing with early Christianity mostly appeared from the 1630s onwards. This, however, does not signify that English churchmen were not preoccupied at all with Early Christianity. Rather, their interest has left traces in a broader range of religious texts, especially in speeches written on the occasion of the consecration of church-buildings, consecration sermons.

The sermons of the seventeenth century display an interest in biblical and Early Christian examples that recalls the church histories devoted to the Primitive Church and its practices of worship. When compared with the historical treatises, they are found to deal with the same subjects, but in a different way. The church histories defined and justified the 'true worship' retrospectively, by reconstructing the ideal Early Christian church building and by showing the importance of the restoration of 'the Glorious Primitive Church'.

The sermons aimed to prove the necessity of building a church as well as its consecration by connecting the material building with ideal 'prototypes' found in the Bible (for example, Solomon's Temple) or in early Christianity (mostly Constantine's churches). The sermons

projected an analogous space of worship and commemoration upon the architecture of the new building.

In this part of the article we will analyse the impact of the body of references contained in this corpus of religious texts concerning church architecture. A chronological examination of the text-building analogy makes manifest a shift from text to building between the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century. As pointed out, the text originally served as a justification of the sacredness of the church building. The historical references were thus commonly related to the church interiors and the liturgical space.⁴⁰ In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the texts still fulfilled the same function, but now also inspired the over-all design of the church architecture. It was an evolution within the Church of England itself that produced this shift. After the Civil War and the Restoration a more ceremonial, High Church approach re-emerged. The Laudian ideals which had emphasized the institutional continuity of the Church throughout history, had remained alive during the revolution of the 1640s. As a result they were well placed to influence and shape the re-established Church, becoming the norm from 1700 onwards.⁴¹ This made way for a growing interest in church architecture and furnishings inspired by Early Christianity.

The early seventeenth-century interest in the historical origins of the true church did not translate into the definition of specific architectural models, but the symbolic frame of reference did play its role in the definition of sacred space by analogy. These analogies were essential to the final phase of the building process, that is the church's consecration. From the religious point of view, the consecration is without doubt the most important moment in the church building process. The consecration sets the building apart from the profane environment by dedicating it solely to the worship of God. The consecration creates a sacred space within the architectural frame, as Roger Abbot detailed in his sermon on the occasion of the consecration of a chapel in 1638:

First our churches and chappels are dedicated to God, for his holy uses and services: and what is this? When is it done? It is their setting apart to holy uses for ever. The Jewes did it by holy oyle appointed by God as a type of Christs graces: and then no ordinary businesses, though the end was sacrifying, was to be done in them; ... the church of Rome doth it by over-loading ceremonies as oyle, salt, ashes,... But wee doe it with the word of God and prayers, decent ceremonies, to hold them for Gods uses for ever. Thus Constantine having finished a goodly church, dedicated it with orations, sermons, prayers, praises, saith Eusebius.⁴²

Besides the emphasis on the importance and necessity of the church building, the sermons also cautiously refer to church architecture itself. Special points of attention were decoration and liturgical setting.

The degree of ornamentation was extensively discussed. Should the House of God be kept in a decent sobriety in order to avoid any danger of idolatry and superstition? Such superstition was after all the hallmark of the Roman Catholic faith. Or does the presence of God require a glorious architecture? In the first decades of the seventeenth century most authors seem to have advocated a decent place of worship that would, however, neither distract the believers nor lead to superstition and idolatry. Anti-Laudian consecration sermons generally referred to the sobriety of the Early Christian places of worship under the persecution as the ideal model:

How well therefore the holy Ghost fitted Rome in this regard, with the title of an Whore (revel.17.). Why an whore? One reason, because she is degenerated from that simplicity, and matron-like modesty where with Christs chast Spouse is attired, and shee is now as (prov.7.10.) in the attyre of an harlot...She is decket with gold and precious stones: so are her churches, her images, her idols, all gloriously adorned...Oh the simplicity of the primitive Church and Christians, then no popish pomp in Gods services, and yet what excellent Christians, what rare measure of grace and holiness¹⁴³

The historical references explained the degree of ornamentation of the building and established a relation between the existing structure, an ideal prototype and true worship. These analogies with the Early Christian and symbolic referents were very flexible, depending on the case.

Even more important than the decoration of the building was the liturgical setting. Liturgy had become a major point of disagreement between Roman Catholics and the Church of England. The Common prayer was a liturgy based on comprehension and participation but also conceived in opposition to Roman Catholic superstitious ritualism.⁴⁴ The architectural implications of liturgy included the position of the communion table and the use of chancel screens. The re-introduction of chancel screens, in order to separate the chancel from the nave, fitted with the early Christian requirement for two separate spaces in the church: one for the service and the sermon, the other for the sacrament⁴⁵ (Figure 5). Although the debate about these screens was especially fierce in the 1620-30s, William Beveridge (1637-1708) still emphasised their importance in 1681 in his opening sermon of the parish church at St. Peter's Cornhill:

Hence that place where this sacrament is administred was always made and reputed the highest place in the Church. And therefore also it was wont to be separated from the rest of the church by a screen or partition network, in Latin cancelli, and that so generally, that from thence the place itself is called the 'Chancel'. That this was antiently observed in the building of all considerable Churches (...) within few centuries after the Apostles themselves, even in the days of Constantine the Great, as well as in all ages since.⁴⁶

These examples demonstrate the importance of Early Christian and Biblical history in the (early) seventeenth-century Church of England. Their role in the consecration sermons was not driven by architectural design principles. The main objective was to show that the

Church of England was the sole heir of the Golden Age of Christianity, because of her direct relationship with the Bible. Therefore all liturgical and ritual actions undertaken by the Church served to restore the original state of Christianity and the glorious Christian nations that flourished under Solomon and Constantine. Thus the historical references in consecration sermons not only established the church building as the place of 'good' worship, but also as an analogous space for the 'correct' (Church of England interpretation of) ecclesiastical history (a place of memory) and for the diffusion of the knowledge of the true religion (place of knowledge).

The growing architectural interest in the Early Christian period developed in parallel with an increasing preoccupation with the actual design of the most important Biblical building: Solomon's temple. In at least one case, Llandaff Cathedral, this led to the reconstruction of an actual church according to the design of the temple of Solomon. At the same time, the contemporary interpretation of the ideal Christian basilica would inspire the lay-out of new churches, as those built in London from 1711 onwards.

Although the Temple's reconstruction in word and image had been developed from at least the thirteenth century onwards, in 1596-1604 Juan-Bautista Villalpando and Juan de Prado had published their highly influential and lavishly illustrated reconstruction of the Temple of Solomon, as part of an exegesis of the prophecy of Ezekiel. In 1643 Joseph Mede's *The key to the Revelation* (1643) provided the first representation of the temple of Jerusalem in English.⁴⁷ As was the case elsewhere in Europe, this growing interest in the pictorial representation of biblical and Early Christian buildings gradually found its way into architectural practice. From the mid sixteenth century onwards, Calvinists on the continent referred to their places of worship as to the Temple, since this was the model of the 'original chosen people'. By way of an external misconception, this eventually led to the association with an architectural model based on an octagonal groundplan.⁴⁸ Also in England the

theoretical model was linked to church buildings from the seventeenth century onwards. The referent became gradually accepted as a model for decent, beautiful church architecture. Preaching at the consecration of churches, preachers of different confessional backgrounds put forward the history and the architecture of Solomon's Temple as a Scriptural fiat for the building of beautiful and even stately churches.

Solomon had no such mean and derogating Thoughts, as to imagin the Temple proportionable to God's Immensity and greatness...All that Solomon designed by rearing up such a noble Fabrick upon Mount Zion, was only that he and the People of Israel might have a Place for Solemn and divine Worship, suitable to the Honour of God's Majesty and to which they might have recourse...⁴⁹

This tropological reading, brought along a genuine historical interest in the Temple architecture. Referring to the Biblical passages in Kings and Ezekiel some preachers give a description of the measurements, the plan, and the fabric of Solomon's Temple.

After the Restoration, architects, involved with church building, also showed a genuine interest in the Biblical past. Christopher Wren (1632-1723), gave a brief account of Solomon's Temple in his *Discourse on Architecture*, written about 1670. Some influence can be found in the groundplans and orders of the post-fire London churches such as St. Mary-at-Hill, St. Anne and St. Agnes and St. Martin Ludgate.⁵⁰ Dean Aldrich (1647-1710) – to whom the design of Trinity chapel, Oxford is attributed –, published a study on the orders of Solomon's Temple in his *Elementorum Architecturae Civilis*, 1708. Nicolas Hawksmoor (1661-1736), made a very elaborate study of Ezekiel's Temple vision, and paid particular attention to the east gate. This study is preserved in some note, however it is not excluded that a restitution along the lines of his *primitive Basilica* was planned or even made. According to several scholars, including Vaugan Hart, Solomonic influence is clearly present in his church of St. Mary Woolnoth. The altarpiece is flanked with two twisted

solomonic columns and the cubic form of the church recalls the temple's cubit measurements.⁵¹

In 1734 John Wood (1704-54) began his 'restoration' of Llandaff Cathedral, which according to the architect was the oldest place of Christian worship known in Britain.⁵²(Figure 6). Wood intended to bring the Cathedral back to her original early Christian state. In the manuscript of his treatise *The Origin of Building* (1741), Wood demonstrated that the original measurements of Llandaff had been founded on the description of Solomon's temple. Part of his intervention was to restore this original state. Secondly, he chose to restore the Gothic church in a Palladian style, inspired by his knowledge of the early Christian and Roman tradition. Finally, the Corinthian canopy that he installed over the Communion table was probably derived from Bingham's description of the 'tabernacle' in his *Antiquities of the Christian Church*. ⁵³ From the perspective of primitive Christianity, Wood attempted to restore *the most ancient church in Britain* to her original glory,

part whereof was built to imitate Solomon's Temple... These proportions as well as the figures of the sacred Edifices of the Jews, we have found disguised under Gothick Dress, in many other churches, and therefore were those churches stripped of their licentious Ornaments, the Beauty of the Proportions observed by the Antients wou'd appear, in the strongest Manner in them.⁵⁴

The 'historical' correction of the measurements, the 'restoration' of the original style and the replacement of 'original' furniture made it possible to realise this architectural project.

The Early Christian basilica also served as referent throughout the Stuart period. For Laudian architecture, the primitivist references towards for example altar rails and the east positioning of the altars, countered accusations of popishness, by emphasizing the continuity

from the apostles' times. Calvinists alike made deliberate primitivist statements in the use of the Tuscan order in the Broadway Westminster (1635-1642) and Poplar (1642-1654) chapels.⁵⁵ It was however only after the Restoration that the Early Basilica was consequently and consciously adopted as a model and referent for designing contemporary church buildings.⁵⁶ The most prominent example of an interaction between church history and church architecture is the Commission established for the Building of Fifty New Churches, established in London in 1711. What began as a governmental investigation on the question of church building in London led to a general programme for revitalizing the Anglican Church by a church building program directly aimed against non-conformity in the widely spread 'conventicles' or meeting halls. One of the leading figures of this commission, Reverend Francis Atterbury (1662-1732), Dean of Christ Church Oxford, possessed most of the contemporary publications available on early Christianity. Peter King, author of An Enquiry into the constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of the Primitive Church (1691), was also a member. Finally amongst the Commissioners were three architects: Sir Christopher Wren, Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) and Thomas Archer (1668-1743). The surveyors chosen by the Commission to carry out the program were Nicholas Hawksmoor and William Dickinson, architects who had worked as draughtsmen with Wren in connection with the City churches.⁵⁷ The Commission's first decision was to supply fifty new buildings. The initial idea was to provide one 'ideal' church plan for this gigantic project.⁵⁸ This plan was based on the eleven 'resolutions' of the commission. On first sight these resolutions seem very practical. One remark of George Hickes (1642-1715) in his Observations on John Vanbrugh's Proposals about Building the Fifty New Churches is much in line with the texts quoted before of Borromeo and Bingham, and shows the historical – theological background of the eleven resolutions:

The plans of the most primitive structure of churches, as described in Eusebius' history may be seen, not to mention other Authors in the third Vol. of Mr. Bingham's Ecclesiastical Antiquities and there it will appear that the old way of building churches is capable of most if not all the state, and graces of Architecture, and as that way of building was the most ancient: so it is most fit to be imitated, and the same modelle will serve for building little as well as great churches.⁵⁹

The eleven resolutions finally led to Hawksmoor's drawing of the 'Basilica after the primitive Christians'⁶⁰ (Figure 7). The churches that were built did not entirely adhere on this ideal plan and their elevations bear witness to a larger 'architectural laboratory' than Early Christianity alone. Nevertheless, the main features of their architectural design were the result of a century of historical and theological study for and by the Anglican Church^{.61}

As we have stated earlier in this article, the historical and thus metaphorical referents of Anglican churches were made explicit at the consecration. Because of their idolatrous connotations, allegorical and other pictures were used cautiously in the church building⁶². It was mainly the text of the consecration sermon that provided the building with its metaphorical and symbolical qualities and which legitimated a wide range of architectural and liturgical arrangements for Laudians and Calvinists alike. The question is whether this process was still valid when the architecture itself had become an important agent of the historical program and embodied the symbolic content, as gradually became the case by the end of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century. Unfortunately, we do not possess sermons preached at the consecration or the re-opening of Llandaff. However, sermons written for some churches of the 1711 campaign – St. Martin in the Fields (architect James Gibbs), St. John the Evangelist Horsleydown (architects Nicholas Hawksmoor and John James) and St. Botolph Bishopgate (architect James Gold) – allow us to address this question.⁶³

The case of St. Martin's is especially relevant as the consecration sermon was published together with the preacher's *An essay on the Origin and Progress of Temples* (Figure 8). Similar to the 17th century consecration sermons the main arguments of this sermon concern first the provision of historical evidence for the erection of place of worship and second the consecration ceremony itself. The arguments are again based on e biblical and Early Christian examples. There is, however, a small but significant change. The sermon heavily relies on contemporary English church histories such as Mede and Bingham:

Nor is there any reason under the Gospel why places should not be assign'd (as of old) for religious worship. And tho' perhaps we have no indisputable proofs in the writings of the apostles...we find in the ecclesiastical historians [Meade and Bingham] of some Christians places of worship very early.⁶⁴

The historical treatises which provided the basis for a reformed Anglican church building practice were assimilated with their referents. As a result, the building itself became a contemporary image of the Early Christian Church and demonstrated how the Anglican Church had re-established the early Christian Church. The importance of Biblical and church-historical references is not limited to the consecration sermon, but is also clearly visible in the architecture itself. The church's plan closely follows those of Hawksmoor: a huge portico, additional rooms at the west end and an open view towards the altar. Although the architectural design is less extravagant than Hawksmoor's, it fits the general eighteenth-century tendency to use Classicism rather than the gothic style. Classicism had already been slyly promoted by R.T. in his treatise *De Templis* in 1638 and was commonly associated with restitutions of Solomon's Temple.⁶⁵ The familiarity of Gibbs' design with the Temple emerges from the fact that Reverend William Stuckeley used a variant of it in his 1751 reconstruction of Solomon's temple.⁶⁶

However, the most important feature in this context is the vaulted crypt, mentioned in church histories like *De Templis* and referred to in Hawksmoor's 'Basilica after the primitive Christians':

The Chancell or Quire, must be higher than the body of the Church; and in Cathedrall Churches, it has been an ancient custome ever since Constantines time, that vaults should be built under the Quire which were called Cryptae, in remembrance of those vaults, caves and secret places, under ground, where the Christians in times of persecution, were wont to assemble to serve God...⁶⁷

It is not surprising that St. Martin's church was praised by several contemporary antiquarians who had shown interest in the archaeology of the old church at time of its demolition. A logical, but nevertheless very honourable consequence was the election of Gibbs as a member of the Society of Antiquiries (1726) and as Fellow of the Royal Society in 1729⁶⁸ All this strongly suggests that the historical accounts connected St. Martin's church, like its predecessors, with its Biblical and Early Christian prototypes. This connection was translated architecturally in the church building. Besides, the building's reliance upon Early Christian prototypes, the consecration of this specific building gave the opportunity to reconsider those 'histories of the biblical and early Christian architecture' that had been in vogue as the ultimate justification as well as a resource for the Anglican 'church-building'. The building, the consecration and the consecration sermon not only formed analogous spaces for religious practice and the knowledge and memory of 'the true religion'. They also created a space of knowledge and memory of the Anglican quest to become a real-time pendant of those Early Christian and biblical ideals. St. Martin-in-the-Fields became the most widely quoted model in the English -speaking world.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Our brief survey of Catholic and Anglican positions with regard to the imitation of both biblical and historical prototypes raises a number of questions that deserve further attention: how, for instance, factual archaeological knowledge about Early Christianity circulated, and whether parts or aspects of this knowledge were confined to particular confessional spheres. Also, if the reservoir of imagery was largely shared, were there images or referents that became more or less associated with one confessional strand? From our survey, it seems that, for instance, the Solomonic Temple was a much more explicit reference in the Anglican architecture of the first half of the eighteenth century than it ever was in Catholicism. Also, the question whether architectural forms acquired confessional associations remains to be adressed; an obvious and important issue here is the discussion about the appropriate ground plan for a church, basilical or circular.⁷⁰

What we do discern are different strategies or operations to establish the analogous space of the religious building. Moreover, by treating Roman Catholic and Church of England attitudes towards their symbolical and historical referents side by side, it is possible to see how in each case these operations are distributed differently over time. A first operation is the incorporation of models or specific (iconographic) elements that recall the analogous space of the referent. Examples are the 'first generation' of restorations in Rome, on the Roman Catholic side, and – much later – the restoration of Llandaff cathedral by Wood on the Anglican side. A second operation is much more of a process: a creative emulation of 'original' models in a new composition inviting the active interpretation of the user or beholder; here the examples are the Baldacchino (and much of Roman baroque architecture), and the churches of Hawksmoor and Gibbs. Finally, we have encountered examples of texts that were so to speak draped over a building, so as to invest it with particular meaning. Here we can think of the descriptions of Monreale and San Petronio, and the Church of England consecration sermons in the first half of the seventeenth century⁷¹

If each of these three models prescribes a different relation of architectural design to its analogue, they all also play out differently in time. If the first model could by rights be termed a monumental approach, fixing into stone the analogy between a building and its prototypes, the other two models are much more dynamic, and depend on an active participation of the observer or worshipper. This helps to explain why these types depend on ritual events and sometimes ephemeral reconfigurations of space by means of liturgy or a description to lay bare the analogous space hidden beneath the architecture.

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⁶⁸ Terry Friedman, James Gibbs (London and New Haven, 1984), p. 16.

⁶⁹ Friedman, James Gibbs, (London and New Haven, 1984), p. 20.

⁷⁰ Christoph Jobst, 'Die christliche Basilika. Zur Diskussion eines Sakralbaues in italienischen Quellen der posttridentischen Zeit', *Zeitsprünge. Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit*, I, 3-4, (1997), pp. 698-749.

⁷¹ That the 'models' of analogous spaces occur at different times in the Catholic and Anglican context is probably best explained by the internal development of the two confessions and their ambitions and anxieties, mutually as well as regarding other competing confessions.