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Abstract of Thesis (400 words)

THEOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE TRADITION OF THE MEETING HOUSE

The purpose of the thesis is to attempt to discover the possible influences behind the architectural design of buildings used for religious worship, and to try to trace any theological reasoning which may have led to certain styles, with special emphasis on the buildings of Christian Protestant Dissenters.

The method followed is a historical survey of religious buildings in general, with some discussion of the two-fold distinction between the 'Temple' and the 'Meeting House' noted by such writers as André Biéler and H.W. Turner.

After a general introduction each of the first four chapters deals with a particular period in the development of religious architecture.

Chapter I makes a study of the buildings of primitive peoples, of the available evidence for the kinds of worship which may have been practised within them, and refers particularly to the associations between worship and ideas connected with hunting, with death and burial and with the seasonal cycle.

In Chapter II the traditions of the Hebrew people are discussed, showing the development in the worship of Israel from the moveable Tabernacle to the successive Temples of the Jews, and noting the appearance and further development of the synagogue.

The subject of Chapter III is the Christian tradition of church building from its beginnings, arising out of the 'house worship' of Apostolic times, traced through the development of the basilican church to the climax of mediaeval Gothic architecture.

Chapter IV compares the typical English mediaeval parish church with the post-Reformation pattern, and with the rise, simultaneously, of the Nonconformist Meeting House, again originating in 'house worship'.

It is in Chapter V that a detailed study is made of Nonconformist buildings, examples of early date having been selected from the buildings of six denominations in an attempt to discover the thinking which may have influenced the design of Dissenting Meeting Houses.

Chapter VI continues the study of church building through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, noting the phenomenon of the Gothic Revival in England.

In conclusion the dual tradition is again considered in connection with divine transcendence and immanence, giving rise respectively to an emphasis on the Sacraments and on the Word, the first being expressed in a sense of awe and mystery, and the second in the intimate gathering together of human worshippers.

The final section suggests that neither tradition presents a universal solution, but that the two are complementary and of equal religious and architectural value.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree. The research was carried out at the University of St. Andrews under the supervision of

Professor J. A. White
.....

CERTIFICATE

I certify that *Miss Olive S. Chedburn* has fulfilled the conditions of the resolution of the University Court, 1970, No. 3 and that she is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the degree Bachelor of Philosophy (B. Phil.)

Signature
(Supervisor's name and address)
Professor James A. Whyte
St. Mary's College,
University of St. Andrews.

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INTRODUCTION

After a long period of disfavour, during which the words 'Nonconformist Chapel' have been associated in many minds with cheap materials, shoddy workmanship and general ugliness, there has begun recently a revival of interest in the buildings used by Nonconformists, or Dissenters, which has led to a reappraisal of them, both as buildings and as places of worship. Writers such as Kenneth Lindley in his book Chapels and Meeting Houses show the genuine appreciation of those brought up within the Nonconformist tradition, but a growing respect for these buildings is also beginning to appear in the work of those with an interest in church architecture for whom a Nonconformist Meeting House has never been a 'spiritual home'.

Now that the great age of prejudice against Dissenters has receded, it is possible for their buildings to be viewed dispassionately alongside those of other religious worshippers; for instance, it is now recognised that an ostentatious red-brick 'chapel' of the late nineteenth century is no more typical of British Nonconformity than is an example of imitation old-world 'Gothick' of the whole history and entire tradition of the Church of England: in both cases there have been changes and developments resulting from many different factors, and the attempt may now be made to discover, from a study of the characteristics of Nonconformist buildings, what their particular tradition has to teach about God and his house - lessons which may be important for future church building programmes, especially in an increasingly ecumenical age. In a study of this kind it is necessary to bear in mind the particular circumstances which called these buildings into being, which in turn

can only be understood in relation to the character and beliefs of those who built them: a Gothic Cathedral is often cited as an example of aspiring devotion, an expression of reverence for the glory and majesty of God; of what, if anything, is a Nonconformist chapel the expression? According to Kenneth Lindley it has an atmosphere all its own, although he admits that this is elusive, and may have a great deal to do with emotional associations, according to which it is either loved or hated. He describes vividly the distinctive smells of different places of worship.¹

For many people a church or chapel is condemned because, to them, it is not 'beautiful'; is this perhaps a symptom of the 'ethical fallacy', according to which only 'beautiful' architecture is truly 'religious'? Many others will protest with George Hay that post-Reformation church buildings and furnishings are not necessarily drab and unlovely, and that the interiors of Scottish kirks remained colourful and cheerful until the nineteenth century!²

In attempting to answer these questions it may be helpful to compare the buildings characteristic of Nonconformist worship with those of other groups of religious worshippers in other times and places, whose situation was in some way similar to that of Dissenters in our own country during the centuries following the Reformation. For example, in the early days of the Church's existence, Christians were themselves faced with very much the same kind of hostile suspicion and bitter persecution from both Jews and pagans, who felt their own religion threatened, as were the first Protestants, and later, those whose beliefs led them to challenge

1. "Churches have a smell like old bookshops or damp rocks: chapels have a smell of pine, varnish and wax polish." Kenneth Lindley, Chapels and Meeting Houses, John Baker Publishers Ltd., London. 1969. p.33.
2. George Hay, The Architecture of Scottish Post-Reformation Churches. 1560-1843, Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1957. p.28, cf. p.215.

the 'establishment'. The Jews themselves had not been strangers to persecution, long before the Christian era, and another parallel to later Dissent may be found in their struggle to preserve their religion in a foreign land, although cut off from all that had previously been associated with it.

A distinction has been made between two types of sanctuary: in his book Architecture in Worship, André Biéler has distinguished between the 'Temple' or 'Holy Place', and the 'Synagogue' or 'Place of Assembly' which in Christian worship he believes to have superseded this. A similar distinction is made by Harold W. Turner in his article The Christian Version of the Sacred Place, in which he traces two traditions, that of the domus dei, the Temple, which is seen as the dwelling-place of God, and that of the domus ecclesiae, which he sees in the Jewish Tabernacle, developed later into the Synagogue, or 'Meeting Place' of the gathered community of worshippers. If this distinction is to be maintained, it is clear that the Nonconformist Meeting House falls into the latter category, while many would claim that the churches of Anglicans and Roman Catholics, as well as those of the Eastern Orthodox Communion represent the tradition of the domus dei in contrast. In support of this it may be argued that the domus dei is chiefly associated with feelings of awe and reverence, and with the desire to express a sense of worship aesthetically in beautiful buildings and furnishings, music and an elaborate liturgy. The great temples and cathedrals appeal to the emotions of the worshippers with their vast spaces, soaring heights and mysterious 'sanctuary', or 'holy place' containing the altar; the desire of the worshipper is to reach towards God in His house. In the domus ecclesiae of the Nonconformists, the desire is rather to meet God in the house of his people; here the aim is towards security, comfort

and protection - the reason for the domestic and functional emphasis in much of this type of architecture, whose characteristics are smallness, homeliness and simplicity, bringing the sense of a family worshipping together.

Turner however regards the coming of Christianity as the factor which 'spiritualised' religious worship in such a way as to make the physical place of worship no longer important.³ The early Christians, he considers, had three models from which to choose: the temple, the synagogue and the tent of meeting, but followed none, and instead took as a new model the 'upper room'.⁴ It appears then that after the Church came under the protection of the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century A.D., the Temple plan reappeared, bringing about a reversion to primitive, superstitious ideas which were inappropriate to the Christian faith.⁵ According to Turner, the Church has more than once missed its opportunity for creating a satisfying form of building suitable for the Christian liturgy, and he sees the present age as another and greater chance for coming to a fuller understanding of the relationship between Christ and his people as expressed in their places of worship.⁶

Turner however seems to hold the view that there is, in fact, one 'ideal' in church architecture which may be adopted once it has been found; this ideal would appear to embrace elements of both domus dei

3. Harold W. Turner, The Christian Version of the Sacred Place, (Reprinted from Reformed Liturgics, Princeton, N.J., Vol. IV, No. 1 Spring 1967, 19-40) Section IV.

4. Op. cit. Section IV

5. One might compare the assertion of Bieler that, whenever man loses sight of the Christian revelation he reverts to natural religion in some form. Andre Bieler, Architecture in Worship, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London, 1965. p.2

6. Turner, op. cit., Section VII

and domus ecclesiae. This would seem to suggest that ultimately all Christians may come to be satisfied with buildings similar in general type, though differing in detail. When one considers the differences in outlook and custom between the various Christian denominations, such unity as regards architecture does not seem, at least at present, to be in sight. Is it not more probable, and perhaps even desirable, that the two traditions of domus dei and domus ecclesiae should remain parallel, balancing one another as two sides of one coin? It is hoped that it may be proved that this is in fact what has happened throughout the course of religious history, and that the tradition of the Meeting House holds equal rank with that of the Temple, though by no means surpassing it.

In this case it is hardly true to say that the Temple is essentially the House of God, but that the Meeting House cannot be this in the true sense, since it is a human construction, built to accommodate human beings, and to satisfy their needs. To those for whom only the worship of the Temple is truly holy, such a building can never be a House of God, because it cannot, without being set apart and completely altered in appearance and in function, be 'consecrated', and so transformed into a fit habitation for God.

Such a view does not seem to accord with the conception of God taught by Christianity, or even Judaism. Even the dedication of Solomon's Temple includes the acknowledgement: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!"⁷

7. 1 Kings 8, 27.

While centuries later St. Paul could still say: "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything."⁸

On the other hand, although God may not be confined within one place to dwell there, he may enter any place, and it is his presence within the man-made structure which makes it holy. Again, does God's presence depend on any human invocation? It was not the altar set up by Jacob which turned Luz into Beth-el, because God was already there, and Jacob "did not know it!"⁹ The altar was merely a belated acknowledgement of the fact - a kind of apology for unwitting trespass! No man can summon God into any place; he may invite him. Yet the idea that no place is especially 'holy' is equally misleading; the qualifying 'especially' tends to be ignored, and the impression may be given that holiness is itself an unnecessary adjunct to any building. There are still too many, even among Christians, who find God's holiness uncomfortable! In Jesus, God sanctified the homes of "publicans and sinners"; his presence may grace both Temple and Tabernacle - Cathedral, village 'Bethel', house or factory. All the same, in order that a congregation may devote itself wholeheartedly to the worship of God, a place set apart for the purpose of worship may still be helpful, if not necessary, and for some may in fact be essential. The Lord may not need a house in which to meet with man, but perhaps man, in his weakness and limitation may still need his 'Holy Place', or even his 'Temple'.

8. Acts 17, 24 - 5

9. Gen. 28, 10- 22

1. PRIMITIVE RELIGIOUS WORSHIP : THE HOLY PLACE

"The most unprofitable thing that eateth up the wealth of a Believer is building."

This somewhat disconcerting statement, attributed to the Prophet Mohammed, is quoted by Jeannette Mirsky in her book Houses of God.¹ In sharp contrast come the words of Gerardus van der Leeuw in his work Sacred and Profane Beauty, in which he asserts that "building is a holy action".²

Whether or not either statement is justified, the fact remains that building is an activity in which, in some form or another, the holders of nearly all religious beliefs have engaged from earliest times. Muslims have been no exception, and if the Prophet's main objection to the activity arises from a certain dismay in view of the expense and labour involved in some building enterprises, many of the mosques erected after the establishment of Islam, despite their comparative simplicity, might give the impression that he has some cause to speak so feelingly!³

1. Jeannette Mirsky, Houses of God, Constable, London. 1965. p.118
2. Gerardus van der Leeuw, Sacred and Profane Beauty, The Holy in Art, Translated by David E. Green, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 20 New Bond Street, London W.1. 1963. p.196.
3. The early mosques were apparently very simple; the Prophet himself is said to have participated in the building of the first mosque in Medina, which "... was not as the mosques of our own times; there was no decoration in it, but instead it was an extremely simple and modest building. Its floor was covered with pebbles, and the pulpit was made from the trunk of a date-palm. A part of it was covered with date-leaves to make the ceiling, while the other portion was left open to the sky." Hassan Ul-Ameene, Islamic Shi'ite Encyclopaedia, Vol. 11. p.67.

Nevertheless, it seems that believers of all kinds will build, given the means and opportunity, which suggests that there is, in connection with religious faith, some basic need for a religious architecture.

It is generally recognised that there is in mankind an almost instinctive desire to build, rooted in the natural human need for shelter. When conditions in the open become painful, dangerous, or even uncomfortable, owing to the elements or to enemies, man instinctively looks for cover. In an emergency any place will do: a cave, a hollow in the ground, a tree - anywhere in which he can hide himself. Eventually he recognises his need for a permanent shelter, and if no natural hiding place is easily available he erects some kind of artificial covering under which he can remain 'at home'.⁴

The suggestion has been made that the earliest influence on the design of human houses was the bird's nest, and that it was the observation of birds and their building activities which led to the distinctive appearance of some of the earliest dwellings; circular tents made of interwoven branches and twigs covered with brushwood or mud: "These huts planted the germ of civic architecture."⁵

The same writer remarks that the use of wattle hurdles in building extended into the age of stone-built churches.⁶

4. Even the caves inhabited by men of the late palaeolithic age apparently only came into being during the third ice age, (250,000 - 180,000 B.C.) Johannes Maringer, The Gods of Prehistoric Man, Translated from the German by Mary Ilford, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, New Bond Street, London W.1. 1960 p.3.
5. F. Palmer Cook, Talk to me of Windows, W.H. Allen, London & New York. 1971. p.9. cf. Sir Henry Wotton, quoted by C.L. Eastlake, A History of the Gothic Revival in England, Longmans, Green & Co., London. 1872. p.13. Wotton approves the circular plan on the ground that: "birds doe build their nests spherically."
6. Op. cit., p.9.

An example of this in our own country is to be found in the persistent legend surrounding the Glastonbury area, in which perhaps the strongest evidence for some link with the Apostolic Church, whether or not Joseph of Arimathaea was involved, is the detailed description which survives of a primitive church building constructed of 'wattle-and-daub', later enclosed in wood, and provided with a leaded roof, but which was destroyed during the Middle Ages.⁷

Deeply rooted in man's nature is not only his instinctive craving for physical shelter and protection, but perhaps closely allied to this, his need for some kind of spiritual safety which he has, it seems from the earliest times, sought in his gods. The close link between the physical and the spiritual need perhaps comes from man's sense of his own ultimate powerlessness against a world full of mysteries which are bigger than he is, and which are beyond his control, and his feeling that there must be somewhere, some power stronger than the strongest of these threats to his own safety, and yet like enough to himself to allow him some understanding which may lead to a secure relationship with it. Is it too far-fetched to suggest that, because man, (unfortunately, though perhaps inevitably), tends to judge his gods by himself, as his understanding develops he begins to ascribe to them not only powers similar to his own, although greater, but even needs which are like his own? Man needs a house to live in, therefore the god must have a house too, and since it is essential for man to remain on good terms with the deity, he must ensure that the god's house is at least as adequate a dwelling place as his own.

7. Ernest Short, The House of God, (A History of Religious Architecture), Eyre and Spottiswoode, London. Fourth edition: 1955. p.110.

Although there is still a good deal of debate over the question of the development of the earliest places of worship and of the practices associated with these, it would seem reasonable to assume that the first homes of the gods, before man took it upon himself to 'house' them, were in fact in the open air. R.E. Clements points out that it was necessary to know where a god was to be found, and that altars tended to be erected where a theophany had occurred.⁸ As long as the gods were conceived as dim, shadowy beings, generally remaining invisible and intangible so that their form could only be guessed at, there may have been less temptation to provide them with suitable housing. The gods were at home in the sacred places associated with them: on mountain tops, in streams and waterfalls, or in mysterious groves of trees of which they had once been believed to be the indwelling spirits.⁹

There is something ironic in the fact that at this primitive stage man may well have had a more penetrating insight into the essentially spiritual nature of divinity than is apparent when his religious conceptions become more highly developed;¹⁰ it seems to be at a slightly later stage that there appear the first signs of an anthropomorphism which begins the sinister process of turning the gods into glorified men: "The more the figure of a god was idealized, the more indistinguishable it became from man."¹¹

8. R.E. Clements, God and Temple, Basil Blackwell, Oxford. 1965. p.1 Cf. Turner, op. cit., Section 1.
9. W.O.E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion Its Origin and Development, S.P.C.K., London. 1961. p.7
10. Maringer claims, (quoting several authorities in his support), that belief in a supreme being preceded even that in spirits. Maringer, op. cit., p.42
11. M.I. Finley, The Ancient Greeks, Chatto & Windus, London. 1963. p.167

It is at this stage that the deity begins to demand more suitable accommodation than a dark cave, a damp grove or a draughty hill-top.

It might be said that man's first step towards religious building was his earliest setting apart of certain natural areas as 'holy places',¹² but the men of those times might well have disclaimed responsibility for any such 'setting apart', maintaining that such sites were already holy, having been chosen by the beings who inhabited them without any reference to their human worshippers. In his book From Cave to Cathedral, E.O. James, in discussing the ancient religion of Rome, describes the consecrating of a sacred place in order to cause the divinity to come and dwell there, but as he also mentions that the gods and numina were already associated with particular places, it is possible that these deliberate acts of consecration came as a later development.¹³ The right of any human being to 'sanctify' any given place not already sanctified by the god's presence may not always have been recognised. Any setting apart, or marking of the area by means of a stone pillar or cairn may well have been simply an acknowledgement of the god's ownership of the site, and a warning to the ignorant to beware of trespassing on holy ground, perhaps confused with the setting up of termini to enclose property.¹⁴ Eventually the worshippers might dare to erect on or near the site a simple altar, or perhaps might utilise a stone marker already there for the purpose of making offerings to the god he worshipped;¹⁵ Jacob found the House of God - Beth-El, on

12. Short, op. cit., p.3.

13. E.O. James, From Cave to Cathedral, (Temples and Shrines of Prehistoric Classical and Early Christian Times), Thames and Hudson, London. 1965. p.283; cf. Short, op. cit., p.50.

14. James, op. cit., p.283

15. Turner, op. cit., Section 1.

an open hillside, but was not concerned to provide God with shelter; the stone which he had used as a pillow was sufficient to mark the spot where God dwelt.¹⁶ For Moses, the bush that burned but was not consumed grew on open ground that was already sanctified by God's mere presence there.¹⁷

What might be described as 'indoor worship', if 'indoors' is taken to refer even to a natural cave, is thought by many scholars to have originated in the mysterious rites associated with death and burial.¹⁸ In most primitive tribes in all parts of the world there seems to be a preoccupation with this strange, terrible thing that can, in a second, turn a living, moving, talking human being into an empty shell, never to walk or converse with his fellows again.¹⁹ Thus it is natural that all things connected with this phenomenon - bones, blood, weapons that can destroy life, should be treated with what a later generation might regard as a morbid fascination.

Although the true explanation of many of the rites practised may never be known, there seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest that for primitive man a shelter for the living was hardly more important than one for the dead, and this idea has persisted to a later stage in nearly all religions, notably that of ancient Egypt.²⁰

One reason for man's early obsession with death is said to be fear: fear of the strange and unknown, and also the fear that the dead, although they seem to have gone away beyond living man's reach, may

16. Genesis 28. 10 - 22

17. Exodus 3. 1 - 6

18. James, op. cit., p.177

19. Maringer, op. cit., p.19

20. W.F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore. 1957. p. 144.

return with a new and terrible power from the mysterious region to which they have vanished, and perhaps cause harm to come to those left behind. With this fear, and perhaps in conflict with it, is the natural grief of the bereaved at the loss of those on whom they depend, which may underlie the presence in so much mortuary ritual of the element of preservation, carried to its highest development in the practice of embalming.²¹ Another life is hoped for for the dead, and so, associated with these practices is the touching custom of providing the dead with all that they may need in their long journey into the darkness. Yet, although the dead are cared for in this way, protection for the living must also be ensured, since the purposes and intentions of the dead towards them are an enigma: a barrier must be set up between them. Is this possibly the origin of the barrier which tends to be set up in all religion between the human and the divine, culminating in Christian worship in the screen separating sanctuary from nave, clergy from laity? One wonders whether this separation coincides with the appearance of a 'priesthood', originating in the rise to power of a shaman or sorcerer, who claims a special knowledge of the will and purposes of the deity, and becomes an intermediary between the god and his worshippers.²²

The cult of the dead plays a large part in ancient religion, perhaps partly because the mystery surrounding their new condition is similar to that which surrounds the gods; it may be supposed that

21. Maringer, op. cit., p. 13. Maringer considers attachment to the dead to have been a stronger force than fear of them, at least in the earlier stages of man's primitive existence.

22. See Chapter VI below, P.172f

the dead man has now become in some way like them, and his departure from this life marks his going to join them in some unknown region. In spite of this gods are still beings to be treated with reverence, and set apart, and there do not seem to be instances of burials taking place actually within an area already sacred to a deity; on the other hand, Maringer cites examples of 'cemeteries' where remains have been found which point to the observance of funerary rites, probably including feasts, within prehistoric caves.²³ It seems that the places where the dead are buried may become holy, but in a slightly different way from those places inhabited by gods, almost as though the deceased occupy an intermediate position between the gods and living men. If all this is so, it might be said that man's religion begins with his consciousness of death, and his sense that this phenomenon, however final it seems, cannot be allowed to have the last word; in this connection James remarks that the belief in rebirth is almost as old as man.²⁴ The motivating force in nearly all religion seems to be a longing for life, as distinct from mere existence, which is perhaps aroused by the experience of death, and is symbolised for the early believer by fire, the sun, water or growing things, and even animals, as representing the perpetuation of life, or even life itself.²⁵ The same longing for life to continue may be detected even in the worship of ancestors, leading to a dim realisation of the distinction between spiritual and physical life, and linked with the worship of 'spirits', and eventually of 'high gods'.

23. Maringer, op. cit., p. 19f.

24. James, op. cit., p.50.

25. James describes the use of red ochre for the painting of skeletons because of its similarity to blood, which for primitive man represented life. Op. cit., p.38.
Cf. Maringer, op. cit., p.51.

It seems generally accepted that the religious purpose of the decorated caves dating from the later Upper Palaeolithic period, and discovered in many parts of France and Spain, was connected, not necessarily with death and burial, but with a hunting ritual.²⁶ This is borne out by the nature of the paintings in such caves, which are predominantly animal subjects and hunting scenes. The idea of death - at least, of human death - seems less prominent here, although many may have met their death in the hunt, and one of the most interesting of the paintings is that known as the Dead Man of Lascaux, which Maringer regards as a memorial to a dead ice-age hunter.²⁷ One may also consider the deeply rooted fear of primitive races of being deprived of their food supplies through any possible decrease in the numbers of hunted beasts. In order that these necessary supplies be maintained, it is easy to see how a form of fertility ritual should be blended with that of the hunt, to be further developed at a later stage in the agricultural fertility rites of a more settled generation of farming peoples.²⁸ Both the continuance of animal life and the necessary slaughter of the hunt, although essentially practical problems, seem to have had a deep religious significance, apparent in the attempt to bring these human concerns under the control of some super-human power.²⁹ Also, it appears that one aim of the early worshippers was the imbibing of the qualities of animals that were held to be sacred through ritual partaking of their flesh.³⁰

26. Maringer considers the caves of Lascaux and Altamira to have been tribal sanctuaries. Op. cit., p.84.

27. Maringer, op. cit., p.58

28. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.144f.

29. James, op. cit., p.15

30. Op. cit., p.35f.

James emphasises the close connection in primitive minds between birth and death;³¹ it might almost be said that the fineness of the dividing lines between life and death is more clearly recognised at this stage than it is later on: being born, living and dying seem to be quite readily accepted as parts of one process, a parallel being perhaps drawn with the continuous natural cycle.

The earliest actual buildings associated with death, religion or both, other than the simple 'coverings' which Turner describes as having been originally placed to protect or conceal sacred objects,³² would seem to be those described as tholoi found in parts of Mycenae, Malta, Crete and Cyprus, and believed to date from the Neolithic age. In some cases these are massive stone structures, such as the Gigantia buildings on the island of Gozo near Malta.³³ Where the simpler ones are concerned, it does not seem fanciful to suppose that the form of this primitive structure might have been suggested by the previously used caves and natural rock shelters; the circular 'beehive' at one end, approached through a rectangular dromos bears a distinct resemblance to a cave approached by means of a tunnel. Perhaps the pyramid may be seen as an extension of this principle, the actual tomb which it contains being buried in its depths.* (See separate note.) The tholos seems undoubtedly to have been used as a burial place, since many examples have been found to contain evidence of interments, and the presence as well of figurines is taken by James as a sign that an advanced mortuary ritual had later become associated with the fertility cult of the Mother Goddess, whose worship appears with the beginnings

31. Op. cit., p.50.

32. Turner, op. cit., Section 1. Turner here stresses the fact that such shrines were not meeting places for worshippers.

33. Maringer, op. cit., p.152ff.

of agricultural civilisation in the Neolithic age.³⁴ Maringer detects signs of fertility ritual at a much earlier stage,³⁵ but also considers that the chthonian cult which is indicated by the monumental burial architecture of the Neolithic age, was later influenced and enlivened by a merging of the worship of the powers of the underworld with that of the Great Mother of the ancient Near East.³⁶ Here the well-known death and rebirth cycle of many of the myths of ancient civilisations would seem to blend naturally with ideas concerning human birth, death and hoped-for resurrection.³⁷

Also dating from the Neolithic period are the great stone circles whose purpose still remains a matter of constant speculation.³⁸

It seems to be generally thought that the huge rings and avenues of megalithic slabs such as those at Stonehenge and Avebury were used for some form of sun-worship, but the view that the worship also included funerary rites, and that Stonehenge in particular was simply a vast mausoleum is questioned by Maringer, who points out that, although the position of the circle "in the midst of a field of barrows" indicates that rites connected with the dead were practised there, the fact that megalithic graves were usually underground, or were covered with a mound of earth, suggests that such a structure as Stonehenge was intended for the living, and, judging by its size, was probably a tribal sanctuary.³⁹

34. James, op. cit., p. 30; cf. p. 52, p.61ff.

35. Maringer, op. cit., p.108ff.

36. Op. cit., p.157

37. James, op. cit., p.125ff.

38. James, op. cit., p.85; cf. Maringer, op. cit., p.159ff.
One might also mention in this connection the white horses, and other landmarks cut out of the chalk on hillsides in various parts of the country, whose purpose also remains a mystery.

39. Maringer, op. cit., p.175.

The resemblance in plan, though not in scale, between stone circle and tholos is striking: the inner, circular sanctuary approached by a straight avenue, although the size of the stone circle prohibits the covering of the structure with a roof;⁴⁰ in any case, the emphasis in this period, if sun-worship was indeed what was practised, would seem naturally to be on wide spaces open to the sun - perhaps a reaction against the enclosed, dark mystery of a cave in the bowels of the earth, perpetuated for a time in the design of the tholos, and no longer necessary either for residence or for worship after the ice of the glacial period had finally receded. It is interesting to note this alternation between darkness and light, mystery and openness, not always dictated by practical conditions in the evolution of temples and churches from the beginning, up to the time of the attempt to make the roof of the building represent the sky itself, as in the great Byzantine dome, and the idea of the Church as a model of the heavenly city.

The idea of erecting structures of large stones joined in the 'column-and-lintel' manner seems to have first arisen out of the earlier custom of setting up a single pillar, a 'standing stone', to mark a sacred spot, or possibly a grave; Maringer suggests that at least in some instances the solitary menhir represented a 'soul seat', a kind of throne for the liberated spirit of a grave's occupant, in this way providing a parallel with the Egyptian obelisk, believed by some scholars to have served a similar purpose.⁴¹

40. James, op. cit., p.93f.

41. Maringer, op. cit., p.166

Later, groups of stones were placed in various arrangements, sometimes in circular cromlechs, sometimes in parallel rows, forming what Maringer terms alignements;⁴² such sites were plainly intended for 'congregational' worship on a large scale!

The joining of single stones with cross pieces to form a circle or an avenue seems to suggest the earliest form of colonnade, later to become such a common feature of temple building. It must be remembered that not all of the great circles or single pillars were of stone; the survival of Woodhenge suggests that the stone structures may in some cases have replaced earlier wooden ones, just as stone buildings have so often replaced previous timber constructions, and it is not surprising if few remains of these can be found.⁴³ As for the solitary, upright wooden post, this is generally taken to be what is indicated by Old Testament references to the Asherah;⁴⁴ while this may have represented a female deity in contrast to the male Massebah, or stone pillar, the symbolic resemblance of a wooden post to a tree recalls the sacred groves of earlier times.

If stone did in fact replace wood in the building of the great circles, the reason might be taken to be its greater durability, but this is surely not enough to account for the almost superhuman effort involved, not only in erecting such structures, but in transporting stone of a particular kind for long distances over difficult ground before the slabs could even be raised into position; such effort recalls that involved in the building of the pyramids of Egypt. The construction of a stone circle must have been of the most profound importance to someone, and it is not easy to think of any motive

42. Op. cit., p.160ff.

43. James, op. cit., p.97; cf. p. 231

44. Martin Noth, The Old Testament World, Translated by Victor I. Gruhn, Adam and Charles Black, London. 1966. p.178.

other than a religious one to inspire such an undertaking. Why did the people of Wessex over three and a half thousand years ago feel it a matter of strict necessity to drag colossal slabs of special 'bluestone' from one hundred and fifty miles away in order to build a place for worship?⁴⁵ Was there something 'special' or 'holy' about the place from which it came? A parallel may perhaps be found in much more recent times in the importing of special stone for the making of altars for churches, but with nothing of the labour involved in these early exploits.⁴⁶ One may compare the pyramid, the ziggurat and the stupa - 'man-made mountains' - as examples of this tendency. Perhaps it might be said that the early stone circles mark one of the recurrent phases of the 'aspiring' type of religious architecture, which reaches toward the heaven itself, and is generally noted as coming to a climax in the Gothic cathedral of the Middle Ages.

Whatever the purpose of these early holy places, whether caves, sacred groves, tholoi or stone circles, the general impression of the religion associated with them is one of fear and propitiation, of sacrifice and death, which are necessary to ensure survival, rather than the spirit which prompts true worship: the spontaneous offering of joy and devotion to a god loved and trusted by his worshippers. Such a spirit may perhaps have been present, especially among the magnificent, soaring pillars of Stonehenge, but one cannot help wondering whether praise and love were not reserved for the god only after a good harvest or a successful battle.⁴⁷

45. James, op. cit., p.94f.

46. An example of this was the importing of a boulder from Bethlehem to make the font for the rebuilt Coventry Cathedral; here there is a form of symbolism which seems to have an appeal, perhaps partly sentimental, in the use of materials or objects associated with Christianity's place of origin.

47. According to Short, religion has arisen everywhere out of fear and curiosity. Short, op. cit., p. 19f.

The dedication of temples and altars as an act of spontaneous thanksgiving for deliverance might be classed with this kind of worship: if the god accepted his people's sacrifices and paid for them with his favours, then he was their friend, but there must always have been the haunting fear that, for some incomprehensible reason he might let them down.

Yet, almost as old as man himself, is a religious faith in the unseen power which seems to control his life, which is in conflict with his idea of a capricious or unfriendly deity: a sense that God does know, understand and care for man, despite all the trials and disasters that may come to him. May it not be said that this is the spirit which prompts genuine religious worship, rather than the spirit of fear, which tends to undermine faith? It is the spirit which leads to genuine religious worship, but perhaps because it is something so intimate and personal as to be difficult to express, it is not surprising that its origins have been traced, not to the earliest temples or 'holy places', nor to the carefully preserved tombs of the dead, but to the place where man does his ordinary, everyday living - in the home.

From earliest times, in all parts of the world, the centre of their religion for many people has been the household shrine. James notes the first appearance of houses in South-West Asia in the Neolithic Age, at the time of the beginnings of agricultural civilisation,⁴⁸ and it seems probable that from the beginning the habitations of the living have been associated in some previous way with worship.⁴⁹

48. James, op. cit., p.51.

49. van der Leeuw, op. cit., p.196: "In undifferentiated life, a house is a temple in which the holy power of the family or clan resides."

Perhaps the most striking example of the household shrine is that found in Hindu worship in many parts of India, where the rites associated with the great temples are for many worshippers secondary to those which take place around the family shrine within the home.⁵⁰ It is perhaps significant that household shrines in almost all cases seem to have been connected originally with the cult of the Mother Goddess; there is perhaps a natural link.⁵¹ Not only in India, but in the Minoan snake cult, James traces the influence of domestic origins, since the snake goddess was a house goddess.⁵² Similar phenomena are found in Greek worship later on, and in the ancient religion of Rome, while early Hebrew worship in its references to 'household gods' or teraphim, suggests that domestic rites, possibly connected with ancestor worship were practised among the Hebrews at one time.⁵³

An interesting statement made by James in his chapter on Greek temples is that the early 'house of God' was not a place of worship in the ordinary sense, but simply a shrine containing the god's image; the earliest buildings were of the simplest - a rectangular cella with a porch supported by two columns. Worship of the deity took place, not within the temple, but in the temenos or forecourt in front of it, in the open air.⁵⁴ According to James, the temenos was the true cult

50. James stresses the fact that Hindu temples were not intended for congregational worship, but for the observance of the great festivals. James op. cit., p.212.

51. Whereas the early religion of a hunting people centred round the father, or chief, the more settled, domestic rites of an agricultural civilisation turned to the mother who ruled the home!

52. James, op. cit., p.239.

53. Genesis 31.

54. This may possibly have been a development from the 'covering' described by Turner. (See page 16, note 32). A Greek temple was a house for a god, not a place of worship; only an altar was required for worship, and an altar might be built anywhere - in homes, fields, places of assembly, outside but not inside temples. Finley, op. cit., p.37.

centre, and he points out that it was related to domestic buildings; in fact he emphasises that the temples themselves, other than natural sanctuaries, were patterned on dwellings: "...the domestic cultus having been practised invariably within the confines of human habitations, be they palaces or houses."⁵⁵ He describes the development of the Greek temple from a simple, circular hut into the familiar pattern commonly used in classical times.

James draws an interesting comparison between Greek and Roman religious architecture. In the ancient Roman religion of Numa, the custom of worshipping the gods in the open air in special holy places which they were believed to inhabit seems to have lingered on for many centuries.⁵⁶ This religion was very much an 'open-air' cult, its places of worship being marked off by the boundary stones, or termini described earlier, (see page 11, note 14), which set apart the area concerned as a sacellum, or sacred precinct.⁵⁷ Within this the original tree or spring, and the later shrine would be enclosed. Therefore, according to James, whereas the Greek temple developed from the dwelling house,⁵⁸ the Roman temple originated in the sacred precinct.⁵⁹

55. James, op. cit., p.239ff.

56. Op. cit., p.219f.

57. A.C. Bouquet describes what little is known of the rites of the Arval Brethren, an ancient Roman priesthood, some of whose ceremonies took place at a temple in a sacred grove. A.C. Bouquet, Sacred Books of the World, Cassell & Company Ltd., London. 1954. p.30f.

58. Cf. Mirsky, op. cit., p.89

59. James, op. cit., p.284; cf. J.G. Davies, The Origin and Development of Early Christian Church Architecture, S.C.M. Press Ltd., 56 Bloomsbury Street, London. 1952. p.27

James also notes that the Egyptian temple, as distinct from the royal tomb, took the form of a dwelling for the god, with a courtyard for worshippers. Op. cit., p.103.

One question which arises here concerns the worship of Vesta, who is described by James as a hearth goddess, and the other domestic deities whose worship he traces back to the most ancient period of Roman religion. Vesta's first shrine, a circular, thatched hut of clay and interwoven reeds is dated by him about 716 B.C.⁶⁰ This would at least support the view that domestic worship of some kind was known in Rome as elsewhere from the earliest times. An interesting statement is made by George Dolbey in his account of the 'house church' of early Christian times, which was adapted rather than specially built, and which he considers to have derived from the pagan house, with its hearth and altar for the ancestral spirits.⁶¹

It is possible by means of the foregoing information to trace two parallel lines of development in the places of worship used and made by man.

In the first place there is the 'Holy Place' - ground which is considered sacred, and being so, is inevitably to some extent strange and alien to man: it is a place belonging to a god. At first the natural sanctuary is marked off and enclosed, and eventually a shrine is erected well within the sacred enclosure. As the shrine becomes larger and more elaborate the temenos or forecourt is gradually extended, and is also elaborated until eventually the typical 'Temple' pattern emerges: a kind of 'Chinese box' arrangement, with the holiest place, enclosing the deity, in the innermost, and therefore

60. Op. cit., p.304. Cf. Short's description of Japanese temples, built in imitation of the ancient, thatched Japanese hut. Short, op. cit., p.106.

61. George W. Dolbey, MA., BD., A.R.I.B.A., The Architectural Expression of Methodism, (The First Hundred Years). The Epworth Press, London. 1964. p.3.

the most inaccessible position, and with a graded series of rooms and courts surrounding it, corresponding to the hierarchical order of the persons occupied in maintaining the cult, only the outermost Court being provided for large 'congregational' gatherings of the laity.⁶² In this tradition are the cathedrals of Christendom, as well as the temples of almost all the great religions of mankind.

On the other hand, there is the house which man makes for himself, be it cave, hut or stone-built dwelling. At some point there seems to arise a need for the deity which is worshipped to be brought inside man's home. Possibly this may happen in many cases where fire has been worshipped by man's ancestors, fire being an essential part of the life of the home, so that it is necessary for a flame to be kindled near, if not actually within the house, both the flame and the hearth on which it burns becoming in some way sacred; this may be enhanced by the conflict between the need for fire, and fear of it learned by man in his early experience of the terror and destruction caused by fire when it is out of control.⁶³

62. Turner notes that the approach to a temple was graded according to the status of the persons connected with it. Turner, op. cit., Section I.

63. A parallel with James' description of the cult of Vesta occurs in Indian religion, where also the sacred fire is kindled by the Brahman priest, originally in a primitive mud hut. Short, op. cit., p.84.

Bouquet traces the custom of fire worship to nomads, possibly reaching India from South-East Russia, or to villagers in the north, for whom the value of the camp-fire is understandable in view of the severity of the winters which had to be endured. Bouquet, op. cit., p.85f.

The possibility of a nomadic origin for fire worship recalls the theory that the religion of Israel, as established in the days of Moses, may have been through him, influenced by the worship of the Kenites, travelling smiths who may have been fire worshippers by reason of their trade, and of which tribe Moses' father-in-law was said to be a member. Theodore H. Robinson, A History of Israel, Vol. I., Glarendon Press, Oxford. First edition, 1932. p.92.

Another possibility may perhaps help to provide the link between the two parallel types of worship. The cult of the dead mentioned earlier, with its strong emotional implications, associating, and sometimes perhaps confusing death and divinity, may have been the origin of the common custom of ancestor worship among primitive tribes. Here, instead of the god being always brought within the house, the deity is perhaps taken out of the home to a more distant shrine, in the form of the dead chief; does this explain the phenomenon of dwellings grouped around, although apart from tombs? The dead forefathers thus become in some sense intermediaries between gods and men, and receive their share of worship, even in time themselves becoming gods, and what place could be more natural for their worship than that which in life was familiar to them? Thus there may have arisen the practice of keeping some token of the dead person, and later of setting up a small shrine, partly as a memorial, actually within his own house, although the official place of worship might have come to be a separate building.⁶⁴

Just as the structure of the temple became gradually larger and more elaborate, so did the dwelling house increase in size and complexity, and therefore it is not surprising that in larger houses a separate room should sometimes be discovered set apart as a place to contain the family shrine. Such a practice has in fact continued until comparatively recent times in the setting up of memorials, and of private chapels in the houses of the wealthy even in this country,

64. Alan Rowe, The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan, (Part I. The Temples and Cult Objects). Publications of the Palestine Section of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania. Volume II. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 1940. p.6

Rowe describes here a shrine in a private house, in addition to tomb-chapels, containing an outer court and an altar room approached by a flight of steps.

although suggestions of incipient ancestor worship would no doubt be indignantly repudiated by the descendants concerned! It must be remembered that even the family mausoleum was not always situated in the churchyard, but in the grounds of the family mansion, or within the private chapel. Perhaps the most interesting possibility is the development of such a private chapel into the small, intimate room for worship which has a parallel in the typical Meeting House, but which appears in various forms, not only among Western Nonconformists but in almost every kind of worship known. Is it possible then to go further, and to trace some element which two such strongly contrasted types of place of worship as the Temple and the Meeting House have in common?

Some difficulty arises here in considering the confusing way in which shrines, houses and even tombs are so often built to resemble one another! In his chapter on Architecture van der Leeuw asserts that every building is a bearer of divine power: "A house is an enclosure of power."⁶⁵ In his view the oldest houses were the dance houses, which developed from enclosed dancing grounds, and were succeeded by the temples. He notes the presence of natural shrines, but considers that originally every house was in fact a temple, sanctified by the 'holy power' of the family or clan residing in it; thus churches and temples were all originally dwellings. Of temples he claims: "They became houses which belonged to God," and later, according to his theory, they 'fell' to the status of places for prayer or instruction. He cites the Jewish synagogue and the Japanese Zen temple, "which", he says, "are really schools".⁶⁶ One receives the impression that, once

65. van der Leeuw, op. cit., p.196.

66. Op. cit., p.196

the temples built by man came to belong to God, man was turned out of them; afterwards, when they 'lost status', this was due to the fact that man had been allowed in again! Also, in the statement quoted above, van der Leeuw does not explain why a school should be less "an enclosure of power" than a dance house or dwelling!

Although such theories as van der Leeuw's seem, (at least in translation), somewhat wildly far-fetched, his idea of the dwelling house as the true place of worship inhabited by the divine has a certain appeal. If this is indeed the case, one is almost forced to see the temple or cathedral as a kind of departure from the course of true religious architecture!

For Turner, on the other hand, the sanctuary is not modelled on any human pattern, but is an earthly home for divine beings, its pattern revealed from heaven; the sanctuary "becomes the centre of life", and reaches its fullest development in the temple.⁶⁷ According to van der Leeuw, the House of God, now that "the house can no longer be a temple", and that temples can no longer exist, "becomes the house of man". This is because: "man no longer builds a holy place, but rather builds himself a place in which he can pray to God in peace."⁶⁸ It is as though, for the former writer the holy place is sanctified from without, by the initiative of God himself; for the latter, sanctification has taken place from within, the indwelling power itself providing the focus, and being simply bounded by an enclosure. Yet both acknowledge the fact that the divine cannot be contained within a building, and indeed van der Leeuw gives his realisation of this as the chief reason for the

67. Turner, op. cit., Section I

68. van der Leeuw, op. cit., p.199

decline of the Temple as the House of God.⁶⁹

There seems then to be a dual tradition: on one hand the temple - the place of fear and awe, associated with the rites of sacrifice, death and burial, and dedicated to the distant, mysterious, transcendent God; on the other is the domestic meeting place, within whose secure and homely atmosphere the immanent God of everyday living may be approached, loved and worshipped. Although each individual may have his own view as to which type of worship is the most effective for him, it may not be possible to proclaim either as 'true' worship at the expense of the other.

69. Op. cit., p.199f.

* Separate note. (p.16)

This raises the whole question of the use of two basic forms in all architecture - the circle and the rectangle.

Rudolf Schwarz discusses the symbolism of forms in architecture in great depth, perhaps over-emphasising the philosophical aspect of building at the expense of the practical; for example, in describing the 'Ring' form, he sees the ideal place of Christian worship as a simple dome.ⁱ

Such a form is indeed the simplest and most basic, and may be the earliest form of building known to man, after the simple woven mat of branches propped up as a screen, and later refined into the tent shape formed by propping two such screens together.ⁱⁱ Huts shaped like beehives have been known as dwellings all over the world from the earliest times, constructed from every material, ranging from snow for the Eskimo igloo to interlaced branches among some African tribes, skins stretched over poles to form tents among, for example, the North American Indians and wood or stone in the case of early dwellers in our own part of the world.ⁱⁱⁱ It does not necessarily follow from this that such a form owes its origin to some profound philosophical or psychological cause any more than to the less exalted fact that a dome, a cone or a cylinder, the latter perhaps surmounted by one of the other two, is by far the quickest and easiest structure for a man to make with limited resources, whether of materials or of building experience, and is also less likely to collapse than a pair of propped-up screens! A rectangular box is simple enough, but this form involves

i Rudolf Schwarz, The Church Incarnate, Translated by Cynthia Harris, The Henry Regnery Company, Chicago. 1958. p.36.

ii Philip Maguire, From Tree Dwellings to New Towns, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London. 1962. p.2ff.

iii Op. cit., p.10ff.

complications such as corners, and the problem of finding an effective way of roofing the building. It would therefore seem that the circular form of building, at least for dwelling houses, would be one of those which comes most 'naturally' to man. What is interesting is that, with the development of a civilisation the round house is gradually superseded by a square or rectangular building. This may well be due to the need for additional living space as a family or tribe increases in numbers; the excavated sites of early settlements frequently show a haphazard arrangement of rooms apparently 'tacked on' to an original communal hall, and this would appear to be the next stage in the solution of a problem which in earlier times had been solved by an accumulation of beehive huts clustered round a central one which probably belonged to the chief. Such huts would, of course, take up more space than a complex of rectangular boxes, especially as these latter could be joined together. The more primitive custom does, however, appear to have survived into Christian times in the case of many early Celtic monasteries, which themselves seem to have evolved out of the common pattern found in the raths of Ireland, where a community would occupy a number of such round huts in a space surrounded by a circular earth-work. Round towers for purposes of defence and protection also continued into the Middle Ages, and still survive in the form of light-houses! Mention might also be made of the round churches found in Denmark, particularly in the island of Bornholm. It is maintained that the circular shape was chosen as the most suitable for fortification, these churches having been used for defence in times of war. One in particular, although circular, has a rectangular apse forming a chancel; the roof of the nave is supported on four massive pillars,

leaving very little space, while an additional feature is the square entrance porch where, it is reputed, members of the congregation were supposed to leave their weapons before entering for the service.^{iv}

Where religious worship is concerned a circular shrine seems also 'natural'. The object of worship is thus given a central position which is less easily marked out in an angular building. Circular temples and churches have however been the exception rather than the rule as far as actual worship is concerned; on the other hand, in buildings connected with mortuary rites a circular or octagonal shape has persisted alongside square and rectangular tombs, possibly owing to the influence of the tholos. In Christian worship the circular mausoleum seems to have continued in favour, and what is most interesting in this connection is the fact that, in the early days of church building, when the baptistery tended to be a separate structure, this too was frequently designed as a circle or octagon; is it possible that this choice of form for baptismal architecture was influenced by earlier mortuary buildings, the parallel being drawn between physical death and the spiritual experience of the believer who rose to new life after 'dying' in the waters of baptism?

In dealing with references to ancient buildings the main difficulty is very often in attempting to distinguish shrines from houses, and both of these from tombs, since all seem to share many characteristics.

Albright describes buildings taken to be shrines, but later found to be houses,^v while James also mentions a house, dated by him before

- iv. Paul Hartling, The Danish Church, Det Danske Selskab. 1964. p. 27f, and information received from Rev. Professor J.A. Whyte, M.A., St. Mary's College, St. Andrews.
- v. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1953. p. 42; cf. p.65.

4,000 B.C. appearing like a shrine or temple.^{vi} Albright also mentions round structures whose function is uncertain, along with mud-brick temples on stone foundations of about the same date,^{vii} and again, rectangular urns shaped like houses, containing bones belonging to the period of the Ghassulians of Khedeirah.^{viii} This custom of designing tombs in the shape of houses seems to be of very ancient origin. A reference is made to a similar custom in Egypt, where tombs were modelled on dwelling houses, the stone being carved in imitation of woodwork and reeds;^{ix} at a much later date the Venerable Bede describes the burial place of St. Chad, (c. A.D. 672), as covered with a wooden tomb shaped like a little house, with an aperture through which the worshipper might insert his hand to remove some of the sacred dust!^x Still more recent are the mausoleums made of palm leaves by the Obibo tribes in the African forests described by Short, which seem little different from the common pattern used for dwelling houses in such areas.^{xi} With these one might compare Turner's description of what he considers to be the simplest of all shrines, (not necessarily connected with burial), - those devoted to the Alosi, nature spirits of Nigeria. These appear in groups of three, the smallest of them being the dwelling of the spirit; the others are for priests or visitors.^{xii}

The shapes of 'houses', whether for the living, the dead or the deity seem to be practically interchangeable, at least as far as the smaller and more modest structures are concerned. Bede's

- vi James, op. cit., p.52.
- vii Albright, op. cit., p.48.
- viii Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.142f.
- ix Leonard Cottrell, The Anvil of Civilisation, Faber and Faber, 24 Russell Square, London. 1958. p.79.
- x Bede, A History of the English Church and People, Translated and with an Introduction by Leo Sherley-Price. Revised by R.E. Latham. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex. 1955. p.212.
- xi Short, op. cit., p.1.
- xii Turner, op. cit., Section I.

description raises the question whether it is this same tendency to build houses for the dead which still persists in a less primitive form in the cult of the martyrs of early Christianity.^{xiii}

To return to the early tholoi, and massive circular building which appear to have been shrines, Albright mentions houses of the same period built on a rectangular plan; later, the circular tholoi themselves seem to have been provided with a rectangular antechamber, (possibly an elaboration of the dromos), while the great monuments of Gozo are of particular interest, not only in that they consist of two ovals linked by passages, but that each culminates in a semicircular apse! Later still, when temples appear, these are rectangular in plan and symmetrical, generally taking the well-known form of the megaron, the Mycenaean palace, with its pedimented facade and colonnade, gradually increasing in size and elaboration.^{xiv}

The antechamber attached to a shrine would appear to be the forerunner of the courtyard found almost universally outside a temple, and perhaps, in time, of the narthex which formed a feature of the early Christian basilican church, and which in some cases has gradually dwindled to a porch. This is interesting in that it suggests the first awakening of realisation of the need for a gathering place for lay worshippers - for those not permitted to enter the 'holy' enclosure surrounding the actual shrine. There has been

xiii In later times reverence for the dead has often been combined with a practical anxiety over the question of finding suitable burial places. This was particularly so in the case of Dissenters, who were denied the right to bury their dead in consecrated ground, and whose graveyards have become an important feature of early Nonconformist chapels.

xiv Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.138ff. Cf. Maringer, *op. cit.*, p. 153f., and James, *op. cit.*, p.240 and p.270ff.

much controversy regarding the origin of the basilican church; is it not possible that the basilica itself, even if its original function was that of a law court, developed from the temple plan,^{xv} the 'courtyard' being incorporated within the building, and the central focus, (since the building existed for a secular purpose), being pushed back to the apsidal 'platform' at one end? It remained for the Christians to reverse the process, gradually causing the apse to gain in size, importance and 'holiness', and driving the 'laity' further back into the nave!^{xvi}

From the sixteenth century onwards the picture becomes more confusing, since choice of forms for all buildings seems to have begun to depend on a more superficial liking for a particular shape, or the desire for novelty.^{xvii} Travellers in different regions admired old buildings which were 'different'; although the Victorians of our own country have come to be regarded as the generation most to be ridiculed for their delight in fantastic and expensive experiments in building, the present century, inspired by its wealth of new materials and techniques, seems to be in a fair way to surpassing the nineteenth in some of its enterprises, church building not excluded.

xv J.G. Davies, The Origin and Development of Early Christian Church Architecture, S.C.M. Press Ltd., 56 Bloomsbury Street London. 1952. p.27ff. The Greek temple itself may, in Davies' view, have derived from the house.

xvi Could it be said that God is the centre of the circle; as some men come to interpose their persons between God and the rest of his people, the focus is gradually pushed further away in one direction, leading to the disappearance of the circle, and the emergence of the rectangle, with the focus at the furthest point away from the people? On the other hand, it should be noted that some later Greek temples were circular! James, op. cit., p.272.

xvii The time seems to have arrived for building for its own sake; Short notes this phenomenon of the building of temples for their own sake among the Jain Buddhists. Short, op. cit., p.91 On the other hand, the first Buddhist temples in China were hollowed-out cave-shrines while those in Japan derived from primitive huts within an enclosure. James, op. cit., p. 236ff. Similar patterns of development seem to appear in almost every part of the world.

II. THE HOLY PLACE IN ISRAEL

In turning to the places of worship of those from whom the Nonconformists of our own country, and indeed the whole Christian Church trace their religious origin - the Jews, one is immediately faced with a problem: if the Meeting House arose out of the worship of the home, as has been suggested, the fact that the homes of the early Hebrews were not settled dwellings, but moveable tents must be taken into consideration.¹ The Old Testament repeatedly emphasises the fact that the God of the Hebrews travelled with them throughout their wanderings, dwelling in the midst of their camp wherever it might happen to be. It has often been suggested that it was this very nomadic character of Hebrew life which gave to Hebrew religion those qualities which distinguish it from the religious beliefs and practices of other ancient peoples, and especially its lofty conception of a God, essentially spiritual, who cannot be conceived of as dwelling permanently within a man-made temple.²

Biéler sees two types of sanctuary in Jewish worship: the Temple, which was primarily the place of sacrifice, and synagogues, in which there was no 'holy place' or priesthood. Although the latter type has been thought to have been of comparatively late origin, this is now in question, and one wonders whether the spirit which prompted this distinctively congregational gathering for worship had been

1. According to the authors of "Christ and Architecture" Jewish architecture is and always has been a theological concern; the message even of the tabernacle in the Book of Exodus is seen as a reminder of God's deliverance and the giving of the Law. Donald J. Bruggink and Carl H. Droppers, Christ and Architecture, (Building Presbyterian/Reformed Churches), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1965. p.3.
2. "For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I led up Israel to this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from dwelling to dwelling." I Chronicles 17. 5.

present from much earlier times.³

If the traditions relating to the very early migrations of the ancestors of the Hebrews are to be accepted, their origins were not identical with those of their Arab neighbours; they were not, as it were, 'born' to a nomadic life, unless one traces those origins back to the earliest prehistoric times when, in a sense, all men were wanderers, hunting for their food, and settling only temporarily wherever some natural shelter offered. The Hebrews, with Abraham their great ancestor, are said to have left the settled civilisation of Ur of the Chaldees in order to become a wandering people. They were therefore of a race who had known what it was to live in houses.⁴

The religion of the early Hebrews would seem to have been affected by many different influences. If one takes into account the traditions of Babylon, some of which were possibly carried in Abraham's generation from the civilised environment of his ancestors into the desert, and adapted to meet the new conditions of desert life, these must have been mingled with the customs and practices of the Arab races of whom the Hebrews had now become a part; if in addition one considers the religion of the settlers already well established in the land of Canaan, themselves influenced by the ancient civilisations of the East which had once surrounded them, it seems almost impossible to disentangle one single thread of religious development.

3. See, p.53f. below; also Biéler, op. cit., p.6ff

4. Albright notes that it has been discovered that the building of permanent houses in substantial materials can be traced to the Neolithic Age, (5,000-4,000 B.C.). From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.62f.

The next phase in the development of Hebrew religion is that of the Mosaic period, and again it has to be borne in mind that at this time the influence of Moses himself must have been coloured by Egyptian elements, which, if the story of his temporary exile in Sinai is to be accepted, became at that time also influenced by the religion of other nomadic tribes, possibly the Kenites, into whose tribe he may have married.⁵ It seems almost as though this were a case of history repeating itself: as the civilised Abraham with his following, dissatisfied with the religion of Chaldaeae, and seeking better conditions for expansion, broke away from the civilisation that they had known and adopted a nomadic existence, so, centuries later, Moses led away from the fringe of the highly developed civilisation of Egypt the slave population of the Hebrews, still clinging, despite their condition of slavery to the remembered traditions of their nomadic forefathers, merged with those of their subsequent years as prosperous farmers in the land of Goshen. In each case a higher value seems to have been placed on the simple, austere values of the desert than on those of the cultured city dweller, and yet it is impossible that either Abraham or Moses should have entirely rejected, or been uninfluenced by the beliefs and practices of the sophisticated cultures also known to them.

The influence of Moses seems to have been the dominating factor in the development of Hebrew religion during the whole of the period of the desert wanderings, but after the settlement of the tribes in Canaan began, it was inevitable that other influences, those of the dwellers in the land, should make themselves more strongly felt,

5. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.257.

sometimes by coming into sharp conflict with the religious traditions of the nomadic invaders, and yet, in many subtle ways, proving an irresistible influence. Perhaps one reason for the lasting power of Hebrew religion is to be found in the eternal tension between the two ways of life, of the nomad and the settler, both to some extent familiar to the people, and each with its particular share both of advantages and disadvantages. It is certainly here that one finds a very clear realisation of the two distinct types of worship: that of the Temple, or 'Holy Place', and that of the equally 'holy', but in many ways more accessible 'Tent of Meeting'. The 'Holy Place' of the Hebrews had to be a moveable shrine which they could carry with them on their wanderings, and yet they had seen and been impressed by the permanent temples of other races.

R.E. Clements distinguishes between the religion of the Israelites and that of the Canaanites as, on the one hand, "religious personalism", and on the other, "religious materialism". Where the Canaanite gods, through their relationship with the soil, were tied to particular places, the God of Israel was bound only to his people: "The primary needs of the proto-Israelite clans were not directed towards the soil, but towards their own family and clan relationship."⁶

It is perhaps at this point that the distinctive tradition of the Meeting House begins to show itself most plainly as something in its own right, apart from that of the Temple. "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst."⁷ So, the Hebrews believed, God commanded Moses,⁸ and in obedience to that command the

6. Clements, op. cit., p.16

7. Exodus 25. 8.

8. Clements, op. cit., p.27

people made a tabernacle as a dwelling place for the Lord, portable like their own tents, but set apart as a special dwelling, since it would be inhabited by God himself. The detailed description of the Tabernacle given in the Book of Exodus is thought to be too elaborate to give a true picture of the original tent carried by the Hebrews in the time of Moses, and to be an idealised description composed at a later date by the Priestly writers, perhaps during the Exile.⁹ The original tent may have resembled those tent-shrines still carried by primitive nomadic tribes, containing sacred objects.¹⁰ Of particular interest in this connection is the statement by Cross that, as well as possessing physical sacredness, the qubbah served both as a palladium and a place for worship or for giving oracles. He remarks: "We must suppose that the portable red leather tent was one of the oldest motifs in Semitic religion."¹¹

It seems possible that this simple, portable tent may provide the link between the home shrine and the external 'Holy Place'. Is the explanation to be found perhaps in the nature of the nomad's life? There are references to 'household gods', probably connected with ancestor worship, in descriptions of the possessions of wealthy Arabs, and there may have been a time when each family within the tribe, or even each tent, possessed its particular objects of veneration. Yet, the desire for unity in so insecure a society

9. Frank M. Cross Jr., The Priestly Tabernacle, (X.3, Sept. 1947, 45-68), The Biblical Archaeologist Reader, Edited by David Noel Freedman and G. Ernest Wright, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York. 1961. p.201-228, No. 13. p.213f.
10. Op. cit., p.217f. In particular Cross notes the qubbah, a miniature leather tent, usually black but occasionally red, with a domed top; this is set up near the chieftain's tent in time of war.
11. Op. cit., p.218f.

as that of a nomadic tribe is natural, and this desire, combined with the practical need for economy with regard to the quantity of material goods to be transported from place to place, might quickly give rise to the custom of centring worship on one god, (possibly the god of the chief), and of providing this deity with a tent of his own in which the objects sacred to him might be housed, which might emphasise his belonging to the whole tribe. In the case of the Hebrews the tent seems to have become the central focus of the camp, and it may be that this was the deliberate intention of Moses, remembering, as he may well have done, the importance of such a central focus for worship, similar to that provided by the temples of Egypt. In connection with this, we may note his determination to lead the people to a great natural 'Holy Place' - the Mount of God in Sinai, even though their sojourn there might not be permanent.¹²

With regard to the Tabernacle one notes what seems to be almost a double tradition, although in this instance only one actual place of worship is referred to. Although it may be dangerous to read back the thought of the Priestly school into the period of the desert wanderings, one wonders whether in fact the Tabernacle itself represented for the Israelites both of the traditions which we are attempting to trace: in pagan worship the 'holy place' inhabited by the god seems to have existed side by side with family worship within the home, possibly of ancestral deities. It has been tentatively suggested that the worship of the Meeting House arose out of that of the home, rather than that of the Temple which succeeded the primitive shrine. In its early stages such 'house' worship may

12 Exodus 3. 12.

have consisted of the veneration of the ancestors of the family or tribe, in which case there is a vast difference between the exclusive, private worship of the 'household gods' of a family within their home and the 'gathered' worship of the congregation within a Meeting House, yet one wonders whether the Jewish Tabernacle, originating perhaps in the special, 'holy' tent of the nomadic tribe may not mark a kind of transition between this exclusive, family worship of a deified ancestor and the worship of the wider 'family' of a God who gathers his people in a place where he may meet with them; one may also note the persistent Jewish emphasis on God as Father.

One of the titles given in the Old Testament to the Tabernacle is אֶהְיֶה לָּם - מוֹדֵד - the Tent of Meeting, and although the people themselves did not enter the Tabernacle, but remained in the outer court, in common with worshippers at pagan temples, while only Moses as their representative went into the tent to meet with God, yet one feels that access was less restricted here than in the temples of settled civilisations where, over the years, a priestly hierarchy had arisen whose members claimed to be mediators between the people and their deity, thus preventing a direct encounter. It is significant that Jewish worship followed exactly the same pattern once the permanent Temple was built, and appears to have done so even in the days of earlier sanctuaries such as Shiloh.¹³ During the nomadic period when the people had no secure, permanent home, and depended on what unity they could achieve, worship could perhaps no longer be either the cosy, intimate veneration of one's own ancestors within the household shrine, nor yet, since they were always on the move, the approach to a being inhabiting one central, 'holy' spot.

13. I Samuel 1. 3ff.

Was it because of this that the Israelites were pointed to a more satisfying object of worship: to the Father of all the people, including their own forefathers, and now identified with the Being associated with the one 'holy place' well-known to them in Mount Sinai? A 'Tent of Meeting' was provided, large enough to accommodate the new, enlarged 'family' of God's people, at least within its outer boundaries, and yet their meeting with him was still indirect. It seems that not until the days of the synagogue, (which is much more closely related to the Tabernacle than to the Temple), did the idea of God's actual presence in the midst of his people begin to become a reality, the full realisation coming only with the Christian faith.

Cross notes the phenomenon of the shekinah, the glory which, like a bright cloud is described as descending on the Tabernacle as the sign of God's presence within.¹⁴ He shows how this word, deriving from the Hebrew שָׁכַן meaning 'to dwell' in the temporary sense of 'encamp', and sometimes translated 'to tabernacle', fell into disuse after the period of the desert wanderings when it became less relevant to the life of the Israelites, and was revived by the Priestly writers who desired a return to what they saw as the purity of the desert tradition. The term שֹׁכֵן applied to the Tabernacle in the earlier writings, and meaning simply 'tent', is in his view used by the Priestly writers in an attempt to express the paradox of Yahweh's transcendence and immanence: שָׁכַן refers only to Yahweh's earthly presence; his permanent dwelling, (indicated by the normal verb for 'dwell', שָׁכַן), is in heaven.¹⁵

14. Exodus 40. 34-38

15. Cross, op. cit., p.225ff. See also Chapter VI below, p.170ff

After the people of Israel began to settle in Canaan, still they built no temple for Yahweh. The Tabernacle, now permanently situated in Shiloh, and housing the Ark of the Covenant was still a sufficient dwelling for God, although its furnishings and equipment and all the ritual associated with it were gradually becoming more elaborate, possibly under the influence of the practices observed by the people to take place at the Canaanite shrines by which they were surrounded, and although it is thought possible that more permanent buildings did exist for worship at Shiloh and elsewhere.

During the period of the settlement in Canaan, prior to the establishment of the monarchy, there seems to have been a conflict between what might be termed the 'Puritan' element in Israel, represented throughout the centuries by the prophets, who seemed to have a particular awareness of the great difference between Yahweh and other deities, and who sought to preserve the austere, spiritual character of the earlier desert worship, and the more sophisticated element which was attracted by the more elaborate, if materialistic, refinements of Canaanite worship. The chief bone of contention may well have been the use in Canaanite worship of images representing deity, which had always been abhorred by the Israelites. Although the denunciations of the religion of the 'people of the land' found in the Old Testament records were generally aimed at the practices of the cult which offended the moral sense of the invaders, it seems that the whole concept of worship as understood by the Canaanites was distasteful to them; was it partly because the very idea of a 'static' god, enthroned

in a temple on a hill-top clashed so violently with that of the living Yahweh, whose presence moved with his people wherever they went, this in itself leading rapidly and inevitably to the conclusion that any god represented by an image imprisoned in a shrine was no god at all? Even the God enthroned on Sinai did not live there permanently, and could lead his people in a pillar of cloud or fire.¹⁶

This strong disapproval of any tendency to accept or be influenced by the religious practices of the Canaanites seems to have found its fullest expression in the attitude of the Rechabites, who claimed descent from the Kenites,¹⁷ and who, like many Puritans, clung to an ideal in the past, and shunned 'modern progress' which they saw as a lowering and corrupting process.¹⁸ It must be stressed that the original Rechabite protest was not only against Canaanite religion, but against the whole way of life of the agricultural settler. Perhaps owing to what they observed of the laxness of Canaanite morals, the Rechabites saw settled civilisation itself as suspect, and they therefore refused to grow crops or vines, to drink wine or to build permanent houses.¹⁹ In rejecting the way of life of the settlers they claimed, of course, to be observing the will of Yahweh himself, and it was therefore impossible for them to accept the building of a permanent temple as pleasing to him. Nevertheless, the prophet Jeremiah records

16. Exodus 13. 21-22

17. I Chronicles 2. 55.

18. One may compare certain religious sects of the present era, including the Independent Order of Rechabites established in 1835, and inspired by the original sect, and also such groups as the Exclusive Brethren, with their suspicion of modern scientific and technological advances, and their rejection of certain of these as contrary to the will of God.

19. Jeremiah 35

that in his day they were willing to visit the Temple in Jerusalem at his invitation, although they refused to drink the wine that was offered to them, and he holds up their faithful obedience to God's law as understood by their ancestors as an example in contrast with the attitudes of the heedless and disobedient house of Judah.²⁰

The establishment of the monarchy in Israel with Saul, and especially with David, marked the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the people. The capture of Jerusalem gave the Israelites a strong central capital, and it was only to be expected that the attempt should be made to make Jerusalem the religious centre of the new nation.²¹ There was, however, still no Temple there, and the worship of Yahweh continued to take place in and around the Tabernacle, which had been carried by the Israelite priests throughout their wanderings, and was now brought to the new capital to house the Ark.²²

The Tabernacle of David may be taken to mark the transition between the nomadic life of Israel and its settled existence; Turner suggests that the new Tabernacle in use during David's reign differed from the simple, portable tent of Moses' day in being designed according to the Temple plan, which in the very nature of things would indicate its being a very elaborate and cumbersome structure, unsuitable for carrying from place to place.²³ Cross refers to the Tabernacle of the Jews as a 'portable Temple';²⁴ it might be true to describe

20. Jeremiah 35. 12ff.

21. Clements, op. cit., p.41f.

22. II Samuel 6.

23. Turner, op. cit., Section II.

24. Cross, op. cit., p.219.

the first 'temple' of the Jews as a 'static tabernacle', used before a permanent building had been erected. Certainly the detailed descriptions in the Book of Exodus seem to indicate a structure of this type rather than the much simpler affair normally carried by Arab tribes, giving weight to the arguments that the writers of the Priestly School 'read back' the description of a much more recent Tabernacle, that of David, into the early period of the desert wanderings.²⁵

What is of particular interest in the traditions of the tabernacles of both Moses and David, is the fact that although their function seems to have been to centralise worship, introducing the idea of God's presence among the congregation of his people, yet they were not, strictly speaking, places of public, communal worship in quite the same sense as the later synagogues; the 'holy' tent had now become more akin to the Temple than to the Meeting House.

The decision to build a Temple, - a 'proper' House of God, according to the accepted pattern of the places of worship of other nations was a natural one, once the people of Israel had established themselves in their own land, with the city of Jerusalem as their almost impregnable capital. However, it was some time before the Temple was built: whether the reason for the delay was, as the Old Testament suggests, hesitation in providing a settled building for the Lord, who dwells not in houses, but had always travelled in a tent, is uncertain, and even when, in the reign of Solomon, the building said to have been conceived by his father David was begun, the idea of providing

25. Cross, op. cit., p.222.

a cult centre for the nation may not have been the chief motive.

The first Temple of the Jews is generally described as a royal chapel; it was certainly not designed for public, congregational worship, but for sacrifice, like the temples of the gods of other races, and it is frequently emphasised that it was not intended to replace the local sanctuaries at such places as Bethel and Shiloh, where worship in fact continued for some time. The descriptions of the building of the Temple and its dedication found in the Books of Kings and Chronicles may also reflect the thought of a later generation of priests writing during the Exile, remembering, not without nostalgia, all that their Temple had meant to them, and reading back into an earlier time an idea of worship and an attitude to holy places which might have surprised Solomon himself, since the chief concern of that royal personage in all his building operations seems to have been to raise himself to a status comparable with that of his kingly neighbours.

The division of the Kingdom after the death of Solomon, and the establishment of the northern Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam I was seen by those of a later age as an act of apostasy against God, as well as disloyalty to the House of David, which indicates that by the time of the compiling of these records, the Temple in Jerusalem had come to be regarded as the religious centre of the Kingdom, to the extent that it was now the legitimate place of worship for the Israelite: Yahweh had come to live in his house on Mount Zion, and should not be sought in any other building, at least as far as the offering of rites of

worship was concerned. Whether the Israelites of Jeroboam's day saw the 'Holy Place' in this light is not certain.

Jeroboam himself saw the need for a sanctuary to centralise worship in his new kingdom now that the Temple was no longer accessible, and in fact provided two shrines, one at Dan and the other at Bethel,²⁶ and despite the shocked disapproval of the writers, and their accusations of idolatry, his action does not seem to have aroused such strong feelings among his own contemporaries. His followers seem to have been satisfied with the provision of these two simple shrines, and not to have attempted the building of a temple to rival that in the South, although the reason for this may have been that the undertaking of such a project was beyond the resources of the newly made northern kings and their people, and the words quoted from Amos suggest that something more elaborate was in existence in his day.

What seems undeniable is that, as long as the Northern Kingdom lasted, her God was still Yahweh, and that, despite small, local lapses into apostasy, the people on the whole remained true to the God of the Covenant; indeed, the strength of Yahwism in Israel is underlined by the reaction against the importing of foreign deities in Ahab's reign by his wife Jezebel, and the prophets, who appeared at intervals, constantly reminded the

26. Albright draws attention to the words of the high priest at Bethel to the prophet Amos: "...never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the King's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." (Amos 7. 12).

Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.301.

people of their duty to Yahweh, and warned them of the dangers that would follow apostasy. Nor was their prophesying futile; Elijah himself was urged not to see his task as hopeless, and reminded that the Lord still had seven thousand in Israel who had not succumbed to the attractions of Baal-worship.²⁷ Indeed, when one studies the history of the Southern Kingdom during the same period, and after the fall of Samaria, one is struck by the signs of no less serious apostasy on frequent occasions within Judah, sometimes involving the worship of the Temple itself.²⁸

The great prophets of Judah saw no less clearly than their northern counterparts the folly of placing their trust in a holy building, and warned the people that such trust might itself become idolatry, and that God would not continue to dwell in a house in which his worship had been perverted, and allowed to become a mockery of all that the religion of the Covenant was meant to be.²⁹ The Temple itself would not survive such abuse, and its eventual destruction was prophesied long before it actually occurred.³⁰ Nevertheless, the fall of Jerusalem still seems to have come upon the people as a shattering blow, and the period spent in exile in Babylon led to a revision of much earlier thinking about the worship of God, and the place in religion of his house.

27. I Kings 19. 18.

28. II Kings 16. 1-4; 21. 1-9.

29. Jeremiah 7. 1ff.

30. Jeremiah 26. 18.

In the early days of the Exile, it seems to have been assumed that the destruction of God's house in Jerusalem had put an end to his worship, as it had been understood and practised since the days of Solomon. The people were now scattered, all the trappings of the elaborate cult which had grown up around the Temple and its services were gone, and to many of the exiles it must have seemed that Yahweh himself had gone, leaving his people at the mercy of the heathen gods of other nations. Such despondency however could not last for ever, and it is frequently pointed out that the time spent in exile was of great value to the religion of Israel, for this very reason - that Yahwism was purified by the cutting away of inessentials, not least of these being the sacred building itself, with all its appurtenances. The survivors now began to concentrate on the Law, and within it found words of God which had long been forgotten; study of the Law became more and more important, and helped to draw the exiles together, and once again a society of outcasts, bound together by a common faith, had to look for a place to meet together where they might learn and understand this faith better. Once again, the most natural meeting places were the homes of the people, and once again it seems, as numbers and prosperity increased, or as practical difficulties arose in arranging for 'house worship', separate buildings were erected for the purpose of worship, but for a new kind of worship: there could be no sacrifices, ceremonial processions or elaborate liturgy; there could be what was most needed - prayer, praise to the God who had, after all, not

deserted them, and an earnest effort to hear and understand his Word. Thus the synagogue came into being, and brought with it such spiritual satisfaction that it continued in use even after the Temple was rebuilt.

Although the synagogue is generally associated with the period of the Exile and subsequent times, H.G. May points out that informal meetings in the homes of Jews did take place even before the destruction of the Temple, under prophetic guidance.³¹ It is even suggested that the priestly legislation found in the Pentateuch may have been written to be read in synagogues as a substitute for the Temple sacrifices;³² it is easy to see that such an arrangement may well have been thought necessary as the Temple came to assume more importance, since for many Jews it was not easily accessible, and especially after the various reform movements of Josiah, and later of Hezekiah, which brought about the destruction of local shrines, there was a genuine need for devout Jews living at a distance from Jerusalem to be provided with a place of worship of some kind.

Unfortunately, the earliest excavated synagogues go back only to the second century A.D., by which time the general plan and design of the buildings seems to have been long established.³³

31. Herbert Gordon May, Synagogues in Palestine, (VII. 1, Feb. 1944, 1-20), The Biblical Archaeologist Reader, Edited by David Noel Freedman and G. Ernest Wright, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York. 1961. p.229-250. p.229.

32. Op. cit., p.230

33. Op. cit., p.230

It is however interesting to note the close resemblance between the general appearance of the typical synagogue and that of the Christian Nonconformist Meeting House, particularly that favoured by the Society of Friends; the other type of religious building which comes to mind is the Islamic Mosque, which is also without altar, priest or 'holy place'.

Jeannette Mirsky claims that the synagogue was a unique creation, and was the very opposite of the typical Ancient Near Eastern Temple;³⁴ Turner also emphasises the fact that the synagogue was designed for corporate rather than individual worship, but notes one similarity to the Temple in the presence of the shrine to house the Torah.³⁵ It would be interesting to know at how early or late a date this tendency to reverence the sacred scrolls led the Jews to the construction of this particular part of synagogue equipment, and whether any influence is to be detected here in the practice introduced in the Reformation, and still upheld by some groups of Protestants, of placing the Bible - the visible symbol of the living Word of God - in the centre of God's house.

When the first exiles returned to Jerusalem, their main concern seems to have been the rebuilding of the city itself, and particularly of the walls, in order to secure the inhabitants against attack.³⁶ Although the books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the rebuilding of the Temple in the early days of the return in about 538 B.C., it is thought that such an undertaking would scarcely have been possible at this time, and that the accounts of the rebuilding given by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, dated nearer

34. Mirsky, *op. cit.*, p.105.

35. Turner, *op. cit.*, Section II. Cf. May, *op. cit.*, p.243f.

36. Nehemiah 1-6.

520 B.C. present a more probable view of the course of events.³⁷

According to Haggai, his own suggestion that the Temple should be rebuilt was made in the face of a general attitude that the time for such a project was not ripe, because of the poor economic condition of the country. The prophet's reply was that the state of the country was the direct result of neglect of God's house. This argument seems to have had the desired effect, and thanks to the enthusiasm of Joshua and Zerubbabel, the Temple was restored and put once again to its former use.

If it is true that the rebuilding was delayed for so long, until the appearance of a few enthusiastic leaders, who could fire the people with their own zeal, one interesting point emerges. It seems that, for nearly twenty years after their return to their own land, the Jews did not feel the need of their 'Holy Place' - for many years they had been obliged to do without the Temple, and now on their return, they were still able to do without it.³⁸ It seems that the now well established synagogue tradition had come to satisfy the people's spiritual needs, and that the necessity of having a place of sacrifice, designed for more elaborate ritual, did not immediately make itself felt; perhaps not until someone like Haggai put the idea into their

37. Haggai 1-2.

38. "The years of exile served to strengthen the conviction that Yahweh was not limited either to one country or to one place. Thus their experience, reflected upon in the light of their historic faith, pointed inevitably to the conclusion that a temple was not essential for the worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel. He was the only God, who had created both the heavens and the earth. His dwelling was in the heavens; what need was there then for another temple?" Clements, op. cit., p.130.

heads! The reason given for building a Temple or shrine is nearly always that God requires it; is this perhaps a rationalisation of a recurring human weakness - the desire for visible, tangible symbols to increase a rather fragile faith in the presence of deity? A Meeting House of the synagogue type is built, quite frankly, to satisfy the more mundane requirements of human beings for a place to shelter them while they worship. It scarcely needs any rationalisation; its inhabitants know that God is present among them: in a sense it is his presence that has drawn them together.

The restored Temple of post-exilic times seems to have had no particular features to distinguish it in general plan, lay-out and furnishing from the previous Temple of Solomon, or indeed from any other typical holy building of any nation or race of the time, barring the absence of any visible representation of the deity. It may well have been simpler and less lavishly furnished; this new generation of Jerusalem's inhabitants could hardly afford to line the building from top to bottom with gold, silver, bronze and ivory, and yet the building seems to have served its purpose adequately for several centuries, surviving the desecration of Antiochus Epiphanes and the stormy days of the Hasmonaean dynasty until, in the reign of Herod the Great it was completely reconstructed.

Herod's Temple, started in 20 B.C., seems to have restored the House of God in Jerusalem to all its former glory and magnificence, and, at least in size, to have surpassed that of Solomon. Some changes were made in the general plan, that of the Hellenistic and Roman type of sacred building being adopted, with courts, colonnades and vestibules providing for the necessary coming and going of thousands of people.³⁹

39. James, op. cit., p.187

In its centre however, the Temple was still uncompromisingly Jewish: the Most Holy Place, situated, it is believed where Solomon's Holy of Holies once stood, was still an empty space concealed by a curtain, and entered only once a year by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. It seems that no attempt was ever made after the Exile to substitute for the Ark of the Covenant which had once symbolised for the Jews God's presence in his house.

Herod's Temple, even though it may never have been completed before its final destruction by the Romans in A.D. 70, ranked as one of the Wonders of the World, and like so many man-made wonders, seems to have engendered in the Jewish people that dangerous spiritual pride which so often led to their downfall, and which moved Jesus himself to tears when he saw Jerusalem in all its splendour, and inherent weakness.⁴⁰ It is reported by Josephus that many Jews quite confidently believed that the Temple was invulnerable - God would never allow this one to be destroyed, although of course, it had to be admitted that the previous Temple, for all its magnificence, had gone the way of all human architectural achievements. This Temple was different; it, and the city which housed it were symbolic of the City of God, and his Temple in Paradise itself. It would therefore stand for ever, until the promised Messiah should enter the city in triumph, and reign over the chosen people and their defeated enemies.

After the final destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the Jews were once again without their great central place of worship. There was something unique in their loss, since, although fashion and local custom may have influenced the appearance and design of their temples, nothing had ever compromised the essential monotheism of the Jewish religion; the Jerusalem Temple had never been one of the

40. Luke 19. 41f.

houses of Yahweh, but was unique, because Yahweh himself was the only true God. As far as the Jews were concerned the second shattering of all the material elements in their worship may have proved less of a shock than the first, despite their confidence in its indestructibility, since the synagogue tradition was by now firmly established, and the people simply had to resign themselves to a return to this humbler, less spectacular form of worship, and to the preservation of the Law. After A.D. 70 there was another great difference. The Jewish religion was from now on to be challenged by the new faith which, itself born of Judaism, was now spreading rapidly from Jerusalem where it had begun, to every corner of the Roman Empire and beyond. When the next great period of temple building arrived, the fashionable form of religious edifice was to be the Christian basilican church.

III. CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

For most people, when the word 'church' is mentioned, it calls to mind a building of some description, and even Christian believers have to be reminded that the word ecclesia did not originally apply to buildings at all, but like synagogue, referred to a community, or to a gathering or assembly of people for worship, or for some other purpose.¹ The early Christians used this word to describe their meetings in one another's houses,² and it was some time before it came to be applied to the building in which Christians assembled.

If we trace the development in Christian worship as it is found in the Book of Acts, an attitude towards places of worship seems gradually to emerge which shows an interesting view of both the 'Temple' and the 'Meeting House' as places where God is to be found.

It must be remembered that the Apostles for some time taught openly in the courts of the Jewish Temple, as Jesus himself had done, but that their activity there, like his, was confined to preaching and teaching, and that they had no part in the 'main business' of the Temple services - that is in the sacrificial liturgy, which was in the hands of the 'qualified' priesthood. Also, although the Temple courts were considered suitable for the purpose of preaching, since the Temple was an obvious centre for worship, such an activity was by no means restricted to the 'Holy Place', but could take place anywhere: in the streets,³

1. Biéler, op. cit., p.17
2. Elinor A. Moore, The Ancient Churches of Old Jerusalem, The Evidence of the Pilgrims, (Constable & Co. Ltd., 10-12 Orange St., London, W.C. 2). 1961. Distributed by KHAYATS 92-4 Rue Bliss, Beirut, Lebanon. p.3.
3. Acts 2. 5-13.

in the countryside,⁴ in market-places, and in fact in any public place where there were people to listen.⁵ A message from God could be proclaimed from anywhere, as it had always been in the days of the prophets.⁶

The Apostles continued to preach in the courts of God's house in Jerusalem until they were driven out by those who had charge of his house, and obliged to continue their preaching wherever they could.⁷ Persecution drove them from the streets and market-places into the homes of Christian believers, and these became their new 'headquarters'.⁸ Since no sacrifice was involved in their worship no sanctuary or altar were required, and yet the sacrifices in the Temple continued, and may have been supported by many Christians who also participated in the worship of the new faith: 'Temple' and 'Meeting House' flourished side by side, as Temple and synagogue had done among the Jews since the return from exile.

The Apostle Paul and his companions during their missionary journeys seem to have followed a regular pattern in each town which they visited: the Gospel was proclaimed first in the synagogue, to the Jewish community, in order that God's chosen people might be the first to hear his Word.⁹ Almost inevitably, sooner or later the Jews would take offence at some aspect of the new teaching, and the Apostles would be driven elsewhere.¹⁰ Any building or none would

4. Mark 1. 4; 4. 1.

5. The Gospel might be proclaimed even on a lonely, desert road to one individual. Cf. Acts 8. 26-39.

6. It is interesting to note that the one place from which the Word of God does not seem to be proclaimed publicly is the sanctuary of the Temple! A call may come to an individual, (cf. Isaiah 6), but the individual must then leave the Temple in order to proclaim the message that he has been given.

7. Acts. 4. 13-22.

8. Biéler, op. cit., p.16.

9. Acts 13. 14; 14. 1; 17. 1-3; 10-11.

10. Acts 14. 5-7.

do for the task which they had undertaken, and the Gospel was again preached in the open air - in the streets or in market-places,¹¹ on the banks of a river where Jews had already been meeting apparently for some time,¹² in a borrowed lecture hall,¹³ in another 'upper room',¹⁴ or in the home of any hospitable member of the newly formed congregation.¹⁵

A common impression seems to exist that the homes used for 'house worship' in these early days were invariably of the larger 'villa' type, such as that discovered at Dura-Europos.¹⁶ In fact, the earliest meeting places, including those in Jerusalem, may well have been the rooms provided by the dwellers in three-storey 'tenement' houses of the type which may have contained the original ecclesia - the Upper Room.¹⁷ As Michael Gough points out, the first 'churches' in the sense of buildings have never been discovered, since they would be indistinguishable from ordinary domestic buildings. However, in time it is probable that certain rooms in a house may have come to be set aside for worship.¹⁸

The meeting rooms in town houses such as these are believed by Gough to have been the predecessors of the tituli churches of Rome, which became the city parish churches. Little is known of them beyond the fact that they did exist before the Edict of Toleration issued by Galerius,¹⁹ but there is insufficient evidence for the

11. Acts. 17. 16-17.

12. Acts. 16. 13.

13. Acts. 19. 8-10.

14. Acts. 20. 8.

15. Michael Gough, The Early Christians, Thames and Hudson, London. 1961. p.58.

16. Gough, op. cit., p.59.

17. The Rt. Rev. Bishop Hanson, Lecture entitled The Earliest Christian Church Buildings, given in York, Oct. 9th, 1970. Cf. Palmer Cook, op. cit., p.11.

18. Gough, op. cit., p.59.

19. Op. cit., p.55.

claim that certain rooms discovered by archaeologists, such as that below the church of San Clemente in Rome were in fact used as churches.²⁰ The only actual 'house churches' then, whose remains are still accessible are those which may have been converted at a later time, belonging to wealthy citizens of the third and fourth centuries A.D., by which time a more elaborate form of lay-out and of decoration is only to be expected. There is thus a frustrating, and apparently unbridgeable gap between the Upper Room and the famous House Churches within the Roman villas of Dura-Europos and Lullingstone in Kent, which are not likely to have been in use until after the accession of Constantine as sole Emperor in 324 A.D.

The House Church at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates has been described in detail by almost every writer on early Christian architecture; it has also been triumphantly hailed as the prototype of all Christian architecture, and the fact that it is the earliest extant example of a 'Church' has led to a tendency to regard it as a perfect example of what all early churches, even in Apostolic times must have been like. This is a dangerous misapprehension, since, as we have seen, the house at Dura is far from being the first Christian church, and although early in date, it is not nearly early enough; a great deal can happen in three hundred years in the development of doctrine, liturgy and architecture, and undoubtedly did happen before the unknown householder at Dura set apart, apparently his entire house, for a relatively complex form of Christian liturgy, including celebration of

20. Gough, op. cit., p.59; cf. James, op. cit., p.327. James notes that the church was built on the supposed site of the saint's house where the Christians had met, and describes a Mithraic temple discovered beneath.

the Eucharist and of Baptism, and involving elaborate decoration of the building.²¹ The case of the House Church at Lullingstone near Eynsford in Kent indicates the setting apart of one end of the villa and sealing it off as a kind of chapel. This building also dates back to the middle of the fourth century A.D., and Gough states that the chapel continued in use even after the house was abandoned in about 380 A.D.²²

Something must be said at this point about the burial customs of the early Christians, although the significance of these, and their influence on the development of worship may sometimes have been exaggerated. This is particularly true of the use of the catacombs for worship; these were certainly used for Christian burial, but there is no evidence that they were used for the purpose of ordinary worship before the time of Constantine, and then only occasionally.²³ It has been suggested that the Christians in Rome may have met in the catacombs during periods of very violent persecution, when there was special need for secrecy, and that at a later time they may have met there to celebrate the anniversaries of the deaths of martyrs; it is pointed out that there was insufficient space in the catacombs for a large assembly of worshippers.²⁴ Nevertheless, the rite of Christian burial seems to have assumed great importance, and this may well have increased during periods of

21. Gough, op. cit., p.59f.

22. Op. cit., p.60f.

23. Biéler, op. cit., p.30.

24. Pierre du Bourguet, S.J., Early Christian Painting, Translated by Simon Watson Taylor, Contact Books, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 20 New Bond St., London W.1. 1965. p.9.

persecution, giving rise to the formation of the cult of the martyrs, and the later building of separate shrines and mortuary chapels. It has been noted that there was an early tendency to revive the custom of venerating a place: hence the building of altars over the tombs of martyrs.²⁵ A preoccupation with death, even for those holding the Christian hope of resurrection seems to lead to a superstitious attitude to the places and objects connected with the dead, which may perhaps be traced back to the primitive attitude to death noted earlier. It has also been noted that Christian belief in resurrection of the body made the common Roman practice of cremation repugnant, and may also have led to a stronger tendency to venerate the physical remains of the Christian dead.²⁶ It is possible that it was through the Christian funerary buildings, and perhaps those buildings of similar design later erected as baptisteries,²⁷ that the 'Temple' tradition made its way back into Christian worship,²⁸ never entirely ousting that of the Upper Room or Meeting House, and yet becoming so firmly rooted that it too has remained throughout subsequent phases of development.²⁹

25. Biéler, op. cit., p.21.

26. du Bourguet, op. cit., p.10.

27. The Christian view of baptism as a spiritual death and resurrection perhaps became more closely linked with the ceremonies involved in funeral rites, thus causing the place of baptism and the place of death, (the tomb), to assume almost equal importance in the minds of the worshippers.

28. Turner, op. cit., Section IV.

29. Op. cit., Section IV. Turner notes that the stone slab covering a tomb came to be used as an altar, whereas before the sixth century wooden tables had been used. Also, the veneration of martyrs' relics caused the tomb, and later the building where they were enshrined to assume 'sanctity'.

It is also possible that it was the importance attached to places of burial, and the erection of shrines and altars in memory of Christian heroes and martyrs that led the early Christians in time to the custom of using separate rooms within one building for different purposes: for the celebration of the Eucharist, for Baptism, for instruction of catechumens and so on.³⁰

The building of churches on a large scale obviously could not take place during the very early days of poverty and persecution, and it was not until Constantine became Emperor, and acknowledged the Christian faith as a religio licita in the Empire that larger and more imposing buildings began to be erected in great numbers.³¹ Not only were large buildings now necessary, owing to the great increase in the numbers of worshippers to be accommodated, but the new status accorded to Christianity by its association with the Imperial Court inevitably introduced a tendency to ostentation in the style and decoration of buildings which might well have startled the original founders of the Church, but the seeds of which had been there even in some of the larger House Churches.³² This natural human desire to adorn and make beautiful all things associated with religion and worship may have combined with the already well-established custom of using artistic means to honour the tombs of martyrs, thus binding closely together the worship of the cult of

30. Gough, op. cit., p.59f.

31. J.G. Davies, The Origin and Development of Early Christian Church Architecture, S.C.M. Press Ltd., 56 Bloomsbury Street, London. 1952. p.14.

32. Gough, op. cit., p.60f.

the martyrs with that of the other elements of Christian worship, such as the celebration of the Eucharist, (which sometimes took place at a martyr's tomb),³³ Baptism, preaching and instruction.

The establishment of the basilica as the standard type of Christian architecture is still a subject of controversy. Many attempts have been made to trace the origin of this particular style of building; some writers trace it to the typical Roman private house,³⁴ others to the civic basilicas, possibly modelled originally on the audience-hall of the Emperor.³⁵ The chief objection to the idea that the plan of the basilica may have developed from the classical dwelling house is the fact that there was no single house plan in universal use, the example of the house at Dura-Europos, which is again triumphantly cited as the original prototype of the basilica, being only one among a number of styles of domestic architecture.³⁶ There is no reason to suppose that the citizens of the Roman Empire, any more than those of other ages, designed their houses according to a uniform plan. On the other hand, Davies points out that there was a general fashion in the second and third centuries A.D. in all branches of architecture for a particular type of building - basically rectangular with colonnades,³⁷ the original influence being that of the Greek megaron,

33. Turner points out that the main architectural activity of the early Christian centuries was the construction of tombs. Op. cit., Section IV.

34. Cecil Stewart, Early Christian, Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture, (Volume II of Simpson's History of Architectural Development), Longmans, Third impression of 1954 edition. p.11

35. Biéler, op. cit., p.33f.

36. Davies, op. cit., p.19.

37. Op. cit., p.32.

which, it must be remembered, is generally associated with religious rather than domestic architecture, although it is possible that the same style may have been used for both. As Davies remarks: "It does not require an architectural genius to devise an oblong hall with two rows of columns to support the roof."³⁸ Davies himself considers the model to have been the civil basilica, of which there were two types, one showing signs of Egyptian, the other of Greek influence.³⁹ Biéler also favours the civic basilica as a type of building which could be erected comparatively quickly and cheaply, and which was particularly suited to a Church now becoming increasingly sacerdotal.⁴⁰

Whatever the origin of the basilica, once it had become established as the accepted style for church buildings in the West, it continued in use for more than a thousand years,⁴¹ and indeed might be said to have remained the basis for the design of most Christian buildings of nearly all Christian denominations ever since. It is noted by Stewart that after Constantine pagan temples were sometimes converted into churches.⁴² This is interesting in view of the fact mentioned by Elinor Moore that, owing to intense superstition, the Christians of Jerusalem in earlier days had avoided this practice, although such conversion of pagan buildings was common in Italy and elsewhere.⁴³ The Venerable Bede, quoting from Pope Gregory's letter to Abbot Mellitus, (A.D. 601), notes the Pope's advice that, in England, although idols should be destroyed, local temples should be aspersed with holy water, provided with new, Christian altars and relics, and should continue in

38. Op. cit., p.34.

39. Op. cit., p.26ff.

40. Biéler, op. cit., p.33ff.

41. Davies, op. cit., p.50

42. Stewart, op. cit., p.10f.

43. Moore, op. cit., p.3

use, since this practice might encourage people to come to familiar places for worship.⁴⁴

It is necessary however to remember that in the East, from the age of Constantine onwards, there appeared churches built according to a centralised plan, taking the shape of a Greek cross, 'cross-in-square', or even occasionally an octagonal or circular structure.⁴⁵ According to Stewart, circular buildings were generally designed for baptisteries or burial shrines,⁴⁶ and Gough also considers that the later domed churches developed from earlier, smaller buildings designed for baptismal or funerary purposes.⁴⁷ It is interesting to observe that the appearance of symbolism in Church architecture seems to date from the later and more elaborate period of building following the time of Constantine, (although traced by some to the influence of his mother, Helena),⁴⁸ and especially noted during the reign of Justinian, which led to the fully developed splendours of Byzantine art and architecture.⁴⁹ Characteristic of the Eastern churches of this period was the dome, representing the sky itself, although the construction of the dome was not unknown before this period; Stewart claims that it may have been in use in Ur.⁵⁰ At this time the basilica in the West began to branch outwards in transepts on either side of the elongated nave, to form the 'Latin cross' familiar in Western Christendom, while the

44. Bede, A History of the English Church and People, Translated and with an Introduction by Leo Sherley-Price. Revised by R.E. Latham, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex. 1955. p.86f.

45. Gough, op. cit., p.145f.

46. Stewart, op. cit., p.42f.

47. Gough, op. cit., p.146. Strangely enough, whereas the predominantly rectangular basilican churches of the West were often accompanied by circular or octagonal baptisteries, in the East, where the centralised church plan was more common, rectangular baptisteries were preferred! Davies, op. cit., p.102

48. Stewart, op. cit., p.59. Cf Chapter IV below.

49. For example, the Byzantine church was seen as a model of the universe. Turner, op. cit., Section IV; cf. Biéler, op. cit., p.38

50. Stewart, op. cit., p.50

centralised building also tended to favour the cruciform shape, but of the 'Greek cross', claimed by one writer as "the most perfect form".⁵¹ The divergence in the Eastern and Western styles may also have been due to differences in liturgical development, as for instance in the position of the celebrant behind the free-standing altar, or facing the altar placed against the east wall, as became customary in the Roman Church. The position of the Bishop's throne in the original basilica may also have had some influence on this.⁵² May points out that the church is indebted to the synagogue for much of its art and symbolism, since both church and synagogue are basilican in type, one being easily convertible into the other.⁵³

Mention must also be made of the intensive building activities carried out by the various monastic orders during the early Middle Ages. Here, a domestic type of church architecture might have been expected, since the aim of the founders of such orders was generally the formation of a community, and the prime necessity was for one or more buildings to live in. It seems however that the general attitude of the monks led to the separation of the House of God from their own dwellings; a chapel was built for the worship of God, and other buildings were provided for the more 'secular' needs of the community. Between the two came the cells of the individual brothers, where they might live, and also carry out their private devotions. The climax of early monastic architectural design is thought to have been reached in the monasteries planned by St. Benedict, whose practical genius applied to communal organisation

51. Op. cit., p.93.

52. Davies, op. cit., p.93f.

53. May, op. cit., p.249.

had a lasting influence.⁵⁴ Thus the founders and members of the monastic orders, for all their emphasis on fellowship and community life, seem to have done more to foster individualism in religion, thereby upholding the worship of the Temple rather than that of the Meeting House!

The Byzantine age was one of great splendour in art and architecture partly because, like many ages following upon the establishment of a new and victorious empire, it was an age of peace in which there was the opportunity for a good deal of experiment in many directions. In building there was experiment, both in form, as new techniques made possible the construction of arch, vault and dome, and in shape, for it was at this time that the unusual circular and octagonal ground plans appeared.⁵⁵ In decoration there was also experiment in design and colour, and use of decorative materials, notably in the making of mosaics, and in the fashioning of objects for use in worship, such as lamps, chalices, censers and vestments, all made from costly materials.

Cecil Stewart cites the example of the church of Basse Oeuvre at Beauvais as a link between the Christian basilica of the earlier type and the true Romanesque style of building,⁵⁶ which, with the addition of its characteristic round arches and barrel vaulting developed from it, and in its turn provided the foundation for the Gothic architecture

54. Short, op. cit., p.113.

55. The churches of San Vitale in Ravenna and St. Mark's in Venice, as well as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople are perhaps the most obvious.

56. Stewart, op. cit., p.117f.

of the Middle Ages.⁵⁷ Also during the Middle Ages there appears the interesting phenomenon of the type of monastery favoured by Bernard of Clairvaux who is described by Stewart as "the Puritan of the Middle Ages".⁵⁸ The outlook of St. Bernard seems to savour remarkably of a reaction against the preoccupation of the Gothic Church with building; perhaps he might have echoed the words of Mohammed quoted earlier, when faced with the soaring spires and cavernous interiors of the great Gothic cathedrals.⁵⁹ Like the later Byzantine churches, the larger examples of Gothic building do seem to have engendered a certain spiritual pride. The oft-quoted words of Justinian when surveying the completed church of Hagia Sophia: "I have surpassed thee, O Solomon!" might be compared with the avowed intention of the builders of Seville Cathedral, which was to be: "so great and of such a kind that those who see it finished shall think we were mad."⁶⁰

57. This is described by Short as "the master synthesis of religious architecture", fusing structural, aesthetic, emotional and associational elements which are needed in "the ideal Christian Church" - a somewhat sweeping claim! Short, op. cit., p.143.

58. Stewart, op. cit., p.126.

59. The usual attitude to Gothic architecture is one of awed admiration for the exalted aspiration of its builders, who must surely typify devout reverence for God at its highest. A startlingly different view of the great height of the typical Gothic tower is expressed by G.K. Chesterton in one of his 'Father Brown' stories. In solving the mystery of the death of a man killed by a hammer dropped from the church tower, Father Brown confronts the murderer with his guilt, suggesting that his habit of climbing to the highest place in the church to worship had given him a distorted sense of his own greatness in comparison with the smallness of things, including human beings, seen far below. In his description of the scene Chesterton comments: "For these two men on the tower were left alone with the most terrible aspect of the Gothic: the monstrous foreshortening and disproportion, the dizzy perspectives, the glimpses of great things small and small things great; a topsy-turvydom of stone in the mid-air." G.K. Chesterton, 'The Hammer of God', from Father Brown Stories, The Folio Society, London. 1959. p.16.

60. John Harvey, The Master Builders, (Architecture in the Middle Ages), Thames and Hudson, London. 1971. p.112.

The friars' churches certainly appear to have been simpler; Biéler describes the churches of the mendicant orders which were built from the sixteenth century onwards - (a period drawing interestingly close to that of the first upsurge of Protestant dissent), - which were built like simple preaching halls, with a stronger emphasis on the pulpit, and with the choir no longer so strictly separated from the nave.⁶¹

A word should be said about the activities of the Crusaders, whose visits to the Holy Land resulted in the introduction into their own countries, including Britain, of architectural features witnessed in the buildings in Jerusalem and elsewhere, notably the 'centralised' plan.⁶²

A distinction has to be made between the great cathedral buildings constructed during the Middle Ages all over Europe and the humbler parish churches to be found in the villages and smaller towns, in which our own country is so rich, having an impressively varied and representative number. The typical ^{cl}mediaeval parish church, although in plan, design and layout usually following the general pattern of the great city churches and cathedrals, shows clearly once again the kind of building which Christians will erect when restricted in means and materials, and yet determined to build a worthy place of worship in which to glorify God. The earliest parish churches seem remarkably faithful to the simple, basilican design in miniature,⁶³

61. Biéler, op. cit., p.47f

62. Bruce Allsopp, Romanesque Architecture - The Romanesque Achievement, (The World of Architecture, Editor: J.H. Cheetham), Arthur Baker Ltd., 5 Winsley Street, London. 1971. p.91.

63. Some of the earliest British churches seem to have been timber-built, as for example the church at Greensted in Essex; some were later replaced by stone buildings. Short, op. cit., p.118.

although by the time of their building colonnades were being replaced by solid walls, and single columns by substantial piers; in any case, the climate of our own and other European countries hardly lends itself to open courtyards and sun-reflecting domes.⁶⁴

The simple rectangle, culminating in an apse, either rounded or, in the case of many early English examples, an uncompromisingly British square, remains the basis of nearly all church building of the period leading up to the seventeenth century. Such a simple and straightforward foundation plan could of course be readily adapted and extended if the Christian community increased in size. However, despite the simplicity of design, and despite all that we read of the community life which used to be lived in and around the parish church, making of it a kind of social centre, the British Church with its altar and priesthood still leaned rather towards the tradition of the Temple than that of the Meeting House, especially in the South, where the influence of Rome introduced by St. Augustine was most strongly felt. It is interesting to speculate upon what might have been the picture of Church building, especially in the North, if the outcome of the Synod of Whitby had been different.⁶⁵

No discussion of religious architecture would be complete without some mention of the development alongside that of Christian building of the 'new' faith of Islam. We have already seen that Mohammed himself apparently disapproved of elaborate and expensive building

64. It has also been noted in this connection that in the West stained-glass, admitting and reflecting the less brilliant light largely took the place of the mosaic decoration so familiar further east and south.

65. Short, op. cit., p.122. The Anglo-Saxon church buildings seem to have borne a close resemblance to those erected further north in the days of the Celtic missionaries. Cf. E.A. Fisher, An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Architecture and Sculpture, Faber and Faber, 24 Russell Square, London. 1959. p.30f.

projects, and during his lifetime Muslim worshippers seem to have been content with the simplest and plainest of buildings. For Islam, more than for Judaism and Christianity, no special design in structure was required, since there seems to have been no early attempt, as in the former, to enshrine the sacred book of the faith, while the absence of such a sacrament as the Lord's Supper made even the simple table or altar of the Christians superfluous. The Jewish abhorrence of images and other forms of representational art is also, of course, present in Islam. Short remarks that there is in fact no architectural tradition in Islam, its buildings being conditioned by place.⁶⁶ The mosque is intended mainly for private prayer, although there is generally a courtyard for public gatherings. Short describes the original Mosque of the Conquest in Cairo as a simple, rectangular meeting-place, lacking even the prayer niche which is characteristic of later buildings.⁶⁷ James also states that the Muslim mosque is "primarily and essentially a house of prayer."⁶⁸ As time passed a pulpit was added, rather as in the case of the Jewish synagogue, courtyards were extended, and sometimes fountains and pools for ritual washing were provided, and there also appeared the distinctive feature of the mosque - the minaret, or tower from which the regular call to prayer is made; James notes the possibility that this may have developed from the church tower!⁶⁹ After the Conquest, Muslims seem also to have adapted readily to their own use the buildings of other worshippers. Perhaps the most notable examples of conversion

66. Short, op. cit., p.132

67. Op. cit., p.134

68. James, op. cit., p.358

69. Op. cit., p.357

of a building are to be found in the chequered career of the cathedral at Cordova, which became a mosque in 711 A.D., and reverted once again to Christian use in 1236, and the similar changes in use of the great cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.⁷⁰

The influence of Islamic architecture on church building in South Italy is noted by Allsopp, who suggests that the term 'Lombardic' often refers to a style which might aptly be described as 'Saracenic'.⁷¹

As far as any development in the style of Muslim building is concerned, Biéler notes that the mosque, when extended in size, spreads always outwards, never lengthways,⁷² which may perhaps be explained by the lack of any visible object of worship, giving a central focus to the interior.

The concentration on private devotion in Islam is oddly more reminiscent of the practice of the mediaeval Catholic church in which worshippers might enter and say their own prayers, regardless of the ceremony being enacted, sometimes invisibly, by the ordained clergy behind the screen dividing chancel from nave, than of that of the more closely related practices of Judaism, in which the synagogue was very definitely a place for the gathering of the community for worship.

The development of religious building through the Middle Ages shows therefore the same parallel growth of Temple and Meeting House remarked before. It still seems to be the case that in the early stages of any religion, architecture is of little importance. The earliest stage, of course, is that of prophecy or evangelism, which by its very nature requires, not an enclosed space, but any place

70. Op. cit., p.334f.

71. Allsopp, op cit., p.15.

72. Biéler, op. cit., p.39.

72^a i.e. any historical religion.

where human beings are to be found. The next stage, which takes place when converts have been made, who now require preaching and instruction to enable them to grow in their new faith, is one which does require a room of some kind, but such 'Meeting House' worship can take place in any kind of building. Sooner or later the growing congregation will need a larger building, more suited to the specific purposes of religious worship, and it is at this point that a choice seems to be made: for some believers a larger version of the Meeting House is sufficient; for others, something more is needed, and the 'something more' almost inevitably seems to take the form of the trappings of the Temple, with the introduction of 'sacred' space, objects and persons to perform the ritual; instruction in the faith gives place to the performance of sacred drama. In either case, when a special building comes to be erected, the builders seem to revert to an almost universal plan - an oblong space, with a focus at one end; this is not necessarily the shorter end of the rectangle: the 'T-plan' characteristic of many Scottish churches has appeared at various times and in many different places. One example cited by Short is the 'preaching church' of Santa Croce in Florence, consisting of a large nave, the T-shape being given by a corona of chapels at the east end.⁷³ Centrally planned buildings never seem to be usual, but to occur occasionally during a period of experimentation in all kinds of shapes, although it has sometimes been suggested that the centralised form is, or ought to be the ideal.⁷⁴ There seems to be a natural human tendency to revert to what one might describe as a 'Holy Rectangle',

73. Short, op. cit., p.248.

74. Schwarz, op. cit., p.36.

with some object of worship, be it altar, cross, sacred book, or, one may sometimes feel uneasily - preacher, organ, or even choir as the focus of attention!

One striking difference in the attitude to religious building which made its appearance with Christianity is the theological idea of Christ himself, and of the individual Christian believer as the living Temple of God.⁷⁵ Clements sees in the Incarnation the complete reconciliation of divine transcendence and immanence, since Jesus Christ himself is the true temple in which the fullness of God can dwell.⁷⁶ The idea of God's true dwelling-place was later applied to the Church: in the Old Testament, God dwells among his people, in the New Testament, within them, by his Holy Spirit; Clements goes on to claim that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity supersedes any need for a material temple, since only human personality can provide a fit dwelling-place for God on earth.⁷⁷

If this new view of the Temple were carried to its logical conclusion, then the need for sacred buildings ceased with the coming of the Holy Spirit. It seems that the early Christians were aware of this, especially during the time when the End of the Age was confidently expected to be imminent, so that building projects would have been pointless, but as time went on, Christians found that they still needed places of worship of some kind, and once such architectural activity had begun, there was no holding it; when one regards the achievements of mediaeval architecture this is hardly a matter for regret.

75. Turner, op. cit., Section III .

76. Clements, op. cit., p.138. See Chapter VI, below, p.173ff

77. Op. cit., p.139.

The choice still remained between the Temple and the Meeting House as outward expressions of God's 'tabernacling' among his people on earth; the words of Stephen are often quoted as an example of the early Christian protest against the Temple of the Jews. In fact, as in so many cases of protest, Stephen's was against the misuse of the Temple rather than the Temple itself.⁷⁸ Manson sees the influence of Stephen in the Epistle to the Hebrews, with its urgent appeal to the Church to realise that a conservative clinging to the Old Jewish institutions was hindering the fulfilment of its true function - an evangelism which should reach out to the ends of the earth: "... the call to the Church of Jesus was to leave the Temple and all that went with it behind, and to go forward ..."⁷⁹ The Temple, like the Tabernacle, was intended as a temporary institution;⁸⁰ this explains the repeated emphasis on the idea of the Tabernacle, which by its very nature was moveable and impermanent, to illustrate the ever-moving, forward-looking nature of the Christian Church.

This is something which Christians need to remember; we are constantly having drawn to our attention the impermanence of modern society, with its pattern of constant change, as people move frequently from place to place, seldom settling in one spot for more than a few years. In planning future building projects, should the Church be thinking along the lines of the Tabernacle? Should 'Mobile Churches' be the order of the day? - "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come."⁸¹

78. William Manson, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (An Historical and Theological Reconsideration. The Baird Lecture, 1949). Hodder and Stoughton, London. 1951. p.30.

79. Op. cit., p.32.

80. Op. cit., p.34.

81. Hebrews, 13. 12.

Even if this should prove to be the case, there will no doubt always be Christian buildings of some degree of permanence, and it is perhaps as well that the continuance of the Jewish synagogue, and the appearance of the Muslim mosque were there in the early centuries as a reminder of the fact that God does not dwell permanently in temples made with hands, but may meet with his people in humbler buildings, and perhaps to some extent to point the way to the new type of religious building which appeared after the Reformation.

IV THE DISSENTING MEETING HOUSE

The upheaval of the Reformation in Europe led to different results in different places, and its effects on Christian architecture also varied from place to place. In England, for example, the peculiar political circumstances of Henry VIII's differences with the papal authority led to a complete break with the Roman Church, in which the whole English Church became Protestant, and its buildings became the property of the State, and could then be adapted for Protestant worship. Since there was at this time less argument in England over questions of liturgy than on the Continent, alterations to the structure of existing Church buildings were not generally drastic, all that was necessary being the removal of images and other 'objects of superstition', and the replacement of stone altars with wooden communion tables.

Scotland, which has often been accused of the most wicked excesses of iconoclasm under John Knox, also seems to have found little reason for destroying or damaging the external structure of existing churches; again, churches were adapted for Protestant use, the new dual emphasis on Word and Sacrament being expressed in some cases in the use of the nave for the preaching ministry, and the choir for the celebration of the Communion.¹ In this the Scottish Church seems to have been following the example set in Switzerland, but it was not a universal solution. In fact, the period following immediately upon the Reformation seems in all places to have been another time of experiment in the attempt to find practical, working solutions to the problems facing a Church with a completely new attitude to its liturgy, trying to perform

1. A.L. Drummond, The Church Architecture of Protestantism, T. & T. Clark, 38 George Street, Edinburgh. 1934. p.30.

this liturgy in buildings designed for something quite different.²

In general, in most parts of Europe, there seems to have been no particular desire to alter the outward appearance of church buildings, or to depart from the long accepted Gothic style even when new buildings were erected.³ Although, as has been noted with reference to the earliest great phase of church building in the fourth century A.D., there was a certain amount of experiment with unusual shapes and forms, these were the exception rather than the rule, and the Protestant churches differed from Catholic ones in interior arrangement rather than in external style. In the Netherlands more radical experiments seem to have taken place,⁴ while one interesting example is the emergence in Scotland of the characteristic 'T-plan' church.⁵ Biéler notes the revival of the central plan, seeing this desire to meet in a circle, not avoiding one another, as an expression of loving concern on the part of Reformation Christians;⁶ it is, however, not certain that the choice of the central plan during this period was for reasons

2. It has been noted that in churches with an elaborate ritual, the liturgy becomes a sacred drama enacted by the priests; in this case the congregation become spectators, rather than playing a full part in the performance of the liturgy, as, it is claimed, they do in the simpler services of those denominations which place less emphasis on ritual. This distinction implies different attitudes to the design of the church building in which the respective services take place.
3. Much depended on the resources available for building and adaptation; this was particularly the case in Scotland. Hay, op. cit., p.9ff.
4. James F. White, Protestant Worship and Church Architecture, Oxford University Press, New York. 1964. p.82ff.
5. Drummond, op. cit., p.22f.
6. Biéler, op. cit., p.51. Cf. Schwarz, op. cit., p.38ff. Biéler notes that some Catholic churches were also circular. Op. cit., p.68.

other than the simple desire for experiment.

Short's contention that the Reformed Church buildings of France and England "failed to express the whole life of the community as the earlier House of God had done" seems a little harsh, especially in view of his subsequent admission that one of the reasons for this may have been financial!⁷ Lutherans, he goes on somewhat sweepingly to assert, were generally iconoclasts;⁸ but the excesses which he quotes, including the use of parts of St. Paul's Cathedral in London for shops, cavalry barracks and stables offer perhaps some excuse for his feelings, and indeed are uncomfortably reminiscent of the situation in a certain Temple at an earlier time, which called forth the accusation that the Father's House had been turned into a den of thieves!⁹

In the Huguenot churches in France, and presumably wherever the Catholic Church remained in a powerful enough position to persecute those who questioned its authority, Protestant church buildings had to be disguised; any churches built by Huguenots must not 'look like Churches'.¹⁰ In this, these buildings would seem to be in the direct line of ancestry of those built by Protestant Dissenters in England very shortly after, of which, for similar reasons, the sacred function had to be disguised. It is an interesting comment on the effects of growing security and affluence that, where the persecuted Church carefully designs its buildings to look like anything other than churches, the aim of the comfortably established congregation is to have a building for worship that looks like everyone else's place

7. Short, *op. cit.*, p.268.

8. *Op. cit.*, p.268.

9. *Op. cit.*, p.270.

10. Drummond, *op. cit.*, p.34.

of worship! In the earlier period however, the typical Meeting House erected in this country following the Toleration Act of 1689 is described thus: "Plain looking, square or oblong buildings of stone or brick with stone facings and high-pitched roofs which expressed the character of dissent and often enshrined behind their bareness a spirit of unearthly beauty."¹¹

By the time that new churches were being designed on a more extensive scale, the classical revival was beginning to have an effect on architecture in general, and there seems to have been a gradual turning away from the older mediaeval styles to the new designs of the great architects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹²

It is true that the Neo-classical style lent itself very effectively to the new Protestant emphasis on the preaching and hearing of the Word,¹³ and the old division into nave and sanctuary was replaced by the simple preaching hall, generally rectangular, although again, experiments with octagonal and circular forms did appear.¹⁴ The pulpit gained in importance, and the Communion Table was placed where it could be seen by the gathered worshippers.

11. F.J. Powicke, Essays Catholic and Congregational, ed. Peel, (1931) pp. 301-2. Wilson, History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches in London. Quoted by John T. Wilkinso, 1662-And After. Three Centuries of English Nonconformity. The Epworth Press, London, 1962. p.103.
12. The most obvious example is Sir Christopher Wren, whose redesigning of much of the city of London after the Great Fire in 1666 afforded an almost unparalleled opportunity for 'town planning'.
13. White, op. cit., p.96; cf. Hay, op. cit., p.21.
14. A.L. Drummond, The Architectural Interest of the English Meeting House, R.I.B.A. Journal, Vol. XLV, 15th Aug. 1938. pp.909-917.
The occasional popularity of the octagon may perhaps be traced to the idea of the number eight as a symbol of re-creation, as seven was a symbol of creation. The octagonal form has been found in other religious buildings, notably the pagodas of Japanese Zen Buddhists. Mirsky, op. cit., p.61.

It is strange to reflect that a revival of Classical architecture, whose external appearance, even in domestic dwellings, frequently appears to imitate the general outline of Greek temples, should be adopted for religious buildings at the very time when 'Temple' worship was out of favour! The interior of the building was an auditory hall, containing no concealed 'Holy of Holies', and it was designed as a meeting place for priests and people, which could never be said of a Greek temple. On the other hand, the great churches of the Middle Ages, developing out of the basilican churches, of which the naves at least were intended to accommodate large assemblies of worshippers very quickly introduced the element of separation present in all Temple worship. Drummond considers that the evolution of the distinctive style of Protestant church building can be traced to an earlier stage, before the end of the sixteenth century, following the lines of the more conservative and formal Palladian style, while under the influence of the Renaissance, the architecture of the Counter-Reformation favoured the romantic and extravagant expression of the Baroque.¹⁵

With the establishment of the Protestant Church in many parts of Europe, and its growing strength and 'respectability', especially in countries such as England where the State Church was Protestant, and patronised by the Head of State, a situation seems to have arisen reminiscent of that of the days of Constantine. As the Protestant Church increased in material wealth, power and security, its early ideals became gradually less sharply defined, and traces of worldliness, vanity and corruption began to appear even among its leaders. This led to the violent protests of those who came to be

15. Drummond, The Church Architecture of Protestantism, p. 27.

named 'Puritans',¹⁶ and who may be described as the originators of many of the Dissenting denominations. Translations of the Bible, and easier distribution of printed copies enabled ordinary Church members to measure the standards of their own leaders against those laid down in the Scriptures, and many different grounds for dissent were found, some being questions of doctrine,¹⁷ others of organisation,¹⁸ others a reaction against what was felt to be the hypocrisy of a Church and clergy which failed to live up to their own teaching.

The reasons for dissent are complex, and there are conflicting views of those who express it: on the one hand, dissenters, or nonconformists are often represented as heroes and martyrs, prepared to sacrifice themselves for the cause of the Truth which they profess; on the other, they may be seen as unbalanced fanatics, inviting persecution because of their obstinate refusal to accept the same Truth. There are, of course, dissenters of both kinds. It is perhaps significant that, in distinguishing between these two types a study of their buildings may be helpful; dissenters of the 'zealot' type seldom seem to take any interest in architecture, (except occasionally

16. 'Puritans' have been blamed for many things, including the 'encouragement' of irreverence towards the altar. G.W.O. Addleshaw and Frederick Etchells, The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship, Faber and Faber Limited, 24 Russell Square, London. 1948. p.118. Although some of the blame was no doubt deserved, it should be remembered that it was the Puritan's intense reverence for God himself which led to his contempt for the veneration of any material object as a substitute for him. In another connection Drummond notes the tendency to hold 'Puritans' responsible for the appearance of pagan symbolism in churches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and suggests that, in banning traditional Christian symbolism the Puritans had perhaps left the way open for what was a non-spiritual fashion of the later period. Drummond, op. cit., p.38.
17. For example, the view of Baptism, as expressed by those Dissenters who were to form the Baptist denomination.
18. E.g. the differing views of Independents and Presbyterians.

of a highly eccentric kind!)¹⁹ and in fact seem to have about them a transience which leads either to the dissolution of their sects before any kind of permanent architectural expression can take place, or to a development into a more sober and moderate way of thinking, more closely akin to that of the main body of dissenters of all kinds - those who, like Martin Luther, George Fox and John Wesley would willingly have remained within a Church purged from corruption, and actively responsive to the needs of mankind, but who were driven by the Church to express their convictions outside it.²⁰

The pattern seems generally to have been the same: dissent from an established authority leads to that authority's insistence on conformity; persistent refusal to conform leads to rejection on the one hand, or withdrawal on the other, but once outside the Nonconformist, (who is usually in a minority), is seldom left alone - there is very rarely any 'agreement to differ'; thus, the continued adherence of the Dissenter to his beliefs leads almost inevitably, and tragically, to persecution; the courageous endurance of this, also almost inevitably, leads to eventual tolerance, and even mutual acceptance. Yet the lesson seems never to be learned, for when those who have suffered persecution have themselves gained a position of authority, as for instance during the brief period of the Commonwealth, they have indulged in equally savage persecution, not

19. 'Jezreels Tower' in Portsmouth was built by an obscure sect living in expectation of the end of the world and the Second Coming. When the day arrived, they believed that they would be snatched up to heaven from the top of it.
20. One of George Fox's main arguments against 'the Church' was his disapproval of the use of this term applied to the building, rather than in its true sense of the gathered people of God. When preaching at Ulrome he was told to get out of the church by an opponent; he replied: "Alack, poor man ... dost thou call the steeplehouse the Church? The Church is the people whom God has purchased with his blood, and not the house." The Journal of George Fox, ed. John L. Nickalls, C.U.P., 1952. p.93f. (Many other references to the 'steeplehouse').

only of those who formerly persecuted them, but of groups whose views were not in exact accordance with those of the main dissenting body. George Fox, in his journal, refers to the fierce opposition suffered by the Quakers from Baptists, especially in Scotland,²¹ and also refers to articles drawn up by the Church of Scotland to be read in churches against Quakers!²² In England Baptists and Presbyterians seem to have been equally fierce, although Baptists in particular had themselves suffered cruelly.

When Dissenters, or Nonconformists have finally turned their backs on the established church, or alternatively, when its doors have been closed against them, their first need is for a place in which to worship - a meeting place, and this should be stressed, since it seems to be in the nature of dissent that its adherents form groups and communities.

The obvious and natural solution to the problem of a meeting place for a group of Nonconformists is one or another of the dwelling houses of the worshippers - a precedent established by the Christian Church in its earliest days, and recently revived in the 'House Church' movement. It is for this reason that what may be termed the genuine Meeting House, that is, the building which has been planned and erected for the specific purpose of accommodating a number of people for worship, and not in a deliberate attempt to construct a building that 'looks' ecclesiastical, almost always retains a certain domestic atmosphere; this is particularly true of

21. Op. cit., p.270.

22. Op. cit., p.317.

the buildings belonging to the Society of Friends, which have altered less in their design, lay-out and furnishing than those of any other denomination.²³

Worship in one another's houses, even when secret, was often unsafe, and when numbers were large could be inconvenient. Meetings might then take place in a barn or other outhouse belonging to a sympathetic farmer,²⁴ or in towns, in an empty warehouse;²⁵ for example, during the reign of Charles II the halls belonging to certain companies of the City of London were sometimes used by Nonconformists.²⁶ There was also open-air worship, but it would seem that this belongs largely to the 'missionary' period of a new movement, when preachers, fired by prophetic zeal, and emulating the example of the Apostles, aim deliberately to make their message public in order to attract converts: during subsequent persecution such meetings are often driven, first from the market-places to the open country, and then reduced in numbers and scattered in separate groups, back into the houses, to meet behind closed doors and drawn blinds.²⁷ It should be borne in mind that meetings in private houses are by no means

23. The Friends' Meeting House: "...makes no effort to be other than a meeting place - unconsecrated and sanctified only by the purpose for which it was designed and used." Hubert Lidbetter, The Friends Meeting House, William Sessions Ltd., The Eton Press, York. 1961. p.5.

24. Fox, op. cit., pp.623, 650.

25. The use of shops also has an earlier precedent. J.G. Davies records that excavations in Rome have revealed shops of the early Christian period with rooms for worship above. Davies, op. cit., p.20.

At a later date, during the period of nineteenth century evangelism, churches were designed for congregations which had originally gathered in shops! Short, op. cit., p.285.

26. E.G. the Halls of the Tallow-Chandlers and the Salters. Drummond, The Architectural Interest of the English Meeting House, p.910.

27. This also doubtless explains the unobtrusiveness of many early Meeting Houses, particularly those of the Friends, designed to attract as little attention as possible. Lidbetter, op. cit., p.12.

peculiar to Christian worshippers. Bouquet, quoting C.L. O'Malley in "Popular Hinduism" notes that congregational gatherings for the worship of Vishnu take place in tents or private houses, quite unconnected with the rites of the temple. Such meetings, involving hymnsinging and the reading and expounding of sacred books may well become highly emotional, and in fact seem to savour strongly of the 'revivalist' type of evangelism well known in Christian countries.²⁸ A similar phenomenon is described in the unofficial preaching sometimes found among Moslems, again, unconnected with the 'official' worship of the mosque. This too sometimes takes place in private houses, and involves emotional scenes.²⁹

A meeting of Nonconformists in a private house in the early period may easily be imagined: the house might be the dwelling of any member - poor or rich, humble or of high rank; thus the earliest type of Meeting House might be a room of almost any kind, from one of the principal rooms in the manor house to a farmhouse kitchen, or the living room in a cottage. What is most important to remember is that the building concerned was not originally designed for worship; nor was it furnished with any of those things usually associated with any developed religious liturgy, but this was of little account, because the essential ingredients for religious worship were there: a gathering, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, of a body of sincere believers, a space to accommodate and shelter them, and, for the presentation of both Word and Sacrament, such moveable items as a Bible, a basin of water, bread and wine.³⁰

28. Bouquet, op. cit., p.240.

29. Op. cit., p.30lf.

30. "...Table, space and walls make up the simplest church."
Schwarz, op. cit., p.35.

The orthodox may have considered such worship heretical, and even sacrilegious, but it seems to have worked! - that is, to have filled those who participated in it with a vital awareness of the presence of the risen Christ which they failed to find in what George Fox so frequently referred to as the 'steeple-house', and which inspired them to persist in seeking it, regardless of inconvenience, discomfort, or even open persecution!

Although the conditions of those early days in the life of any persecuted minority, and the picture of this simple, domestic worship may have a certain romantic appeal, obviously such days cannot last for ever; for one thing, mercifully, persecution cannot last for ever, at least when directed against a particular object. Whenever an authority became more tolerant, or when respected and influential people became converted,³¹ or when local 'gangs' simply tired of persecuting Nonconformists and turned their attention elsewhere, secrecy became unnecessary. When there was no longer any need to hide, it seems as though the huddled, overcrowded congregations in their cramped meeting-places must have begun to look round at one another, and to become aware of their discomfort, like people in an air-raid shelter after the 'all-clear' has sounded. Perhaps it was this sense of sheer, claustrophobic, physical discomfort, and the desire for space that led to the adaptations in the early Church of larger dwelling-houses into the complexes excavated at such places as Dura-Europos.³²

31. For example, Margaret Fell, the wife of Judge Fell of Swarthmoor, who although he himself never became a Quaker gave his protection and support to George Fox and his friends, and allowed them to meet in his own house.

32. Biéler, op. cit., p.23ff.

The worshippers might now at least spread themselves into several rooms, each of which might be set aside for a particular purpose; for instance, a special room could be reserved for the celebration of the Eucharist, and another might become a separate baptistery. For seventeenth century Nonconformists, unlike the Christians of the fourth century, there were problems: not many of the houses of worshippers were mansions; the majority had few rooms, and these were in constant use for ordinary domestic activities. Also, the room heretofore in use for worship was still required for other purposes; (perhaps, for some house-wives, the regular clearing and cleaning of the kitchen table in preparation for its temporary use as a communion table, although willingly undertaken in times of necessity, was beginning to be something of a nuisance!)³³ What was really required was one spacious room which could be set aside for worship, and worship only, and now that the threat of persecution had lessened, if not disappeared, such a room might actually be built by the efforts of those who required it, as an independent structure. Alternatively, any existing building offered by its owner as a meeting-place could be even more simply and economically rendered serviceable by conversion into a Meeting House, which might well require no more than the clearing out of its interior to provide the desired space to accommodate the worshippers.³⁴ This may be said to have been the

33. The use of an ordinary table for so 'sacred' a purpose may itself have added to the disapproval of Dissenters expressed by those of the established Church; yet in the early centuries A.D. it is probable that wooden tables were used by Christians as, or in place of altars. Wooden altars were prohibited in the sixth century A.D.. Davies, op. cit., p.84.

Centuries later, in Reformation times, stone altars were deliberately abandoned in favour of wooden tables in order to do away with the element of sacrifice in Christian worship, since Christ had put an end to sacrifice. White, op. cit., p.83f.

34. Lidbetter, op. cit., p.14.

origin of the Nonconformist Chapel, or Meeting House as such.

Something very similar is to be seen at a later date in the planning and construction of the early Methodist 'preaching-houses', although these had an example already to hand in the existing buildings of other denominations.

Examples of these early places of worship are still to be found in this country dating from the seventeenth century, a few even earlier.³⁵ Those belonging to the Society of Friends, and especially those still in use in country districts, are perhaps among the most interesting, since they afford examples of Nonconformist worship stripped of all but the barest essentials - eschewing even such articles, (necessary in other denominations), as the pulpit, communion furniture, or even a basin for baptism! Since Quaker worship required a silent waiting upon God, and nothing more, four walls and a roof, doors by which to enter and exit and windows to provide light and air were the only real essentials; plain benches would be provided for seating, and perhaps, as a concession to comfort, some means of heating the building, but such refinements as the elders' stand,³⁶ a central table with a Bible placed upon it, cushions, carpeting and arrangements of flowers and pot plants have been gradual and later developments, subtly brought about, one suspects, by the slowly increasing influence of the female members of the Meeting, whose presence has always been accorded due respect among Quakers.³⁷

35. The oldest recorded chapel still in existence is one at Horningsham in Wiltshire, built in 1566. Lindley, op. cit., p. 44. See Chapter V, section 2.

36. Lidbetter, op. cit., p.26.

37. The position of women in early Nonconformist churches is in itself an interesting question. In many denominations, including the Society of Friends, segregation of the sexes seems to have been taken for granted, and in some cases a separate women's gallery was included. The custom seems to reflect that of the Jewish synagogue, which was carried into the early Church, and certainly has a strangely Eastern flavour; yet, as has been noted, this does not necessarily presuppose an attitude of disrespect for the women of the congregation, and may have been simply another attempt to hold to a Biblical precedent. See also Chapter V below, p. 124.

In other Nonconformist buildings of this early period more characteristic details may be found, but even these buildings are basically similar to the Meeting Houses of the Friends. All Nonconformists alike, including Quakers, seem to have found the most powerful influence in their lives to have been the Word of God, rediscovered by the Reformers,³⁸ and now for the first time available in their own language, but whereas for the Friends this living Word was the voice of God speaking through the silence, and not only in the words of the Scriptures, for other Nonconformists the Word was more closely bound up with the Bible. The Bible must therefore have a place of special honour in the Meeting House, and since the Bible alone, without an interpreter, was of little use, there must also be provided a place for the preacher from which he might expound its message. To those who still retained memories of the parish churches from which they had withdrawn, the pulpit was the natural choice from among all the church furnishings that they had known to emphasise the Ministry of the Word, and to provide a focus within the Meeting House. For many Nonconformists it was the chief focus; for others, for whom the Sacrament was still of equal importance, the simple communion table, (or tables), would replace the altar, while for some it was essential that Baptism should be seen to be regarded with equal solemnity.

If increasing security led only to a state of modest comfort church design of all kinds might never progress far beyond the simple structure of perhaps the typical eighteenth century Meeting House as

38. One might here compare the rediscovery by the exiled Jews in Babylon of the Law.

built by numerous congregations of Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists during this period of more tolerant acceptance. Unfortunately this rarely happens; once a group of people begin to feel 'safe', their attention seems to stray from the urgent concentration on spiritual realities called forth by persecution to an interested appraisal of what other people are doing - particularly of what 'the best people' are doing! Once life and property are no longer threatened, social conventions and material interests become important once again; the Kingdom of Heaven has to make room for Respectable Society, and once more it matters 'what people say'.³⁹ Thus we see countless Nonconformist congregations during the nineteenth, and into the present century, becoming ashamed of the buildings erected by their fathers and grandfathers, and developing a growing obsession for replacing these contemptible, paltry structures with buildings that 'look like churches'; in many cases this was to mean like miniature Gothic Cathedrals.

During such a period of increasing affluence appearances become important; it is no longer sufficient for a church to fulfil adequately its basic practical function - to provide shelter for the worshipping people of God: now it must look right.⁴⁰ This suggests that a congregation now has more time to allow its attention to wander from the words and actions of the service, and to take note of other things; could this perhaps be associated with a decline of genuine interest in the liturgy, with feelings of boredom as the service becomes familiar,

39. Biéler suggests that the eighteenth century age of 'enlightenment', with its emphasis on rationalism, and corresponding loss of the significance of communion had something to do with attitudes to the Christian sanctuary, which at that time became a concert or lecture hall. Op. cit., p.71

40. For example, decoration becomes more elaborate, as though the congregation now needs something to look at during the service; 'images' are, of course, taboo, but stencilled texts and abstract designs eventually covered walls, windows, memorials and all other surfaces in the Meeting Houses of many denominations. Lindley, op. cit., p. 37ff

and perhaps increasingly conventional, and with a lack of concentrated, willing attention which may sometimes follow the relaxation of previous tension? Of course, any departure from a constant devotion to essentials is never admitted - such tendencies must be rationalised, and so an increasing use of symbolism develops to explain, and sometimes to make excuses for the presence of objects or particular arrangements involving the church building which are not strictly necessary. Attracted by what they have seen in other buildings, but have perhaps not perfectly understood, members of congregations begin to imitate and to borrow; with understanding such imitation might sometimes be effective, but lack of knowledge leads to an artificiality in the design of church buildings which could hardly be more ill-placed.

Those Nonconformist Meeting Houses which have been specifically designed as such, built in more recent years, provide some useful information as to the architectural ideas of their designers, partly because Nonconformists have gradually become more willing to explain, defend and justify the buildings they have erected, and perhaps partly because Christian worshippers have become more aware of the questions involved in the shape and design of their churches, and more interested in discovering the reasons behind particular styles. Most noticeable in the earlier writings on the subject of Nonconformist buildings is the firm and eminently sensible insistence on the practical element.⁴¹ This emphasis may be noted also with reference to Anglican buildings in the writings of Sir Christopher Wren, an architect much of whose genius lay in the ability to plan his designs, not merely as

41. See the letter of George Fox to Thomas Lower, giving advice on the conversion of Petty's house into a Meeting House. p.178.

aesthetically pleasing works of Art, but from the point of view of practical function. In his description of one of his own buildings, the Parish Church of St. James, Westminster, Wren shows that large size is not only unnecessary, but undesirable for Protestant worship, since it is essential that every member of a Protestant congregation should be able both to hear and see the service. He remarks of this church: "...I think it may be found beautiful and convenient, and as such, the cheapest of any Form I could invent."⁴² It would seem that many Nonconformist buildings, as well as those erected by the Church of England show the influence of Wren; (one interesting fact noted by Short is that, after the Great Fire of London Wren built 'tabernacles', temporary churches among the ruins.)⁴³ This is particularly true of the 'preaching houses' of the Methodists, built somewhat later, since John Wesley's personal interest in finding the most appropriate type of building for a service consisting mainly of preaching followed the general line of Wren's views on the importance of the acoustic properties of a building.⁴⁴ It has been pointed out that Wren was himself a High-Churchman, and that his 'Auditory' churches were not designed solely for the purpose of hearing sermons!⁴⁵ It might be said that the only noticeable difference in the interiors of Anglican and Nonconformist churches built during the eighteenth century, apart from the presence or absence of the altar, was in the seating arrangements, since the

42. Christopher Wren, Parentalia or Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens, Published by Stephen Wren, London, 1750 p.320.

43. Short, op. cit., p.279.

44. Wren himself favoured the central plan in some circumstances, and it is interesting that he was forced to abandon his original design for St. Paul's Cathedral, which was based on the central plan. William Lockett, A Lesson from Anglican History, from The Modern Architectural Setting of the Liturgy, ed. Lockett, S.P.C.K., London. 1964. p.52.

45. Addleshaw and Etchells, op. cit., p.52f.

Anglicans tended to retain family pews, and the system of 'pew-rents', which, if they appeared at all in Nonconformist worship, did so only at a much later stage.⁴⁶ Wren himself seems to have disliked the custom.⁴⁷

Although the new attitudes introduced by the Reformation brought about a new insistence on the importance of the full audibility, and visibility of the service to all the worshippers, other considerations also became important, not least of these being regard to the reasonable comfort of those worshipping. This too underlines the sound, practical sense of many post-Reformation designers, including Nonconformists. William Alexander notes quite openly the fact that the tendency of some congregations to fall asleep during the service may be - at least partly - due to bad ventilation,⁴⁸ and George Fox sees no reason why worshippers should struggle to their Meeting House through thick mud, if this can be avoided.⁴⁹

One criticism of Nonconformist Meeting Houses has always been the hardness of the pews,⁵⁰ which has sometimes been cited as evidence of a fanatical courting of discomfort for its own sake, typical, (so say the critics), of Nonconformists, but in fact, the uncushioned wooden benches provided in early places of worship are no more uncomfortable than the kind of seating provided in the same period for a gathering of people in any public place, or indeed even within the homes of many families, since cushions, either at home or in Church

46. Op. cit., p. 90.

47. Wren, op. cit., p. 321.

48. William Alexander, Observations on the Construction and Fitting up of Meeting Houses, &c. for Public Worship, published and sold by William Alexander, York. 1820. p.8.

49. See George Fox's letter. p.178.

50. Lindley, op. cit., p.35f.

would seem to have been something of a luxury, the prerogative of the wealthy.⁵¹ In the parish church, for many years no seating at all was provided for the poor; padding, upholstery, footstools, kneeling rests and boxed-in or curtained pews being considered suitable only for their 'betters'. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the domestic element in the House of God seems unfortunately, though perhaps naturally, to have echoed the domestic conditions of the society of the time, in which it was considered right and proper that 'inferior' members of the society concerned should be allowed the minimum of comfort, even in Church. Did such conditions apply, perhaps, in the Church of the fourth century A.D., after Constantine's patronage had made Christianity fashionable, even possibly in Dura-Europos? Was the Bishop's Throne in the early Church provided with a cushion?

Having traced the development of two traditions of places of worship, that of the Temple and that of the Meeting House, and having taken particular note of the latter as a type of worshipping place which is all too easily neglected in discussions on religious architecture, as being only of temporary interest and importance, it may be helpful to compare some of the buildings used by different Nonconformist denominations from their early days, and to note those things which seem to have been of greatest importance to their

51. In this respect it seems that the designs of clothing and furniture balance one another. It has been pointed out that in Elizabethan times, when voluminous skirts and padded breeches were the fashion, large chairs with plain, wooden seats were the general rule; the Regency period, when clothing tended to be flimsy and clinging was the time for generously upholstered seating! (Lecture delivered by James Laver for the International Wool Secretariat, London. 1953).

designers and builders, and to the congregations who have occupied them. For this purpose some of the oldest Meeting Houses in the country have been selected for more intensive study - one Baptist, one Independent, one Methodist, several Quaker, one Church of Scotland and one particularly interesting example of a chapel, Presbyterian in origin, but which passed, like many others, into the control of Unitarians.

There is some difficulty in attempting to trace the thinking behind Nonconformist buildings of the various denominations, owing to the fact that the small number of writers who have tried to express the views of their particular denominations on questions of theology have made little or no mention of respective attitudes to the building! In many cases there seems to be only one authority on the architecture of the denomination in question.

V. A COMPARISON OF SOME EARLY MEETING HOUSES

The emergence in Britain from the sixteenth century onwards of various groups of 'Puritans' is not unlike that of the Christians of an earlier day within the Roman Empire. The term 'Puritan' originally embraced English Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians,¹ who came to be variously described as 'Nonconformists' and 'Dissenters'. According to Wilkinson there were originally two distinct groups - Conforming Puritans within the Church, and Separatists who desired further reformation.²

In 1567 a group of Puritans who were not Separatist held a meeting at Plumbers' Hall in London, thus defying the Act of Uniformity of 1559, and were arrested.³ There followed a long period of protest and persecution, during which the particular beliefs of various groups became crystallised.

It is hardly to be expected that much Nonconformist building of any kind should have taken place during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The time was definitely one for house-worship, and secret meetings held wherever there was a reasonable chance of safety. With the exception of a few chapels like that at Horningsham in Wiltshire to be discussed later, buildings were not erected, since few Dissenters openly flouted the law to the extent of building special places of worship, and it is significant that the Horningsham

1. John T. Wilkinson, 1662 - And After. Three Centuries of English Nonconformity. London: The Epworth Press. 1962. p.1.
2. Op. cit., p.1.
3. Op. cit., p.1.

chapel, if it was indeed built as Martin Briggs states, for Scottish residents in the area,⁴ was perhaps tolerated as a place suitable for 'foreigners', rather as a heathen temple might be tolerated, provided it in no way interfered with the 'proper' worship of the local inhabitants. Also, at this early stage, the bitterest persecution had hardly begun; the attitude to the earliest Dissenters may well have been the common one of 'taking no notice in the hope that they will go away'. A similar attitude to Christianity itself on the part of the Roman authorities may be observed in the period immediately following Apostolic times, persecution being sporadic, and generally directed against particular groups of individuals suspected, (sometimes with justification), of being troublemakers.⁵

The influence most apparent in Nonconformist Puritanism was that of Geneva, but it is interesting to see how the ideas of Calvin, which were so readily adapted on a large scale in Scotland, made less impact in England, which seems in general to have preferred the form of Congregational organisation advocated by the Independents. In fact, after 1643, during the time of the Commonwealth, there seems to have been a gradual decline of Presbyterianism in England; its eventual revival was not to take place until well into the nineteenth century, chiefly owing to the efforts of Scots living in England. One reason for the decline may have been the fact that Cromwell, although he urged tolerance, was himself an Independent;

4. Martin S. Briggs, F.R.I.B.A., Puritan Architecture and its Future, Lutterworth Press, London & Redhill, 1946. p. 1

5. This may be compared with the strong political flavour of the later persecution of Nonconformists, in the days when their refusal to accept the authority of the State Church implied disloyalty to the King as its head.

another may have been the strangely powerful effect of the growing Quaker movement in England, which in its turn seems to have been largely unsuccessful north of the border.⁶ Yet another reason may have been the fact that it was the English Presbyterians who were to be most affected by the Act of Uniformity.⁷ One result of the Act was the destruction of internal Nonconformity; Presbyterians began to unite with other Nonconformists outside the Church, being chiefly drawn towards Congregationalism.

Despite the continued persecution which came to a climax in the Act of Uniformity in 1662, Nonconformists of all shades of opinion clung obstinately to their belief in their right to worship according to conscience, and continued to meet in one another's houses. In time, especially in reasonably safe country districts, some cautious and tentative alterations might be made to existing buildings, and a few new ones erected, the emphasis always being on extreme simplicity, and every effort being made to ensure that the building continued to blend with its surroundings as just another house, or possibly an inoffensive farm building;⁸ from the outside no one need suspect the

6. George Fox, op. cit., p.317. Articles were apparently drawn up by assemblies to be read in Scottish churches against Quakers; Fox however remained optimistic: "And since, a great increase there is, and great there will be in Scotland. For when first I set my horse's feet a-top of the Scottish ground I felt the seed of God to sparkle about me like innumerable sparks of fire, though there is abundance of thick, cloddy earth of hypocrisy and falseness that is a-top, and a briary, brambly nature which is to be burnt up with God's word, and ploughed up with his spiritual plough, before God's Seed brings forth heavenly and spiritual fruit to the glory of the heavenly, glorious and omnipotent Lord God almighty. But the husbandman is to wait in patience." Op. cit., p.331.
7. Wilkinson, op. cit., p.65f.
8. E.G. the Friends' Meeting House at Cotherstone in Teesdale.

actual purpose of the structure, and even the interior gave little away, since there was no altar, nor any visible symbol marking the house as a place of worship.

Even as early as 1672, Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence encouraged applications for buildings of all kinds,⁹ and from this time onwards Nonconformist Meeting Houses began to appear in somewhat greater numbers. The buildings were still simple and unobtrusive; their builders had not the financial means to make them otherwise, and also caution may have played a part, since times were still uncertain, and persecution might all too easily rear its head again.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that under the terms of the Declaration it was only Roman Catholics who were excluded, and who were obliged still to meet only in houses.¹¹ This state of affairs lasted of course only until the King's brother declared himself a Catholic, and after James himself became King, his Declaration of Indulgence in 1687 is said to have treated Nonconformists more gently only in order to give more power to Roman Catholics.¹²

The constant political wrangling of the period continued to hamper the growth of the Nonconformist denominations, although the sinister swing towards Rome feared by all Protestants of the time seems to have had the effect of partially bridging the gulf between the Church of England and the less extreme Nonconformist groups. It was not until the passing of the Toleration Act of 1689 that Nonconformists might

9. Wilkinson, op. cit., p.75.
10. The Friends' Meeting House at Brigflatts near Sedbergh was built in 1675, despite the Conventicle Act which was still in force. (See leaflet describing the Meeting House.)
11. Wilkinson, op. cit., p.74.
12. Op. cit., p.83

breathe more freely, and turn their attention to the development of their own various forms of worship, free for a short time from the fear of, at least official persecution. According to Wilkinson, nearly one thousand chapels were built following the Act.¹³ This was also the time of the rise of the Dissenting Academies.

The new outbreak of persecution which took place after the death of William III seems to have been largely politically motivated, the leading Tory party opposing the strong Whig sympathies of many of the Dissenters. During this time there was much wrecking and burning of the property of Dissenters, and feeling against them reached a height in 1714, owing to the accession of George I who was generally unpopular, but was supported by many Dissenters.¹⁴ There was also division and conflict within the denominations, and the first half of the eighteenth century saw a general decline of religion, partly owing to the rise of the Rationalist philosophy which infiltrated into the Church in various forms of Socinianism and Unitarianism, and which seems almost to have destroyed the original English Presbyterian movement.

The rise of the latest of the great Nonconformist denominations, the Methodists, under John Wesley, provided the necessary check to the tendency to decline, and brought about a revival in religious standards. At the same time, prejudice was gradually giving way to a more tolerant outlook, and by the end of the eighteenth century even Nonconformity had become almost respectable, a fact particularly obvious in its later buildings. This new-found respectability had its disadvantages, as will be apparent from the following survey of the buildings of various Nonconformist denominations erected between the late sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

13. Op. cit., p.103.

14. Op. cit., p.107ff.

1. The Baptists

Although the Baptist movement in this country has come to be chiefly associated with the events of the great campaign of the mid-seventeenth century to eliminate all non-conforming ministers and congregations, the appearance of small groups of Christians holding Baptist views, both in this country and on the Continent may be traced back to much earlier times; in fact it is inherently probable that from the time when Infant Baptism was first introduced into the Christian Church there were those among its members who objected to the practice on the grounds that there was no Apostolic precedent for it.¹⁵ During the Middle Ages, the sect called Anabaptists clung rigidly to their belief that those baptized in infancy must express their faith as responsible adult Christians by submitting to the rite a second time, and they persisted in this conviction despite fierce persecution, sometimes including execution by drowning.

From these small, scattered sects, their beliefs reinforced by the new concentration on the Scriptures brought about by the Reformation, there came the more organised movement which originated in the Netherlands, and was brought by Thomas Helwys and others into England, where the first English Baptist Church was founded at Spitalfields in 1612.¹⁶

Of all the Nonconformist denominations, saving perhaps the Quakers, the Baptists seem to have had greatest cause for fearing persecution. One reason for this may perhaps be the very nature of the rite which

15. In pre-Christian times the rite is believed to have been practised by at least one Jewish sect, the Essenes, from whom John the Baptist may have adopted the custom, although this has not been proved.

16. Wilkinson, op. cit., p.3f.

forms the centre of their practice - a rite which, although well-known in ancient times in Eastern countries, seems to have for those unfamiliar with the ceremony a strangeness which makes it appear to them incongruous, and perhaps even ridiculous. There are still many Western Christian who find the custom of adult baptism by total immersion embarrassing, and it may have been this effect which motivated some at least of the early persecutors of the sect.

The nature of the rite of total immersion required an available supply of water in larger quantity than that usually provided for the mere sprinkling of candidates, and therefore many groups of Baptist believers would hold their meetings where there was easy access to a river or lake. Because of persecution, secrecy was also important, and in some places it was the custom for members of the congregation to keep watch during services, so that warning could be given of the approach of anyone with hostile intentions. Even with this precaution such open-air gatherings must have proved too dangerous, and it seems to have been a general custom for Baptists to meet for ordinary worship like other Nonconformists, in private houses, only venturing to their natural 'baptistery' for the actual rite of immersion of new converts to their faith.

Such a procedure seems to have been the rule in Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire, where there is still in existence a seventeenth-century Baptist chapel. Before it was built in 1690 there had already been strong communities of Baptists in the area, originating long before in a Lollard community influenced by Wyclif. Apparently the Lollards sometimes practised Believers' Baptism, and the custom was continued among the growing communities, which by the early seventeenth century became specifically Baptist. It is understandable that the cause should have been able to thrive considerably in the West Midlands, at some distance from the larger cities which seem to have been the greatest

trouble-spots as far as Dissenters were concerned.

Although scattered, these groups of Western Baptists of the seventeenth century maintained some contact with each other; from the time that Thomas Ransford of Tewkesbury was baptized the Ransford family, who had connections with the Baptists of Cheltenham, became leading figures in the local Baptist movement. This would seem to be a typical example of the influence often exercised by one powerful family in the establishment of a new movement.¹⁷ Interest must have been keen, since it is noted that the Cheltenham Baptists used to walk eight miles to their nearest meeting-place.

The early members adopted the custom of writing their names in cypher to avoid identification, so that the earliest origins of the Tewkesbury Baptists will probably always remain shrouded in mystery. By 1623 it appears that the Baptist cause was more safely established, since a deed bearing that date is in existence, conveying property for the use of the local Baptist community.

The oldest extant minute book of the Tewkesbury Baptist congregation is dated 1655; where the members were meeting at this time is not clear. During this period officials of the Church seem to have been known as 'Messengers', and names are given of three who represented their Church at Warwick. The name of the first official Minister of the Church is given as Eleazar Herring, who with the first Elder, John Cowell, is buried in the cemetery of the chapel. There seems to be the possibility that, as in the case of many Nonconformist congregations, the first property to be acquired was a burial ground; since burial in consecrated ground was forbidden to Dissenters this became a serious

17. Cf. the influence of the Fell family in early Quakerism, and that of Lady Hewley in the affairs of the Presbyterians in York, to which reference is made later.

problem, and may explain why the cemeteries of Dissenting congregations are sometimes found at a considerable distance from their place of worship, which was usually erected at a later date.¹⁸

Tewkesbury 'Old' Baptist Church was built in 1690, presumably being one of the many for which permission to build was obtained under the Toleration Act of 1689.¹⁹ The congregation were fortunate in being able to build their church close to their cemetery, itself beautifully situated at the end of a narrow street, almost on the banks of the Severn. A house for the Minister was provided within the same court, and the chapel itself has high windows, a curiously arched ceiling, slightly reminiscent of a railway carriage, and plain woodwork, showing the high quality of craftsmanship noted in the work of Nonconformist craftsmen in general by Kenneth Lindley;²⁰ this is particularly true of the carving of the pulpit. The original Commonwealth communion table was later replaced by one of the Queen Anne period. Perhaps the most interesting detail is the apparent absence of a baptistery; it can only be supposed that the River Severn itself still provided the congregation with the natural element required for their baptismal services.

In the nineteenth century parts of the chapel were blocked off to form two cottages - an interesting reversal of the usual process in which a cottage or other building might be converted into a place of worship!²¹ This seems to have been one step towards the abandonment

18. The burial ground belonging to the Quakers of Nailsworth in Gloucestershire is some distance away in Sheepscombe. The importance of a burial place points back to the pre-Christian example of Abraham, whose first purchase of land in Canaan was that of a burial place for his family. (Gen. 23, 19-20). One might also compare the growth of the cults of the martyrs, and the setting up of shrines to their memory in early Christian times.
19. All information concerning Tewkesbury 'Old' Baptist Church has been taken from notes displayed in the church, including an extract from the Baptist Times of 1964.
20. Lindley, op. cit., p.34
21. In 1892 the congregation of the Unitarian Church in York were proposing to build a 'cottage'; its intended use is not specified. (Committee Minutes of the Church, now in the Borthwick Institute, York).

of the old chapel for worship, since a new chapel was built in 1805, and remains in use. Since the new building was much further from the river, a baptistery was included, and it is noted that the design of this, an open baptistery, conspicuously placed in front of the pulpit, is a mark of the continued influence of the Lollards, who are believed to have been instrumental in founding the original sect, and in whose worship the open baptistery apparently featured. Perhaps this may have been some consolation to older members of the 1805 congregation who regretted the passing of river-side baptisms.

An interesting continuation of the story of English Baptists is to be found in York, in the adventures of a society of Particular Baptists who were meeting there towards the end of the eighteenth century. Their chapel, built in Grape Lane in 1806, and interesting because of its octagonal form, unfortunately no longer exists, and it 'changed hands' frequently in the course of its comparatively short life as a Meeting House.

Something of the beliefs and practices of the sect is to be found in a book published in 1800 by one of its members, David Eaton, in an attempt to refute charges which had been made against Baptists in York;²² there had already been some correspondence concerning the question, and the title of Eaton's book indicates the seriousness with which many Nonconformists regarded the witness of the Bible. Indeed, seriousness to an excessive degree seems to have characterised the Grape Lane Baptists according to Eaton's account. Oddly enough, it was the preaching of early Methodists which led this particular group to withdraw from the established Church. They became first

22. David Eaton, Scripture - The Only Guide to Religious Truth. A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Society of Baptists in York, etc. Printed in York, 1800.

'Independent Calvinists', and sent for a minister from London; when he had to leave, the congregation applied to Lady Huntingdon for a supply, and were for some time associated with her 'Connexion'. Eaton makes no mention of the building in Grape Lane, and does not tell us whether it was provided for the congregation by Lady Huntingdon, (which seems not unlikely), or was built by the congregation themselves, or by some other group of Dissenters from whom they acquired it.

Eaton and his companions were earnest students of Scripture, so that it is not surprising that they came shortly up against the question of Baptism, which eventually drove them to break from Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, but such a move seems to have been already pending, since it was, says Eaton: "...an event which did not give us much concern", because some of the ministers whom Lady Huntingdon supplied had proved to be: "...more distinguished for their ministerial consequence" than for humility and prudence!

The congregation then decided that Believers' Baptism was essential, and were baptized by a Calvinist minister from near Leeds, but Eaton acknowledges rather sadly that they could not often afford his services as a preacher. From this time on, the group seem to have fallen into a morass of doubt and difficulty, aggravated, one suspects, by a certain tendency to mass hysteria. After being temporarily 'misled' by a Mr. Johnston of Liverpool who 'proved' both the Calvinists and the Methodists to be wrong, someone wisely suggested that Mr. Johnston might be wrong, and all authority save that of the Scriptures was rejected. Although the group now: "rejoiced in the freedom of the Gospel", they were still afflicted by periods of doubt, but once the decision had been made to call themselves Baptists, a more settled period seems to have followed. Their views are summed up by Eaton in the words: "But our best apology for being Baptists is, that we find none but Baptists in the New Testament. Our Lord was a Baptist;

he commissioned his Apostles to preach it; they were Baptist Ministers, and all that gladly received their Word were baptized."

What is most interesting about this particular group is the way in which it demonstrated how an absorbing interest in matters of doctrine may result in what seems to be a complete lack of interest in what such a group would no doubt regard as inessentials, as for example the character of the building in which they meet Sunday by Sunday. What the Grape Lane congregation used for a baptistery is not clear; the present Baptist Church in York, built in 1862, was designed with such practical considerations in mind, but the same apparent disregard for these is to be noted among many early Dissenters. Even Quakers, who generally take a pride in the upkeep of their buildings, often show surprise at the interest taken by others in those buildings, although the historic interest of many of the older Meeting Houses is now beginning to be appreciated.

2. The Congregationalists

The originators of Congregationalism, or 'Independency' are named by Wilkinson as two Englishmen, Greenwood and Barrow, and a Welshman, John Penry, who were executed in 1596 after attempting to establish a 'Privie Church'. The characteristic of the sect seems to have been the adoption of a 'Covenant',²³ and it is this emphasis on the sharing of responsibility within the Christian community which has remained a characteristic of Congregationalism ever since.²⁴

In his book telling the story of the Congregational movement, Erik Routley makes a helpful division of the history of Congregational worship into three phases,²⁵ and this is particularly valuable in a consideration of the development of church architecture among Congregationalists; in fact, a similar division may perhaps be detected in the worship of other groups of Nonconformists, and even of other religious bodies in general. The first phase, according to Routley extends over the period from the beginnings of Independency to about 1750, and he names this the 'Family' phase in which Meeting Houses were designed as dwelling houses in the typical rectangular form, with pulpit and table occupying one of the longer sides of the rectangle. This so-called 'centralised' plan does seem to be most closely associated with the worship of the home, so often seen in the early stages of a new religious movement:²⁶ the time when the preacher or evangelist is literally in the midst of a group of family and friends gathered closely

23. This calls to mind the 'Solemn League and Covenant' of the Scots.

24. Wilkinson, op. cit., p.3.

25. Erik Routley, The Story of Congregationalism, Independent Press, London. 1961 p.128ff.

26. It is at times like these that experiments with square, octagonal and 'Greek cross' plans seem to be most common.

round him in a dwelling house.²⁷ In the second phase, from 1750 to about 1900, Routley notes that the pulpit is gradually pushed back to the centre of one of the narrower ends of the rectangle, the preacher thus becoming more remote.²⁸ This is the same process that has been observed in so many cases, as the Meeting House becomes transformed into the Temple, its central focus, even when this is not an altar, gradually increasing in 'holiness', and being withdrawn to some distance from the midst of the worshipping community. Routley describes this phase as that of the 'Audience', and remarks on the fashion of the time for large-scale evangelistic services, often supported by the music of full choirs and large organs - the Nonconformist equivalent of Sacred Drama.²⁹ Perhaps David Eaton and his friends perceived the dangers inherent in the preaching of those successors of the original Nonconformist evangelists, whose obsession with 'ministerial consequence' may have been, in the minds of their hearers, their interpretation of a growing tendency to replace genuine preaching of the Gospel with a more academic lecture, or a theological 'performance'. Again, this tendency may be observed in many different circumstances, especially, as will shortly be seen, in the growth of Socinianism in England during the eighteenth century, from which many Independent and Presbyterian congregations were to suffer. The great preacher came to be renowned for his learning and his oratory, rather than for the message which he proclaimed.

In the third phase of Congregational worship, from 1900 to the present time, Routley detects a new emphasis on the 'Community', resulting

27. One variation of this basic arrangement for Congregational worship is the 'T-plan' more commonly associated with Scotland.
28. This is perhaps reminiscent of the days following the conversion of Constantine, when the fashion for church building in the West was the rectangular basilica, while square and octagonal structures remained popular in the East.
29. Routley, op. cit., p.130.

in a view of the church building as a dual-purpose one, of more moderate size than the large 'Audience' church, and easily adaptable to the requirements of various social activities.³⁰ This might be seen as a return in one sense to Family Worship, only the family is now much larger and more complex. The similarity with the development of church buildings among the Methodists may be noted here.

To return to the early days of the Independent movement, it is possible still to visit the oldest known Congregational chapel, which is indeed believed to be the oldest existing place of worship used by Dissenters in this country, namely the Meeting House built in Horningsham in Wiltshire in 1566.

The building, in external appearance simply a small, thatched cottage, is said to have been built under particularly interesting circumstances, linking it not only with early Independency, but with the Presbyterianism, not of England, but of Scotland! Briggs states that it was originally erected for a number of Scottish masons who were at work on the construction of Longleat House, and therefore sees it as a transplanted Scottish example,³¹ and although this tradition has been questioned, it is a strong one. Unfortunately the earliest records have been lost, but a former minister of the church, Rev. Albert E. Banton, in his little book telling the story of Horningsham Chapel, suggests that the tradition is well founded; he notes that the story of the Scottish masons is told in a Church Minute Book of 1834, listing their names, and also draws attention to the fact that there is in the village a row of very old cottages bearing the name of 'Little Scotland', where, tradition maintains, the Scottish

30. Op. cit., p.130.

31. Briggs, op. cit., p.14.

masons lived.³²

The story claims that the masons, who were employed at Longleat during 1566-7 were Calvinists who worshipped for a time in Penny's Wood, but eventually applied to Sir John Thynne, the owner of Longleat for permission to build: "...a small house in which they might worship God according to their own tenets."³³

Banton notes that, owing to the lack of records for the earliest period of the Church's history it cannot be ascertained at what time the, presumably Presbyterian form of worship of the original builders became 'Independent', or 'Congregational'; there is, of course such similarity in outlook between the two denominations that the change may have been so gradual as to have taken place almost without notice.

It would seem that for the greater part of its first century, worship in the chapel continued peacefully enough; the remoteness of the area and the protection of Sir John Thynne, and presumably his immediate successors, seem to have enabled the first generations of the congregation to have worshipped unmolested. This state of affairs must have continued through the Commonwealth period, but after the Restoration and the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662 the increase in anti-Nonconformist feeling placed the Horningsham Dissenters in a position no less difficult and dangerous than that of other Dissenting congregations throughout the country.

There are in existence certificates of conviction against several Dissenters, including Jeremy Cray of Horningsham, who was apparently arrested in 1670, owing to the vigilance of local informers, charged

32. Albert E. Banton, Horningsham Chapel, The Story of England's Oldest Free Church, Dyer's Printing Works, Chapmanslade, Westbury, Wilts. 1964. p.11.

33. Quoted from the 1834 Minute Book, Banton, op. cit., p.10.

with being present at a 'Conventicle', and fined.³⁴ It is interesting to note that this same Jeremy Cray, a clothier, became Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1688, and founded a charity - particularly interesting in view of the fact that the King who showed him favour, despite his Dissenting views, was James II!³⁵ Cray appears to have been a remarkably tolerant and broadminded man, a fact which did not increase his popularity in some quarters!³⁶

Between the passing of the Acts of Uniformity in 1662, and of Toleration in 1689, a number of ministers in the Horningsham area appear to have suffered from the results of the Ejection, but this had also the effect of seeing the establishment of a number of Independent congregations; it is noted that the Horningsham church appears to be unique in that its foundation was already long in existence, whereas the other Independent churches founded in the second half of the seventeenth century all seem to be connected with the name of a particular ejected minister.³⁷

Perhaps because of its old and well-established tradition, the Horningsham chapel does not seem to have been among the large number of those who applied for licenses immediately after the passing of the Toleration Act. According to the old minute book, and a panel on the wall of the chapel, it was licensed in the reign of William and Mary in about 1700. 1704 is the date given in a nineteenth century history of the chapel by a former minister of the Common Close Congregational Church in Warminster, the Rev. H.M. Gunn, but Banton has some doubts about its accuracy.³⁸ Since the original licence, like all the

34. Op. cit., p.12.

35. Op. cit., p.13.

36. Op. cit., p.13.

37. The opinion of Dr. Marjorie Reeves of Oxford, quoted by Banton, op. cit., p.15.

38. Banton, op. cit., p.15f.

earliest records is lost, the exact date may never be known.

During the years the little church seems to have been well served by a number of devoted ministers; notable among these was Dr. Rowland Cotton, who ministered there between 1675 and 1752.³⁹

The building has been several times enlarged and repaired; the interest of the family at Longleat, who still hold the lease has been maintained, and the chapel, although preserving something of its unique distinction as the oldest Nonconformist place of worship still in regular use, has become increasingly involved in the affairs of its denomination, and of the Church as a whole.

Of all the Nonconformist buildings studied, Horningsham Chapel is perhaps the most 'domestic' in appearance; in fact, at a casual glance it would be taken for a simple, thatched country cottage. Built below a steep slope known as 'The Batch', with its burial ground on the opposite side of the road, it is a plain, stone-built gabled rectangle, the corners edged with red brick. The thatched roof is perhaps its most outstanding feature, and the greatest problem to those who care for the building, owing to the necessity of the periodic renewal of thatching, (mentioned in the terms of the lease), and the growing scarcity in the present age both of skilled workers in this ancient craft, and of suitable materials for the purpose. Up till now the chapel has been able to provide skilled thatchers from among the members of its own small congregation, and it is hoped that this state of affairs will continue. In fact, the whole roof recently had to be restored, owing to the dread discovery of the activities of death-watch beetle in some of the old timbers,

39. Op. cit., p.15ff.

and an interesting illustrated account of the progress of the work of restoration carried out between 1959 and 1960 is preserved in the chapel.

The entrance to the building is unobtrusively tucked away at the end of the chapel facing away from the road. The plain, rectangular windows are regularly placed, 'three up, three down', on the long sides of the rectangle. Although several times renovated and repaired over the years, the general appearance of the chapel seems to have remained practically unchanged.

Inside, the layout and furnishings are of the conventional Nonconformist pattern. A gallery runs round three sides of the building, with the familiar array of long hat pegs on one side, and the two hundred years old clock, after a somewhat eventful career, still rhythmically ticking over the gallery opposite the pulpit. The pulpit itself is one of those very high, elegant ones in dark oak common to the eighteenth century; Banton mentions a sounding-board, but this does not appear to have survived, although two graceful brass candlesticks are still attached to the front of the pulpit. A simple scroll on the wall above bears the one text: "God is Love". Originally the pews were of the box variety, but these, along with many other of the original furnishings were apparently disposed of during the time of the 1863 renovations, although the pews in the side galleries remain. There is now an organ placed in the front of the chapel on the preacher's right, but according to Banton the music in the old days was provided by a choir seated in the front gallery, accompanied by bass viol and flute; the music stand is still in place.⁴⁰

40. Op. cit., p.8.

Because of its early date, Horningsham chapel affords an excellent example of the gradual development from an entirely domestic form of worship to the straightforward simplicity of the typical Nonconformist service of a later time. The building is designed, not to be admired as a work of art, nor to provide an essay in symbolism, or an expression of some theological idea, but simply for use, in supplying the people of God with a comfortable, convenient and pleasant-looking place in which to meet with him and with one another.

Those critics who have described such country Meeting Houses as 'barn-like' and 'ugly' can never have looked at them! In fact, all those described here, and many others like them are, in their very simplicity and suitability for their function, extremely 'easy on the eye'.

3. The Presbyterians

There is some difficulty in knowing where to place Presbyterianism in a study of this kind, dealing with the meeting-places of Nonconformists, since the Presbyterian form of worship is more naturally associated with Scotland, where it is, however not Nonconformist, but forms the national Church, still continuing since its establishment at the time of the Reformation.⁴¹ It may be compared and contrasted with the Church of England, but when one considers English Presbyterianism one seems to be confronted with the phenomenon of a foreign Church, very largely inhabited by exiled Scots. (The same, perhaps, applies to the ~~English~~ Episcopal Church in Scotland).

The common practice of Scots living in England for building a place of worship of their own has already been noted in the case of the Horningsham chapel. The other most noticeable feature is the generally close resemblance between the ways of thinking, forms of worship and buildings of Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England, now underlined by the recent union of the two in the United Reformed Church of England. Since differences of doctrine are less sharp than those between other denominations, the idea of union has never been far from the minds of members of the two Churches, and it is noticeable that opinions as to forms of Church government, although presenting problems, seem generally less divisive than deeper religious issues. One may also note the affinity between Presbyterianism and

41. Early Presbyterianism in England seems to have almost died out in the eighteenth century; a revival, brought about mainly by Scots who had become resident in England, took place in the nineteenth century.

Continental forms of Reformed worship, especially those influenced, as were the Scottish Presbyterians, by the ideas of the Swiss Reformation.

Since the Presbyterian parish churches of Scotland have already been considered in connection with Reformation architecture, and will be referred to again elsewhere, it remains to discuss the buildings constructed by the Nonconformist Presbyterians of England. As has already been seen, there is less material available for such a study than is the case with regard to other denominations, and if Meeting Houses such as the one at Horningsham are to be regarded as Scottish intrusions, the field is smaller still. Another difficulty arises in the fact that many buildings originally erected by Presbyterians later changed their denomination, sometimes becoming Congregational, or, as in the case selected for particular study, being affected by the gradual infiltration of Unitarianism during the eighteenth century. Since chapels built specifically for Unitarian worship in England are few in number, and of comparatively late date, owing to this very tendency to 'take over' existing places of worship of other denominations, it may be helpful in this case to trace the fortunes of one Meeting House from its foundation as a Presbyterian chapel to its present form as a Unitarian one, even though the basic structure of the building and its interior furnishing have undergone little change.⁴²

The appearance of a Presbyterian place of worship in the city of York at a comparatively early date is not surprising when one considers that in 1644 York declared for Presbyterianism, and remained Presbyterian

42. Information concerning the St. Saviourgate Chapel, York has been taken from documents preserved in the Borthwick Institute in York, from Mr. R. Smith, Session Clerk of the then Presbyterian Church in York, and from an article by F.H. Legg in York A Survey 1959. (Copyright reserved). Published by the Local Executive Committee on the occasion of the meeting of the British Association in York, 1959. (Herald Printing Works, York and London.)

until the Restoration. There was therefore a strong body of Presbyterian opinion in the city, and even after the events of 1662, a Presbyterian minister, Ralph Ward, who was a personal friend and chaplain of the Hewleys, a leading family in York, seems to have been protected by the family until the time of Charles II's Indulgence. Perhaps mainly because of the influence of Ralph Ward, Lady Sarah Hewley remained a devout Presbyterian; her husband, Sir John Hewley, although a loyal member of the Church of England, seems not to have disapproved of his wife's religious affiliation, or of the views of his chaplain.⁴³

In 1692, three years after the passing of the Toleration Act, the first Dissenting Chapel in York was built by Lady Hewley in St. Saviourgate in York, for Ralph Ward, almost opposite the parish church. Some years later, in 1704, following what was apparently a popular fashion on the part of wealthy families of the period, Lady Hewley built alms-houses for the benefit of the poor and widowed among Dissenters, especially Presbyterians. A trust was founded, but Lady Hewley herself continued to take an interest in both the chapel and almshouses until her death in 1710. Although a small graveyard surrounds the chapel, its founder was buried with her husband in the nearby parish church.

The earliest written record of the St. Saviourgate Chapel dates from 1746, and is an account book listing collections taken and distributed to the poor. From 1759 onwards 'Sacrament Collections' are mentioned, and also payments made for bread and wine for Communion services, and for 'Sweeping Chapple $\frac{1}{2}$ year'.

43. Again one may compare the situation at Swarthmoor, in which Judge Fell, although himself not a Quaker, gave open support to his wife, Margaret in her allegiance to the new movement, and gave his protection to its founder, George Fox.

From the middle of the eighteenth century, there is some confusion to be discerned in the affairs of the Chapel, not least being the question as to what name the congregation adopted. Although Ralph Ward was a Presbyterian, and Lady Hewley seems to have considered herself one, the cash-book above mentioned describes the members of the congregation simply as 'Protestant Dissenters'; from this time on there is no written record bearing the name of the chapel before the nineteenth century, but the arrival in 1756 of a new minister Newcome Cappe, seems to have marked the beginning of a gradual movement towards Unitarianism. It is not clear whether Mr. Cappe was himself a Unitarian at the time of his arrival in York, or whether his own views developed gradually in this direction. As there is a gap in the records at this time, one can only make conjectures; Unitarianism was beginning to gain ground in various parts of the country as the Christian doctrine of the Trinity began to conflict with the scientific, rationalist views of the new generation of more highly educated ministers.⁴⁴ The Church of England was unlikely to be affected by such views, the Baptists were secure in their own distinctive beliefs, and so were the Quakers, and the Methodist movement was still in its early stages. It seems that Presbyterian and Congregational churches were the most vulnerable to the new 'intellectual' approach in Nonconformist teaching, and it is also probable that, as so often happens, the majority of Church members were hardly aware of the changes that were taking place, until.

44. Unitarianism was by no means a new movement; in 1644 John Bidle was denounced by Puritans for his views on the doctrine of the Trinity, which he described as: "...not grounded in revelation, much less in reason". H.Y.J. Taylor, History of Gloucester Unitarians, 1898. (Newspaper article in local collection, Gloucester Reference Library.)

In his statement Bidle accepted Jesus Christ as 'truly God in consequence of His union with him.'

as in the days of the great Arian controversy of the fourth century they found that they had somehow, by some subtle means, become Unitarians. It may even be that the term 'Unitarian' was at first contemptuously applied to the St. Saviourgate congregation by disapproving outsiders, since the Committee Minute Book of 1893 refers to the chapel with uncompromising firmness as Presbyterian! The present members are, however, in no way ashamed to call themselves Unitarians.

The more general acceptance of Unitarian views seems not to have appeared before the nineteenth century, when there was a division in the St. Saviourgate chapel, resulting partly from the religious revival brought about by the Methodist movement. By this time the Independents in York, who had worshipped first in Lendal, had built their new Salem Chapel, also in St. Saviourgate, and it seems that a number of dissatisfied members of Lady Hewley's Chapel transferred their allegiance to Salem.

The real reason behind the disagreements seems, however to have been less a matter of doctrine than a somewhat distasteful affair relating to the administration of Lady Hewley's Trust fund, and involving other similar institutions in different parts of the country. Although there was doubtless a great deal of unjust prejudice against Unitarians, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that many among their number were guilty of gaining possession of property and funds belonging to other Dissenting groups by dubious means.

In 1824 at a public dinner in Manchester, a Unitarian minister denounced 'Orthodox' Dissenters in terms which led to a lengthy and heated correspondence in the Manchester Gazette, and eventually to a lawsuit which went through a long series of judgements and appeals, finally ending in the Lords in 1849.⁴⁵

45. The Manchester Socinian Controversy, (Full account printed in 1824).

The final verdict on the administration of the Hewley Trust was given by the Lord Chancellor: the use of the chapel, and various small grants were allowed to the Unitarians, but the Almshouses were to revert to the use for which they had been specifically designated by Lady Hewley, for Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists, all of which denominations must be represented among the Trustees. By 1824, the number of both Trustees and residents had showed a dominating proportion of Unitarians, and similar conditions had been observed in other cases.⁴⁶

Although the Unitarians of the nineteenth century cannot be said to have made a very good showing in the affair of the Manchester Socinian Controversy, one may perhaps sympathise with them for a certain bitterness that they seem to have felt in finding themselves excluded from many benefits that were enjoyed by other Dissenters, and a feeling that they too were the victims of persecution. Their position recalls that of Roman Catholics during an earlier period. However unorthodox their views, there were many among them who had courageously endured the earlier persecutions alongside other Dissenters, and some of their number proved themselves to be faithful and conscientious ministers. Among these was the Rev. Charles Wellbeloved, who was minister of the St. Saviourgate Chapel during the nineteenth century, and whose grave is to be seen outside the chapel; his name is still mentioned with respect and affection.

The chapel built by Lady Hewley is designed in the Greek Cross

46. All this only came to light after the controversy aroused by the afore-mentioned speech had led to a new interest being taken in the activities of Unitarians, which before this had apparently not attracted public attention.

form unusual in this country, the centre being surmounted by a small tower. The choice of this particular form seems to have had no particular significance for its builders, but to be one of the examples of the tendency, already noted during new phases of Church building, to experiment with unusual forms.⁴⁷ The peculiar shape of the interior did not lead to 'centralised worship' in the sense of bringing the Communion table forward; the table, surrounded by a curved rail, together with two similar, though not identical hexagonal pulpits, occupies the 'east' arm of the cross, while the other three are filled with pews, leaving the square 'crossing' clear in the centre.⁴⁸ The carving, especially of the Communion rail, is of a very high standard of craftsmanship, and the design of the pews, although very simple, is also highly satisfying.

In 1893 the congregation celebrated the bi-centenary of the Chapel, but by that time, although the Committee Minutes still refer to the Chapel as 'Presbyterian', it seems to have come to be generally regarded as Unitarian, and the fact that, in 1873, the new wave of Presbyterianism which had arrived in England with Scottish 'immigrants' had led to the establishment of a new Presbyterian congregation in York, whose Church was built in Priory Street in 1879, seems to have marked out still more clearly the distinction between the St. Saviourgate congregation, and what might be termed the 'new' generation of English Presbyterians, whose witness still continued until the recent forming of the United Reformed Church.

47. This tendency is perhaps more common among chapels erected by wealthy benefactors than among those built by congregations themselves.

48. To some extent the plan is reminiscent of the Scottish 'T-plan' arrangement, since the pulpit and lectern are not set back in the 'east' arm of the cross, although the Communion table is.

4. The Society of Friends

The beliefs of George Fox and his followers, emerging early in the seventeenth century, formed the basis for the most extreme, and perhaps in some respects the most consistent of the varying branches of Nonconformity; Quaker belief insisted on the importance of spiritual authority, and thereby escaped the temptation to replace the authority of the Church with that even of the Bible. The resultant danger of a reliance on the 'Inner Light' leading to an unfounded conviction of the individual's own rightness in all circumstances seems also to have been avoided to a very great extent in the Society of Friends throughout its history; there have been fanatical Quakers, among whom some might number George Fox himself, and yet the arrogant intolerance generally associated with fanaticism has appeared surprisingly rarely.

Where their buildings are concerned, the Quakers are perhaps of all Nonconformists the most interesting, not only because their quiet consistency in all their dealings has resulted in the survival of many of their early Meeting Houses practically unchanged,⁴⁹ but because, despite their strong spiritual emphasis, which one would expect to lead to a total disregard of such mundane questions as physical conditions for worship, (as noted with regard to other groups such as the Grape Lane

49. "Alone among the English Nonconformist bodies, the Quakers have remained impervious to the seductive blandishments of Gothic, and have maintained their architectural integrity. So, although they differ from us in having no professional clergy and no music, we have much to learn from their buildings." Martin S. Briggs, Puritan Architecture and its Future, Lutterworth Press, London and Redhill, 1946. p.33.

Baptists in York), in fact their Meeting Houses do reflect, consciously and intelligently, what they see as the essential requirements for worship. The chief difficulty in studying Quaker architecture is one of embarras de richesses, not only in the large number of early buildings, well maintained, which invite exploration, but in the quantity of statements and ideas about building expressed by Quakers from Fox onwards.

Martin Briggs records that when George Fox began preaching in 1647 he had no intention of setting up special buildings.⁵⁰ In this Fox may be compared with John Wesley, although the motives of the two differed; Wesley's original intention was to bring back into the Church those whom it had lost; Fox saw no reason for special buildings at all, and his diary abounds in references to what he called 'the steeple-house', for he seems to have seen with remarkable clarity the ever-present human temptation to idolatry frequently directed towards a 'sacred' building. Fox's famous act of prophetic symbolism in Lichfield was apparently called forth by the sight of 'three steeple-house spires.'⁵¹ Repeatedly Fox spoke out against the tendency to apply the term 'Church' to a building, one of his favourite texts being: "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands,"⁵² and insisting that God dwells in men's hearts, and that the Church is the people of God. For example, when ordered at Ulrome to "get out of the Church", Fox replied: "Dost thou call the steep le-house the Church? The Church is the people whom God

50. Op. cit., p.32.

51. The Journal of George Fox, p.71.

52. Acts 17. 24.

has purchased with his blood, and not the house."⁵³

Sometimes, especially in the early days of his ministry, Fox felt called upon to speak in Church buildings, but generally found the atmosphere so offensive to him that he preferred to preach outside.⁵⁴

During the period of the Commonwealth, Quakers were cruelly persecuted by Cromwellian Nonconformists;⁵⁵ they also suffered from Baptists, especially in Scotland. Some Meeting Houses were built, but were often attacked and wrecked, and it was not until after the passing of the Toleration Act that licenses began to be taken out for the building of places of worship in greater numbers.⁵⁷

The organisation of the Society of Friends, once its members were given the chance to establish themselves, was hardly less efficient than that of Methodism. Many letters which have been preserved show an interesting resemblance to those of New Testament times, in that the earlier examples concentrate on religious exhortation, while the later ones turn to practical matters. One of these, written by George Fox himself in 1687 is included almost in its entirety, since it deals with the conversion of a building into a Meeting House, and shows very clearly his own ideas as to what is essential, and what useful in a place to be used for the meeting of God with his people.

In his book the Friends' Meeting House, Hubert Lidbetter remarks on the way in which the silence typical of Quaker worship has contributed

53. The Journal of George Fox, p.93f.

54. At Malton he entered the Church, but would not go into the pulpit. *Op. cit.*, p.85.

On another occasion, when attending a meeting at Firbank Chapel, he insisted on preaching from the rock outside, now known as 'Fox's Pulpit'. *Op. cit.* p.108f.

55. Briggs, *op. cit.* p.32.

56. George Fox's Journal, p.326.

57. At first Quakers objected to the Act itself, feeling that the right to build a place of worship should not be a matter for the law to decide.

to the form of its buildings, which are essentially domestic rather than ecclesiastical.⁵⁸ The Friends' Meeting House, he says: "...makes no effort to be other than a meeting place - unconsecrated and sanctified only by the purpose for which it was designed and used."⁵⁹ He acknowledges however how the domestic charm and simplicity noticeable in the earlier buildings was gradually lost towards the nineteenth century.⁶⁰

Although the smaller Meeting Houses, especially in country districts were of the utmost simplicity, some of the larger ones would be provided with a porch, a gallery, and in some cases extra accommodation in the form of a lobby, or even an extra room;⁶¹ there was also stabling for horses. The Meeting House at Brigflatts near Sedbergh in Yorkshire is well-known for the pen provided inside the door, where the shepherds might place their dogs during the meeting. These additions were however included, not out of pretentiousness, but always for practical reasons, such as increase in numbers.⁶² Even the Ministers' Stand is described by Lidbetter as having been introduced purely as a matter of convenience, and not as a substitute for sanctuary or pulpit.⁶³

58. Hubert Lidbetter, F.R.I.B.A., The Friends' Meeting House, William Sessions Ltd., The Ebor Press, York. 1961. p.4.

59. Op. cit., p.5.

60. Op. cit. p.7.

61. Op. cit., p.17.

62. It may be noted that Quakers seem to take for granted the need for such amenities as kitchens, possibly because their own needs are practical rather than liturgical. (Cf. Lidbetter, op. cit., p.53).

63. "In its variations... the stand gives character to the interior and in spite of its simplicity is a distinct, and possibly the only real architectural feature in the room, lack of which is felt in the modern meeting houses, some of which have dispensed with it altogether in accordance with the more recent democratic conduct of the meeting and the abolition of the 'recorded minister'." Op. cit., p.26.

One interesting feature of the Friends' Meeting House is the custom, continued until comparatively recent times, of separating men from women. The obvious precedent for this would seem to be that of the Jewish synagogue, carried on into the early Church, together with the continued use of the term 'Elder', but Lidbetter suggests that the custom, at least in early American Meeting Houses, was introduced for reasons of safety, the women and children being placed furthest from the door for protection if the meeting should be raided.⁶⁴

Lidbetter defends the extreme simplicity and lack of ornamentation of the typical Meeting House as one of its greatest charms,⁶⁵ and notes the standard of craftsmanship already remarked in the early places of worship of other denominations.⁶⁶ He points out that the one stipulation in a recent competition for Meeting House design was that anyone speaking from any position in the room should be clearly seen and heard - an interesting echo of the views of early Protestants which appears in the ideas of Wren, at least as far as audibility is concerned.⁶⁷

In his account of the buildings of American Quakers, associated originally with William Penn, Lidbetter points out how similar externally to Friends' Meeting Houses were some early American Church buildings.⁶⁸ Although this may be partly explained by the similar limitations imposed

64. Op. cit., p.26.

65. "Actually this extreme simplicity is the great charm of many Friends' Meeting Houses and almost unintentionally, it may be assumed, the sheer single-minded suitability of the room for its purpose achieved an aesthetic success which would have been impossible had there been any attempt to go beyond bare necessities by the introduction of features or elaboration." Op. cit., p.29f.

66. Op. cit., p.30.

67. Op. cit., p.43.

68. Op. cit., p.52.

on all early American settlers in building, as for example the necessity of building with timber, this seems to be yet another example of the tendency of all worshippers living under difficult conditions to seek a place of worship which is domestic in character.

The earliest Friends' Meeting House to be built in the north of England is that at Brigflatts near Sedbergh in Yorkshire; it was built in 1675 and has been in continuous use ever since.⁶⁹ For many years before this there had been a Quaker community in the area, where George Fox had preached in 1652. At first Friends had met in the open, or in one another's homes, and had suffered persecution, not only on this account, but for failing to attend the Parish Church and pay tithes, and imprisonment and confiscation of goods were common. One Friend, a blacksmith named Richard Robinson, who had given hospitality to Fox in 1652, and had sold to local Friends a piece of land for a burial ground, was one of many who lost the tools of their trade if they could not, or would not pay the fines imposed on them. In 1674, in defiance of the Conventicle Act, another piece of ground was bought by Friends on which the Meeting House was erected. The building operation was carried out by the cooperative efforts of Friends themselves, those who had materials to contribute such as timber gave these, while others who had nothing material to offer gave their labour. Because of this principle, necessary in so many cases of early Nonconformist buildings, it is easy to see in them the reason behind the sound construction and simple attractiveness: such a building is so much more obviously a genuine 'labour of love' than the kind of edifice built by contract, by those who have no personal interest in the work; perhaps a 'do-it-yourself' scheme of Church architecture might still

69. Information concerning Brigflatts Meeting House is taken from the leaflet provided within the Meeting House.

have some advantages!

The original Meeting House at Brigflatts, although substantially built, was a bare shell with an earth floor and no ceiling, but gradually improvements - always of a practical nature - were made, costs being met in every case by Friends themselves. The last major restoration was made in 1905, but none of the alterations and additions made seem to have changed the original character of Brigflatts, which remains as suitable for its purpose as it was in 1675.

George Fox visited Brigflatts again in 1677, and his own opinions on the necessary requirements of a Meeting House may perhaps have been influenced by his experience of Brigflatts. His gift of Petty's house for adaptation into a place of meeting was made in 1687, and in a number of letters making various arrangements for the work to be done his own personal views and interests become apparent.⁷⁰ One interesting fact which emerges concerns the Meeting at Swarthmoor Hall, the home of Judge Fell and his wife Margaret, who married George Fox after her first husband's death. It seems that Margaret Fell's express wish was that the Meeting at Swarthmoor should continue for as long as possible, and Fox asks that her wish should be respected, and that Petty's house should not be used for the Meeting as long as the possibility of Friends gathering at Swarthmoor Hall remains.

In the document in which he declares his intention of giving up Petty's house,⁷¹ (which he seems to have acquired originally from Susannah

70. Letters and other documents among the Tuke Papers, preserved in the Borthwick Institute, York. (Catalogue no. 81)

71. This letter is quoted almost in full on p. 179.

and Rachel Fell for £72), Fox makes his wishes clear in a simple and dignified statement: "And this I am moved in the Life and power and Love of God to do. It is all the Land and House that I have in England and it is given up to the Lord for it is for his Service and his Children's." Fox also indicates his wish that: "...any poor honest Friend" should be allowed to live in part of the house, and gives with the house his own bed, chair and a water bottle for the use of any visiting Friend.⁷² In this document too, practical questions are prominent, and advice is given on slating and paving. The Friends are: "...not to be at a Farthing charge", although help with the building will be welcomed. The complicated legal business of setting up a Trust to be in charge of the property seems to have been less to Fox's taste, and in a further letter he remarks that the legal business is now "...done with... and I am glad of it."!

In comparison with the two northern Meeting Houses just described, those of the same period in Gloucestershire are worthy of interest. In Gloucester itself the Society of Friends seems to have been well organised by 1655, registers being kept, and lists of those suffering persecution and imprisonment.⁷³ For many years a 'house-church' system seems to have been in operation. In 1678 a Gloucester brick-layer named Henry Cugley sold to the Friends there two cottages in Back Hare Lane, (now Park Street), which were converted into one room. An interesting description of the original building appears in the

72. One is reminded of the duty of hospitality taken so seriously by the early Christians, and perhaps seen at its fullest expression in the provision made by the monks of the Middle Ages for the poor, the sick and for the traveller.

73. Information taken from Local Collection in Gloucester Reference Library.

writings of Edith Sessions.⁷⁴ When the building was restored in 1902, some foot-long, chisel-shaped ~~steel~~ nails were discovered in the old walls, throwing light on seventeenth-century methods of building construction.

In 1834 the present Gloucester Meeting House was built on land bought for the Quakers by Samuel Bowley; the present site has a peculiar interest, since it was part of land that had belonged originally, until 1556 to the Franciscans or Greyfriars, with whom many Quakers feel a kind of affinity. The history of the site goes even further back, since there is a Roman mosaic still preserved within the Meeting House.

The country districts of Gloucestershire are rich in Friends' Meeting Houses, of which those at Painswick, Cirencester and Nailsworth are typical. The Nailsworth Meeting House, a seventeenth-century Cotswold stone building, is believed to have been originally a farm.⁷⁵ The date of its conversion into a Meeting House is not known, but it is likely to have been about 1686. A complete set of records for the Society from 1670 is still in existence, and pieces of the original furniture remain in the rooms. Particular interest has been aroused by a series of initials carved in one of the upper windowsills, with the date 1683. At one time it was thought that the building had once been a dame-school, and that the initials had been carved by pupils, but the quality of the carving is now thought to be too high to be

74. "A bare flat front, with low wide doorway, a patched roof of stone 'slats' and tiles, and having two dormer windows. The door opened into a little lobby, leading to the room which was about 40 feet by 23 feet. The two heavy old roofs were held together by a huge beam, supported on 2 oak pillars." Quoted in an article in the Gloucester Citizen, Aug. 1971 by Miriam Higgins.

75. Record by Ruth Burttt preserved in the Meeting House.

the work of children, and the suggestion has been made that the initials are those of Dissenters of various persuasions, for whom the house had perhaps been a refuge during the persecutions.⁷⁶

Nailsworth is another example of a place where the Friends' place of worship was at some distance from their burial ground, which was at Sheepscombe.

The interior lay-out of the typical Friends' Meeting House is an example of 'centralised' worship, in which members occupy all four sides of the room, facing towards the centre. Since all members are Ministers, and entitled to speak if led to do so by the Spirit, there is little possibility of any one object or part of the room acquiring the 'holiness' which leads towards 'Temple' worship, although the presence of the Ministers' or Elders' Stand provides a useful visual focus, without unduly dominating the room, or appearing to confer 'sanctity' on its occupants.⁷⁷ It is remarkable that Quakers alone of all Christian denominations have resisted the temptation to alter the basic ground plan of their Meeting House interiors, and it would seem that this is the chief, if not the only reason which has preserved Quaker worship as that of the Meeting House as opposed to that of the Temple. Another pleasant custom has been the transforming of many simple Quaker cemeteries into attractive gardens; this too has been made possible largely by the rejection by Quakers of memorials, which may sometimes have the effect of conferring a kind of holiness on the graves which they mark.

76. Many Christian buildings from the Upper Room onwards appear to have had their origins as places of refuge, and the same may well apply to religious buildings of all kinds.

77. One might compare this with the effect on the occupants of choir stalls in certain parish churches!

An interesting side-light on the design and construction of later Meeting Houses is provided by William Alexander of York in his book on the subject published in 1820.⁷⁸ One notices the new technical and scientific approach to the subject of architecture in the author's acknowledgement of the defects which can spoil a building for worship, and his practical discussion of all the problems which may arise, from the choosing of a site to dry rot in the woodwork.

Alexander stresses the need for light and air;⁷⁹ his comment on the shape of room most suitable for a Meeting House is interesting: an octagon or square is, he considers, best for the accommodation of large numbers of two thousand or upwards, but for Meeting Houses in general, the rectangle is still the best: "...and it is so seldom deviated from, in modern erections, that to mention a square as a defect may be sufficient."⁸⁰

Sound plays an important part in Meeting House construction in Alexander's opinion, and also a proper use of space,⁸¹ and he has some strong remarks to make on the subject of stoves.⁸² The

78. William Alexander, Observations on the Construction and Fitting Up of Meeting Houses, &c. for Public Worship. Published and sold by William Alexander; York 1820.

79. Op. cit., p.14.

80. Op. cit., p. 8.

81. "Few may be aware, that, in divers Meeting Houses, the spaces allowed for these seats are so confined, that some individuals, when they have been engaged in the solemn duty of vocal supplication, have, with extreme difficulty, supported themselves to the end; and have felt the trying effects of this malconstruction for several days afterwards, or even for a longer period." Op. cit., p.17.

82. The effect of some stoves is: "...to unfit the mind either for silent meditation and worship, or for listening with lively attention to ministry, or other vocal utterance of devotional exercises." It is also injurious to health, "...and no Meeting House ought ever to be rendered so detrimental both to devotional feelings and to animal respiration." Op. cit., p.14.

requisites of a Meeting House are, in Alexander's view, almost the same as those of a dwelling-house.⁸³ Throughout his work one is impressed by the intensely practical approach, completely lacking in superstition and sentimentality,⁸⁴ although by no means in reverence; it is the purpose of the building, not the building itself which matters. His views are summed up in his note on the neglect of Meeting Houses by those whose own homes are properly cared for; "The Society of which the author is a member, does not attach any sanctity to the building, but everyone must, to the purpose for which it is designed."⁸⁵

Alexander concludes with a description of the rebuilt Meeting House in Clifford Street in York, the design of which he compares with others, and which he seems in general to have approved, although another view is expressed in a newspaper article which appeared at the time of the completion of the 'improvements' to the Clifford Street building. The architect is said to have selected "the French Renaissance style of the Seventeenth Century" because of the awkward shape of the site; the writer of the article remarks: "...descendants of Fox come perilously near the 'steeple-house' he denounced when they add a 'conical towered roof broken up by two or three quaint little dormers', and a recessed portico! Quakerism is indeed rapidly changing."

83. Op. cit., p.21.

84. One may compare the attitudes to Church architecture of the members of the Cambridge Ecclesiological Society.

85. Alexander, op. cit., p.23.

5. The Methodists

The rise of the Methodist movement, founded by John Wesley in the eighteenth century, affords a particularly interesting comparison with the beginnings of other movements. One Methodist writer draws attention to the close parallel between the growth of Methodism out of the Anglican Church, and that of Christianity out of Judaism.⁸⁶ Like the early Christians, and like other Nonconformists, the first Methodists worshipped anywhere, out of doors, or in any building which was available to them. In referring to the 'House Church' Dolbey makes a particularly interesting statement, saying that this is essentially adapted rather than specially built, and derives from the pagan house, with its sacred hearth and ancestral spirits' altar.⁸⁷ This places Methodism firmly within the tradition of the Meeting House rather than that of the Temple, and in fact when special places of worship were built by Methodists they could not be anything else; like George Fox, John Wesley had no intention of building 'churches' for his followers, but where Fox had objected to the naming of any building as a 'church', believing that the term applied only to the congregation who assembled there, and disapproving of the liturgy which took place in church buildings, Wesley still loved and respected the Church of England, its buildings and its liturgy. He wished only to encourage his converts to go back to their local churches, and it was only the practical problems of increasing numbers, and the need for shelter which led to the erection of any buildings at all.

86. George W. Dolbey, Op. cit., p.22.

87. Op. cit., p.3.

It was always distasteful to the Wesleys to celebrate the Sacraments in unconsecrated buildings, although the question of the ordination of those administering the Sacraments was a more serious problem.⁸⁸

Those buildings which were erected were called 'preaching-houses', (Wesley appears to have disliked the term 'Meeting House'), and were, as their name implies, designed for preaching and class meetings rather than for liturgical worship; there was a particular emphasis on fellowship.⁸⁹

By the time the Methodists appeared on the scene it could no longer be said that there was no tradition of Nonconformist building. Another advantage to them was the personal interest of John Wesley himself in the form of building most suited to the preaching of the Word, and the importance of good auditory qualities, in which he agrees with Wren.⁹⁰ The early Methodists, according to Dolbey, had no intention of creating architecture, but were driven to this when the churches were closed to them.⁹¹

The form of the typical Methodist 'preaching-house' is said by Dolbey to have come from the Anglicans;⁹² the influence of other Nonconformist buildings is also likely. Dolbey notes that some

88. Wesley's views on the consecration of buildings are expressed in his journal; all that is necessary for the consecration of a building, he asserts, is the performance of public worship within it. N. Curnock, John Wesley's Journal, (Popular Edition), Charles H. Kelly, London 1903. p.310. See also John G. Bowmer, The Lord's Supper in Methodism 1791-1960. London: The Epworth Press. 1961. p.12.

89. Op. cit., p.85.

90. In his comments on those new preaching-houses which he visited, Wesley seems to have been mainly concerned that there should be sufficient space. Wesley's Journal, p.363ff.

91. Op. cit., p.37.

92. Op. cit., p.53.

mediaeval churches were copied from those of the Mendicant Orders, who emphasised preaching.⁹³ Wesley himself had a preference for octagonal structures, and is said to have built at least fourteen octagonal chapels.⁹⁴ Dolbey distinguishes between two traditions of design: the one, more common in the north of England, is the familiar type of building already noted in the case of other groups, and in the other he detects a Moravian influence.⁹⁵ Since the eighteenth century had produced considerable experiment with different architectural forms, and since persecution, although by no means unknown to early Methodists was unofficial and less widespread than that of other Dissenters in the previous century, buildings did not always have to be disguised, and there was more opportunity for conscious design. Nevertheless, despite Wesley's liking for the octagon, this shape was abandoned at a fairly early stage. Dolbey sees one reason as the growing desire for a more sacramental type of worship, for which the octagon was unsuitable, and another more practical reason in the fact that such buildings were sometimes unstable, and that they did not allow for expansion.⁹⁶ The most common plan remained the rectangular, and in many ways resembled other Dissenting Meeting Houses, but one interesting fact emerges: the rectangle was generally broader than long, with the pulpit placed in the centre of the long side opposite the entrances.⁹⁷ Again one is reminded of the Scottish 'T-plan' kirk, and of the general layout of the Friends' Meeting House. The gathering of a community for a shared experience of what

93. Mention is made by A.L. Drummond of an American Methodist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was built with a chimney, apparently to comply with an English ordinance that the building must be designed as a house. Andrew L. Drummond, The Architectural Interest of the English Meeting House. R.I.B.A. Journal, Vol. XLV, 15th Aug. 1938. p.140.

94. Dolbey, op. cit., p.99

95. Op. cit., p.93

96. Op. cit., p.112f

97. Op. cit., p.85

was undoubtedly worship in the Methodist preaching-house, although there was no observance of Sacraments, seems naturally to call for a centralised plan. Even the Methodists however lost this tradition in later years when, after Wesley 's death, the final break with the Church of England was made, and Methodist preaching-houses became 'Methodist Churches', adapted for the conventional type of liturgical worship practised in the Anglican Church, and following the general pattern of Anglican buildings; the influence of the Gothic revival of course made itself felt.

To return to the early architectural attempts of Methodists, one is again impressed by the attention to practical problems, and suitability of the building for its purpose which is a characteristic of Quaker and other Nonconformist architecture. Another interesting point is the composite nature of many early Methodist buildings; for example, the Foundery in London, adapted in 1739, contained a complex of rooms and services, including a school and an apothecary's practice,⁹⁸ while the first completely new Methodist building, The New Room in Bristol, built in the same year, was planned for community life; it is here in particular that Dolbey sees the possible influence of the Moravians, with whom Wesley always seems to have felt a special affinity.⁹⁹ This social interest is also shared by the Friends, but does not seem in their case to have led to such elaborate building projects. The modern enthusiasm for 'Worship Centres', involving a complex of buildings for the accommodation of various 'secular' as well as 'sacred' activities seems, like most new fashions, to be less modern than at first appears.

Since Methodist chapels of all ages and types abound in England, the attempt has been made to select one of the older ones, built within Wesley's own lifetime, and in fact, one of the many in which he himself preached.

98. Op. cit., p.40.

99. Op. cit., p.41.

The Methodist church at Newbiggin-in-Teesdale was built in 1760, and although it was enlarged just one hundred years later, it is claimed that little alteration in the general appearance of the building resulted from the extension which was then added at one end.

The building is a plain, gabled rectangle with the entrance in one of the long sides, surmounted by a shallow, moulded pediment - hardly a porch as such. This was probably added in 1860, since both the dates are inscribed under it. The four windows, two on each long side of the rectangle, are typical of the Nonconformist Meeting House of the period, having round arches and clear glass, but one interesting phenomenon is a single, much smaller square window behind the pulpit, which has at some stage in the church's history been blocked up; two iron hooks remain in the stonework outside. These may possibly have been for outside shutters. A local tale claims that this window was once used as an emergency exit by John Wesley himself, but no firm evidence seems to be available! The only other noticeable exterior feature is the chimney, which is placed directly opposite the entrance for the stove within.

The 'enlargement' of the building in 1860 has apparently had the effect of actually reducing the number of seats in the chapel; the addition seems to have been the Sunday School building, with two cottages built over it, one of which is occupied by the caretaker. This extension is built on to the narrow end of the rectangle opposite the pulpit, forming a T shape.¹⁰⁰

Inside the chapel, perhaps the most interesting feature is the arrangement of the seating, which rises in tiers towards the back,

¹⁰⁰ All information concerning the Newbiggin-in-Teesdale Methodist chapel has come from members of the present congregation; unfortunately the earliest records concerning the chapel preserved in the county archives give only the Sunday School collections from 1765!

rather like that in the auditorium of a theatre or concert hall. Dolbey mentions banked pews as a feature of some non-Wesleyan Methodist churches, but it would seem to be unusual.¹⁰¹ There is no gallery. Across the front of the building there is a slightly raised dais with a small altar rail, on which there is a pulpit placed centrally with the communion table in front of it, and the organ on the preacher's right; the pulpit and organ are not part of the original furnishings, but came from the Bowlees Primitive Methodist Church which amalgamated with Newbiggin about four years ago. There is however an interesting relic in the corner opposite the organ, in the original pulpit, a small octagonal one, originally higher and approached by steps. This is said to be the pulpit from which John Wesley preached. Inside it is a narrow bench, and on the floor under the reading ledge a box, which may have provided something to stand on, or have served as a kneeling rest. As it was locked, there is no knowing what it contains.

101. Dolbey, op. cit., p.153.

6. Church Buildings in Scotland

When studying the development of the Nonconformist Meeting House in England it is interesting to compare these architectural activities with what was going on in Scotland at the same time.

The picture is totally different owing to the fact that the Reformation in Scotland was in many ways a more thorough-going affair than that in England; there the issues involved were as much political as theological, and independence of the papal authority the central object. Although the Book of Common Prayer replaced the old Roman liturgy, and attempts were made to abolish all that had formerly led to superstition, in the form of images, elaborate vestments and so forth, the religion of the Anglican Church, like that of the Lutheran Church on the Continent, remained virtually unchanged. Those changes that did take place were, in England, concerned mainly with superficial elements, and related to the interior of the church; it was not until considerably later that the need for a more complete and drastic reformation was felt by the Puritans within the Church of England, and it is perhaps significant that the appropriateness for worship of an actual building should be linked with a theological and doctrinal reformation rather than with one more concerned with political questions.

In Scotland on the other hand the influence of Geneva through John Knox seems to have ensured that a strong Puritan element was present from the start; Scottish Puritans were able to reform their Church from within in a way which English Puritans found to be impossible. Therefore, the truly Protestant, Reformed architecture which, in England, was erected by those who had been forced to become Nonconformist, may be observed in Scotland in buildings belonging to the established Church.

As we have seen, in the early days of the Reformation in both countries there was little new building; the existing mediaeval parish churches were adapted for Protestant use, but in Scotland the adaptation seems often to have been more drastic!

George Hay points out that, long before the Reformation, many Scottish church buildings were already falling into ruin, largely owing to the widespread misappropriation of revenue belonging to the Church. As a result, post-Reformation kirks, like English Nonconformist Meeting Houses, were built under conditions of financial difficulty, and were bound to be small, simple structures designed with the basic essentials of Protestant worship in mind.¹⁰² Attempts were made after the Reformation to repair and restore neglected parish churches, but these seem to have met with little success.¹⁰³ In any case the parish churches in Scotland dating from the thirteenth century in no way resembled the Gothic structures of the same period in England and on the Continent, but seem in the main to have retained their early simplicity in the form of plain, rectangular buildings without aisles, chancel, transepts or tower.¹⁰⁴

It was therefore only natural that when new buildings did appear they should continue in the tradition of church building already familiar. Departures from the simple, aisleless rectangle were exceptional, but it is interesting to note that the occasional experiment with a centrally planned building, square or Greek cross, forms a parallel with those experiments already noted on the part of later Nonconformist groups in England. Again, it is difficult to discover any particular reason

102. Hay, op. cit., p.9ff.

103. Op. cit., p.18ff.

104. Op. cit., p.13.

for the choice of such a plan, although the suitability for Reformed worship of a more centrally placed focal point, with the congregation gathered round it on at least three sides, found one solution in the typical Scottish 'T-plan' kirk, and was perhaps so obvious to the Reformers that arguments in its defence were considered unnecessary.

The origin of the T-plan according to Hay may be accounted for by the addition of lofts - (sometimes a heritor's loft and burial vault), - to a plain rectangular building.¹⁰⁵ He notes that Scottish Reformed kirks were not designed as auditoria; since the accoustics in the T-plan kirk were excellent, the considerations which prompted Wren in his designing of English church buildings, with his favouring of a central plan, were presumably not of such importance in Scotland, but there was another, probably more important reason for the Scottish preference for the T-plan rather than the central plan based on a Greek cross or square: until the mid-nineteenth century the Scottish Reformed communion service required the provision of long tables at which the communicants would gather to receive the sacrament, and to accommodate these a long, rectangular nave was an obvious necessity.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the arms of the T would enable the congregation to gather more closely round the pulpit for the hearing of the Word.

In the case of the T-plan it seems that the reasons for its design were severely practical - the provision of accommodation - and in no way symbolic. Although nineteenth century Anglicans might claim that the cruciform shape of the Gothic church, formed by the addition of transepts,

105 Op. cit., p.22.

106 Op. cit., p.22.

was symbolic, it is interesting to note that here too practical considerations had not been absent. The transepts may well have been added to an originally plain, rectangular building as buttresses to prop up an unstable tower!

Hay objects strongly, and with justification to the popular image of Scottish Reformed worship, reflected in its buildings and furnishings, as dark, cold and 'dour', Puritanical, obsessed with Sin and Judgement and ruthlessly iconoclastic.¹⁰⁷ The passage from The First Book of Discipline from which he quotes stresses the importance, not only of a sound, well-built structure for worship, but also demands that it should be a decent looking building, properly maintained.¹⁰⁸ The instructions given here are remarkably similar to the suggestions made by George Fox regarding Petty's House.¹⁰⁹ Pictures, sculpture and stained glass might be repudiated on perfectly reasonable grounds, but as has already been noted, there was no lack of colour, and of decorative craftsmanship. Indeed, if the church at Burntisland, (presently to be discussed in more detail), is anything to go by, its most recent restoration may give some idea of the brightness and cheerfulness of the interior in its earliest days.

In Scotland, when new church buildings were required, the usual choice seems to have been the simple, gabled rectangle which was also most common among English Nonconformists. This choice was however not universal in either country. Experiments with unusual shapes where Scottish kirks were concerned generally seem to have

107. Op. cit., p.18ff.

108. The First Book of Discipline, Edited by James K. Cameron, The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1972. p.202.

109. See George Fox's letter, p.178.

reflected Dutch influence, and there has been some controversy regarding the extent of this in the case of the selected example, St. Columba's Church in Burntisland.¹¹⁰

The parish church of Burntisland was built in 1592, and is claimed as the first post-Reformation Scottish church. It is particularly interesting to note that, according to the present minister the Rev. J. Mackenzie, the responsibility for its construction was that of the Town Council of the time, whose ideas on the subject of church building might throw considerable light on the motives of other post-Reformation builders if a record of their planning sessions could be obtained.

The church is completely square, its central tower being supported by four square central pillars. The tower itself is of later date, although there is no reason to suppose that it was, in intention not part of the original design. The steeply sloping roof and four buttresses at the corners give interest to the exterior, and the tower, in two stages, is also interesting without being over elaborate. An outside staircase leading to a door at a higher level is another well-designed feature. The windows and doors are also mainly square in shape, although there is a fondness for circular openings, which appear in the tower.

Inside, the 'central plan' is found to be inescapable; (in fact, it is said by Hay to have caused some embarrassment to Charles I and to Archbishop Laud who visited it in 1633: there is simply no place for an altar!)¹¹¹

110. Hay, Op. cit., p.31.

111. Op. cit., p.34.

The interior of the church is filled by blocks of box pews, but the walls of these are of reasonable height, so that one does not imagine the occupants vanishing from sight during the service as in the case of some English parish churches of the same period, (for example, the old parish church at Whitby). The gallery almost provides a second storey, being on all four sides of the building, while a slightly raised dais in the centre accommodates the communion table, placed diagonally in front of the pulpit. The pulpit itself, with its sounding board above, is attached to one of the four central pillars, and diagonally opposite is the handsome magistrates' pew, so placed as to bring the town's dignitaries right under the minister's eye! Altogether the church proclaims itself as a 'town kirk', in which religion and civic affairs, 'sacred' and 'secular' are closely linked. The panels of the gallery front are decorated with the emblems of the various trades, and the most outstanding of these, the model ship gracefully suspended from another pillar, bears witness to the town's close association with the sea.

Although very much a part of the established Church of Scotland, the church building at Burntisland has many points in common with some of those English Nonconformist buildings which appear in the towns and cities rather than in rural districts; for instance, there is a resemblance between Burntisland Church and the chapel in York built by Lady Hewley. It would seem that, when congregations of the period, of whatever persuasion, were free to build a place of worship designed specifically for Protestant services, they would experiment more freely; while the poorer country congregations were satisfied with what was available for them in the form of a humble, cottage-type building, where a congregation had more resources, either among its members or

in the form of patronage by a wealthy benefactor, an attempt was made to produce some kind of design in erecting a meeting place. Yet, as we have seen, the motives behind such design seem almost invariably to have been of a practical nature, theological and symbolic considerations being apparently absent. The building, in fact, appears to be of less importance than the activity that is to take place within it. Perhaps this is as it should be.

VI

THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

During the major part of the eighteenth century there seem to have been no dramatic changes in the pattern of church building in this country, or, for that matter anywhere else. As far as the Anglican Church was concerned worship continued in those mediaeval buildings which were still usable, (although some were beginning to show serious signs of neglect), and also in the new, classical style buildings which had appeared since the introduction of Wren's 'Auditory' churches. Nonconformists continued to worship in the modest buildings erected by a previous generation, and when new Meeting Houses were required, these tended to follow the same pattern: a simple, rectangular hall, (sometimes, in the case of larger Meeting Houses with a neo-classic facade), with large, well-proportioned windows, often with rounded arches, and having a light, colour-washed interior, and a pulpit, communion table and other furnishings, often of good local craftsmanship, arranged according to the tenets of the particular denomination.

It is well known that each succeeding age produces a reaction against it in the next; it was perhaps only to be expected that the cool, classical Rationalism which had become 'modern' in the eighteenth century should in time be replaced by a new wave of Romanticism, in which a clear, detached attitude to the pursuit of knowledge should be rejected in favour of an approach in which feeling was once again allowed a place. Emotional and mystical experience were once more taken seriously, and the 'Enlightenment' of a previous age, based on classical patterns gave place to a revival of interest in mediaeval studies; the period of Greece and Rome became far less interesting

than the European Middle Ages.¹ It was perhaps unfortunate that the very nature of the changed emphasis allowed free reign to the romantic imagination of the new generation of researchers, so that much of their discovery, although professedly 'scientific' was less well informed, and more subject to precarious speculation than that of their predecessors into an area involving an even earlier period.

One result of the reaction was some slackening of the strong Protestant feeling of a previous generation, leading gradually to a growing tolerance of Roman Catholicism, and added to this, the typical tendency of any new, young generation to belittle what its fathers have revered, in this case the events of the Reformation. Now that memories of persecution were receding into the past, the faults and weaknesses of the Reformers could be exposed.

Such a reaction makes itself felt in every sphere; not only was the Puritanical harshness of much Reformation thinking condemned, and the (admittedly) iconoclastic tendencies of some Puritans in destroying much that was beautiful in mediaeval religion deplored, but the positive contribution of eighteenth century art and design became unfashionable; the spacious simplicity and uncluttered dignity of Wren's 'Auditories' were now dismissed as cold, barn-like and ugly;² there was nothing in

1. The influence of Sir Walter Scott's novels has been cited in connection with the new, romantic view of the Middle Ages; Kenneth Clark points also to the possible influence of poets such as Thomas Gray, especially in the growing passion for ruined buildings, and the melancholy associated with them. Kenneth Clark, The Gothic Revival. An Essay in the History of Taste, Constable and Co. Ltd., London 1928. p.38ff.
2. It is ironic that such descriptions applied to classical architecture by those who wished to see the restoration of Gothic should have replaced such epithets as 'monstrous' and 'barbarous' applied to Gothic itself! Vasari, quoted by J. Mirsky, op. cit., p.140.

a well lighted, acoustically suitable church to provide the aura of mystery, and the religious 'feeling' so prized by the new Romantics.³ What was unfortunate was that the new 'Reformers', having learned nothing from the destructive zeal of their sixteenth century predecessors, were themselves prepared to sweep away much that they were unable to appreciate, even including ancient features in mediaeval churches whose value they failed to understand, but which came to be recognised as valuable by a later generation, viewing the whole question in a more distant, and clearer perspective.⁴

As far as Nonconformist Meeting Houses were concerned attitudes were predictable: Nonconformists, although no longer persecuted, were still despised on social as well as religious grounds, and were sometimes suspected, owing to their historical association with the Whig party, of holding dangerously subversive political opinions. As to the buildings used by Dissenters for worship - these were unconsecrated, and moreover they did not look like churches; therefore, they were eyesores, worthy only of contempt. It is interesting to note that attitudes similar to those of many Nonconformists were to be observed among members of the Evangelical movement within the Church of England! These attitudes are described in detail by the nineteenth century writer on architecture, Charles Eastlake, with a kind of pitiful condescension! In his words: "Whether a congregation of Christians assembled for public worship in a cathedral or a barn their prayers would be equally acceptable." He goes on to say of the Evangelicals,

3. James F. White, The Cambridge Movement, Cambridge at the University Press, 1962. p.34.

4. Op. cit. p.109.

"The best form for a church, they reasoned, was surely that which was the simplest - in which all could see the preacher and hear his words."⁵ A Nonconformist might well ask what was wrong with this! It would seem that, in fact, the Auditory churches of the Anglicans were in the Meeting House tradition, and that the new Reformers were hankering after a return to the Temple with all its appurtenances; there is, perhaps, in typical 'Temple' worship a strong Romantic element which is lacking in that of the Meeting House, although Puritans can hardly be accused of lack of fire, in the form of religious zeal! Perhaps again their emphasis on the Word, with its insistence on reason and understanding tends to repel those for whom the Sacraments, with their appeal to the emotions take first place.

It is unfortunate that the Nonconformists of the nineteenth century should have become so anxious to share the respectability of their Anglican neighbours that, instead of ignoring the inevitable criticisms of their own places of worship as their fathers would have done, they took such criticisms to heart to such an extent that much of their subsequent building activity took the form of weak and incongruous imitation of the latest Anglican fashions. If the fashions had been good in themselves less harm would have been done, but there is a warning in the fact that in ages when the Church deliberately sets out to create or revive a style on intellectual or aesthetic grounds, instead of allowing for the organic growth of new styles out of the activity of worship itself, 'good' fashions rarely result.

The circumstances of the next phase in church building in this country were peculiar to England, and so do not represent general or

5. C.L. Eastlake, op. cit., p.190.

universal trends in religious architecture, (although the effects of this phase have appeared in many parts of the world), and yet their powerful influence for many years cannot be ignored, especially in view of the reaction to it of some of those outside the Church of England, particularly Dissenters.

At a time when the views of the Tractarians of Oxford were causing much discussion, a movement arose in Cambridge, similar in having its origins among University undergraduates, although also claiming some influential members, but always strenuously denying any connection with the Oxford Movement. The new group, the Cambridge Camden Society, later to be known as the 'Ecclesiological Society' disclaimed any interest in theological questions; their interests were said to be entirely aesthetic, and their aims were to revive an appreciation of old church buildings, many of which were in a disgraceful state of neglect, and to awaken a sense of responsibility in those who were supposed to care for them.⁶ It seems as though the members of the Society in its early days, perhaps partly because of the unexpected success of their endeavours, (particularly through the issues of their journal The Ecclesiologist), were not fully aware of the extent of their own influence, or of the fact that many of the ideas which they put forward, particularly those associated with liturgical practice, were much more closely bound up with questions of theology and Christian doctrine than they realised or cared to admit.

The moving spirit in the Cambridge Movement from its first beginnings, and throughout its stormy history until his own death, after which the Society significantly declined, was its first chairman of committee,

6. White, op. cit., p.4.

John Mason Neale.⁷ Although a man of undoubted ability and obvious powers of leadership, Neale appears to have been fanatical in a high degree where his own views on the subject of church buildings were concerned, and in his account of the history of the Society, White gives a clear impression that there was rarely any occasion when, if disagreement arose within the Movement, Neale did not get his own way! Therefore, it might be true to say that, despite the enthusiastic support which Neale received from his followers, the course of church building in England during the greater part of the nineteenth century was directed, not merely by a group of Cambridge undergraduates with limited knowledge of either theology or architecture, but by one man!

The significant change in thinking about church architecture brought about by the Cambridge Camden Society was the abandonment of the practical and functional emphasis which had characterised the work of Wren and his successors, and a return to an attitude coloured by the new Romantic interest, taking into account the appearance of the building, and the 'feeling' which it engendered. For many people mediaevalism was closely bound up with the Gothic style of architecture; the passion for 'Gothick' had already appeared in a somewhat eccentric guise in the building, by wealthy dilettantes of edifices such as Walpole's Strawberry Hill, and Beckford's Fonthill 'Abbey'. If Gothic ecclesiastical patterns were considered appropriate for domestic buildings, it was only natural that, where churches were concerned, the style should have been regarded as the obvious choice. Also, previous designs had been based on classical

7. Perhaps an earlier influence, possibly on Neale himself, was Pugin, although he was not a member of the Society and later became a Roman Catholic; Pugin's passion for the Gothic style certainly had its effect on the architecture of the time.

patterns, and it was now pointed out that these were pagan in origin, and that the Reformation, and the Renaissance itself, which had encouraged their revival, were nothing short of apostasy and a lapse into paganism! Again, the new mediaevalists were convinced that the Gothic style had originated in England; it was therefore acclaimed as a national style - one which should 'come naturally' to English builders.⁸ The Christian ideal was now sought in mediaeval Western Christendom, and where architecture was concerned, this ideal was found in the Gothic style. The strength of this conviction may be detected even in the title of one of Pugin's chief works: The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture! Only Gothic architecture therefore was Christian, and only Christian architecture was truly religious. As is usually the case, the Ecclesiologists had some justification for their disapproval of the attitude to church buildings of some early nineteenth century Christians. Neglect and carelessness were prevalent, and there seems to have been a general lack of reverence, which perhaps was partly due to the Reformation reaction against superstition, and refusal to allow the Church building, or any of its furnishings to be treated with unwholesome veneration. The newer churches were bound to suffer most from this easy familiarity, since they lacked the old traditions and the atmosphere of ancient dignity which had grown up around the mediaeval parish churches, but even the latter were not immune, especially where the now often unused chancels were concerned.⁹

8. Clark, op. cit., p.89. Clark points out that, in fact, the pointed arch originated in France.

9. White, op. cit., p.5f. Cf. Eastlake, op. cit., p.139f.

Since practical values were now out of fashion, something else had to be found to replace them, and the substitute discovered, (again, closely bound up with the Romanticism of the age), was symbolism. Since the Ecclesiologists were convinced that every detail of a mediaeval building was the result of deliberate design, and therefore must 'mean something',¹⁰ everything, from the cruciform plan to the last detail of stone carving was a symbol of some profound Christian truth. This attitude implied some great, fixed, universal plan for church building, and although this explanation was frequently challenged in individual buildings by the discovery of divergences and local idiosyncrasies, the Ecclesiologists soon proved that they could symbolise anything.¹¹ Later, it was admitted that some churches were more 'symbolical' than others, and an explanation was found in the theory of the development of Gothic from Norman to Perpendicular, which latter was described as 'debased' Gothic.¹² An example of the obsession with symbolism is the view of the roodscreen as the most important item - the symbol of death, separating the Church Triumphant, (symbolised by the chancel), from the Church Militant, (the nave).¹³ Other examples of Ecclesiological symbolism are too numerous to mention; Eastlake evidently felt that the Society went too far: "That the outward and visible form of Church Architecture was in the Middle Ages influenced by theological creed there can be little doubt, but that this influence extended to every detail of construction and ornament - that it inspired the designers or workmen with anything more than an ordinary respect for the traditions

10. White, op. cit., p.50f.

11. Eastlake's protests in this connection are of special interest in that they were voiced by a man of the Ecclesiologists' own time; incidentally, he was most unpopular with the Society, although himself an eager Gothic revivalist.

12. White, op. cit., p.76.

13. Op. cit., p.100.

of their craft, or that as a rule they allowed the principle of symbolism to interfere with more practical considerations - it is impossible to believe, without rejecting the plainest evidence of common sense."¹⁴

This fascinated preoccupation with symbolism led to a gradual return to an attitude of reverence, not, as was no doubt intended to the truths symbolised, but to the material objects which were said to represent them. The House of God became again a 'Holy Place' in the sense of a place of awe and mystery, parts of which were barred to all except 'holy' persons dedicated to ritual tasks; the Auditory church where the Word of God might be heard by all his people, and where they might participate fully in his worship became once again the Temple, or Sacred Theatre, where shadowy glimpses of a mysterious drama might be observed. There were some protests, but Neale and his followers gradually became so powerful that for many years it seems that Christians in England hardly dared to erect a building for worship without seeking their approval!¹⁵ The so-called 'Battle of the Styles' raging between the supporters of Classical and Gothic architecture respectively was, of course, concerned not only with ecclesiastical architecture; there was a campaign for the restoration of Gothic for all public buildings, and even for domestic architecture, perhaps reaching its climax in the controversy which arose over the design for the new Houses of Parliament.

The typical Victorian church marked the undoing of all that Wren had tried to do in making the House of God a meeting place for his people

14. Eastlake, op. cit., p.231. Incidentally, one still meets with an attitude, especially among Anglicans, in which profoundly philosophical and theological ideas are attributed to the mediaeval cathedral builders; for example, it is asserted that the cathedral is "an expression of the unity of the material and the spiritual."

15. White, op. cit., p.124.

in his presence. On the other hand, it did much to restore the atmosphere of reverence which had been previously lost. The main disadvantage was that the new generation of builders failed to realise that a true spirit of reverence is to be found only in the worshippers, and does not depend on any particular type of building, and that it could have been revived, (and indeed in many churches had never been lost), had irreverent clergy and congregations simply been reminded of how to conduct themselves during worship.

The aim of the earlier Ecclesiologists, both in the building of new churches and the restoring of old, was to copy exactly the pattern of the typical early fourteenth century church. This, representing the 'Decorated' phase of Gothic architecture was seen as the climax; anything as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was abhorred. One problem which aroused some opposition to the Ecclesiologists was their insistence on the need for a chancel, which many churches found unnecessary, and some could not afford. It seems that the Ecclesiologists' desire was to revive the idea of the chancel as a place set apart for the clergy; a compromise was found in the introduction of robed choirs. It was even thought that the fact that the clergy might be concealed behind the roodscreen would be an aid to 'community of worship'.¹⁶ The abhorrence of galleries during this period is interesting; the only reason for it would seem to be the fact that mediaeval churches did not have them, while many eighteenth century churches did. Also, they were common in Nonconformist Meeting Houses, which were regarded with contempt by the Ecclesiologists. Arguments against the use of galleries are almost entirely directed against their appearance; they are condemned as 'clumsy' and 'ugly', and as indicating attempts to provide the maximum

16. Op. cit., p.104.

seating at the minimum cost.¹⁷ Another significant reversal was the advocating of a fixed stone altar, although it was still preferred that this should be open in front, and it was laid down that if the altar was made of wood it should take the form of a moveable table.¹⁸

What is perhaps most distasteful in the attitude of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists is the almost vicious nature of the attacks which they made on churches which did not fit into the pattern which they had decreed, and on those who designed and built, and even expressed approval of them. The extremes to which they were prepared to go appear in the readiness with which they succumbed to the so-called 'Ethical Fallacy', which stated that only a good man could be a good church architect or builder. Architects were expected to take 'a religious view' of their profession; even architectural competitions were denounced, and architects were given to understand that they should not combine ecclesiastical with secular works.¹⁹

Eastlake notes the extremes of prejudice prevalent in his own century 'for' and 'against' the Gothic style, noting that the mediaeval period was seen as either all good or all evil.²⁰ He has little sympathy with the Ethical Fallacy, stating without qualification: "...to presume that what may be called the religious aspect of ancient art resulted from the specially religious life of those who practised it is a piece of sentimentalism which is founded neither in philosophy nor in fact."²¹ This recalls the argument of a certain Baptist minister in the early years of the present century who, when certain repairs to gas fittings in his church, carried out by a gas-fitter belonging to his congregation

17. Eastlake, op. cit., p.188f. Cf. p.220. Cf. also Stewart, op. cit., p.148.

18. White, op. cit., p.99f.

19. Op. cit., p.123.

20. Eastlake, op. cit., p.176ff.

21. Op. cit., p.180.

proved inadequate, asked his office-bearers if there were no other gas-fitter who might be called in. On being informed that the only other gas-fitter in the district was an atheist, he replied: "What we want for this job is a competent gas-fitter, not an incompetent saint!"

What is disappointing in the story of the Cambridge Movement is the fact that, when at last it seemed that a conscious theology of church architecture was beginning to emerge, it should have been brought to birth by those whose theological understanding was insufficient, so that the resultant theory of church architecture was founded on misconceptions; their theories about architecture were supported by theological notions which were so far from expressing a true theology of architecture that the two became separated. The weakness of the theology may perhaps be detected in the preoccupation of the Camden Society with ritual. This, rather than considerations of faith, and the true significance of the liturgy seems to have been all-important; religion consisted in beautiful feelings, stimulated by aesthetic beauty. In White's words: "ritualistic propriety" was the highest criterion for a church, surpassing even that of beauty, and the Ecclesiologists went on to assert that it was this propriety which had led to the mediaeval architectural forms.²² Kenneth Clark remarks that the religious inconsistency of the Camdenians had already been exposed by Pugin.²³

As a result of the Society's strictures, few architects achieved its standards, only William Butterfield and R.C. Carpenter winning complete approval, while Sir George Gilbert Scott committed the shocking offence of winning a competition to build a Lutheran church in Hamburg in 1844, and still further blackening his reputation by defending

22. White, op. cit., p.92.

23. Clark, op. cit., p.210f.

his action!²⁴ It is significant that, according to White, most of the other architects who appeared on the Society's 'Approved' list are now considered to have been of minor importance.²⁵ It is likely that they were, like many artists who, while accomplished up to a point never achieve the top grade, gifted in copying the works of others, since all that the Ecclesiologists required in an architect was the ability to imitate the pattern which they claimed as the ideal.²⁶

During the early part of the nineteenth century, while the 'Battle of the Styles' was raging in Anglican ecclesiastical circles, most Nonconformists continued decorously to worship in their eighteenth century 'Eyesores', for the most part unmolested, but as time went on, and Dissenting congregations became larger and more prosperous, new buildings were required. It seems to have been at this time that Nonconformists at last began to look dispassionately at the buildings in which they worshipped, (such self-consciousness no doubt having been aroused by the controversy in the Anglican Church), and to view them critically as buildings to be looked at and judged for their aesthetic and religious qualities, as well as for their practical suitability as meeting places. It might be true to say that this was the first time that Nonconformists had sought to rationalise their own motives in building Meeting Houses, and the reason for their doing so now was a sense of inferiority engendered by the teachings of the Cambridge Movement. Nonconformists became aware that their Meeting Houses did not 'look like

24. White, op. cit., p.126f.

25. Op. cit., p.125.

26. Eastlake deplores the dullness and insipidity of much nineteenth century Church art. Referring to the carving in churches of his own day he remarks: "Our nineteenth century angels look like demure Bible-readers, somewhat too pious to be interesting." Op. cit., p.260.

churches', and with the exception of the Quakers, many groups began to ape their Anglican brethren by building in the Gothic style. Such imitation by no means pleased the Ecclesiologists, who disliked the copying of their styles, whether by Dissenters or by Roman Catholics;²⁷ their 'Approved' architects were not supposed to soil their hands by designing 'conventicles' - yet another indication of the peculiar, single-track attitude of a group who could see only the Church of England as the true Church.²⁸ Dissenters, however, continued to imitate. At first the use of Gothic styles seems to have been restricted mainly to exterior features: pointed arches over doors and windows, higher-pitched roofs than had been common previously, and sometimes the use of stained glass. The ground plan generally remained rectangular; cruciform churches with transepts were still seen to be impracticable for Dissenting worship, and the interiors of the buildings also showed little change, except in a cautious use of more elaborate decoration than had appeared before, also in an attempt to copy what was appearing in Anglican churches.

Although the first part of the nineteenth century saw only such timid attempts on the part of Nonconformists to assert themselves by producing architecture which could not be condemned by Anglicans because it was similar to their own, as the years passed Methodists, Baptists and some Congregationalists and Presbyterians became bolder, and their

27. White, op. cit., p.182.

28. One of Eastlake's prejudices against the use of galleries is their effect, in his view, of converting a church into a 'meeting-room'. Op. cit., p.221. Yet, in his final chapter he shows a greater tolerance of Dissenters, and approval of their 'seeing the light' so far as to adopt the Gothic style for their buildings! He adds: "...the day may be not far distant when, so far as external appearance is concerned, it will be difficult to distinguish the Church from the conventicle." Op. cit., p.351.

church buildings became correspondingly more ambitious.²⁹ Miniature Gothic cathedrals began to appear everywhere, (many of them in red brick), complete with towers, transepts, chancels and even rood screens. The simple, satisfying craftsmanship which had produced dignified pulpits and gracefully formed pew-ends gave place to heavy, pseudo-mediaeval carving in every corner; pillared aisles led to 'sanctuaries' draped with embroidered hangings, and the patterned brickwork popularised by Butterfield, which had come to earn the name of the 'Streaky Bacon' style, together with encaustic tiles, and stained glass showing sentimental representations of Biblical scenes in the most lurid colours, helped to 'brighten up' the interior. It must of course be remembered that the Victorians believed that they were reviving the decorative principles and techniques of another, and to them more 'artistic' age, and that the Victorian love for the rich and elaborate decoration of every possible surface cannot be dismissed as artistically invalid simply because it, like all other phases in artistic appreciation is no longer fashionable; what rendered the new styles suspect, at least as far as Nonconformists were concerned, was the apparent loss of what seems always to have been a first principle in Meeting House architecture of all kinds: the provision, quite simply, of a place which should be convenient and comfortable for the worshippers, suitable for the hearing and seeing of the services, and containing only those objects which were necessary for the carrying out of the particular form of worship. The previous lack of visual art may have traced back to the disapproval of the early

29. One example cited as a typical 'Nonconformist Gothic' layout is Coats Memorial Baptist Church at Paisley! Lindley, op. cit., p.48.

Puritans, but as has been seen, nearly all Meeting Houses had contained what might be described as 'Folk Art' in the form of functional decoration applied to pews, pulpits and communion furniture.

As Meeting Houses gradually increased in their likeness to Temples, obvious disadvantages began to be felt. Since, thanks to the Cambridge Movement's concentration on matters of architecture, Nonconformist imitation of Anglican models was restricted to outward appearance in their buildings, and there was no question of such imitation being carried to the essentials of doctrine and practice, Nonconformists continued to worship in their various accustomed ways within their new 'mini-cathedrals', and found the exercise inconvenient, frustrating, and sometimes well-nigh impossible! Rows of pillars which obstructed vision, dim light filtering through stained glass, vaulted roofs in which the voice of the preacher was lost in a blur of echoes and chancels with no particular purpose became something of an embarrassment. Towards the end of the nineteenth century many Nonconformists were aware that they had made a mistake, and at the beginning of the present century at least one attempt was made to rescue them.

In 1901 a book was published by two Nonconformist architects in which a solution was suggested to the architectural problems of Dissenters: entitled "Churches Mission Halls and Schools for Nonconformists", by Joseph Crouch and Edmund Butler it was published by Buckler and Webb Ltd. in Birmingham. It is interesting to note that Nonconformists now dared to apply the word 'Church' to a Meeting House. The two authors felt that what was lacking in the Nonconformist denominations was expert, specialised knowledge of building, which may well have been

true, since during the preceding century architecture had become a highly specialised science; the days of 'do-it-yourself' erection of simple Meeting Houses by their own worshippers were past, except possibly in remote country districts.

The book by Crouch and Butler indicates an acceptance of the views of the Ecclesiologists regarding mediaeval Church buildings, and the authors share the prevalent dislike of the eighteenth century Palladian style, which they describe as a reversion to the 'box' type of building, although they give no practical reason for condemning a box-shaped construction.³⁰ Despite the obvious influence of the Ecclesiologists, the authors admit frankly that the Gothic style is essentially unsuitable for Nonconformist worship,³¹ and this creates for them a dilemma, because they are still convinced that the Gothic style is 'right' for church buildings; throughout the book the importance of the whole congregation being brought into touch with the preacher is continually stressed, and it is notable that practical considerations are once more brought into the open, but the aesthetic element, once recognised, is not easily banished, and the writers confess their aim to reduce practical disadvantages while still preserving the Gothic 'feeling'.³² The result of their work is a most ingenious compromise, which they describe as a 'modified form of Gothic', designed to obtain the best of both worlds.³³

In addition to the new recognition of an appreciation of aesthetic values, there is evidence of another, perhaps less worthy feeling which has been noted before in the attitudes of religious groups after they

30. Joseph Crouch and Edmund Butler, Churches Mission Halls and Schools for Nonconformists, Buckler and Webb Ltd., Church Street, Birmingham, 1901. p.21.

31. Op. cit., p.20.

32. Op. cit., p.28.

33. Op. cit., p.25.

have emerged from a stage of persecution and been allowed the opportunity to establish themselves on equal terms with their neighbours. Even after persecution ceases, there is often a lingering spirit of suspicion and contempt for those who were once its victims, and the natural reaction of these seems to be a sustained effort to prove their respectability. In this nineteenth century Nonconformists were no exception, which is perhaps hardly to be wondered at in those who lived in the great age of Victorian Respectability, when propriety and correctness were among the highest virtues; perhaps a similar phenomenon might have been observed among the newly recognised Christians of Constantine's empire; were they regarded by fourth century Roman society as social climbers?

There is perhaps something a little pathetic in the way in which Crouch and Butler stress the 'growing importance' of the Nonconformist denominations, and seem to suggest that among the reasons for the unsuitability of old Meeting Houses is their comparatively small size, (for one sure sign of Respectability appears to be impressive and increasing numbers!) and the fact that they do not provide the kind of environment in which 'proper' people would like to be seen.³⁴ Older Meeting Houses are dismissed as 'dismal, ugly and uninviting', and the authors state plainly their aim: "...the idea being to erect a house in which men and women of sober tastes may meet together for worship."³⁵ There is no mention of the One who is to be worshipped!

Messrs. Crouch and Butler are evidently deeply impressed by Ecclesiological notions of symbolism. The cruciform plan is advocated, and columns for both "use and beauty",³⁶ although what the use of such

34. There is a subtle difference between this association of size with importance, and the injunction in George Fox's letter that the Meeting House should be built large "for truth may increase".

35. Crouch and Butler, op. cit., p.35.

36. Op. cit., p.22.

columns is to be, apart from the obvious one of supporting the roof is not explained. Galleries do not meet with approval;³⁷ a tiled floor is acceptable, but marble mosaic is better!³⁸ There is an interesting suggestion that an outside pulpit may be an advantage for Nonconformists,³⁹ but incredibly, the custom of enclosing the communion table within railings is noted with approval!⁴⁰ The choir has apparently come to stay in Nonconformist worship, and it is remarked that the choir ought not to be hidden by the preacher!⁴¹ Any incipient theology of religious architecture among Nonconformists of this period seems to have died in infancy!

Particular suggestions are made for the benefit of Baptist congregations. The 'ideal' baptistery should be in the 'chancel', and should be circular or octagonal, preferably tiled or frescoed.⁴² This is an interesting reversion to the practice of the Church in the early Christian centuries exemplified in, for instance, Dura-Europos.

In defending the Gothic style against the Classic, much is made of its 'sincerity'. It is pointed out that in Palladian buildings the structure is concealed by plaster decoration, and that this is a deceptive practice.⁴³ However, plaster may be used satisfactorily where no deception is intended; bricks should be hand-made rather than machine-made, but "stone is a nobler material!"⁴⁴ Decoration

37. Op. cit., p.32.

38. Op. cit., p.48.

39. Op. cit., p.51.

40. Op. cit., p.52.

41. Op. cit., p.55.

42. Op. cit., p.56.

43. Op. cit., p.62ff. The 'insincerity' of Classic styles was a favourite theme with the early Gothic revivalists, notably Ruskin.

44. Op. cit., p.70f.

should aim at simplicity, but clear glass should be ruthlessly removed, and replaced by "carefully designed windows of leaded cathedral tinted glass".⁴⁵ One can only ask: Why was the desire of previous congregations for the admission of light so reprehensible?

One more innocently intended statement on heating arrangements is worthy of quotation: "The usual methods of heating a Church are either by hot air or hot water".⁴⁶

It was perhaps inevitable that, once the twentieth century had become well established everything connected with the Victorian age should become as unpopular as everything Georgian had become to the Victorians. It is amusing to compare the contemptuous terms in which Eastlake criticises Wren's work, speaking of "hideous pediments", and "clumsy truss-work" surrounding pinnacles, on the one hand with Wren's own description of pinnacles as being "of no use and little ornament", and on the other with the typical modern phrase, "ghastly Victoriana"! As far as the twentieth century is concerned, the effects of the First World War cannot be discounted, and developments in architecture, as in everything else, which had promised great things owing to new discoveries, experiments with new building materials and new scientific techniques were only beginning to make their mark when the Second World War threw everything once more into confusion. Progress in architecture in general seems therefore to have been uncertain and disjointed for many years. Where Church architecture is concerned, some great buildings have appeared, especially on the Continent; the names of Schwarz and le Corbusier call to mind buildings whose existence has proved that concrete, glass and steel can be successfully used in the construction

45. Op. cit., p.73.

46. Op. cit., p.82.

of places of worship, eminently suitable for the forms of worship which take place in them, though whether they display the "distinctly ecclesiastical effect" required by an earlier generation is another matter.

In this country the imitation of 'modern' styles of Church building has been generally slow and cautious. Where larger churches in important cities have been erected there has been some measure of success; this has not been the case with all Church building schemes on a smaller scale, where building committees with little knowledge of architecture have engaged architects with little knowledge of the function of a church, to build them something 'ultra-modern', because they feel that this is the right thing for the Church to do, in order to prove to outsiders that it is not, as its critics suggest, old-fashioned, superstitious, retrograde and redundant. The present craze for 'modernism' for its own sake has also afflicted Nonconformists, but in all denominations there seems now to be a division between those who cling to the older tradition in Church building, because to them modern departures seem almost irreverent, and those whose fear for the Church's future moves them to desperate attempts at appearing 'with it'. In the case of the Nonconformist denominations, and even in some Anglican parishes, the influence of the minister or incumbent sometimes seems powerful; one frequently meets the clergyman who discusses proposed rebuilding or alterations to 'his' church with apparently little regard for the views of those who are to worship in it with him! Although the minister of the church may have superior knowledge as to its function, his views as to a 'suitable' place of worship seem sometimes to reflect mere personal taste.

The various recent movements in theological and liturgical thinking, such as the Liturgical and Ecumenical Movements have brought about a new attitude to the designing of church buildings, in which a genuine attempt has been made to discover the real essentials in a place of worship, and a new willingness for the sharing of knowledge and experience among those of differing persuasions is proving valuable. It seems that the temptation to select one 'favourite' style as a model for all future church design has so far been resisted, and there is a constant striving to view the whole picture of religious building in all its forms, both Christian and non-Christian. Perhaps the most valuable lesson that has been learned is that no architectural form can be regarded as permanent; forms must be flexible enough to yield to more frequent alteration and replacement than formerly. The dreams of ancient and mediaeval builders that they were building for eternity are now seen to be incapable of fulfilment, but this fact in itself may, where the Church is concerned make its people aware once more of the image of the Church as the moving Tabernacle which is not intended to be permanent; it may be necessary now to build for the present, not hankering towards an unknown future. Churches, like the Tabernacle, are perhaps intended only to provide a meeting-place for God and his people during the course of their journey towards the eternal city, whose Temple is not made with hands.

It must now be generally recognised, (especially when the twentieth-century passion for psychology, preoccupation with self-knowledge, and love of examining motives is taken into consideration), that whenever a group of people decide to erect a place of worship, it is the reasons behind their choice of a particular plan or style which need to be investigated. Man's constant temptation, even in his genuine attempts to glorify God, is to glorify himself, whether in the near-fanatical aspiration which leads to the construction of a great Temple, or in the

more worldly desire to erect a 'better' place of worship than his neighbours: in either case, to produce a building which will impress other men. We have seen how the primary consideration of worshippers in conditions of persecution is to find simply a place of shelter for themselves as God's people; they know very well that God himself needs no shelter. With increasing security comes the tendency to concentrate more attention on the building for its own sake, but because the building is believed to be sanctified by God's presence, it is easy for the attitude to be rationalised into a belief that such concern is being felt on God's account, and that attempts to improve and beautify the building are in accordance with his will.⁴⁷ Although no-one could doubt God's acceptance of every sincere offering of beauty and skill, it is easy for the artists among his people to be led astray by their own love of beauty into making God's house primarily a work of art, or, in the case of preserving an old building, a religious museum, instead of a house in which his people can serve him. It also concentrates too much attention on the physical and material aspect of the Church, and so helps to distract its congregation from their Christian duty to those in other buildings, and outside the Church's influence.

One misguided motive is the building of a church so startling in its ultra-modernity that no passer-by will be able to ignore it. This is defended as a means of drawing the attention of the world outside to the presence of the Church in its midst, but the upholders of this method of evangelism seem not to realise that, although no-one can help

47. One may compare the lengthy descriptions in the Book of Exodus of the building of the Tabernacle, framed as a series of detailed instructions to Moses from the Lord himself! Exodus 25ff.

seeing their church, people are not the more likely to want to enter it, (except perhaps from curiosity, to see whether the inside can possibly be as strange as the outside), far less to worship in it.

On the other hand, an insistence on keeping to the old traditions in church building, again for their own sake, is equally misguided if these old traditions have become unsuitable for twentieth century life and worship.

Since the present-day emphasis in church building seems to be on the provision of a place suitable for the carrying out of the Church's activities, practical and liturgical considerations are likely to carry the most weight, and for this reason it is possible that it will be the tradition of the Meeting House which will supply the necessary practical understanding of problems, although for many worshippers that of the Temple will still find a place.

For those who dream of the ultimate union of all denominations in one Church it is possible that one great building might be conceived which could provide for the varying needs of those with many different ideas and customs, and if this were to be the case, a basic structure in the Meeting House form would be almost essential, since such a structure would lend itself most readily to adaptation for many different uses. If such a building could be constructed the danger would be in yielding to the modern obsession with size: the prevalent idea that, because numbers are ever increasing buildings must necessarily expand to hold thousands instead of hundreds, when possibly larger numbers of smaller buildings would provide for all who need them, without causing the loss of identity and respect for individual persons criticised in large modern institutions of all kinds - schools, hospitals, factories

and housing estates. Also, a desire for a building of too vast size is one of the symptoms of self-glorification already noted. Twentieth century man has still to learn that 'biggest' and 'newest' do not necessarily mean 'best'.

It is natural that the builders of very large churches should succumb to the other temptation mentioned earlier - that of attempting to build, if not for eternity, at least for many years, or even centuries ahead. The larger the church the greater the expense, and the most exalted visionary could hardly conceive of replacing a new cathedral within, perhaps, a decade! Although for most people a certain permanency in their place of worship is desirable, especially as they grow older, it seems that throughout the history of religion the acceptance of any state of affairs as permanent has been the starting point of a deterioration in standards, owing to the growing carelessness of those who feel that they have reached the summit and may now relax. One may consider the days of the great Pharaohs, the period of affluence following the establishment of Solomon's Temple, the Byzantine age and the heyday of the mediaeval cathedrals. In each case the resulting evils manifest themselves in social injustice; a widening gulf appears between rich and poor, and the contrast is carefully concealed, often by those most influential in the country's religious life. This weakness shows nowhere more clearly than in the study of religious buildings; it seems that at these times any theology in architecture gives place to considerations which are entirely material. Wars and natural disasters have repeatedly shown man that he may not regard the works of his hands as permanent, and for the Christian such knowledge need cause no regret, since he knows that even among the ruins of his most cherished house he may meet with God and with his fellows, and know himself to be a living

part of the true ecclesia, the Temple of the Lord from which God himself is never absent. Thus he may come at last to understand that the house which God desires is no structure of stone, brick, timber or concrete, but a spiritual Temple dedicated to him.

It seems to be therefore that, with regard to the building of 'Houses of God', the dual tradition noted by both Biéler and Turner is certainly to be observed: on the one hand there is the Temple, the consecrated house dedicated to the Holy Being who is believed to inhabit it, served by persons set apart for their sacred task. On the other hand there is the house of the worshippers, a meeting-place, simple and unconsecrated, yet a place where it is believed that fellowship may be shared by the people with the same Holy Being. The significant factor is that in many cases it is the same Being who is believed to be the object of both types of worship.

The question appears to be whether this dual tradition has always existed, and the evidence from the earliest times would seem to show that man has indeed worshipped both in shrines and temples, and in meeting-places often consisting of ordinary homes, either alternatively, or even simultaneously. It cannot, apparently be proved that either Temple or Meeting House came first!

It is perhaps not possible to find any particular moment in time, or any particular place as marking the appearance of this distinction between two types of worship, each characterised by its own special type of 'house'. One can also only speculate as to the reasons behind the distinction; possibly this is psychological, bound up with basic human attitudes to the divine, and influenced by circumstances both internal and external.

There seems to be a parallel in this dual development of the House of God with the dual conception in theology of God as both transcendent and immanent.⁴⁸

The Temple or Cathedral, slowly developing from the sacred shrine, itself marking the Holy Place chosen by the deity, who is linked in the minds of his worshippers with earth and sky, and with growth, and with its associations with sacrifice, death and burial: this is the awful place, to be approached with deepest reverence, where some glimpse of the transcendent God may perhaps be seen;⁴⁹ this only if all conditions are right, and the correct procedures duly observed. Here, the element of fear is never forgotten.⁵⁰

In the simple Meeting Room, so often dismissed by the unthinking as a mere 'house of man', the God whose presence is also immanent makes himself known as the familiar friend who has always been present in all the day-to-day activities of the home, and indeed within the very hearts of its inhabitants; in a sense the Meeting House is simply an enlargement of the family worship of the home, possibly including some elements of the early worship of the fathers of the clan or tribe.

48. In the Christian tradition, in a study on the requirements in liturgy of the Anglican Church, the Dean of Gloucester comments on the two devotional themes present in the double title of the Sacrament: God is immanent in the Supper, but transcendent in the Sacrifice, and he notes how sometimes the one theme, sometimes the other comes to predominate. Seiriol J.A. Evans, 'Anglican Requirements', in Making the Building Serve the Liturgy, (Studies in the Re-ordering of Churches), Ed. Gilbert Cope, A.R. Mowbray and Co. Ltd., London. 1962. p.43.

49. Isaiah 6. 1-5.

50. R.E. Clements notes that Yahweh was both transcendent and immanent from the beginning. The same, he states applied to the Canaanite gods, but since these gods were part of the natural process, immanence was predominant, the tension being overcome by cultic symbolism. Clements, op. cit., p.136.

The God known in these surroundings becomes too well known to be feared.⁵¹

Is it possible that the distinction above-mentioned is man-made, an example of the basic human desire for power, at least as far as the deliberate attempt is concerned to set up a barrier between God and man, such as that which is often found in Temple worship? It has been noted that the stronger and more intelligent members of a tribe or society, those who find in themselves the ability to influence and manipulate others, whether physically or psychologically, can gain control. Such a person can establish himself in a superior position as shaman, witch-doctor, priest or prophet, exploiting the ignorant and superstitious beliefs of others by claiming to be in direct contact with the divine will and purpose. As suggested earlier, a claim to be able to understand and control the mysterious rites associated with death may add to the prestige of the priest. This priest, by whatever name he calls himself, thus becomes a being set apart from other men; in fact, he sets himself apart as one holding an intermediate status between the human and the divine. Gradually others may come to share his functions in a subordinate capacity, marking the emergence of a priestly class or caste which, on account of its greater numbers may increase in power. From this time on all 'holy' things, places and seasons come under the control of the priestly body, and it is in their interest to ensure that what is 'holy' remains so, by erecting barriers, tangible and intangible, to preserve it from all contact with those outside,

51. This attitude, carried perhaps to its logical conclusion may be found in the practice, common in some Nonconformist denominations, notably the Society of Friends, of using the room in which worship takes place, as distinct from the 'Church Hall' for the transaction of much of the day-to-day business of the community.

since such contact would weaken this control by undermining their superior 'separateness'.⁵²

If therefore the distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' is indeed a human invention, a kind of perversion of the human understanding of the nature of God, with its dual elements of immanence and transcendence, it would seem that the consecration of a site or a building as a special place for the deity would be a later phenomenon than the use of a human meeting place for religious worship; this however does not take into account the deep-rooted sense of 'difference' between God and himself felt by man from the earliest times, and his veneration of objects and the area surrounding them which has emphasised the idea of 'holiness'. Is it perhaps when people claim holiness for themselves rather than for objects, places, or even other animals that trouble arises? A stone, an ox or a mountain may be venerated without harming anyone, but a man or woman who claims the quality of separateness that belongs to the divine may cause damage to be done to himself or herself, and to others.

In turning once again to the theological ideas of immanence and transcendence with regard to the deity, it may be possible to find some further clue to the apparent dualism in worship which has led to two distinct types of religious building: if God indeed manifests himself in these two ways it is natural that there should be in man a certain tension in which he becomes aware of God's presence, sometimes in the one form, sometimes in the other. The problem that arises is, perhaps owing to the natural human tendency to 'one-sidedness', causing men to

52. See above, Chapter I.

forget the all-important fact that these two manifestations are both of the same God - in effect, 'two sides of one coin', and to over-emphasise either one at the expense of the other.

In both extremes there is a danger: the remote God who is only feared can never be truly known by his worshippers, and how can one not truly known be truly loved? On the other hand, "familiarity breeds contempt", and the God who is taken for granted as a member of the family may not always receive the reverence due to him who, however close he may be to those who love and worship him, is still God. A.L. Drummond considers that the qualities of both Temple and Meeting House may, and should be combined within one building: "Reverence and intimacy, the two poles of Christian worship that have been so often sundered in Ecclesiastical History, must be reconciled in the very fabric of the church building in token of synthesis. There is a place for the homelike qualities of the meeting house, as the complement of the mystery and aloofness of the Temple."⁵³

The pattern is, perhaps appropriately, best illustrated by the attitudes and worship of the 'chosen people', the Jews, for whom the tension seems to have been recognised, and who attempted to come to terms with it. Although in early Jewish worship the familiar Temple cultus was central, worship in the home has also always played an important part, and it is believed that the synagogue, which may have originated in family worship, in fact came into existence before its official emergence during the Exile.⁵⁴ What is most interesting in connection with these developments

53. Drummond, The Architectural Interest of the English Meeting House p. 281

54. Herbert Gordon May. *Op. cit.*, p.229
See also Chapter II above p. 46

is the far more ancient appearance of a third alternative, possibly forming a link between Temple and Meeting House, in the Tabernacle. This third possibility indeed seems to suggest the recognition of the need for congregational worship, as something distinct from both the highly individualistic attitudes of those who worship in temples, and those of the small, family groups worshipping at home.⁵⁵ As regards the Meeting House tradition, if this did indeed arise out of the intimate worship of the home, with its strong sense of the immanent presence of deity, it is possible that the loss of this sense when attempts are made to separate God from his people, may be due in some part simply to the increase in numbers when the family is extended, and the resultant fear of a loss of the awe and reverence due to the transcendent God.

The two terms used in Hebrew to describe the Tabernacle - $\text{קֹדֶשׁ} \text{וּמִקְדָּשׁ}$ and $\text{מִקְדָּשׁ} \text{-לְהִתְכַּוֵּן}$ may also illustrate the above-mentioned duality in recognising the presence of God:⁵⁶ as $\text{קֹדֶשׁ} \text{וּמִקְדָּשׁ}$ the Tabernacle was the 'Holy Place', the temple of the transcendent God, who descended upon it in the bright cloud of his 'glory', the shekinah; as $\text{מִקְדָּשׁ} \text{-לְהִתְכַּוֵּן}$ it was the meeting-place of the assembly of God's people. A special 'holiest place' might be provided within the tent to be entered only by an authorised person; here we find again the idea of an intermediate priesthood standing between the human and the divine, although the monotheism of the Jews ensured that their priests were themselves entirely human. At least in the Tabernacle we find both Temple and Meeting House, as it were, 'under one roof'. A similar arrangement may be seen in the courtyard surrounding many ancient temples, and in

55. Note Maringer's theory regarding some of the stone circles, as indicating congregational worship at a very early period. See p.17 above

56. See Chapter II above

the mediaeval Church in which the choir became the 'sacred place', used by the clergy in the celebration of divine offices, while the nave was frequently used for secular purposes, even including markets, and the performance of miracle plays.⁵⁷ Yet the whole building, nave and choir included, was the 'House of God'; it was as though one room in God's house was reserved for his special use.

G.E. Wright notes two tendencies, one emphasising immanence and the other transcendence. The first, he suggests, localised God's appearances in particular places, but not his 'dwellings'; the other, recognising his omnipresence, stressed his heavenly abode:⁵⁸

"Thus the perennial problem of the distant, transcendent God and the knowledge of and desire for his nearness or immanence was solved in Solomon's temple, as in the temples of surrounding peoples, by means of a rich, sacramental symbolism which possessed deep significance for those who understood its meaning."⁵⁹ Since this cannot have been a very large number, the idea that the Temple succeeded in solving the problem is rather doubtful; also, we have seen something of the dangers which a "rich, sacramental symbolism" may bring in its train!⁶⁰ Wright goes on to describe the notion of the Temple as the place where God's name is as an important attempt to bridge the gap between his immanence and transcendence.⁶¹

57. This question of the use of 'sacred' buildings for 'secular' purposes is one which would require more space than is available here. The full account given by J.G. Davies in his book The Secular Use of Church Buildings would seem to bear out the suggestion that the idea of places exclusive to deity is a reflection of the desire of certain spaces as 'holy', and therefore unsuitable for 'common' use.

58. G. Ernest Wright, "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East", (VII, 3 and 4, Sept. and Dec. 1944, 41-48), The Biblical Archaeologist Reader, Edited by David Noel Freedman and G. Ernest Wright, Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company Inc., Garden City, New York. 1961. pp. 145-200, No. 12. p.176f.

59. Op. cit., p.180f.

60. See p. 152f.

61. Wright, op. cit., p. 181ff.

Yet, if a true balance is to be achieved, it is necessary to reject utterly the widely held view that the Meeting House is essentially 'inferior' to the Temple. Such a view would seem to be based on the far from spiritual considerations of respective size, quality of building materials, expense and outward appearance. For this reason it is perhaps right that the possible origins of the House of God from within the house of man should be remembered and stressed. If however the human house is indeed the true cradle of religious architecture, what of the Temple? Is this after all a departure from the kind of building which is genuinely appropriate for religious worship? Surely no-one who has had the experience of seeing and entering a great cathedral or an Eastern temple, or even Stonehenge, could say that such a building was so much wasted effort.

There is a need for man to express his reverence and devotion in building as in all other arts, and the building, if dedicated to God, must be the finest and the most beautiful that man is capable of making. The Temple is a constant reminder of the greatness and majesty of God, and danger only arises when the building comes to be regarded as holy in itself, the God who sanctifies it being relegated to second place. Both types of building will probably always be needed as foils to one another, continually drawing to mind the God who is both transcendent and immanent, the One whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and yet the One who makes his dwelling among the humblest of his people, within their very hearts.

The worship of the Temple is necessary, and yet it is significant that, when great temples are destroyed or fall into ruin, worship does not die with the buildings designed for it; on the contrary, true believers seek another place in which to worship, and how often is not their new

meeting place in the home? When the Temple of the Jews was destroyed by the Babylonian invaders, and again by the Romans, in their respective attempts to eliminate this strangely powerful and troublesome sect, the Jewish religion was not destroyed: it found a new life, purged of many old abuses, in what was virtually a return to 'house-worship'. The old sacrificial system with all its elaborate rites was gone, but it was found that all this was not after all essential; the development of the worship of the synagogue proved that God could still be approached in any place, and under any conditions. Perhaps it is this consciousness that is the most valuable reminder that God cannot be contained within any house, and that ultimately all religious buildings, whether Meeting Houses or Temples will cease to exist; they will be no longer necessary in the Holy City glimpsed by the visionary who wrote:

"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

Rev. 21. 22.

From the Tuke Papers, preserved in the Borthwick Institute, York.

(Catalogue no. 81)

"True copy of letter from George Fox to Thomas Lower: 'touching his Intention how to dispose of Petty's House and Tenement as followeth.'
28th of 2nd month, 1687."

"And as concerning the Meeting place itself whether the Barn or the House, I shall leave it to you. But if the Barn will do better, if you could make it wider, maybe it may be better, because then there will be the House to go into, and the ground may be so rais'd that you may go up a step or two to go into the Meeting House & it will be more wholesome: and the yards are low which may be rais'd, & laid dry, and you have stones enough, and poor Men to get them. And I would have all the Thatch pulled off all the Houses and laid in a heap to rot for Manure to be laid upon the Close, and let all the Houses be slated, and the Walls about it to be made substantial to stand, and laid in Lime and Sand (viz:) the Wall upon the Common Side all along from Petty's Tenement to the end of the Lane, by the end of the Close if you see it convenient, or else to turn up by the end of the Kiln or Barn.

And I would have a porch made to the Meeting place of the Common side into the Yard, and with rubbish & earth as before, you may raise the Yard and the floors. And I would have the Meeting place large, for truth may increase. The Barn made as wide again, which you may do with Pillars, or otherwise, which I leave to thee, and Workmen, and I would have thee take Robert Barrow's advice in it. If you think to have the Kiln continued, you may fit it up if it be worth the charge of doing, that is the making Malt there: for I understand there is a Stable already - But these things I must leave to you.

I would have it gone about, and prepare things for it beforehand as soon as you can; when you have viewed it and see what you will want, whether Lime, Sand, Wood, or Stone: And I would have Robert Barrow to do it if he can. And I would have next Winter an Orchard planted when you see fit: you may get some Trees set about the Close: and if thou will set some of thy Fir Trees there thou may: And when all is done, and fitted completely for the Lord's service and his Peoples: let it stand 'til there be occasion for it: And I desire thee to be very careful in this thing, & let it be done as soon as may be: for it is not for myself, but for the service of the Lord and his People: and let it be done substantially."

The letter continues with a reference to a "time of liberty" after persecution, and to the danger of falling away which easier times can bring.

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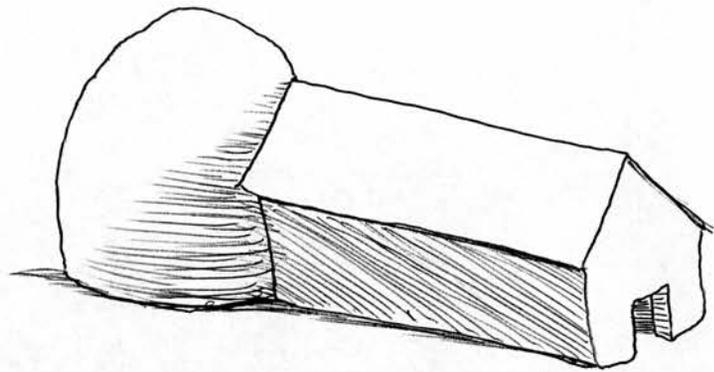
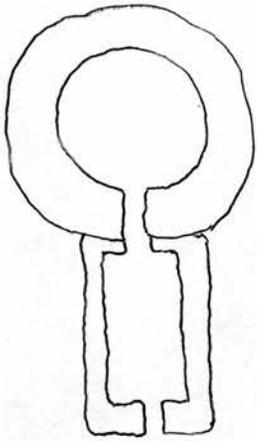
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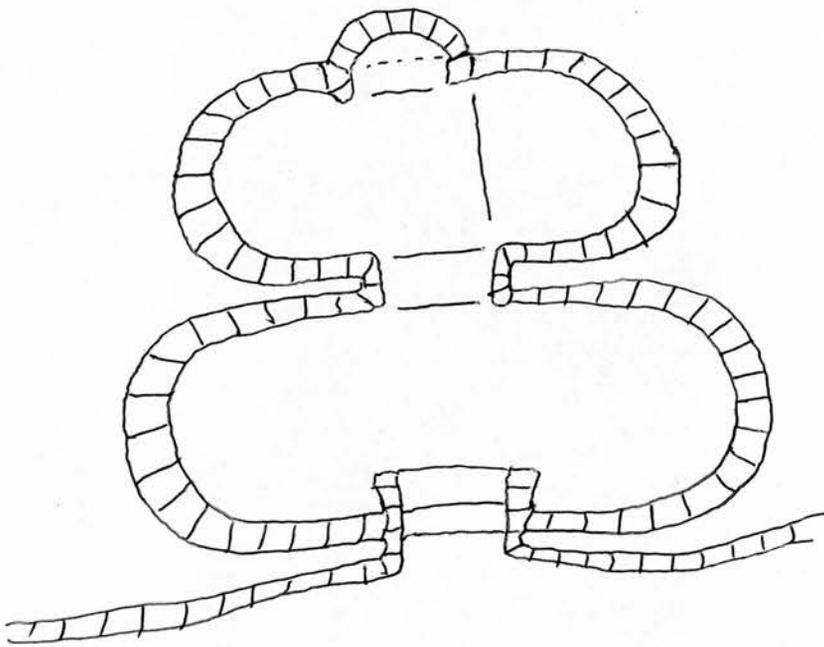
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ILLUSTRATIONS



THOLOS

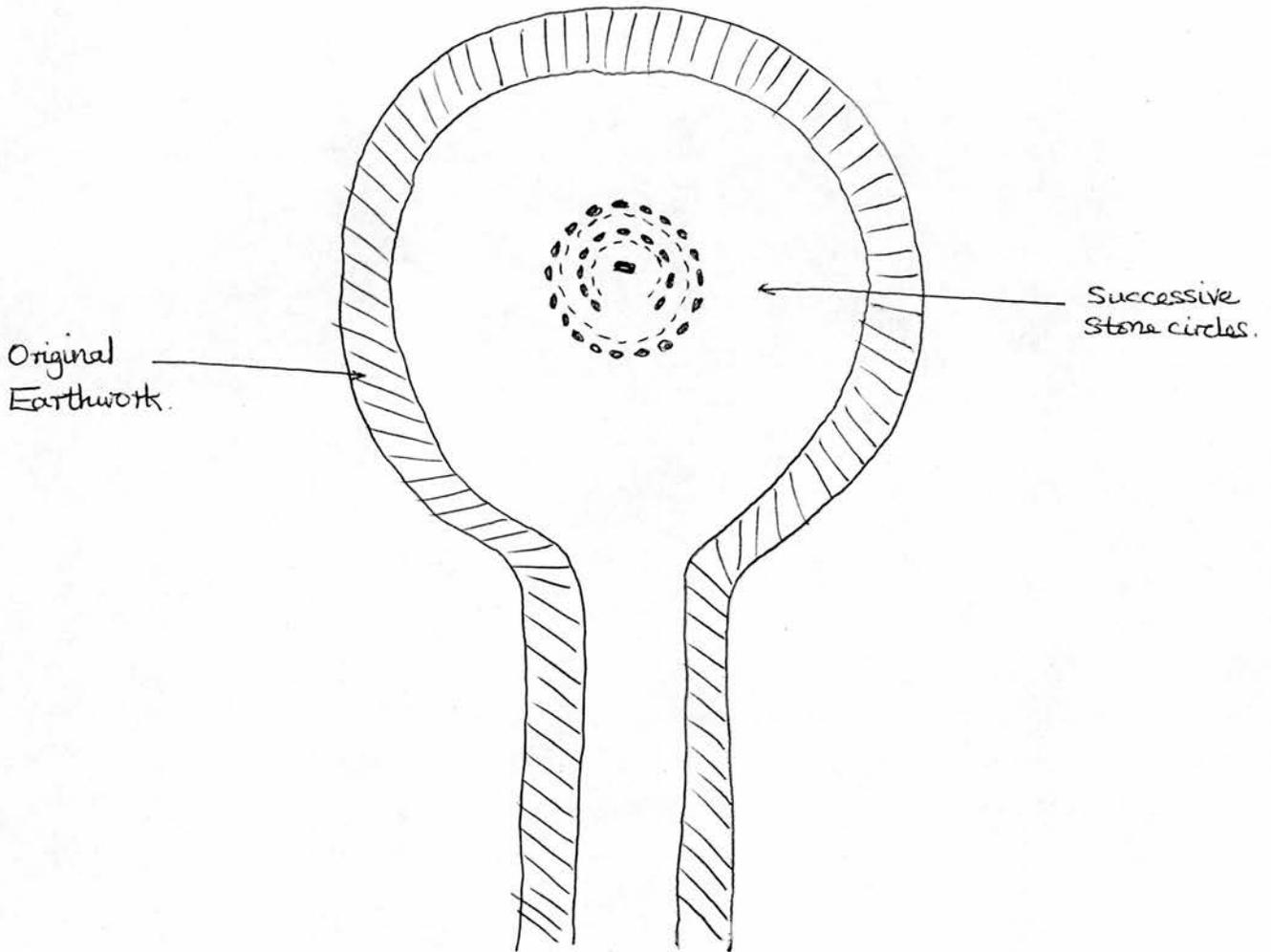
(James, p. 54).



SKETCH SHOWING TYPICAL GROUND PLAN
OF BUILDINGS OF GIGANTIA, GOZO.

(Taken from Maringer, p. 153).

STONEHENGE.



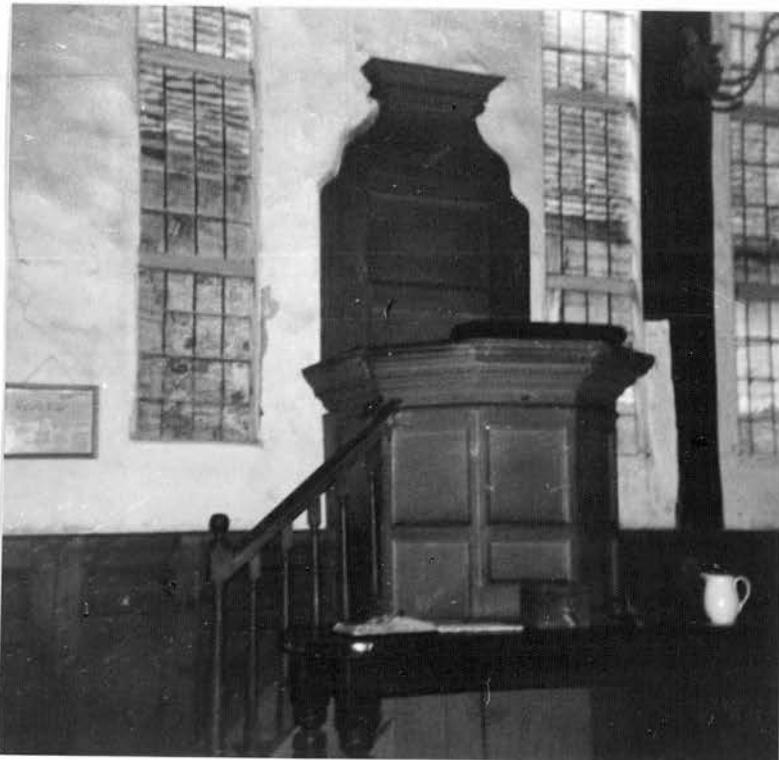
SKETCH PLAN SHOWING POSSIBLE LAY-OUT.

(Adapted from Maringer, p.161).



Entrance

Tewkesbury Old Baptist Church



Pulpit

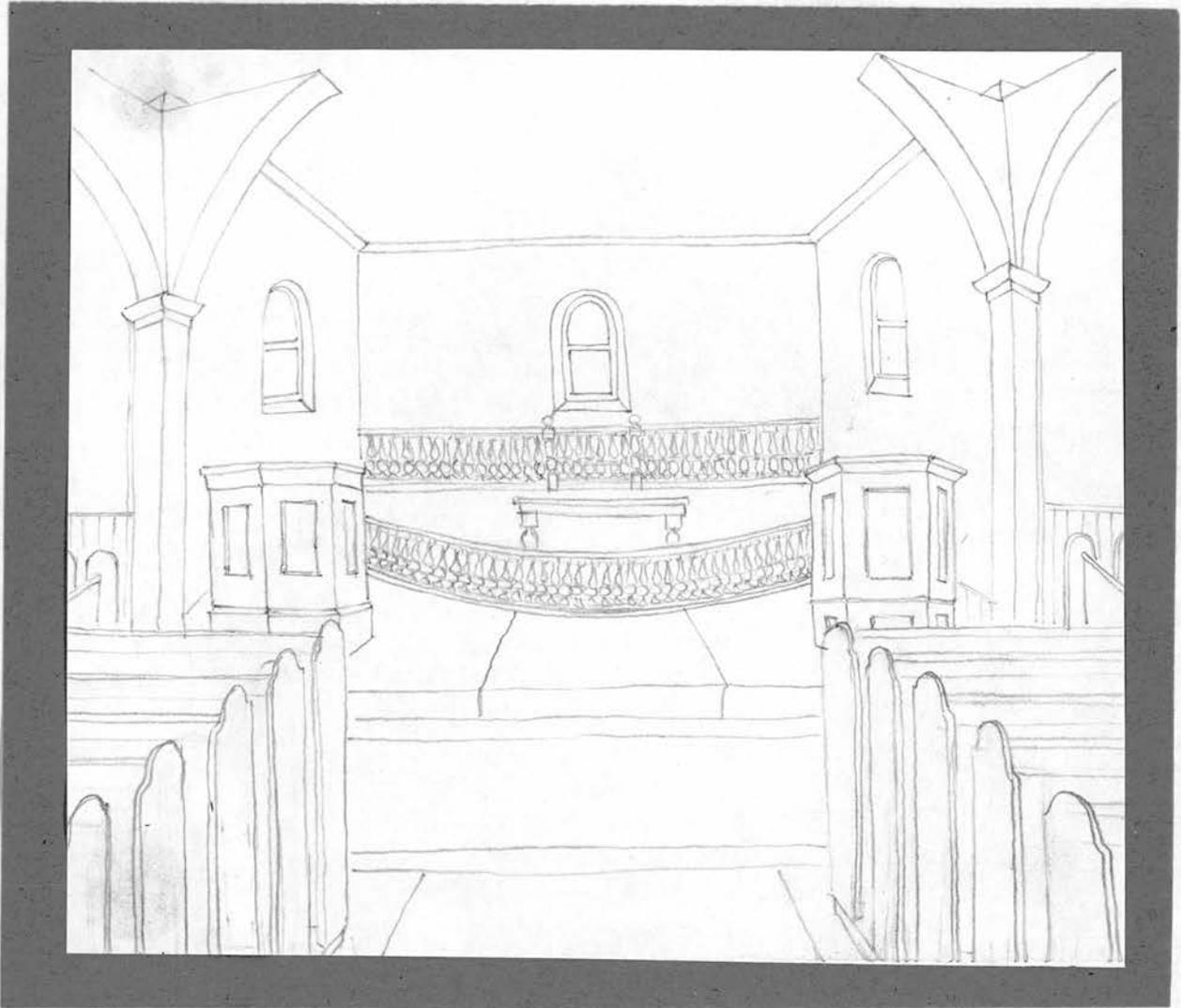


Horningsham Independent Chapel
(1566)



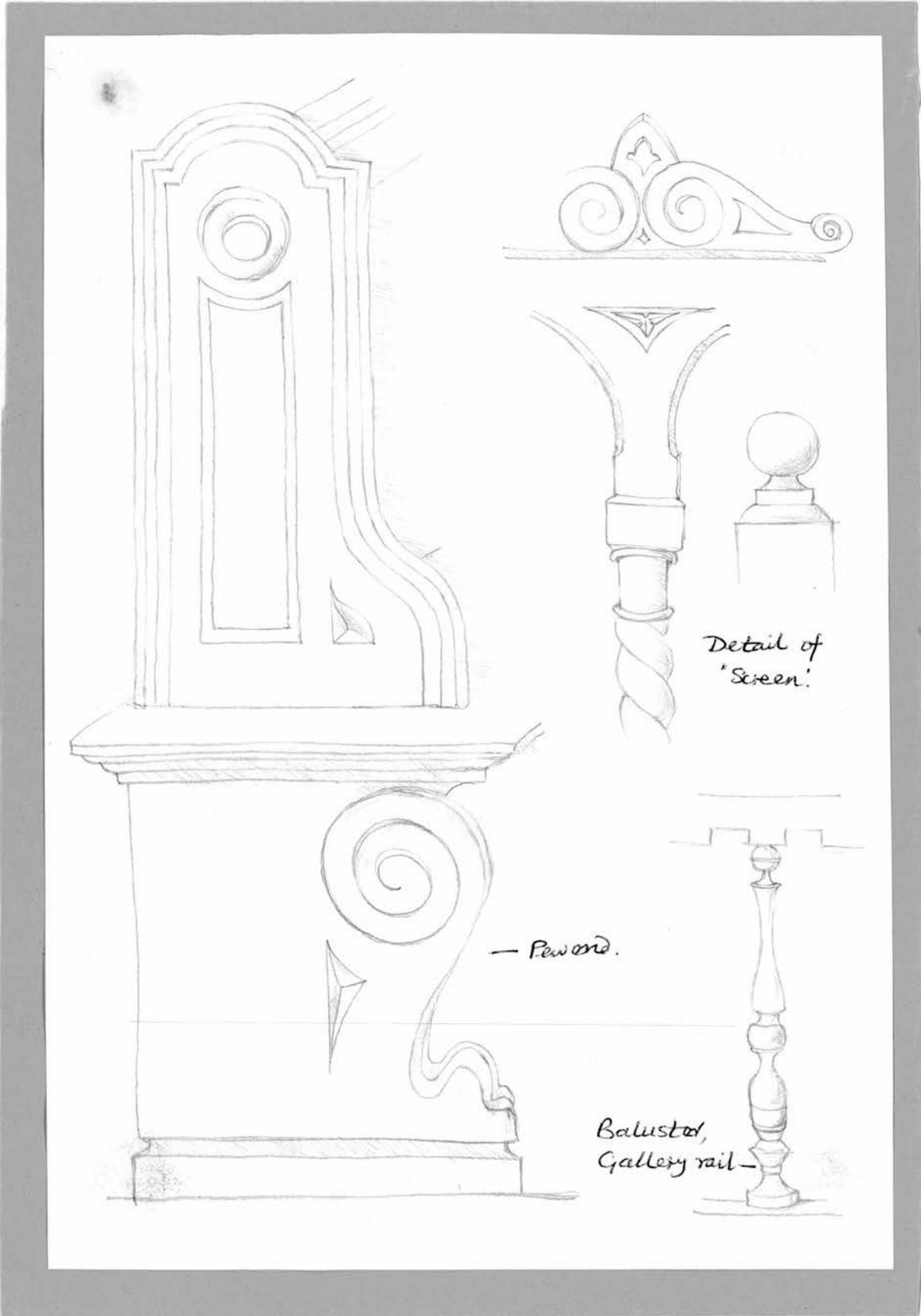
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL
HORNINGSHAM, WILTSHIRE

Sketch of Interior.



ST. SAVIOUR GATE
UNITARIAN CHAPEL, YORK.

Interior.



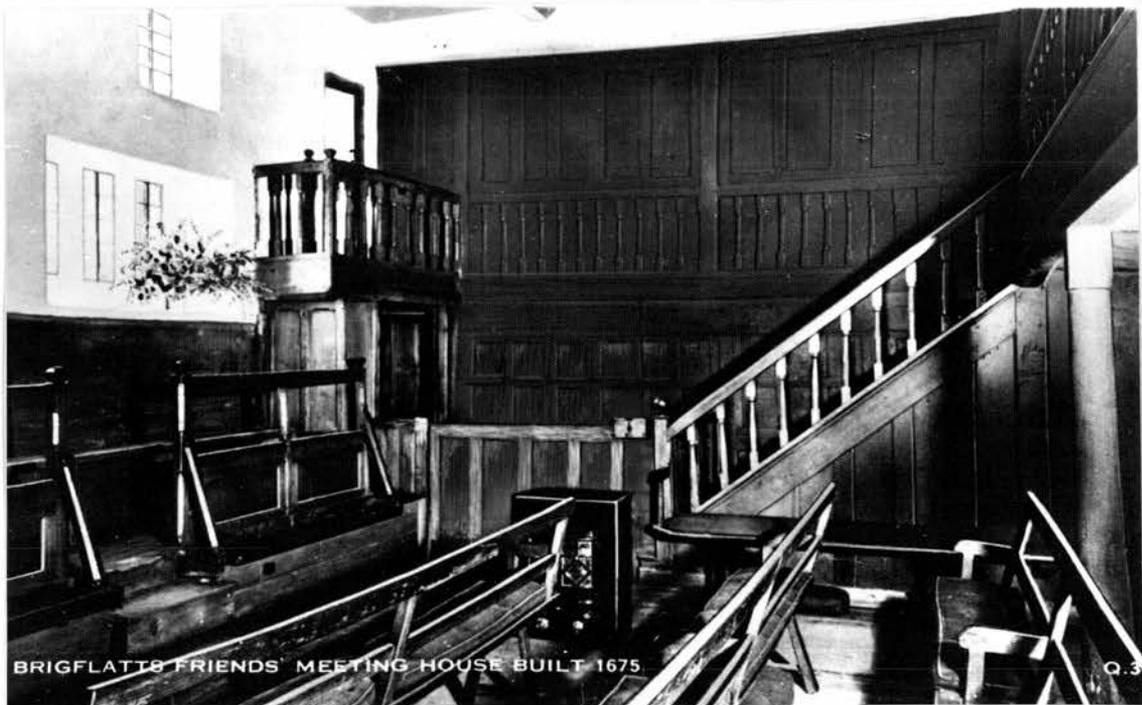
DETAIL OF WOODWORK IN THE ST. SAVIOURGATE
UNITARIAN CHAPEL, YORK.

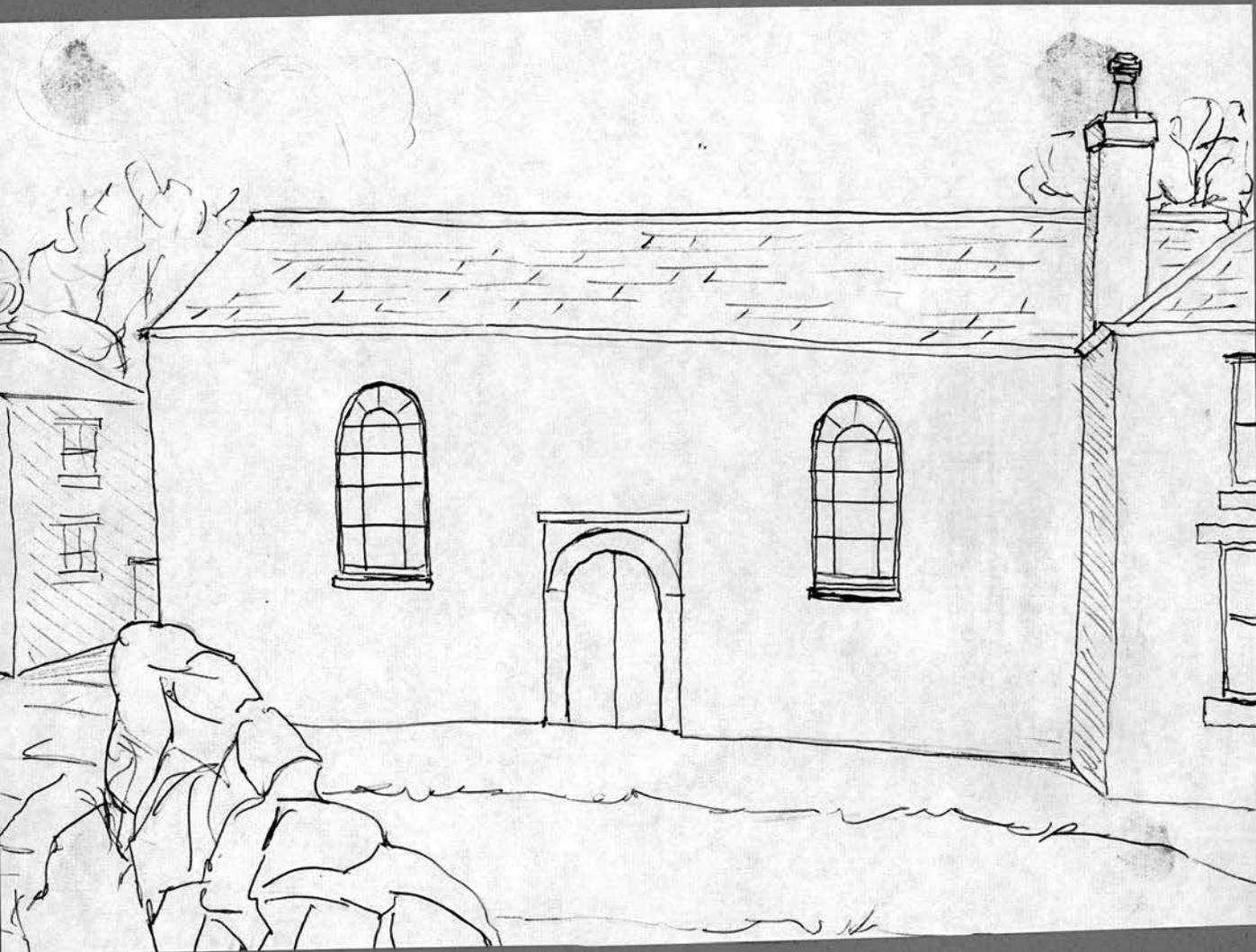


Nailsworth Friends' Meeting House



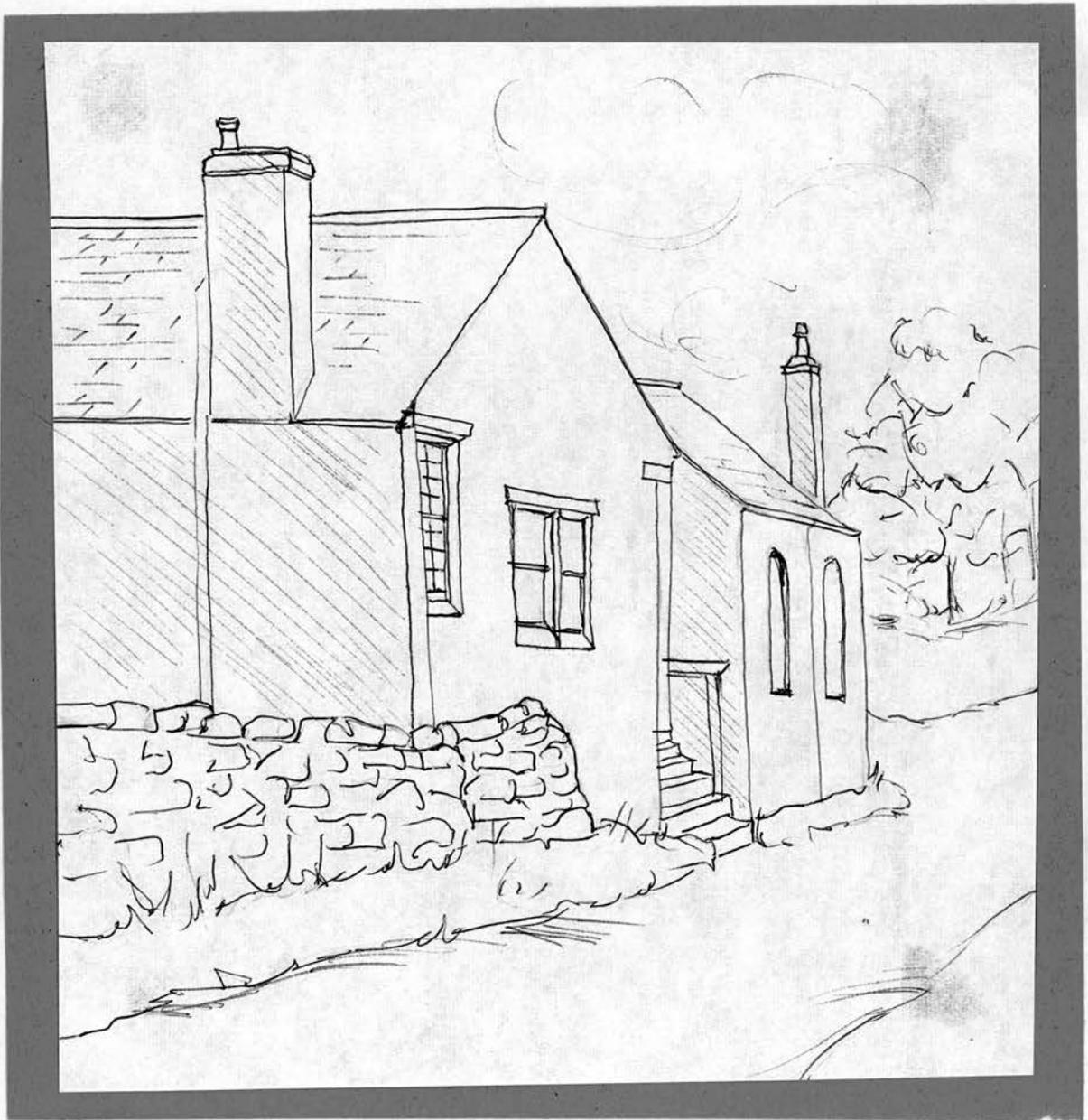
Brigflatts Friends' Meeting House
(1675)





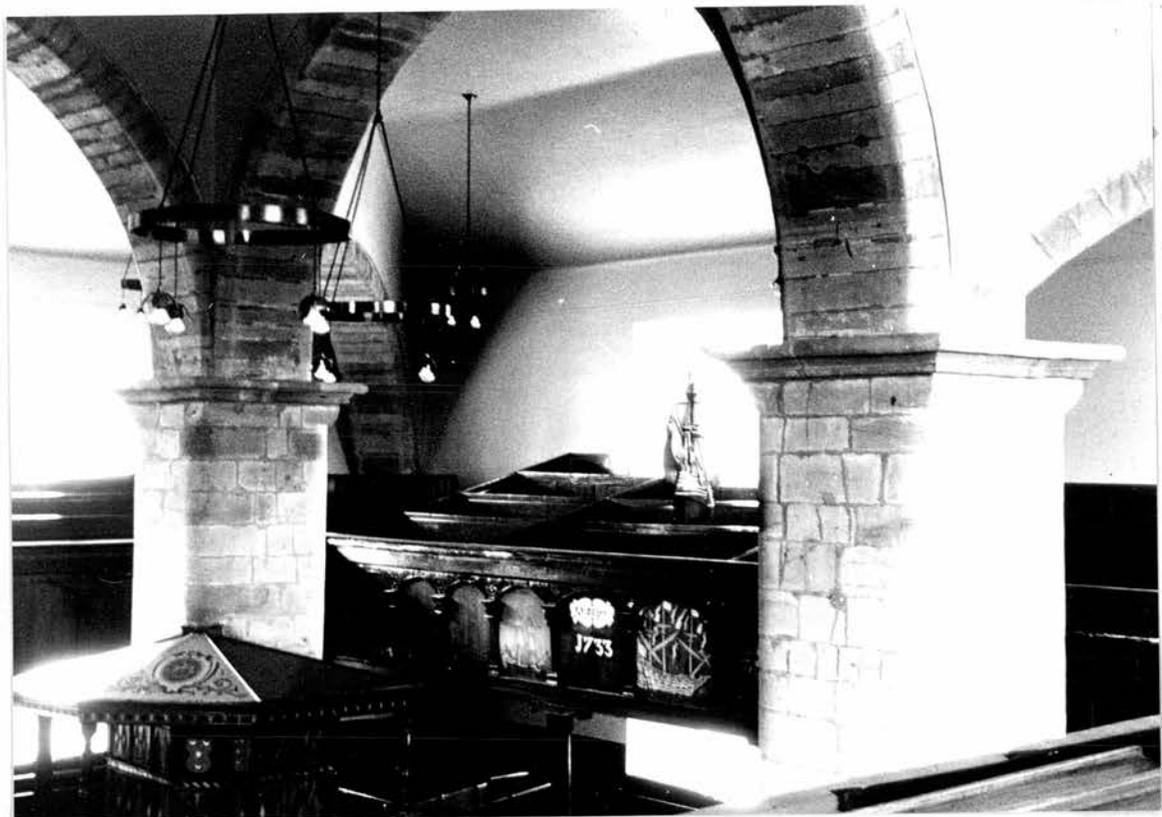
NEWBIGGIN-IN-TEESDALE

METHODIST CHAPEL.



NEWBIGGIN-IN-TEESDALE

Rear View of Methodist Chapel and Caretaker's House.



Burntisland Parish Church
Interior from Gallery behind pulpit,
showing painted Guild Lofts, and
Magistrates' Pew.



Burntisland Parish Church
interior, looking to pulpit.



Burntisland Parish Church
(1592)