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# The Theology of Church Building in India

J. F. BUTLER

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The notes in this article refer by letter and number to books listed in the Bibliography at the end.)

## A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN ART OUTSIDE THE WEST

In a recent series of articles<sup>1</sup> I have been feeling my way towards a doctrine about the arts in the Younger Churches. This doctrine, so far as I have yet attained it, can be summarized in these eight theses:

1. *Christian art is necessary.*—Art for the Christian Church is not a sin, nor a mere luxury: it is all but a necessity. Not only does the Church have to have buildings and cult-implements of some kind, and had better have them beautiful rather than ugly; more importantly, the side of human nature which makes art is (for the community, even if not for every individual) an essential side, which like the rest of human nature must be redeemed and used to God's glory, or else it will remain as sin and as a centre of the personality's disintegration. Thus bad or warped Christian art, while not so immediately hostile to the soul as is bad Christian conduct or devotion, yet is both the expression of a spiritual disease and a cause of a worsening of that disease: contrariwise, sound Christian art both expresses and propagates spiritual health.

<sup>1</sup> B6, B7, B8, B9.

2. *Art in the western Churches' 'mission fields', till about thirty years ago, has been thoroughly western.*—It is true that in its first great expansion—from about A.D. 30 to roughly A.D. 1100, in the growth begun by the 'acts' of the Apostles, consolidated, despite barbarian inroads, as the official religion of the Roman Empire, pushed back by the spectacular sweep of Islam, and finally all but halted in the second, the mediaeval, consolidation of western 'Christendom'—in this first great expansion the Church took over local art-forms and used them freely, till gradually out of them it developed forms uniquely its own. The second great expansion, the modern 'missionary' period, began, for Rome, with the great Portuguese pioneering voyages; for Protestantism, not till the very end of the eighteenth century, with the multiplication of the great Missionary Societies; for all, it is ending now, as every corner of the globe has been touched by the Gospel and each Confession in its own way begins to hand over power to the local nationals. In this second expansion, western Christianity has for much the most part exported its own art into the newly evangelized areas. There have been some fascinating exceptions to this—such as the Japanese seventeenth-century martyr-paintings, Castiglione's Chinese paintings in the Ricci period, some aspects of the Spanish 'mission churches' in Mexico, southern U.S.A. and Paraguay, the great series of Congo crucifixes of 'the era of Christ the Redeemer', and 'Père Six' cathedral at Phat-Diem in the late nineteenth century. But, by and large, the modern missionary movement, till quite recently, has taken western art-forms with it. Converts have been trained on these, have come to expect them and are, with few exceptions, intensely conservative about them.

3. *That westernization of Christian art outside Europe was thoroughly vicious.*—It is invidious, or perhaps meaningless, to condemn the past; and I do not intend to assert that the original westernizers acted in bad faith, or that their policy did much harm in the context of their own times, or even that any other policy was possible in the psychology of those times. But its continuance today must be radically condemned. It stamps the Church as unnecessarily foreign. We cannot indeed avoid the fact of history that in most places Christianity has come to non-Christian lands from the West, or the fact of theology that Christianity must radically criticize all local thought-forms and conduct-forms and demand therefore some measure of break by the convert from his non-Christian society. That much denationalization is part of the necessary price of Gospel truth, which on some matters cannot compromise. It is therefore all the more important that this necessary evil should be imposed only where it really *is* necessary: but the westernizing of Christian art grossly exaggerates it. Western buildings, pictures and so forth have flaunted foreignness at the convert, and then have left the foreignized convert to flaunt himself at the local culture. The result has been disintegration both in the individual and in his society—a dull art that expresses no lyric release of spirit, and heavy Christianity that cannot soar, a *milieu* resentful about its sterile disruption. Westernized art might pass in days when the superiority of the West was taken for granted and western colonialism was taken to be just and beneficial; it is hopelessly out of place amid modern nationalisms.

4. *There has been a reaction lately from this westernism, in the enlightened among both nationals and missionaries. As a powerful*

force, it dates from 1923, the year in which, shortly after his arrival in China as Papal Legate, Archbishop (now Cardinal) Celso Costantini sent a formal and closely-reasoned letter to two of his Prefects Apostolic, requiring them in future to erect churches in the Chinese style.<sup>1</sup> It is true that in this pronouncement Mgr Costantini was consciously building on many precedents in Roman theory and practice;<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, it is also true that after 1923 Roman missions, like the rest of us, have perpetrated many shocking westernisms: nevertheless, 1923 was a decisive date. The movement thus begun culminated in the great Vatican Exhibition of 1950.<sup>3</sup> Most of the Protestant experiments along the same lines, such as the wonderful pictures by Canon E. G. Paterson's boys at Cyrene in Southern Rhodesia, and the *jebalayam* at Tirupattur, date from after 1923; but enough are earlier to show that they are partly independent of Mgr Costantini's initiative.<sup>4</sup> A new spirit has been stirring, replacing the old colonialism in Church as in State; and new art-forms have been sought to match it.

5. *The 'adaptation' which this reform calls for is not a simple matter.*—The reaction, thus begun in all Confessions, is as yet far from complete; even the need for it is not widely accepted. And it would be wrong to join over-ardent reformers in attributing all slowness and hesitation here to conservative apathy or even to 'imperialism' and 'slave-mentality'. The doubts and hesitations are very often due, at least in part, to the fact that the 'adaptation' of indigenous art-forms for Christian uses is fraught with difficulty and danger. Non-Christian forms are full of symbolisms, associations, purposes and sentiments which are alien, some even hostile, to Christian truth.<sup>5</sup> Our use of them, therefore, must needs be cautious and experimental.

6. *This already complex situation is further complicated by the emergence of 'modern' art.*—Adaptation is sometimes debated as if there were a straight issue between western traditionalism and other traditionalisms. But that is not the case. The West has itself deserted its traditional styles for modern techniques. These claim to be international, supra-racial; and some of them will unquestionably oust eastern traditions as they have ousted western. The sternest Indian nationalist, for example, does not seem to mind ferro-concrete office-blocks that look very like office-blocks in New York; and he certainly does not want to design a Hindu motor-car. Ought we then to consider the adaptation problem as out-of-date, and simply by-pass it, by building in a style which is neither western nor indigenous but modern?

7. *No static solution must be sought.*—'Culture-mingling' (of which our problem is a facet)<sup>6</sup> has few laws but many surprises. Our problem is not one that can be posed and answered: art lives in an advance to creative novelty; so any final solution could only be a sterile one. The answer will not come in any theory, but only in the creative life of art itself, through long years of experiment and groping. All that

<sup>1</sup> C14, 212-3, 223-9.

<sup>2</sup> C14, *pass.*, esp. I. v, xv (39-45, 141-6); S2.

<sup>3</sup> C1; G1; H1; H2; H3; H4; L3; O1; S1; V1.

<sup>4</sup> L1, 6, 18; various plates in F1, F2, F3.

<sup>5</sup> V., e.g. D1; L1, 25-6, 29, 47-8, 246; C14, 169-75, for various aspects of the controversy.

<sup>6</sup> H5; B9.

the theorist can do is to demonstrate the futility of certain blind alleys such as continued westernism, and help the Church as a whole to give the atmosphere of mingled adventure and patience in which alone the creative artists will be able to struggle towards the temporary solution for our age.

8. *There are no basic theological objections to the experiments called for.*—Every church building, since it serves certain religious purposes and expresses certain religious ideas, must stand under theological judgment. Any particular experiments in either adaptation or modernism, involving as they do *rapprochement* to purposes and ideas not in the Christian tradition, stand in special need of careful theological scrutiny; and indeed part of my purpose in this article is to make such theological criticism of some Indian experiments. But the general principle of such experiments cannot be ruled out *a priori* on theological grounds. In missiology, one must either grant some degree of validity to non-Christian systems and their associated cultures, or one must deny it. The former position is taken, in different forms, by Liberal Protestantism and by Roman Catholicism; the latter is involved in the now fashionable Barthianism. To the Liberal, adaptation is the most natural thing in the world: it is simply the mode in which, in art, Christianity is 'the crown of Hinduism' and of other faiths. Likewise Mgr Costantini, on the Roman side, can say: 'The art of the peoples of ancient civilization, in India and the Far East, is *naturaliter Christiana*, that is to say, is marvellously prepared, by its highly spiritual nature, to interpret Christian subjects and put itself at the service of Christian worship.' It is not perhaps so obvious, but it is equally true, that a wide range of experiment can likewise be justified in terms of the 'Biblical' theology now dominant in Protestantism. For, according to that, all 'religion' (which includes all outer forms, western and eastern alike) is under the judgment of God: therefore both non-Christian forms and forms which have had centuries of Christian usage are alike neutral vessels, which can be filled either with men's imaginings or with the true Word of God or with such compromises as we in our partial regeneration may contrive. Particular cases, then, must meet particular criticism; but there is no general theological ban on experiment itself.

These are the theses which I have been developing elsewhere, in a general form. My purpose in the present article is to begin a special application of them to India. I can do this only very tentatively, not at all dogmatically—because of the limitations of my experience and knowledge; because I am of the wrong nationality for this task; and because, as my seventh thesis asserted, the future Indian Christian art will come in a spontaneous creative advance, guided by its own concrete life, very little controlled or predicted by theory. In what follows, therefore, I can wish only to set some thoughts stirring, to indicate some possible lines of experiment, to focus some of the experience of the past upon the problems of the present, and perhaps to prevent some further groping in dead ends.

I shall here confine myself to the problems of Indian church buildings, and shall only occasionally glance, for the sake of illustration, at

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<sup>1</sup> Cl, 14 (my trans.); cf. S2.

other Christian arts within India, and at Christian building and other arts in other lands.

## B. CHRISTIAN BUILDING IN INDIA IN THE PAST

Wise planning for the future begins by taking stock of the past. What, then, has Christian building been in India in the past? In brief, it has been, till recent years, on the whole good in quality, but thoroughly western.

For most practical purposes, Christian building in India must be taken as beginning with the Portuguese.<sup>1</sup> It is a little odd that the Portuguese in India built so little in their own distinctive 'Manueline' style,<sup>2</sup> which was once thought to contain elements culled in India: most good scholars now deny such direct Indian influence, but the style does unquestionably arise from the impulse and upsurge of the great adventurings which led the Portuguese to India.<sup>3</sup> But those Portuguese, though they did not build very distinctively, did build nobly: they stood in a great tradition, and had wealth ample for living up to it. In Old Goa itself, four great churches that survive, and several now destroyed, and many smaller churches besides, were or are very fine specimens indeed of Baroque or Mannerism: so are the great church of Sant' Ana de Talaulim in the Island of Goa, the cathedrals of Damão (Daman) and of São Paulo at Dio (Diu), and several smaller churches in the old settlements, even as far afield as San Thomé, Madras.<sup>4</sup>

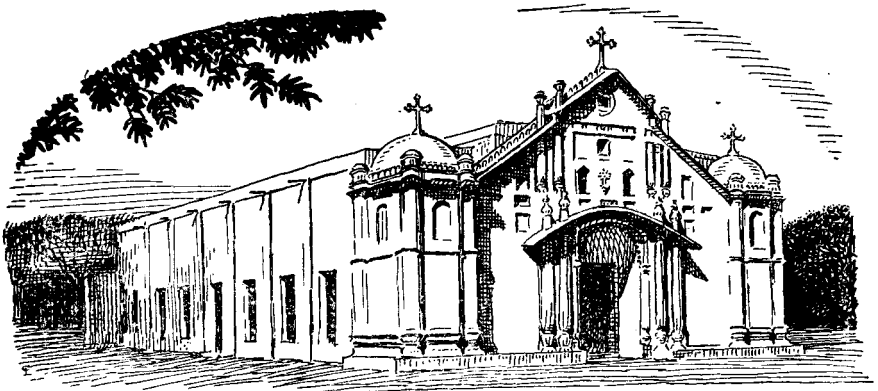


FIG. 1—Holy Rosary Church, Tejgaon, near Dacca.

<sup>1</sup> However, *v. infr.*, sec. C, para. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Manueline dates between 1495 and 1521 in its metropolitan area; it continued longer in the remoter parts of Portugal. The earliest churches at Goa are dated 1510 and 1513, and are not in that style. There never seems to have been much Manueline in Portuguese India; the only pieces now extant are the west doorway of São Francisco at Goa (the sole remains of the original church of 1521), parts of the Church of the Priorado do Rocário at Goa (1543), and fragments of a small church and a doorway in Dio (Diu). (C6, 9; C9; personal observation at Goa; information from Dr. M. T. Chicó about Diu.)

<sup>3</sup> D1; C8, 4.

<sup>4</sup> A7; D3; A6, 56, 58, 65; illustrations to A5, C6; C7; C8; C10; personal knowledge of the (unpublished) Madras churches.

So far as major architectural features go, the style of these buildings is entirely Portuguese, with two exceptions only. These are: the isolated arch in front of the Cathedral façade at Goa, which is the sole surviving fragment of the early Palace of the Viceroys; and the façade of the Holy Rosary Church at Tejgaon, near Dacca (1677):<sup>1</sup> in these there are real blends of Portuguese with Gujerati and Bengali features respectively.

In some smaller decorative features of the buildings, there is indeed some blending of the styles. The most notable example of this is the tomb-plaque of Dona Catarina de Sá in the Priory Church of the Rosário at Old Goa:<sup>2</sup> and elsewhere at Old Goa and in the Goa Territory there are many cases of subtle infiltration of Indian motifs and treatments, as indeed was inevitable when most of the labour force was Indian.<sup>3</sup> Such partial Indianization of architectural details is of a piece with the frequent, and in many cases full, mixture of the styles, in British as well as in Portuguese India, in pictures and in the 'minor arts' of furniture, tapestries, ecclesiastical silverware, etc.<sup>4</sup> Under different circumstances, this mixture might have been the beginning of a true blend of the cultures of East and West;<sup>5</sup> but in actual fact it led to no very high achievement even in the minor arts, and left the major art of architecture almost unaffected.

The Protestants began their building in India much later than the Portuguese: their oldest church in the East, St. Mary's in Fort St. George, Madras, dates from 1680. They also in the old days generally built very well. For instance, in Madras, St. George's Cathedral, St. Andrew's Kirk and Christ Church are all very good Palladian; and St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, is as good a piece of 'Strawberry Hill' Gothic as could be found anywhere. No doubt almost anywhere in India one could compile a list of good 'Company' or similar churches in the area: they are somewhat staid and governmental, and are cheap and heavy in their furnishings; but at their best they have much of the same dignified grace as the more famous 'Colonial' churches of eastern U.S.A.

Good—but pure western. This architecture has been transported half-way across the world, to a land of utterly different traditions, climate and landscape;<sup>6</sup> and the only changes are that most of the windows are replaced by louvered doors, going down to the ground level instead of

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<sup>1</sup> C14, 270; information from Fr. Timm. There is apparently also some assimilation in the smaller country churches in parts of Goa Territory (C5; C6, 10—but we await A7).

<sup>2</sup> C9, 5, 7-8 and pl. 3.

<sup>3</sup> C8, 7-9 and pls. 1, 3, 4; C6, 10-1; A5, 13.

<sup>4</sup> A1; A3; A6, 59, 61, 63; C2; C4; C5; C11; C12; C14, 279-81 (this greatly overstates the case for Italian responsibility for the Taj Mahal); D3; E1; H6; H7, 21-2, 510-24 and pl. 48; I2; I3; I4; I5; I6; K2; L1, pls. 66-7 and p. 232; M1; P1; W1. (The originals nearly always show the blending more clearly than do the photographs). The taste spread to the West: e.g. C3: indeed, the influence always was a two-way one—that is the main lesson of the careful research of E1; G3.

<sup>5</sup> It is significant that Goa, the collecting station for all the eastern trade with the West, felt Chinese influence also in this period: D3, 7-11 and pls. 8-11; E1, 69, 71, 189; probably also A6, 57-8.

<sup>6</sup> L1, 45; B3, 24.

ending at raised sills, so that the heat is not intensified by glass and air-flow is more available and more controllable.<sup>1</sup>

For the most part modern churches have been less successful. The Georgian standards of good taste, pedestrian but sound, lingered longer in India than in England—'the outposts of Empire' being always more conservative than the metropolis. But ultimately Victorian vulgarity and confusion did reach India. And so Catholics in modern India have put up some dreadful pseudo-Gothic bits of wedding-cake, and Protestants some very dreary Bethels. There have been exceptions: for instance, the Cathedral of Medak is a fine building in a slightly and intelligently modernized Gothic. But good new work in the western traditional styles is now rare in India. Most of the good modern Christian buildings have been experiments in adaptation: and we thus pass naturally to the matter of our next two Sections.

### C. POSSIBLE MODELS IN HINDUISM

Hinduism is the most autochthonous of the developed Indian religions, and accordingly the two main Hindu styles (northern and southern) are the most indigenous of the Indian religious building styles. It is natural, then, to look first to the temple as a possible model for a Christian church of an indigenous type.

There is, however, an obstacle arising from the differing purposes of temple and church—and, while extreme functionalism is false, no one nowadays denies that function must be taken very seriously into account in architecture. The Hindu temple differs radically from the Christian church in both its origin and its use—its heavenward and its earthward purpose. In origin, it is, in its finest examples, an offering to God rather than the fulfilment of any human need, even religious need. Most of its bulk, often vast, serves no purpose but to glorify God. Now, that is not a meaningless purpose, or an unworthy one: Christians too desire to glorify God in art and to make lovely buildings in His praise—they remember the alabaster box of ointment. But in this they seek a certain manner and degree and balance. When there is so much sheer human need to meet, we do not think it right to spend vast sums on beauty unaccompanied by mundane use: and the beauty of a building comes, for Christian sacramentalism, more fittingly from a simple organization of the lines of that building's utility than from the heaping up of a merely decorative pile like the *gopuram*.<sup>2</sup> From the origin of the Hindu temple, then, we find in one way an excess over the true mean. In another respect, we find a paucity, due to differing purposes. A temple is a building where the idol can have ceremonies performed on the analogy of the court life of a *rājā*, and where worshippers can come singly or in small groups to do *pūjā* and have *darśan*. In the bigger temples there must indeed be much space, to accommodate crowds at pilgrimage times and permit various subsidiary functions: but there is no congregational worship or preaching in the Christian sense, and therefore no

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<sup>1</sup> A further change is the use round Madras of the fine, and I believe now unreproducible, 'egg-shell *chunam*'. A parallel in old Portuguese India was the use, in windows and cloisters, of mother-of-pearl 'glazing'. But perhaps both these had European prototypes.

<sup>2</sup> This, I admit, implies a criticism of Medak Cathedral tower.



need for the special kind of spaciousness which a Christian church requires.

Hence the better-known types of Hindu temple can hardly be models for Christian churches. Hindus themselves must judge of their fitness by the norms of their own purposes: but for our purposes they would be too large in extent, too small in covered space with a clear view forwards, too ornate, too unfunctional, too airless. The nearest approach in a Christian church to a close copy of one of these types is the *jebalayam* at the Kristu-kula *āśrama* at Tirupattur.<sup>1</sup> Even there, the actual worship-chamber is more of a free adaptation than a copy: of the more purely indigenous parts, the *gopuram* is almost completely unfunctional, and the ornate *vīmāna* largely so. Experiments and gestures of inter-group understanding are badly needed in this strife-torn age; so it is good that this particular experiment and gesture has been made; but it is probably not desirable that it should be repeated.

This, however, does not mean that the Hindu temple cannot at all serve as a model for the Christian church in India. The Hindu temple, indeed, is so various in form that it would be surprising if models could not be found in it for almost anything! There are several types or aspects or developments of the temple that look specially promising for our purposes: in some cases experience has proved their fittingness.

1. *The box-shaped small temple* can be well adapted. One pleasing example of this is the chapel of the Theological School at Tumkur, in Mysore State,<sup>2</sup> which is especially interesting as showing how, though the main appeal of much Hindu architecture is in its richness, yet there are in it basic lines which will stand the test of simple treatment, and which with this simplification, together with other adaptations, can yield a thoroughly satisfactory Christian building. Tumkur uses the Mysore style: there is a satisfactory treatment of the northern style tower at the parish church of Meharauli, Delhi: so far as I can judge from photographs, the Tamil style is used effectively at the chapels of the Bishop's Theological College, Tirumaraiyur, and of the Social Centre for Women, Vellore;<sup>3</sup> but with a rather dull and heavy effect, perhaps through too much effort at simplification, in the chapel of the Christian Mission Hospital at Madurai; and the northern style has been well used by the Roman Catholics in their church at Mokameh in the Patna Diocese.<sup>4</sup>

2. There are types of temple *maṇḍapam*, and of the closely-connected *open-hall type of village shrine*, which can serve us almost directly as models. An outstandingly successful example of this is the chapel of the Bentinck Girls' High School at Vepery, Madras. Not dissimilar churches have resulted in Ceylon from adaptations of the secular audience-hall of the Kandyan kings, in the chapels of Trinity College, Kandy, and of the Training Colony at Peradeniya.<sup>5</sup> In both Ceylon and India the *maṇḍapam* has secular uses, and this is held an advantage for

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<sup>1</sup> F1, 65-6; F3, 48-52, 64; L1, 50-1, 233 and pls. 85-6.

<sup>2</sup> F3, 61.

<sup>3</sup> F3, 56-7, 62-3.

<sup>4</sup> C1, 125. For other Roman experiments in India, v. C13; G1; H1; H2; H3; L2; L3; S1; T1; VI.

<sup>5</sup> F1, 80-1; F3, 54-5; S3, Chap. v; L1, 52, 234 and pl. 94.

adaptation, in reducing the volume of non-Christian associations ;<sup>1</sup> against this must be set the practical disadvantages of openness during monsoons.

3. *The halls of some Hindu sects and societies* are erected for congregational purposes not unakin to our own, and are worthy of study, as being the work of thoroughly Indian minds trying to solve our very problem. Two fine instances are the temple of the Belur Maṭh near Calcutta, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission, and the chapel of the revived Buddhist community at Sarnath.

4. India has *various syncretistic styles*, which may give us clues as to sound ways of adaptation. Syncretism is not always sterile ; it can be fruitful new beginning. Some even contend that the superb Mughal style of Delhi and Agra is a synthesis of Persian and Hindu styles : unquestionably there are in the 'provinces' many fine types of synthesis of Muslim and Hindu styles, as in the mosques of Jaunpur, and the tomb of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam. Especially instructive, for our purposes, are the examples of synthesis of Hindu and European styles, as in the street of the fast-decaying houses of the *zamindārs* at Kalahasti ; the *Kalyāna-maṇḍapam* on the roof of the Thousand-Pillared *Maṇḍapam* in the Ekāmbaranātha Temple at Kāñcī ; the pedimented façade of the Viṣṇu Temple at Kalighat, Calcutta ; and the eighteenth-century temples in the Pondá area of Goa, notably at Queulá and Sirodá.<sup>2</sup> There is even, in the late style of the *Nāyaks* at Madurai and Tanjore and Gingee, a synthesis of Hindu, Muslim and European, which is of particular interest for its use, in buildings primarily Hindu in spirit, of the vault, which is so rare in pure Hindu work. It is true that none of these syntheses is itself in the front rank of artistic achievement, nor did any of them lead on to any full development ; but the possibilities are there. It may be that most of our indigenizing experiments have been too purist, that the syntheses here mentioned point to a possible way, and that thus Bishop Azariah, whatever the quality of his particular achievement at Dornakal Cathedral, was right in attempting a blend of Hindu and Muslim there.<sup>3</sup>

5. I think it is probable that proper research might show that for one region our problem was really solved long ago—that the ancient 'Syrian' Church of Malabar, established for itself, in the mediaeval period, a satisfactory adaptation of the local Hindu temple-form. I understand that the oldest buildings of this Church have been much rebuilt in post-Portuguese times, but yet that fragments of pre-Portuguese work are incorporated in some of them. Investigation might confirm that these fragments belong to buildings of local form : I have been told this in vague terms, and it seems borne out by the detached carvings which have been published.<sup>4</sup> Here is a field for much-needed research by a Malayalam-speaking scholar, preferably one belonging himself to the Syrian Church.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L1, 50 ; G2.

<sup>2</sup> A5, 13-4 ; A6, 57-8.

<sup>3</sup> F1, 70-3 ; F3, 47 ; L1, 51-2 and pl. 87.

<sup>4</sup> B1, pl. lxi ; J1 ; H7, i. A, iii, 2, 3, 6, vi : 1, and relevant illustrations (pls. 9-12, 25, 26, 28-34, 36-8, 41, 44-6).

<sup>5</sup> I am not aware that anything at all has been published on the architecture of these ancient churches. A few years ago a Malabari Carmelite called on me in Selly Oak, told me he was researching on this architecture and promised to keep me in touch with his work ; but I have not heard from him since. May I appeal to local scholars for photographs and information about these pre-Portuguese remains ?

#### D. POSSIBLE MODELS IN ISLAM

When Christians adapt the art of any non-Christian faith, there are always theological dangers. With Hinduism, the main danger was that of being drawn into or associated with its syncretism; with Islam, it is that of sharing in a monotheism which rejects Christ and all that flows from Him. In addition, there is a slight legal danger of our arches being in some circumstances treated as mosques, and political danger in some areas of the popular view associating us too closely with one community as against another. Against these risks, of course, must be set the great and increasing danger of foreignness.

To turn from the dangers to the opportunities—these are very great. True, many mosques that we think of as typical would not be suitable for copying by Christians. For instance, I would not like to have to hear a sermon or watch an Eucharist from a back corner of a courtyard modelled on that of the Jamā' Masjid of Delhi. The *mezquita* of Córdoba was indeed turned into a Christian cathedral; but it is a terribly bad one for practical purposes, and in fact only the *coro*, intruded into it by Christians in the sixteenth century, is used at all nowadays, except for quite isolated chapels. (It cannot, I think, have been previously very good as a mosque; and a Christian cathedral such as that of Lincoln is far from ideal as a 'great church' for a modern diocese.)

Nevertheless, the mosque has the potentialities of being a good model for a church. This is not surprising in view of the origin of its main form, in Christian churches of the Byzantine area or of Armenia; nor is its purpose so very different from that of the church, particularly for Protestants, since Islam is in origin simply an early Puritan heresy of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Hence historically much interchange of buildings between the faiths has been possible. Some types of mosque have many elements borrowed from churches.<sup>2</sup> In Spain many a mosque has (though we may regret the means) made a very satisfactory church; and in the Byzantine area (by equally regrettable history) many a church has made a very satisfactory mosque, the most famous example being Sancta Sophia at Constantinople; in Cyprus even some Gothic churches, despite their less Islamic nature and greater difficulties of orientation, are so used.<sup>3</sup> In Spain Gothic and Moorish fused in Mozarabic and the lovely new *mudéjar* style;<sup>4</sup> in southern Portugal the Islamic horseshoe arch<sup>5</sup> appears in what is otherwise Gothic or Manueline. Normally indeed a church requires a fuller chancel than the tiny *mīhrāb* (which indeed in architectural origin is a vestigial chancel);<sup>6</sup> but *mudéjar* shows how this can be added without any violence to the spirit of an Islamic style.

There are, I think, five ways in which the mosque, or other type of Islamic building, could provide a model for a church:

(1) It is possible simply to copy the mosque which is rectangular in shape and fully roofed.<sup>7</sup> This has been done beautifully at All Saints'

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<sup>1</sup> It was so treated by St. John of Damascus.

<sup>2</sup> E3, 379a, 380a, b, 381a, 385b, 386a, 388a. Cf. the controversy in B4, 159.

<sup>3</sup> E3, 320-1.

<sup>4</sup> B2, esp. Chaps. v and xii; E2; II.

<sup>5</sup> Islamic with reservations—v. B2, 7, 9.

<sup>6</sup> E3, 338.

<sup>7</sup> Though Card. Costantini disapproves: C14, 373.

Memorial Church, Peshawar<sup>1</sup> (and in Persia at the Church of St. Simon the Zealot, Shiraz).<sup>2</sup> (Indeed, in the seventeenth century the Armenians at Julfa were building their churches in the style of the local mosques.)<sup>3</sup>

(2) Another style of Muslim building, the great tomb-hall, as in the great row of royal tombs at Allahabad, would, I think, provide a fine type of hall for Christian purposes (though wasteful in height). I feel that the designs of the fine chapel of the Women's Christian College, Madras, and (from photographs) Wesley Church, Hyderabad, though both in different ways somewhat Byzantine in style, may owe something to such tombs: and at Lahore the tomb of Jahāngīr's mistress Anārkalī (1615) was actually the Christian church of St. James between 1857 and 1887.

(3) There have been experiments in the incorporation of Islamic elements in churches mainly of the normal western type, as at Dudgaon Central Church, Hyderabad State.<sup>4</sup>

(4) I would like specially to recommend as a model a form of one of India's commonest types of mosque, the smallish courtyard mosque.

Such a building would serve us quite well functionally, and would suit both the climate and our economic state. The part corresponding to the actual mosque building, if made shallow and wide, can give a good view of the altar and a reasonable hearing of the preacher to a small courtyard surrounded by a wide colonnade with narrow pillars. In such a colonnade quite a large congregation can be accommodated under roofed shade; for the rest, in the courtyard itself, shade from the sun is provided by the walls and by trees, at the times when we normally hold our services; admittedly this is inadequate during monsoons; but this does not affect too many Sundays or our major festivals. Such a church can be of great beauty; if the courtyard walls are pierced with grille-windows of the lovely Mughal type,<sup>5</sup> it is cool and airy and yet reasonably private; it is of good size, and yet avoids that wide roof-span which is

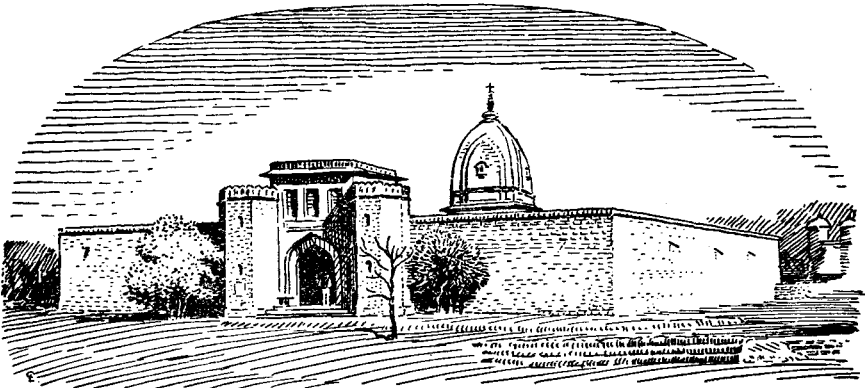


FIG. 2—St. John's Church, Meharauli, near Delhi.

<sup>1</sup> F1, 70-3; F3, 47; L1, 51, 233 and pl. 88. (The date is remarkable—1883.)

<sup>2</sup> F1, 66-9.

<sup>3</sup> P2, II. 1200-1, IV. pl. 507 (the Cathedral, 1663).

<sup>4</sup> L1, 234 and pl. 92; v. also *supr.*, C(4).

<sup>5</sup> Modern Christian windows of this type are at the Divinity School, Stevenson College, Ahmadabad (F1, 92-3; L1, 233 and pl. 84), and in the chancel at Tumkur. The same borrowing was accomplished long ago in Spain: v. B2, 23-4 and pl. III, and index s.v. 'transennae'.

what makes the ordinary big church so expensive ; it can contain the normal congregation in full comfort according to Indian ways, yet without making it look like a forlorn remnant in a vast building, and there is still adequate accommodation for the festival crowds.

Much, of course, depends on apparent details of the design—adjustable piercings of some walls to allow either breeze or shelter ; shade of trees or awnings in the open space ; lightness and proper placing of pillars ; etc. If such matters are not carefully thought out, then the criticisms of the conservatives will have only too much legitimate weight. I tentatively venture to suggest something like Fig. 2, which is based on mingled memories of Jaunpur in India, Granada in Spain and pictures of the churches mentioned below.

Within my knowledge, five churches of this type have been built in North and Central India recently—St. Andrew's, Ummadpur, and St. Philip and St. James', Pak Bara, both in the Moradabad District and Lucknow Diocese ; St. John's, Meharauli, near Delhi ; St. Francis', Karanji,

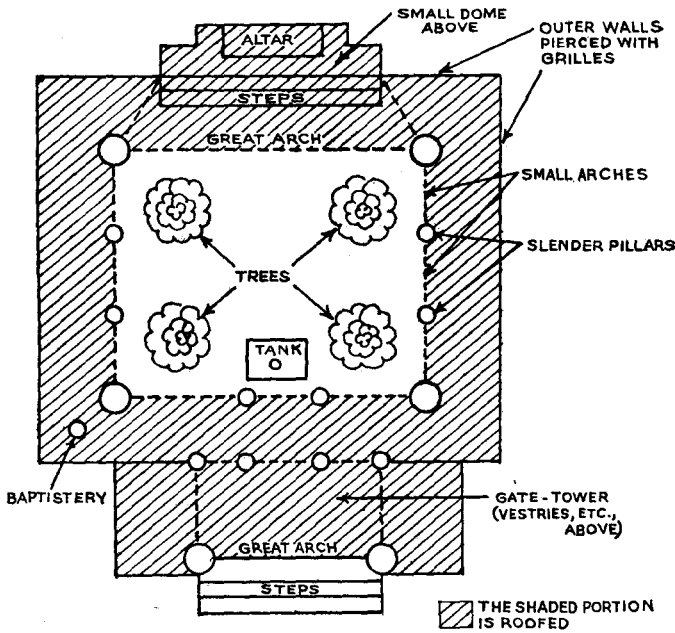


FIG. 3—Rough Plan of suggested Courtyard Church.

in the District and Diocese of Nasik ; and Nirmal Church of the Medak Diocese of the C.S.I. (formerly Methodist).

In each case the result has been a building of really pleasing appearance. I do not know how the experiment has fared in other respects at the first three of those churches. I am told that at Nirmal it has the special merit of fitting in well with the development of church life in Hyderabad State which specially stresses *jatras*.<sup>1</sup> But at Karanji, I am informed, it has failed : on normal days the whole congregation would sit under cover in the roofed part running along the east wall of the court ; on festival days the extra congregation that used the courtyard

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Rev. H. W. Sibree Page, dated 4th April, 1956.

found it either too cold or too wet or too hot ; so the experiment has been abandoned, by the courtyard being roofed in :<sup>1</sup> I am surprised and uneasy at this. After all, the Muslims use open courts without complaint.<sup>2</sup> The covered, the *qiblah*, end of their mosque holds the congregation at the ordinary prayer-times, and the courtyard takes the extra congregation on Fridays and at *Id*. Some of the prayer-times are indeed short and at shady hours ; but the Friday prayers at midday, and these and the *Id* prayers are often long ; but cloth or *tatti* awnings seem to suffice for shade. It is difficult and invidious to try and judge these matters at a distance ; but I would need some persuading that either the Karanji people or their leaders were not either too conservative, or given to over-lengthy services, or unlucky in the practical details of their design, or weighed down by some combination of these.

(5) I would like to go further, and suggest, at any rate for the first Christian buildings in newly-evangelized villages, an even more open type of church, which might be said to be the Christian counterpart of the Muslim *idgāh*, the prayer-wall which gives the correct orientation.<sup>3</sup> We Christians do not indeed so greatly need the orientation : on the other hand, we do for various reasons mostly need more than a mere wall : I cannot but think that the completely open prayer-platforms or shade-gables with which some Indian village congregations have experimented<sup>4</sup> are inadequate except for ultra-Protestants. But there is much to be said for a cheap beginning with an 'open chapel', which covers the altar and a small portion of ground for celebrant and preacher, can be shut up between services to avoid profanation, and during services is open to a congregation outside. Such an 'open chapel' can, as and when the local situation comes to justify it, easily be added to and made into a 'courtyard church'.

Actually, this solution has once been tried on an ancient mission field, and has led to some beautiful results. In Spanish Mexico, roughly between the years 1540 and 1555, several towns had, previously to, or at the side of, the great conventual church, an 'open chapel'. This would shelter the celebrant, and sometimes a small congregation besides ; at the west it is open to the great church square, where a congregation of almost any size could muster, with a full view of the altar. Presumably there were movable wooden fences and gates to close these chapels up after service. There survive some beautiful little chapels built in this way : in fact, they form the one distinctive contribution of Mexico to Spanish architecture.<sup>5</sup> They do not seem to have been long in use : it is not clear either why they became fashionable or why they ceased to be built—perhaps population waned, big covered churches were erected, an increase in the number of clergy rendered vast congregations unnecessary, the strict Roman Canon Law about open-air altars was

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of the Archdeacon of Ahmednagar, Ven. B. S. de W. Batty, dated 16th March, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Such was the earliest custom ; and modern Persian Muslims are said, in reasonable weather conditions, to *prefer* the open to the covered part of a mosque (P2, I. 909).

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this is the prototype of all mosques except the one at Mecca (E3, 332).

<sup>4</sup> F1, 74-7 ; L1, 52.

<sup>5</sup> K1, I. 225 and Fig. 99, II, 231, 269, 299, 307, 314-41, 422-3, 430-1, 455 and related pictures.

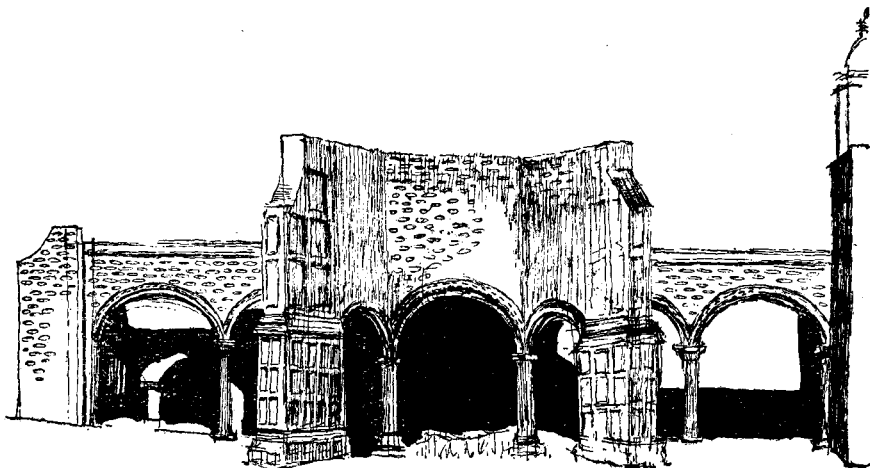


FIG. 4—*Tepogcolula, view of open chapel.*

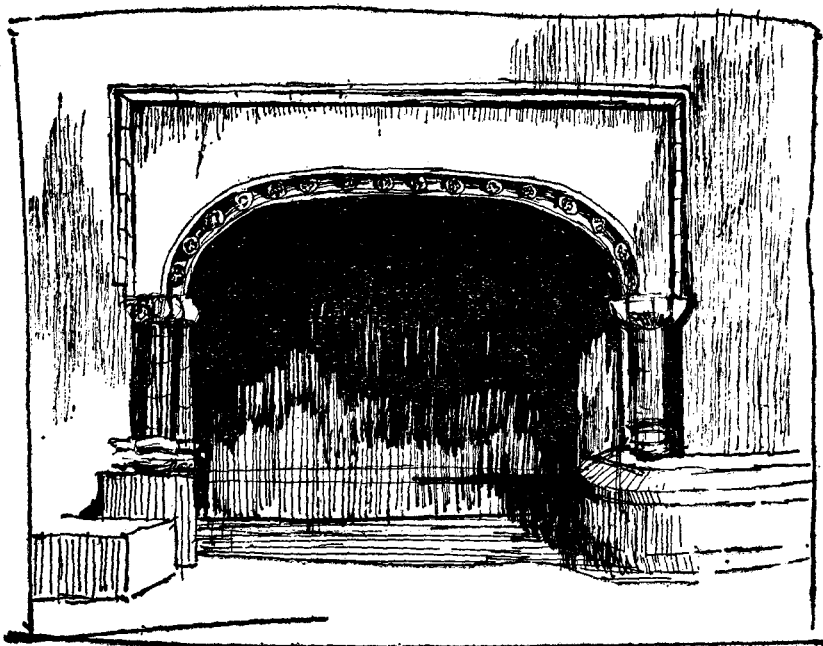


FIG. 5—*Tepeji Del Rio, view of open chapel.*

enforced, or maybe they never had been intended for anything but interim use.<sup>1</sup> They are indeed something of a mystery, and the investigation of them has scarcely begun.

<sup>1</sup> KI, II. 269, 307, 314-5, 322-5, 337-8, 422-3. (For the modern Roman Catholic law on the subject, v. *Codex Juris Canonici* (1917) Canon 822, paras. 1, 4: ancient authorities lie behind that.)

I am not aware of any systematic use of such chapels outside this short phase in Mexico ; and indeed I only know of one other instance of them, and this happens to be in the Indian sub-continent. In the fort that crowns the cliff at Mormugão, the main port of the Territory of Goa, is the Chapel of St. Mary, dated 1624. It is just a niche in a wall, the wall of a ramp leading from a level space on the top of a tower on to a battlement at a higher level of the fortifications. Its niche only just holds

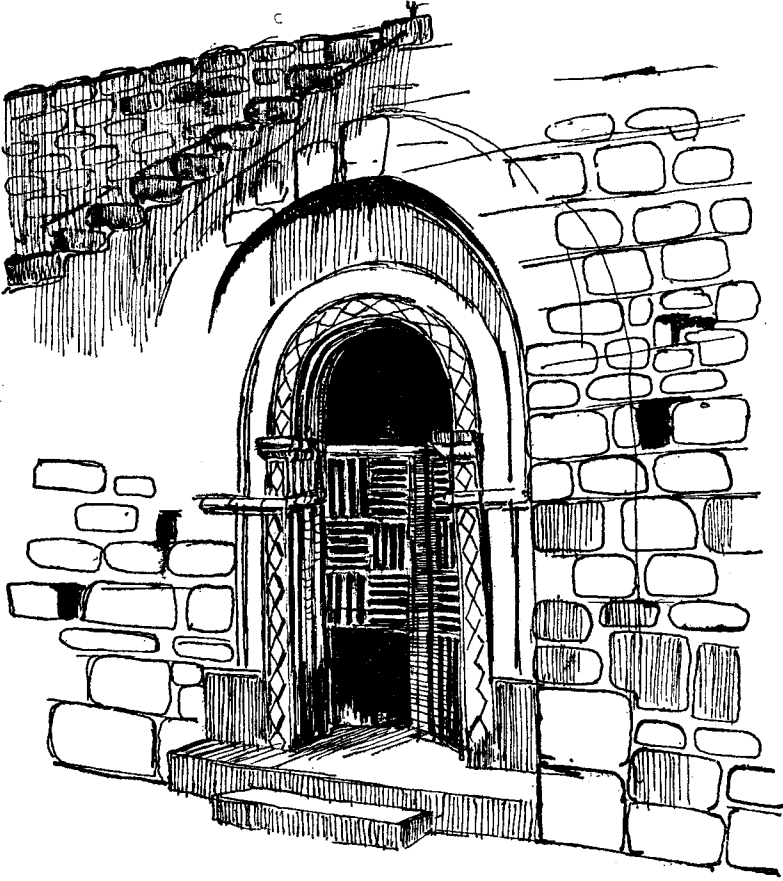


FIG. 6—*St. Mary's Chapel, Mormugão.*

the altar, but it has a wooden grille to protect it from birds and animals. At the other, the seaward, end of the open tower-top is a cross such as the Portuguese commonly have in front of their churches. The congregation must have stood in the open between the priest and that cross. It is a lovely place for worship in the still cool of dawn.

#### E. POSSIBILITIES IN MODERNISM

What now of Thesis 6 in Section A? Will these problems of indigenization be swept aside for churches by the new 'functional' ferro-concrete style, which India apparently accepts for factories, office-buildings and suburban houses ?



If so, then the prospect is at first sight dim, from an indigenizing Christian's point of view. In the West, the style is in origin and essential nature secular: if it is capable of real religious development, it has not yet found this power, at any rate not in any definitive mode; and it seems hard if the West is to subject other parts of the world to its own confusion. The style claims to be international rather than western; but it did in fact originate in the West, and seems unlikely to satisfy what is real in national feeling.

Yet this style may bring us a new opportunity. It may well be that our problem of finding a worthy Christian architecture for India will be solved better in an atmosphere of adventurous trial of quite new things than in one of patch and compromise among the old. Nor is it certain that the new style is international in any way destructive of proper national distinctiveness: for instance, the Mexican skyscraper is said already to be no mere copy of New York but definitely Mexican: and all sorts of possibilities will open out as modern architecture rids itself, as it will, of an excessively rigid functionalist theory and really faces the problem of ornament. And it may well prove capable of religious expression: there has been much experiment about this, particularly in France:<sup>1</sup> and indeed the only sound way for religious art anywhere is to give religious form to contemporary idioms, not to play with archaistic escapisms.

In West Africa, whose building problems are fruitfully comparable with those of India, interesting experiments have been made in the secular adaptation of the style to tropical conditions;<sup>2</sup> the same has been done in India itself, at the new Punjab State capital of Chandigarh.<sup>3</sup> As for the religious application of this style, in Africa the chapel of Ibadan University College and the new cathedral of the Niger Diocese at Onitsha adapt the new techniques fully to the climate of their neighbourhood and partially to the traditional forms of its buildings. In India, I am not aware of any achievement in religious ferro-concrete that could guide us. It is true that the new Birla Temple at New Delhi uses the modern materials, but it does so only to copy the traditional style, and that badly: at St. Thomas' Mount near Madras the Tamil C.S.I. (ex-Methodist) Church attempts a more original translation of ancient motifs into the forms of the new material, but it is one of the ugliest buildings I know. Thus we have an almost virgin field for experiment.<sup>4</sup> In particular, we can hope that ultimately ferro-concrete will solve the problem of how to build in an Indian way without getting entangled in the controversies as to the rights and merits of various regional Indian styles.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A4. Bitter controversy has been aroused by these experiments; and the hierarchy's official ruling is a monument of confident non-committal. It is curious that those most liberal about the possibilities of Christianizing indigenous arts seem to have no hope that the Spirit can similarly work in 'twentieth-century art': C14, 105-18, B3, 8 (Bp. Greente), 126-9.

<sup>2</sup> A2.

<sup>3</sup> At Chandigarh, it is said, a policy of social reform makes the buildings deliberately flout certain traditional Indian customs: but this should not obscure the fact that in other ways they seek the fullest integration with their Indian setting.

<sup>4</sup> It is important and relevant that several art educators are actively thinking along the lines of blending the indigenous and the international: Z1, 103-10.

<sup>5</sup> V., e.g. L1, 50.

## F. CONCLUSION

On the academic side, this study is very incomplete: it is more a plea for information and debate from others than a presentation of any full scholarship or formed views. I shall indeed be most grateful if it provokes others to give me facts or photographs which will increase my knowledge of the material relevant to these problems, and comment and criticism which will help my thinking about them.

On the practical side, I have (apart from my partiality for the courtyard church and open chapel) little to propose but experiment, tolerance and forward-mindedness. What else could I offer? Art developments cannot be forecast; they happen; and they happen in artists, not in scholars or critics; and art developments within a nation happen through the nationals, not through interested foreigners. Thus, in this matter of Indian church building, all that one who is neither an artist nor an Indian can do is to ask Indian Christians to be awake to the dangers of the present foreignness, and awake to the fine possibilities latent in the problem, and then to shed fears and encourage experiment. Then, almost automatically, yet under the leading of God's Spirit, modern Indian Christianity will find the Indian and the modern answer to the problem of its building style.

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