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Summaries in English

The Parish Building of Gwatt, near Thun 269

1955/56, arch. F. Wenger, SIA, Thun

Built in a centre still not yet completed and standing on a site which will also hold a church, this parish building contains a large and two smaller halls. In a review of the work X. Bäschlin stresses the building's qualities in its role as a church: the arrangement of the pulpit and communion table as well as that of the chairs, and in addition the idea of constructing a tentlike roof, will suggest the transitory character of our home here below.

Inquiry into Ecclesiastical Architecture and Religious Art 271

Replies from K. Barth, W. Bernet, F. Buri, H. Heer, J. L. Leuba, G. W. Locher, J. Schweizer, W. Tanner and G. Widmer

The replies of the theologians mentioned above to a range of questions on the architectural conception of Protestant churches and the legitimate role that art in general may play in them are collected together in this number. As far as religious architecture is concerned, the question was to determine whether and to what extent the ministers in charge of worship preferred the form of church traditional in the West with a long nave usually terminating in a chancel, or whether they preferred the conception which has recently become more widespread where everything is grouped round a central point, i.e. with either a polygonal or circular ground plan. Although the second conception, as is well known, has its most fervent partisans in Zurich, it was Karl Barth from Basle who gave the most consistent reply. The famous theologian does not only think that the "central plan" is correct and therefore desirable, but it can be said that in his eyes the heart of the church lies at the centre, where he thinks the communion table should not only serve in place of the sacrament of baptism, as it does in a number of reformed churches, but even in place of the preacher's desk. Other contributors, such as J. Schweizer and G. W. Locher, are less exacting but also favourable to the "central plan". On the other hand, F. Buri, who feels as G. Widmer does, that the choir is of prime importance, vigourously defends the elongated nave; in addition to the sermon and the sacraments even, the chancel symbolizes the Kingdom of God to the faithful, of which the church here below is only the prefiguration. – Although it is nearly impossible to deduce an architectural form from theological doctrine and the liturgy alone, nevertheless this is what emerges from the exposé of J. Schweizer. He shows that if on one hand the Zwinglian conception, implying as it does that the community of the faithful at the moment of communion is the body of Christ, seems to call for the central plan, on the other, however, it is the Huguenot temples where Calvinist tradition depicts a communion "above" the community which in recent times are the most often adapted to church construction round a central point.
As for the other question in the inquiry, we shall state first of all that all the answers concerning the placing of the pulpit insist on the necessity of its being so arranged that the essential nature of the Word is thrown into relief. On the contrary, the organ and its loft (when there is one) must not attract attention and should be arranged either laterally or behind the congregation. As for the communion table and baptismal fonts, most of the contributors agree that these should be handled in a material, wood or stone, which stresses, by its careful selection, the sacramental nature of the above rites. Generally speaking, although it is no longer condemned as was the case for a long time, the contribution of the liberal arts to the construction of Protestant churches must be discreet and avoid representational elements. W. Bernet is very insistent, in this respect, that truly religious work, far from being "representational", has the essential function of calling for interpretation.

St. Thomas' Church, Basle 281

1956/58, B. Huber, arch. FAS/SIA, Zurich

This church and Wasgenring School form the centre of a new outer suburb. Standing on the same square, church, rectory and parish hall form a unity which avoids all the emphasis being put on the Sunday devotions.

Lutheran Church in Simatra, Finland 289

1956/58, arch.: Prof. Alvar Aalto, Helsinki

Although the church and its adjacent halls have been conceived as a unitary spatial group, they are, nevertheless, separable from one another. They seem to rise and flow back as they converge towards the altar. The striking unity of the whole structure is a token of the imaginative power of this great Finnish architect.

Martin Luther Church in Zurich 294

1957/58, arch: F. Steinbrüchel, SIA, and E. U. Kräger Zurich; eng: S. Gatzka, SIA, Zurich

This Lutheran church is like others of the same profession, in that it is regarded as a sacred building. Because of this, the importance of the altar and cross is clearly stressed and the parish hall is completely detached.

Ritual Objects 296

by Max Fröhlich

The reformed church only recognizes a very reduced number of ritual objects, but nowadays these are tending to arouse greater interest, both in the material employed in them and in their actual design.

The West Door of Schaffhausen Minster 304

by W. Grimmer

The sculptor Otto Bänninger has made the door of this cathedral, the symbolical point of entry to the sanctuary. Not only are the four Evangelists, who are figured in relief on the two leaves, each touched by a ray coming from the heart of the Crucifix, but even the handle of the door depicts the Crown of Thorns. This work is the dignified culminating point to restoration recently carried out on this fine historical building.

The Pictorial Cycle in the Fraumünster, Zurich 308

by E. Hüttinger

From Whitsuntide this year fifteen paintings of scenes from the Passion by young Zurich painter, Tobias Schiess, have been hanging along the sides of the Fraumünster's nave. These paintings are a gift from the painter and their acceptance by the Fraumünster marks a clean break with Zwinglian traditions and is the beginning of "lutherization". E. H. examines the artistic merit of the pictorial cycle in question. It seems to him that these works, which are indubitably sincere, are an unfortunate reflection of the necessarily problematical nature of any attempt to create work of this kind at the present time. The evolution of modern thought may certainly not have destroyed belief as such, but from the end of the 18th century at the latest, it has broken up the existential unity of myth and art, and thus made it impossible, strictly speaking, for religion to be depicted. This may be the moment for abstract art, but in any case it is an unlucky time for the historicist attempt of T. Schiess