

## Reviews

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*Tomb and temple. Re-imagining the sacred buildings of Jerusalem.* Edited by Robin Griffith-Jones and Eric Fernie. (Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture.) Pp. xxx + 492 incl. frontispiece, 40 colour plates and 126 figs. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2018. £50. 978 1 78327 280 8

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There is growing concern for the well-being and indeed the survival of the ancient Churches of the Middle East, the lands where Christ lived and the Christian faith began. Political upheaval and economic pressures are leading to the decline in Churches which have maintained a witness since the beginnings of Christianity. This book, therefore, is a timely reminder of the importance of the place where the Christian faith began.

Jerusalem, it begins by stating, is dominated by two buildings which have evoked religious feeling and fervour on many levels. The Temple was the dwelling-place of God for many faiths, through the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, and then through multiple themes of the divine kingship of Solomon, the presentation of Mary the Mother of God and then Jesus' preaching and later the night visit of the prophet Mohammad. Across the city, the Tomb of Jesus was excavated at the time of the emperor Constantine and became the location of a church which went through several stages of construction. These two buildings have attracted pilgrims and visitors. They have had a formative influence on liturgical worship and have also directed the hearts of believers towards the heavenly Jerusalem which is above. This book shows how the two themes of 'Tomb' and 'Temple' have shaped and inspired the life of the Church, especially through its architecture and art.

The contributors to the book trace the history of these two clusters of ideas. The first two sections of the book describe how the two buildings, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Noble Sanctuary of the Temple Mount, were built and re-built over several centuries. Each changed hands as the city was occupied successively by Byzantine Christians, Arab conquerors, western Crusaders and then Muslim rulers again. These essays describe the various stages of the evolution of the Church of the Sepulchre which reached its present shape in the eleventh century and also the reverence of Muslims in forming the sanctuary of the Dome of the Rock, and then re-forming it after the period of Crusader occupation. Political changes led to the formation of a tradition of faith as well as leaving a complex architectural footprint.

Then there are two sections which explore how the two buildings have entered into the tradition of eastern and western Churches. There are examples from

Constantinople, Georgia, Armenia, Russia, Ethiopia and then various countries in Western Europe. The geographical spread and the input of several contributors leads to the ambitious scope of the subject and an evocative inclusion of multiple ideas.

It is not surprising, since one of the two editors is Master of the Temple at the Temple Church in London, that there is a full discussion of the Round Churches of England, built in the period of the Crusades by the Military Orders of the Hospitallers and Templars. These essays describe the architectural styles and also the forms of liturgy and the social context, and show how the Church of the Sepulchre in Jerusalem influenced the religious imagination of medieval England.

Several contributors note that buildings intended to imitate the Sepulchre in Jerusalem often have little physical resemblance to it. Imitation is a richer idea than mere copying and the variety of architectural forms used by later builders are explored. These often pointed towards the spiritual reality which lay beyond the concrete shapes and forms.

Among these was the use of a circle in the design. The Sepulchre in Jerusalem was round with the aedicule of the tomb enclosed in a rotunda. Many of the churches described were also circular. The circle has many symbolic connections, representing the round world and the firmament above, and the perfect form of the heavenly city. In Ethiopia the round church, with a central sanctuary, became the usual form of church design, which arrived, so one essay argues, through earlier examples in Nubia. Elsewhere, circular designs in manuscripts such as the chronicle of Adomnan and various maps of the Holy Land and of the world show parallel uses of the circle and its spiritual meaning. The circular shape of the Sepulchre was reported by returning pilgrims and from there entered into popular imagination.

The topography of Jerusalem, the holy city, was reproduced through the construction of churches and other sacred buildings to recreate the city and make its physical form of holiness available to local people. The positioning and relation between the various churches in both Echmiadzin in Armenia and Lalibela in Ethiopia were deliberate attempts to make new Jerusalems. Russia also used images and shapes in church building which established the idea of 'holy Russia'. A motive in church building was to root a new Jerusalem in far-off places.

The discussion of the circle and the recreations of the city show the broad approach of the book. It is more than an architectural history – although it is that. It introduces many ways in which the Jerusalem idea was communicated and so provides a portrait of the imaginative thought-world of an age and of a culture. The different chapters are sometimes unconnected and occasionally repetitive but the rich difference of theme and treatment opens up a variety of perspectives and helps towards new insights.

The book is sumptuously produced and a pleasure to handle. Since the subject matter is buildings and images of buildings, illustrations are important. There are around seventy colour plates and numerous black-and-white illustrations which convey the creativity and imagination of those who formed this tradition of faith. They contribute to the wide and evocative landscape of faith which this book evokes in the reader.

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