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Thomas Archer and the English Baroque

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Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the ecclesiastical architecture of Thomas Archer (c.1668-1743, figure 1) within the context of the ‘English’ Baroque. Despite having been responsible for several of the most idiosyncratic buildings in England, Archer has been significantly overshadowed by his contemporaries, namely John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) and Nicholas Hawksmoor (c. 1661-1736). The ambiguous state of Archer’s connoisseurship is due in part to the fact that his documented *oeuvre* is comparatively small since his architectural career lasted no more than fifteen years. Consequently, Marcus Whiffen’s brief but highly valuable monograph, published in 1950, has been cemented as the leading critical text.¹

Archer was the quintessential ‘gentleman architect’ of the early eighteenth-century. To quote a document of 1693, the Archer family ‘lived prudently as well as plentifully.’² Indeed, his grandfather was Sir Simon Archer of Umberslade in Warwickshire, a celebrated antiquarian.³ Upon graduating from Trinity College, Oxford in 1689, Archer embarked on a Grand Tour of Europe, which offered him unprecedented access to ancient monuments, a prerequisite for any educated gentleman. Beyond the acknowledgment that Archer was in Padua in Italy in December 1691, ‘nothing is known’ of his itinerary.⁴ Between 1691-1695 it is presumed Archer visited Rome and travelled through Germany and Switzerland, avoiding France as a consequence of the War of the Grand Alliance (1689–97).⁵ Until the mid eighteenth-century, architecture as a formal profession did not exist; in most cases, amateur architects, as with Archer, came into it as gentlemen by birth, presenting architecture with a certain level of ‘respectability.’⁶ In 1705, Archer was appointed the post of Groom Porter at the Court of Queen Anne (r. 1702-1707), a lucrative position that he retained for the rest of his life. Indeed, according to his obituary in *Gentleman’s Magazine*, ‘he left above 100,000 *l* to his youngest nephew, H. Archer,’ upon his death on 23 May 1743.⁷ Following his Grand Tour, Archer

¹ M. Whiffen, *Thomas Archer: Architect of the English Baroque* (Los Angeles, 1973).

² P. Style, ‘Sir Simon Archer, 1581-1662’, *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers*, 6 (1946) cited in Whiffen, *Thomas Archer*, p.10.

³ Whiffen, *Thomas Archer*, p.10.

⁴ H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600-1840* (New Haven, 2008), p.71.

⁵ K. Downes, *English Baroque Architecture* (London, 1966), p.3.

⁶ H. M. Colvin, *Essays in English Architectural History* (New Haven, 1999), p.272.

⁷ ‘Deaths, Promotions & Mays’, *Gentleman’s Magazine* (London), Jan. 1743, p.275.

returned with an enthusiastic admiration for the baroque architecture of Rome, especially the late works of Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669), Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) and Francesco Borromini (1599–1667) which has been detected in his *oeuvre* by more than one critic. As noted by Whiffen, ‘Archer was both the least English and the most baroque.’⁸ While Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor relied heavily on architectural treatises and engravings, Archer brought a first-hand experience of the Continental baroque back to England, applying it with confidence. It is this that made his style uniquely his and that raised favourable praise among his contemporaries. Moreover, following Vanbrugh’s temporary dismissal from the Comptrollership of the Works in 1713, the notable patron of architecture, Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury (1660-1710), advocated Archer as his successor, declaring that ‘he is the most able and has the best genuine for building of anybody we have.’⁹

In 1959 and 1977, Kerry Downes respectively sought to certify that the architectural spirit of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor stayed alive for the next generation, concluding that Hawksmoor left behind ‘the eloquence of stone.’¹⁰ Interest in the two architects has since expanded. The recent publications of Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey (2000), Vaughan Hart (2002) and others, have handled the architecture of Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh from an interdisciplinary point of view, addressing new contexts and proposing new interpretations.¹¹ Unfortunately, Archer has not received similar exploration since Whiffen’s authoritative monograph.

The primary thesis of this dissertation is to examine in what ways does the ecclesiastical architecture of Thomas Archer communicate the social ideals of the early eighteenth-century. In 1972, Michael Baxandall introduced his seminal *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* by asserting that a ‘painting is a deposit of a social relationship.’¹² Nevertheless, there has been no detailed attempt to analyse Archer’s overtly baroque churches within their social context. In order to understand the significance of Archer’s architectural language, the dissertation will explore the religious and political circumstances of the early eighteenth-century England. Other secondary concerns will investigate Archer’s influences and the ‘originality’ of his

⁸ Whiffen, *Thomas Archer*, p.43.

⁹ M. Whiffen, *Stuart and Georgian Churches* (New York, 1947), p.23.

¹⁰ K. Downes, *Vanbrugh* (London, 1977); K. Downes, *Hawksmoor* (London, 1987), p.206.

¹¹ P. Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches: Architecture and Theology* (Chicago, 2000); V. Hart, *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders* (New Haven, 2002).

¹² M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford, 1972), p.1.

style. Underscoring the baroque is a pervasive interest in the ‘rhetoric’ thus the complex issue of reception between the building and their spectator is subsequently raised.

The dissertation will first consider the origins of the ‘English’ Baroque as a stylistic category in architecture as a way of understanding the broader social framework to which it emerged. In order to demonstrate a gradual progression of Archer’s visual language and encapsulate the churches as a whole, a case study approach to his major ecclesiastical works will be undertaken. The first architectural work that will be examined is Saint Philip’s church in Birmingham (1709-1715). Today it stands as the Cathedral; nevertheless by origin the church was one of the few new parish-churches to be erected outside of London. The third and fourth chapters will then observe the circumstances and execution of the ‘Fifty New Churches’ (1711), for which Archer designed two churches, Saint Paul’s in Deptford (1712-30) and Saint John’s Smith Square in Westminster (1714-28). In the absence of detailed accounts on Archer’s architectural training and his *oeuvre*, a significant challenge is exposed to the dissertation. Nonetheless employing existing archival evidence and making first-hand observations, the dissertation serves as a unique contribution to the historiography of Thomas Archer and will draw conclusion on the insights, which have emerged, from the investigation.

Chapter 1: Origins of the English Baroque

The term ‘baroque’ has gained ample scholarly attention, since one universal formula does not exist. In origins, it was applied derisively and retrospectively to architectural works, which had distorted the sacred grammar of antiquity. Indeed, it was the ‘distortion’ that prompted eighteenth-century critics to adopt the word ‘baroque’, which derives from the Portuguese term for an irregularly shaped pearl (*pérola barroca*).¹³ The Italian architects who pioneered this style were Cortona, Bernini and Borromini; their results were dynamic, theatrical and whimsical. Soon after, the baroque style emigrated from Papal Rome to the greater part of Europe, including Protestant England, where it intermittently occupied a period of seventy years (c. 1660-1730).

The influx of a baroque spirit in England can be ascribed to the ‘discovery of the Renaissance,’ since a proficient handling of the classical language of architecture was essential for conceiving rich and complex baroque works.¹⁴ In 1613, Inigo Jones (1573-1652) embarked on a tour of Italy. In the words of Giles Worsley, the formative sojourn was ‘the most momentous event of his life,’ since it exposed Jones to the great models of antiquity and the works of Cinquecento architect Andrea Palladio (1508-80).¹⁵ Returning to England, and now Surveyor of the King’s Works, Jones executed his new architectural vision that was strongly tinged with Palladian and antique ideals. It took two generations for Jones’ vocabulary to be fully assimilated, nonetheless once it did, it introduced the new style of the nation, which reigned until the late eighteenth-century.¹⁶

The gradual genesis of an ‘English’ Baroque can be noted at the turn of the seventeenth-century. In the mature works of Christopher Wren (1632-1723) an awareness of the baroque’s variety and striking qualities can be detected. In September 1666, after the Great Fire, Charles II (r. 1660-85) appointed Wren in the vast renovation programme, which stimulated a major initiative in church building, the largest since the English Reformation. Wren’s final and greatest achievement of

¹³ M. Snodin and N. Llewellyn (eds.), *Baroque, 1620-1800: Style in the Age of Magnificence*, exhibition catalogue, London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2009, p.74.

¹⁴ B. Borngässer, ‘Baroque Architecture in England,’ in R. Tolman (ed.), *Baroque: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting* (Köln, 1998), p.162.

¹⁵ G. Worsley, *Inigo Jones and the European Classicist Tradition* (New Haven, 2007), p.19.

¹⁶ Downes, *Hawksmoor*, p.19.

building fifty-one parish churches was the construction of Saint Paul's Cathedral (1675-1710, figure 2). Wren composed his monument through the grouping of different architectonic elements - the central cupola, the flanking towers and the temple façade framed by Corinthian columns. While Wren's building was more restrained than his Roman predecessors, he nevertheless still produced a grand showpiece.

The climax of the English Baroque was reached under Wren's immediate successors Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor and Archer. Architecture evolved eclectically, articulating a larger awareness in the rhetorical potential of design than Wren had ever endeavoured. 'Rhetoric' was first cited in the 5th century BC as the art of persuasive discourse that aspired to move an audience in a particular way. Subsequently, the rhetorical devices adopted by ancient Greek orators were equated to the similar evocative visual effects baroque architects employed. Blenheim Palace (c. 1705-22, Woodstock, Oxfordshire) for example, the joint work of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor, is an imposing monument of British military triumph encapsulated in 'a silhouette in violet motion.'¹⁷ Nevertheless, the late-developing baroque phenomenon in England did not arouse favourable commentary. In 1715, Scottish architect Colen Campbell (1676-1729) published the first volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, a compilation of plates of contemporary architecture, which proclaimed superiority of Palladianism.¹⁸ In Campbell's introduction, he did not revile the work of Wren and his successors but their models, declaring that the likes of Borromini had 'endeavoured to debauch Mankind with [their] odd and chimerical Beauties.'¹⁹ The further publication of three more volumes assisted in the launch of the neo-Palladianism in England. Following the change in architectural climate in the late 1720's, Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor and others increasingly moved away from the Continental mainstream. Nonetheless, Archer stood as the primary exception, subscribing passionately to the style until his death.

The four leading architects of the English Baroque were each qualified in designing ambitious monuments that fit within the baroque tradition, nevertheless the circumstances to which they arose were quite different. Firstly, the baroque manner is conventionally understood as an instrument of absolute monarchy. Nevertheless,

¹⁷ J. Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture* (London, 1980), p.70.

¹⁸ C. Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus* (London, 1715), p.2.

¹⁹ Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, p.2.

England was a ‘parliamentary oligarchy.’²⁰ During the seventeenth-century, tension between the Crown and Parliament, which led England to civil war in 1642, had reached its zenith in Parliament’s favour following the Bill of Rights in 1689.²¹ Given the political climate of England, the State did not enforce an official style of architecture, profiting architects at the turn of the century to develop their own idiosyncrasies.²² Religious status underscored the second point of difference. Following the Counter-Reformation, the emotional baroque style was patronised by the Roman Catholic Church, responding to the rules laid out by the Council of Trent in 1573 that the arts should guide and teach the worshipper. England, by comparison was a leading Protestant nation and as pointed out by Judith Hook, in ‘an essentially Erastian age,’ thus the patronage that was once the chief concern of the Church was now habitually exercised by the State.²³ In the autumn of 1710, for the first time in twenty-two years, the Tory Government defeated the Whig Party to attain power of the House of Commons. In contrast to the liberal religious ideals endorsed by the Whigs, the Tory Party advocated loyalty between the State and the Church of England.²⁴ An allegiance that became fractured after the Toleration Act (1689) during the previous reign of William III (r. 1689-1702) and Mary II (r. 1689-94), which granted freedom of worship to Protestant Dissenters. Consequently, the political victory cemented a strong counter-revolution and solidified the revival of the High Church tradition to court and country. While Puritan sentiment strictly opposed the extravagant expenditure on ecclesiastical buildings, High Church thinking adapted the observations of Church of England Cleric John Donne (1572 -1631), to whom stated that ‘Beloved, outward things apparrell God; and since God was content to take a *body*, let us not leave him naked, or ragged.’²⁵

²⁰ G. Worsley, ‘Wren, Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor, and Archer: The Search for an English Baroque,’ in H. A. Millon (ed.), *Circa 1700: Architecture in Europe and the Americas* (Washington, 2005), p.99.

²¹ Borngässer, ‘Baroque Architecture,’ p.162.

²² Worsley, ‘Wren, Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor, and Archer,’ p.116.

²³ J. Hook, *The Baroque Age in England* (London, 1976), p.74.

²⁴ J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530 to 1830* (London, 1991), p.300.

²⁵ C. A. Patrides (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists* (London, 1969), p.14.

Chapter 2: Saint Philip, Birmingham

In the two centuries succeeding the Reformation, a vacant interval can be observed in reference to ecclesiastical development outside of London.²⁶ Archer's Saint Philip's, Birmingham is a rare exception. Moreover, despite sharing stylistic affinities with the Continental baroque, it was one of the few churches to be included in *Vitruvius Britannicus* and was described by Campbell as 'a very beautiful structure' (figure 3).²⁷ In the early eighteenth-century, Birmingham was a modest town with a rapidly growing population. The magnitude of the increase is displayed in the figures noted on William Westley's *Plan of Birmingham* (1731, figure 4), demonstrating that in 1700, 15,082 inhabitants were recorded and in 1730 this number had reached 24,000. Consequently, Saint Martin's, the parish church that had stood for six hundred years could no longer accommodate the populous town; likewise the small churchyard became insufficient for burying the deceased. In 1783, William Hutton, Birmingham's first historian stated:

[Saint Martin's church-yard was] augmented into a considerable hill, chiefly composed of the refuse of life . . . *the dead are raised up* . . . instead of the church burying the dead, the dead would, in time, have buried the church.²⁸

Raising a new parish church at the turn of the seventeenth-century was a complex feat, one that required a special Act of Parliament.²⁹ Following the Restoration in 1660, the State became primarily concerned with patronising architecture for utilitarian purposes thus, for the good of the greater people.³⁰ To help mitigate the overcrowding at Saint Martin's, Saint Philip's was executed as a chapel of ease (subsequently upgraded to parish church status in 1715). Under an Act of Parliament of 1708, a body of commissioners, no more than twenty, were appointed to collect funding, select a plan and supervise the construction of the new church.³¹ In the main, they were drawn from members of the landed gentry, including Archer, a local landowner, who was chosen as the principle architect after presenting his designs at a

²⁶ S. Jenkins, *England's Thousand Best Churches* (London, 1999), p.xiv.

²⁷ Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, p.2.

²⁸ W. Hutton, *A History of Birmingham* (1783; Birmingham, 1836), p.331.

²⁹ Whiffen, *Stuart and Georgian Churches*, p.4.

³⁰ Hook, *Baroque Age in England*, p.144.

³¹ A. Foster, *Birmingham* (New Haven, 2005), p.40.

meeting in 1709.³² Although the church was designed a year preceding the Tories' triumphant election, the socio-religious context that produced it was becoming increasingly affiliated with High Church practice. Historically, Birmingham had been a leading centre of religious radicalism; therefore underscoring the design of the new Anglican Church was the necessity to call the public's attention to God and worship.³³ Consequently, Saint Philip's was to be raised on the highest ground of the town, in the affluent quarters known as Horse Close; the benefactor was Robert Philips, to whom the dedication of the church alludes.³⁴ The church was consecrated on 4 October 1715, however, the west tower was not completed until 1725, when George I (r. 1714-27) assisted with the charity of £600.³⁵

Ecclesiastical architecture belonging to the first half of the eighteenth-century has not always aroused favourable commentary. According to Downes, churches were frequently affiliated with the 'rather dull affair' of Protestantism, which were exhibited through 'plain...structures of brick or where materials were cheap.'³⁶ Nonetheless, Saint Philip's gained admiration among contemporary commentators; Hutton wrote in 1741 'I was delighted with its appearance, and thought it then, what I do now, and what others will in future, *the pride of the place*.'³⁷ The sense of nationhood felt by Hutton, is analogous to Christopher Wren's well-known dictum at the end of the seventeenth-century century:

Architecture has its political use; publick Buildings being the Ornament of a Country; it establishes a Nation, draws People and Commerce; makes the People love their native Country, which Passion is the Original of all great Actions in a Common-wealth.³⁸

The parish church fulfilled an important social role, while accommodating the religious needs of the community it additionally established a communal identity. Indeed, as demonstrated in Westley's *East Prospect of Birmingham* (1732, figure 5), Archer's baroque masterpiece, dominated the provincial market town's skyline,

³² Whiffen, *Thomas Archer*, p.23.

³³ P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700* (London, 1976), p.44.

³⁴ H. M. Pratt, *The Cathedral Churches of England: their Architecture, History and Antiquities* (London, 1910), p.89.

³⁵ Pratt, *Cathedral Churches*, p.89.

³⁶ Downes, *English Baroque*, p.105.

³⁷ Hutton, *History of Birmingham*, p.356.

³⁸ C. Wren, *Life and Works of Sir Christopher Wren: From the Parentalia, or, Memoirs by his Son Christopher, 1750* (1750; London, 1903), p.236.

epitomising Birmingham's prosperity as it expanded beyond its market status towards the age of industrialisation.³⁹ In 1883, the east end of Saint Philip's became the site of an ambitious scheme directed by architect J. A. Chatwin (1830-1907).⁴⁰ Following the success of the 'Oxford Movement' and the resulting shift in liturgical practice, the church was extended twelve feet to create a considerably larger chancel to house an elaborate high altar. Westley's *North Prospect of St. Philip's Church* (1732, figure 6) provides visual evidence for Archer's original conception. Comparing the monument today (figure 7) with its predecessor reveals that Chatwin's new east elevation respected Archer's design closely. Thus, despite the entire church being refaced in 1869 with more durable sandstone, the exterior retains much of its original logic.

The whole conception of Saint Philip's is understood at a single sweep of the eye since Archer articulated a 'giant' order of Roman Doric pilasters to extend around the main body of the church. The term 'giant' is appropriated since the order is one that ascends through two levels of elevation; accordingly Saint Philip's assumes the scale of a great temple. The motif was relatively novel in English ecclesiastical design, having appeared only once before at Henry Aldrich's (1647-1710) All Saints Church in Oxford (1707-10).⁴¹ Archer's controlling Doric order is consistent with principles of 'decorum,' an ancient theory dictating that orders and buildings should reflect their patron. It was Vitruvius (c. 80 BC-15 BC) who first described the language of the orders in his ten-book treatise *De architectura* (1st c. BC), prescribing that the Doric encapsulated 'the proportions, strength, and beauty of the body of a man.'⁴² It leads one to believe that Archer exploited the Doric for symbolic significance, alluding to the power of the Church of England. Furthermore, rusticated treatment of the original masonry walls served to stress the restrained Doric pilasters. According to Terry Friedman, Archer's rustication derives from the observations Wren composed whilst examining the Temple of Mars Ultor (dedicated in 2 B.C.) in Rome on the Forum of Augustus.⁴³ In the words of Wren, the walls are 'channelled [so] the Shafts of the Pillars might the better appear entire, and... give a darker Field

³⁹ Foster, *Birmingham*, p.40.

⁴⁰ Whiffen, *Thomas Archer*, p.25.

⁴¹ Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, p.300.

⁴² Vitruvius, *De architectura*, trans. M. H. Morgan (1st c. BC., Cambridge, Mass., 1914), p.103.

⁴³ Friedman, *The Georgian Parish Church: Monuments to Posterity* (Reading, 2004), p.47.

behind them,' evoking a 'strong and stately Temple' which 'shrews itself forward.'⁴⁴ The emphasis on the visual power of architecture and its ability to enrapture the viewer is expressed here; it is clear that Archer aspired to equate the main body of his church with the solidity of the temple form.

The west façade of Saint Philip's articulates a rich, three-dimensional, sculptural presence (figure 8). The two entrance portals were designed with great attention to detail (figure 9); incised pilasters tilt outwards, a broken pediment crowns a semi-circular architrave with extended triglyphs, and mirrors the angular pilasters through the inverted ends. The revision and rearrangement of classical motifs highlights Archer's proficiency in the late baroque style. The creative vitality conveyed in the exterior is very 'Borrominesque,' as displayed in Borromini's window on the upper elevation of the Palazzo Barberini (c. 1630, figure 10), in which the architrave is turned on an angle, to fabricate a dynamic sense of movement.⁴⁵ Moreover, the force and drama of Archer's west tower demonstrates more than a passing acquaintance with the Continental baroque (figure 11). Rising above the segmented pedimented front, the tower consists of a belfry stage with four concave sides. The meeting of the curved niches culminate in paired Corinthian columns, creating a dramatic *chiaroscuro* display of convex and concaves forms. A clock face, framed by large volutes was innovatively incorporated into the next level.⁴⁶ The vertical ribbing of Archer's leaded cupola guides the eye up to the climax of the whole building, a small open colonnade lantern which supports a cross and boar's head weathervane, the family crest belonging to Sir Richard Gough (1655-1728), to whom was responsible for encouraging George I to contribute financial aid towards the tower.⁴⁷ The landmark is to Birmingham's skyline what Borromini's extravagant dome and spiral spire of Sant' Ivo alla Sapienza (1642-60, figure 12) are to Rome. Moreover, the analogy underscores a formal likeness too; there is a definite similarity between the level above Borromini's stepped dome and Archer's bold, eight-angled silhouette. On stylistic grounds, the only comparable example in England was with Wren's baroque steeple of Saint Vedast Foster Lane (1709-12, London), however while Wren examined treatises on modern Italian architecture, Archer had direct experience with the Continental baroque. In his seminal

⁴⁴ L. M. Soo, *Wren's "Tracts" on Architecture and Other Writings* (New York, 1998), pp. 179-184.

⁴⁵ A. Blunt, *Borromini* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), p.33.

⁴⁶ Foster, *Birmingham*, p.41.

⁴⁷ Foster, *Birmingham*, p.41.

Renaissance Architecture in England (1900), Sir Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942) pointed out that Archer ‘deliberately rejected Wren's favourite device of getting his effect by constant repetition of storeys’ and applauded his ‘very ingenious transition from the... square returns to the octagon.’⁴⁸ Thus, Archer confirmed his competent mastery of the classical language and succeeded in fabricating a compact and cohesive monument.

The interior arrangements of Saint Philip’s were motivated by liturgical concerns of the early eighteenth-century, which witnessed the emergence of the a new type of church, known as the ‘auditory church.’⁴⁹ Archer comprised an open rectangular space with galleried aisles and five bay-arcades (figure 13). Following the Reformation, the first church to embody the new plan was Inigo Jones’ Saint Paul’s in Covent Garden (1630-1) and as a result it became a much-imitated Protestant model for ecclesiastical design.⁵⁰ According to the famous dictum, Jones informed his patron, Francis Russell the Earl of Bedford (1593-1641) that his monument would be ‘the handsomest barn in England.’⁵¹ Indeed, it was the uncluttered barn-like character, which ensured intelligible services that were auditory and participatory, a fundamental concern for the Protestant Church. At Birmingham, the font was placed at the West End near the entrance, the altar was against the east wall and the pulpit was positioned in the centre of the nave, separating the two spaces.⁵² All three centres formed part of the liturgy. The longitudinal layout of the church suited the expectations laid out in the *Book of Common Prayer* whereby worshippers were only permitted to become conscious of the Eucharist after engaging with baptism and absorbing the lessons from the Bible (figure 14).⁵³ A Catholic baroque church by comparison, was conceived around one liturgical centre, the high altar, as conveyed in Gianlorenzo Bernini’s Sant’ Andrea al Quirinale (1658-70, figure 15). The church, commissioned by Cardinal Camillo Pamphili (1622-1666) for the novices of the Jesuit Order rises over an oval plan, in which the transverse axis is longer than the axis

⁴⁸ R. Blomfield, *A Handbook of Renaissance Architecture in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1900), pp.165-66.

⁴⁹ G. W. O. Addleshaw, *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship: An Inquiry into the Arrangements for Public Worship* (London, 1948), p.52.

⁵⁰ Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, p.136.

⁵¹ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.102.

⁵² Addleshaw, *Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship*, p.163.

⁵³ Addleshaw, *Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship*, p.58.

leading from the entrance to the altar.⁵⁴ Consequently, upon entering space, the spectator is immediately confronted by the altar. In addition, to avoid the worshipper's gaze meandering towards the side chapels, Bernini masked the niches with diffused lighting and placed pilasters in the place of open chapels on the transverse axis.⁵⁵ It should be remembered that the leaders of the Counter-Reformation were principally concerned with the individualisation of the liturgy.⁵⁶ Bernini's tricks of perspective and pronounced orchestration of light and dark were all characteristic features of baroque architecture, employed to provoke individual prayer, meditation and contemplation for the worshipper. In England, the principle concern of Anglican worship was directed towards understanding the underlying meaning of the liturgy. Thus, the sermon had become the dominant part of the church service and the pulpit was the most striking feature of the interior. At Saint Philip's the reading pew, pulpit and clerk's seat were adjoined resulting in a three-storey structure.⁵⁷ The great height of the pulpit, crowning the topmost level enabled the congregation to see and hear the priest over the tall pew boxes.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, during Chatwin's refurbishment, the 'three-decker' pulpit was removed as a result of the vicissitudes of England's religiosity whereby the act of Communion rivalled the sermon as the most conspicuous part of the church service. In short, Archer fashioned an interesting hybrid, executing an extraordinary baroque vocabulary, while remaining faithful to religious conventions of the Anglican Church. However, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the 'Fifty New Churches' Act offered Archer the first true opportunity to foster a baroque ecclesiastical tradition adapted to the needs of the Church of England.

⁵⁴ R. Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750* (New Haven, 1999), p.119.

⁵⁵ Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, p.119.

⁵⁶ G. W. O. Addleshaw, *The High Church Tradition* (London, 1941), p.13.

⁵⁷ Downes, *English Baroque Architecture*, p.105.

⁵⁸ Addleshaw, *Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship*, p.76.

Chapter 3: Saint Paul, Deptford

Amongst the several kinds of Buildings by which Great Cities are Adorn'd; Churches, have in all Ages, and with all Religions been placed in the first Rank. No Expence has ever been thought too much for them; Their Magnificence has been esteem'd a pious expression of the Peoples great and profound Veneration towards their Deitys.⁵⁹

In 1711, during the reign of Queen Anne, a tax on coal imports was implemented in order to fund the 'Act for Building [...] Fifty new churches...in or near the Cities of London, Westminster, or the Suburbs thereof.'⁶⁰ The ideological motive underscoring the building legislation was chiefly political. To cement the Tories' return to power in 1710 and strengthen their fidelity to the Anglican Church, the construction of fifty new churches 'of Stone and other proper Materials, with Towers or Steeples' was seemingly appropriate.

The practical objectives underscoring Parliament's Act were two-fold. Promoted by the case of Saint Alphege's in Greenwich (1712–14), which had fallen into disrepair as a consequence of the 'Great Infamous Wind' in November 1710, there was a need to replenish an extensive number of dilapidated churches in London.⁶¹ Moreover, the rapidly growing outer suburbs of London resulted in ecclesiastical accommodation being much in demand, especially in the poor industrial and mercantile areas in the East End whereby religion was becoming increasingly Nonconformist in its practice.⁶² Subsequently, fifty-two commissioners were appointed to oversee the scheme, including the architects Wren, his son the chief clerk, Christopher (1675-1747), Vanbrugh and Archer. The commissioners' selected surveyors were Hawksmoor and William Dickinson (c. 1670-1724), who were succeeded by James Gibbs (1682-1754) and John James (1673-1746).⁶³ It is important to note that Archer was a commissioner and a designated architect. As suggested by Friedman, the formative dual-responsibility would have provided him with a more autonomous position, which is articulated in Archer's two idiosyncratic London churches.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ J. Vanbrugh, 'Mr Van-Brugg's Proposals about Building ye New Churches,' cited in Downes, *Vanbrugh*, pp.257-8.

⁶⁰ London, Lambeth Palace Library, Add. MS 2690, fo.1r.

⁶¹ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.49.

⁶² Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, p.44.

⁶³ Friedman, *The Georgian Parish Church*, p.35.

⁶⁴ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.35.

Unfortunately, the fifty planned churches proved too ambitious, since only twelve materialised. In 1714, the Tories lost their newfound power to the Whigs. Thus, a new body of commissioners were selected; however they lacked the enthusiasm of their predecessors, instead criticising the underlying motive of the programme, leading to the premature conclusion of the Act.⁶⁵

Early in the proceedings, two of the commissioners proposed a series of recommendations on church building, Wren's 'Letter to a Friend on the Commission' and Vanbrugh's 'Proposals about Building ye New Churches.'⁶⁶ The primary documents are of significance since they reflect the mainstream attitudes towards ecclesiastical design at the beginning of the eighteenth-century. Wren's letter consisted of eight practical points, which were underscored by his authoritative experience in designing the fifty-one churches destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. His principle concern was to stipulate the importance of having buildings where sermons were audible. Wren calculated that no more than two thousand parishioners should be accommodated, contrasting the Roman Catholic Church '[who] built large Churches [where] it is enough if they hear the Murmur of the Mass, and see the Elevation of the Host,' since 'ours are to be fitted for Auditories.'⁶⁷ Wren commended one of his own parish churches, Saint James' in Piccadilly (1676-84) as the most appropriate model to follow for it was 'beautiful and convenient, and such, the cheapest of any Form I could invent.'⁶⁸ In addition, Wren rejected spending 'a great Expence for enriching the outward Walls...in which Plainness and Duration ought principally, if not wholly, to be studied.'⁶⁹ Nevertheless, he enunciated an appeal for open spaces so that the churches could include porticos 'both for Beauty and Convenience ...together with handsome Spires...rising in good Proportion above the neighbouring Houses.'⁷⁰

Vanbrugh concurred with Wren's notion for porticos, since 'no part in the Public Edifices being of greater use, nor no production in architecture so solemnly Magnificent.'⁷¹ The rhetoric of magnificence is an interesting point of discussion in Vanbrugh's 'Proposals.' The classical theory of magnificence evokes the power

⁶⁵ Downes, *English Baroque Architecture*, p.105.

⁶⁶ Wren, *Parentalia*, pp.195-6; Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.257-8.

⁶⁷ Wren, *Parentalia*, pp.195-6.

⁶⁸ Wren, *Parentalia*, p.196.

⁶⁹ Wren, *Parentalia*, p.194.

⁷⁰ Wren, *Parentalia*, p.194.

⁷¹ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.257.

architecture had of inspiring feeling of grandeur in the mind of the spectator. The Greek historian Thucydides (460BC-395 BC) emphasised that ‘sumptuous building’ was equated with the splendour of the nation’s ‘posterity.’⁷² In contrast with Wren’s practical memorandum, Vanbrugh envisioned monuments executed ‘with the utmost Grace that Architecture can produce,’ which should adhere to the concept of decorum thus expressing ‘a plain but Just and Noble Stile,’ in place of ‘Gayety of Ornaments’ that ‘may be proper to a Luxurious Palace.’⁷³ In addition, the city churches should stress the ‘the Reverend look of a Temple it self; which shou’d ever have the most Solemn and Awful Appearance both without and within, that is possible.’⁷⁴ In short, the ‘Fifty New Churches’ promoted great architectural statements that inspired feelings of power and piety as well as suiting the needs of the local parishes.

While Wren and Vanbrugh speculated on a number of elements of design, the wider theological implications were mostly left unexamined. The main body of commissioners subsequently adopted the recommendations prescribed by Reverend George Hickes (1642-1715) titled ‘Observations on Mr Van-Brugg’s Proposals about Building ye New Churches,’ which were first recovered by Ruffinière du Prey in 2000.⁷⁵ Hickes cautioned the commissioners to ‘take care, that the new models of Architecture, do not exclude the old manner of building churches ...[and that] they will guard the Theatrical form to which many of our new churches, and chapels to nearly approach.’⁷⁶ Underlining Hickes’ statement was the search for early Christianity, stipulating that ‘the old way of building churches is capable of most if not all the state, and graces of Architecture’ and thus ancient buildings are the ‘most fit to be imitate.’⁷⁷ Furthermore, Hickes specified that churches should be orientated in an east-west direction, since ‘in their most ancient Apologies’ worshipping God towards the East had been ‘an inviolable right.’⁷⁸ Examining the final transcript for the commissioners’ twelve resolutions, it becomes clear that the guidelines conflated the observations laid out by Wren and Vanbrugh, as well as the liturgical and theological suggestions encouraged by Hickes.⁷⁹

⁷² Newman, ‘Inigo Jones and the Politics of Architecture,’ p.230.

⁷³ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.257.

⁷⁴ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.257.

⁷⁵ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, pp.139-142.

⁷⁶ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.142.

⁷⁷ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.139.

⁷⁸ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.140.

⁷⁹ ‘Rules for the Fifty New Churches Set Down by the Commissioners and Their Subcommittee’ cited in Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, pp.143-144.

In 1711, the Reverend George Stanhope (1660-1728) presented his case on behalf of his parish church of Saint Nicholas' in Deptford and the:

12,000 souls who cannot possibly be accommodated in the said church... for want of which... many have wholly neglected their duty on the Sabbath day... and many others go to meeting houses... of Quakers... Presbyterians, and... Anabaptists.⁸⁰

Stanhope's emotional appeal before the legislators was successful; the commission subsequently appointed Archer to design a new parish church in Deptford. Today, Deptford is an inner city district in south-east London, nevertheless at the turn of the seventeenth-century it was the riverside home of Deptford Dockyard, and was one of the more populous English towns with around 10,000 inhabitants.⁸¹ The town's economic history was primarily dependant on the prosperity of the Dockyard; in the words of Elizabeth McKellar the labourers were 'character skilled, literate dissenting, democratised and independent minded.'⁸² It was this characteristic freethinking that influenced Deptford and the East of London more generally to become a centre of Nonconformity. The first Baptist Church, raised in Spitalfields in 1612, effectively demonstrates the East's resistance for the authority of the established Church.

In 1730, the parish of Deptford was divided into two ecclesiastical centres, namely Saint Nicholas (rebuilt in 1696-98) and Saint Paul (figure 16). As McKellar points out, a comparative analysis with both monuments demonstrates the role architecture played in relation to changing religious ideals.⁸³ The carpenter Charles Stanton rebuilt the parish church of Saint Nicholas to a centralised plan, suiting earlier Puritan sentiment.⁸⁴ Clearly opposing ostentatious expenditure on church building, Stanton comprised a restrained brick exterior with a Palladian interior, reiterating the classicalism employed at Jones' Saint Paul's in Covent Garden.⁸⁵ Archer by comparison, executed a monumental Portland stone church with an extrovertly baroque design. The worshippers' experiences of church structures were emphasised in Vanbrugh's 'Proposals,' in which the recommended situation of buildings were

⁸⁰ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.49.

⁸¹ B. Arciszewska and E. McKellar (eds.), *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture* (Aldershot, 2004), p.188.

⁸² Arciszewska and McKellar, *Articulating British Classicism*, p.188.

⁸³ Arciszewska and McKellar, *Articulating British Classicism*, p.189.

⁸⁴ Arciszewska and McKellar, *Articulating British Classicism*, p.190.

⁸⁵ Arciszewska and McKellar, *Articulating British Classicism*, p.190.

ideally an open site ‘to be fairly View’d at such proper distance.’⁸⁶ Indeed, Archer paid attention to the way Saint Paul’s was to be approached by elevating the monument on a masonry plinth in an area of open land on the edge of Deptford (figure 17). To the eighteenth-century viewer, it would have stood as an overwhelming symbol of State power (figure 18).

The main entrance to the church consists of a semi-circular *tempietto* with projecting Tuscan columns, which swells out of the churchyard like a small round temple, enclosing the visitor standing before it (figure 19). A fan of steps leads the worshipper up to the entrance in a series of concentric circles. The convex form of the West Front is echoed at the East End in which a shallow apse framed by paired Tuscan columns flank a large Venetian window (figure 20). Archer’s employment of the Tuscan order is of significance. As will be examined in Chapter 4, Saint John’s by comparison, was raised in the Doric order. In reference to the six churches Hawksmoor designed for the 1711 building legislation, Timothy Rub proposed that the use of different orders corresponded to the parishes’ distinct locations.⁸⁷ A similar relationship can be noted here. In contrast to the gentrified environment of Saint John’s in Westminster, Deptford was a suburban parish and served a chiefly lower-middle class population thus the humbler implications of the primitive Tuscan were best suited.

The front façade illustrates stylistic similarities with Pietro da Cortona’s Santa Maria della Pace in Rome (1656-57, figure 21), which Archer presumably would have encountered on his Grand Tour. As with Saint Paul’s, Cortona appropriated a commanding façade flanked by giant pilasters, which greet the visitor through the convex curve of the projecting portico. However, Archer replaced Cortona’s crowning pediment with a balustrade, circular tower and spire (figure 22). The juxtaposition of a classical portico and steeple was an accent unique among the twelve new churches and unprecedented in Wren’s city churches, in which the towers were habitually brought to the ground.⁸⁸ The rippling effect produced by the circular steps strategically guides the viewer’s eye upwards towards the steeple, which repeats the semi-spherical form below. As a result, the West Front is encapsulated in one cohesive compositional gesture.

⁸⁶ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.257.

⁸⁷ T. Rub cited in Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor’s London Churches*, p.101.

⁸⁸ G. Cobb, *The Old Churches of London* (London, 1942), p.96.

The north and south elevations are identical, evoking Vanbrugh's 'Reverend look of a Temple,' through the pediment porticos raised up by surrounding staircases, which are partially obscured by the heavily rusticated Tuscan pilasters (figure 23). Iconographically, Archer's church reiterated the prescriptions made by Hickes, in which the Temple of Jerusalem should be adopted for the modern Anglican Church. Archer was not alone in his interest in antiquity. Hawksmoor zealously employed antique sources for his City churches, as conveyed in the bold masonry and Tuscan portico at Saint Alphege's in Greenwich (figure 24). According to Jason Ali, the two architects both shared a deep concern for antiquarianism, for Archer this is likely to have descended from his hereditary.⁸⁹ The imitation of pagan temples obtained disapproval from nineteenth-century descendants, who accused the architects of renouncing the Christian Faith.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Archer and Hawksmoor were motivated by the desire to emulate primitive Christianity in order to certify the Church of England as an authentic successor to the 'first fathers of the Church.'⁹¹ Indeed, in the words of Ali, the 'Fifty New Churches' were erected as the 'Anglican New Jerusalem.'⁹²

The interior of Saint Paul's conserves much of the original logic. In Archer's plan two axes of similar length intersect in the central space at right angles to each other, forming a cross-like shape (figure 25). Downes suggests that Archer appropriated the centralised plan Borromini restyled at Sant' Agnese in Agone (Rome, 1652-57) as a model for his outline at Deptford.⁹³ Nevertheless, in the plan Saint Paul's is a Greek cross within a rectangle, since the east-west axis is slightly longer. Thus the formal considerations of Archer's interior accommodated both the High Church tradition for longitudinal plans as examined in Chapter 2 and his personal interest in centralised buildings of the Italian baroque. Galleries in post-Reformation churches were of utmost importance, ensuring audibility and visibility for the parishioners. However for a building planned around two interlocking axes, their placement conflicted with the balanced internal space, since having the altar placed against the east wall resulted in an uneven number of galleries. In James Gibbs' *Book of Architecture* (1728) he reinforced this point, stating that galleries 'as well as Pews,

⁸⁹ J. R. Ali and P. Cunich, 'The Church East and West: Orientating the Queen Anne Churches, 1711-34', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64 (2005), p. 57.

⁹⁰ W. M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1996), p.203.

⁹¹ Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, p.204.

⁹² Ali and Cunich, 'Church East and West,' p.57.

⁹³ Downes, *English Baroque Architecture*, p.101.

clog up and Spoil the Inside of Churches and take away that right Proportion which they would otherwise have.’⁹⁴ Hook thus proposes that it would have been unlikely for an English church to achieve true Baroque spatial effects.⁹⁵ To resolve the aesthetic concern, Archer skillfully employed four small isolated galleries, on the internal corners of Saint Paul’s fabric (figure 26). Furthermore, the rectangular forms are reminiscent of theatre-boxes, evoking the *palci* (the precursors to loges) Irving Lavin identified at Bernini’s Cornaro Chapel in Rome (1647-52, figure 27).⁹⁶ Here, Bernini fabricated two marble balustrades into the sidewalls of his chapel with the addition of portrait busts of the patron, Federico Cornaro and the family’s six cardinals.⁹⁷ The half-figures of the Cornaro family are the intermediaries between the worshipper and the spiritual realm that is embodied in the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1647). While Bernini appropriated architecture as a platform to exhibit dramatic events through sculpture, Archer followed the more ‘Borrominesque’ approach in which the ‘theatre’ unfolded through his architectural conception and the dynamics of the assembled congregation.⁹⁸ At the heart of Archer’s design was the desire to communicate a sense of belief to the worshipper. Employing baroque visual effects juxtaposed with ancient ideals, Archer raised a great ecclesiastical monument that glorified the Church of England and assisted the local parish at Deptford.

⁹⁴ J. Gibbs, *A Book of Architecture Containing Designs of Buildings and Ornaments* (London, 1728), p.xxv.

⁹⁵ Hook, *Baroque Age in England*, p.147.

⁹⁶ I. Lavin cited in G. Warwick, *Bernini: Art as Theatre* (New Haven, 2012), p.51.

⁹⁷ Warwick, *Bernini: Art as Theatre*, p.51.

⁹⁸ Blunt, *Borromini*, p.23.

Chapter 4: Saint John, Westminster

In the centre of [Smith Square]... is a very hideous church with four towers at the four corners, generally resembling some petrified monster, frightful and gigantic, on its back with its legs in the air.⁹⁹

As with the church of Saint Paul's in Deptford, Archer aspired to conceive a bold architectural statement for the parish church in Westminster, to epitomize the High Anglican, Tory ascendancy, during the reign of Queen Anne. Despite not always complementing everyone's taste, Archer's Saint John's in Smith Square is widely celebrated as a *magnum opus* of the English Baroque period. Indeed, it outstripped the twelve other new churches in size and was the most expensive to construct, with final costs reaching £40, 875. 14. 0, surpassing the commissioners' allocated funding by approximately five times.¹⁰⁰ The eminent twentieth-century architectural writer Sir Hugh Casson (1910- 99) wrote 'Just to come across it in that quiet square is an event.'¹⁰¹

In contrast to the extensive open land at Deptford, Archer was faced with a challenging site at Westminster, comprising an asymmetrical square at the intersection of two axes, Church Street (today, Dean Stanley Street) and Lord North Street (figure 28). Consequently, the church was raised on the north-south axis seemingly neglecting the commissioners' clause that 'no site to be pitched upon for erecting a new church, where it will not admit that the church be placed east and west, without special reasons.'¹⁰² Nevertheless, Archer overcame the obstacle by adhering to the more aesthetic stipulation laid out by Wren, to whom stressed that '[the churches] be brought as forward as possible into the large and more open Streets, not in obscure Lanes,' moreover he emphasised that the front elevation of the church, 'most open to View should be adorn'd with Porticos, both for Beauty and Convenience.'¹⁰³ It is evident that Archer ingeniously took advantage of the limited site to execute his grand showpiece. The wide pediment façade, framed by colossal Doric pilasters and columns *in antis*, immediately confronts the spectator approaching

⁹⁹ C. Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (1865; London, 1997), p.207.

¹⁰⁰ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.34.

¹⁰¹ H. Casson, 'St John's Smith Square: History', <http://www.sjss.org.uk> [accessed 10 September 2014].

¹⁰² Add. MS 2690, fo.15r.

¹⁰³ Wren, *Parentalia*, p.194.

Smith Square from Lord North Street (figure 29). The monumental entrance portico culminates in an elaborate cleft pediment, which is broken near the apex, exposing a further pediment set behind the tower bases. A plate for Archer's Roehampton House in Surrey (1710-12) in Campbell's *Vitruvius* shows that the architect had previously experimented with a similar motif.¹⁰⁴ However, at Westminster the void is intersected with a miniature tabernacle, flanked by ionic pilasters and topped by its own pediment that is broken along the base (figure 30).

It should be remembered that the new monuments of the city were built on behalf of the government to honour Queen Anne. In the period following the Restoration, the struggles between Crown and Parliament were still woven into the minds of Stuart audiences. As a result, to stay clear from absolute monarchical accusations, no royal buildings were erected for personal use. Nevertheless, the Queen graciously supported the building of 'Fifty New Churches' as noted at the commencement of the campaign, in which she advocated Parliament to commence:

The great and necessary work of Building more churches within the Bills of Mortality,... which may be so much to the Advantage of the Protestant Religion and the former Establishment of the Church of England.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, the sovereign's enthusiasm for the programme is articulated through the celebrated anecdote that recalls Queen Anne prescribing her ideas for the design of Saint John's by pointing at an upturned footstall.¹⁰⁶ The four crowning towers still yield this effect today. On 23 June 1713, the body of commissioners proposed to have fifty life-size statues of Queen Anne, 'made by the best hands' to be 'fixt in some conspicuous part' of every one of the 'Fifty New Churches.'¹⁰⁷ Underscoring the elaborate scheme was the desire to unite the churches as visual manifestations expressing, 'Monuments to Prosperity of Her Piety and Grandeur.'¹⁰⁸ In an initial design for Hawksmoor's London church of Saint Anne's Limehouse (c. 1709-30), the architect adhered to the High Church commissioners' sentiment, propositioning a figure of Queen Anne accompanied with an orb and sceptre for the east elevation of

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, p.81.

¹⁰⁵ J. Anderson Winn, *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts* (Oxford, 2014), p.555.

¹⁰⁶ Anderson Winn, *Queen Anne*, p.555.

¹⁰⁷ Add. MS 2690, fo.99r.

¹⁰⁸ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.257.

his building.¹⁰⁹ According to Friedman, the curious tabernacles adorning the four façades of Archer's church may have been designed to enshrine statues of the monarch.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the sculptural series was abandoned following the sudden death of Queen Anne in 1714. In its place, it was recommended that a single bronze figurine of the sovereign should be erected outside the first of the new churches, James Gibbs' Saint Mary-le-Strand (1714- 17), to mark a stamp of royal approval.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, the four empty tabernacles at Saint John's represent the 'ghosts of a lost ideal.'¹¹²

Contrasting the row of Georgian terraced housing on Lord North Street, Archer's momentous Portland stone church is immediately singled out as a building of significance. There is an element of surprise in it all, set in place that you would least anticipate it. Once again, Archer was demonstrating an appreciation and understanding of the Continental baroque. As shown in Chapter 3, Cortona had constructed a grandiose visual experience for his audience at Santa Maria della Pace by exploiting the oblique approach from the principle street. As a result, the church confronted the passers-by when it came into view. It was Richard Krautheimer who first established the concept of *teatro* (theatre) in reference to seventeenth-century Roman architecture, in which he stressed the performative dimension of buildings that appealed directly to the viewer.¹¹³ As with Cortona, Archer was investigating the theatricalities of urban planning to entice his audience to draw closer.

At the turn of the seventeenth-century, Gerald Cobb notes that a harkening for originality became notably apparent in architecture.¹¹⁴ The term 'originality' is an interesting point of discussion here. As identified by Maria Loh, there are two concepts of originality in art historical discourse.¹¹⁵ Firstly, the pre-modernist notion that signifies an artist's own re-working of existing themes and the modern conception to which Cobb refers stresses that a disassociation from the past in order to construct a new visual culture.¹¹⁶ Thus far, the dissertation has examined Archer's style as representing a singular rearrangement of what he had witnessed on his Grand

¹⁰⁹ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.94.

¹¹⁰ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.45.

¹¹¹ Ruffinière du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London Churches*, p.94.

¹¹² Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.46.

¹¹³ R. Krautheimer, *The Rome of Alexander VII, 1655-1667* (Princeton, 1985), pp.4-7.

¹¹⁴ Cobb, *Old Churches of London*, p.96.

¹¹⁵ M. Loh, 'New and Improved: Repetition as Originality in Italian Baroque Practice and Theory', *Art Bulletin*, 86 (2004), pp. 477-504.

¹¹⁶ Loh, 'New and Improved: Repetition as Originality in Italian Baroque,' p.478.

Tour. However, it appears the four eccentric towers, topping each corner of the Saint John's church reveal complete innovation (figure 31). In the detailed commissioners' papers it insinuates that these accents were the determining factor when the board appointed Archer's design for the Westminster site. Following in-depth analysis of the different plans, the commissioners approved that the 'Model... with: Four Towers proposed by Mr Archer is proper to be built.'¹¹⁷ Today, the towers are crowned with lead finials, an alteration carried out without Archer's consent, nonetheless an undated engraving recovered by Friedman (figure 32) provides new visual evidence for the architect's creative conception.¹¹⁸ As with Saint Paul's tower, the print illustrates the cylindrical form of the structures pierced by round-headed arches and *oeil-de-boeuf* ('bull's eye').¹¹⁹ However, Corinthian pilasters replace Deptford's compact Tuscan tower and additional Corinthian columns fabricate a more dramatic silhouette. In origins, Archer had intended to continue the composition of his towers in four theatrical stone pinnacles. Regarding possible sources of inspiration, Nikolaus Pevsner expressed how he was 'at a loss' to finding a suitable predecessor for the four towers.¹²⁰ While their precarious position recall the bell towers added to the Pantheon in the seventeenth-century, which were notoriously labelled the 'ass-ears' and later removed, it is reasonable to conclude that Archer's huge towers were not imitative at all.¹²¹

For the east and west elevations of Saint John's, Archer conceived identical façades, which echoed the Doric porticos of the alternative fronts (figure 33). Nonetheless, Archer replaced the enormous crowning pediments with tabernacles, supported by exaggerated scrolls that provided ornamentation to the otherwise sober façades. The juxtaposition between colossal elements and excessive detail resulted in extreme surface tension. However, as with Saint Philip's, the solidity of the controlling Doric order, complete with metopes and triglyphs, resulted in the four elevations harmoniously coexisting. In addition, Archer introduced four convex quadrants, fusing the individual façades together. Similar to the modified pseudoperipteral temple at Birmingham, the exterior walls of Saint John's were deeply channelled with horizontal bands; however here a strictly utilitarian purpose

¹¹⁷ Add. MS 2690, fo.84r.

¹¹⁸ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.42.

¹¹⁹ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.42.

¹²⁰ N. Pevsner cited in Games, S. (ed.), *Pevsner: The Complete Broadcast Talks, Architecture and Art on Radio and Television* (London, 2014), pp.530-1.

¹²¹ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.44.

underscored their treatment since the contours strategically guide the spectator's gaze towards the base of the towers, unifying the composition.¹²² As previously shown, Hawksmoor's interest in ancient Rome was a recurrent theme in his work. While Hawksmoor prescribed to Vanbrugh's recommendations for a 'Just and Noble Stile,' through designing churches that were devoid of any ornamentation, a marked individuality characterises Archer's plastic quality of his architectural works.¹²³ The employment of Doric pilasters for reasons other than support is particularly noticeable in Archer's *oeuvre*. A point of departure for Hawksmoor is articulated at the church of Saint Alphege's in Greenwich. According to the minutes of 9 July 1712, the initial plans for the Greenwich church were 'improved by Archer.'¹²⁴ Despite the minutes not expanding on what the amendments were, Downes argues that it is conceivable Archer 'improved' the church by devising a giant order of Doric pilasters to run the length of the building, reflecting similar treatments at Saint Philip's and Saint John's.¹²⁵

The twin north and south porticos are represented in the plan as the entrances to Archer's monument (figure 34). Upon entering the church, the spectator would have walked through loggias supporting the internal wooden galleries before reaching the greater principal space, a rectangular room, placed on a short transept axis.¹²⁶ In 1742 a 'terrible Fire...broke out in the Vestry-Room' and caused extensive internal damage; in 1773 Saint John's was struck by lightning and required large restoration.¹²⁷ Finally on 10 May 1941, after receiving a direct hit during the Second World War, the interior was given a new lease of life as a concert hall. Despite the transformation of function, much of the internal fabric has been restored to its original form. In the preserved commissioners' papers it was recorded that there were 'Twelve Corinthian Columns' supporting a ceiling with intersecting vaults.¹²⁸ At the opening to the East End, two paired columns were employed to carry a foliated arch, resembling a proscenium arch for a theatre (figure 35). Similar to Saint Philip's, the three defined liturgical centres were staged in ascending scale of importance. Hawksmoor additionally exploited bi-axial planning at Saint George's in Bloomsbury

¹²² Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, pp.46-7.

¹²³ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.257.

¹²⁴ Add. MS 2690, fo.40r.

¹²⁵ Downes, *Hawksmoor*, p.110.

¹²⁶ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.48.

¹²⁷ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.51.

¹²⁸ Friedman, *Georgian Parish Church*, p.48.

(1716- 31). As a result of the limitations imposed by the narrow site, Hawksmoor executed a rectangular plan with a long north-south axis, however as with Archer, conformed to the commissioners' guidelines, placing the altar at the east end. The analogous ideas evoked in the designs of Archer and Hawksmoor's churches suggest that the atmosphere of the Commission office was an organic one, in which aesthetic solutions were freely traded. However at Westminster, Archer's projecting columns allowed the viewer to interpret the space in central or longitudinal terms, a creative solution to an awkward site.¹²⁹ In the words of Pevsner, 'St John is on the aesthetic level of Hawksmoor's best.'¹³⁰

While Archer's interlocked internal space is reminiscent of the arrangements used by the likes of Borromini, in terms of ecclesiastical decoration, it was important Archer did not infringe on what was considered too extravagant. The opinions on the Continent were quite different. Following the Catholic Church's triumph over the Protestant Reformation, religious patrons were prepared to spend vast quantities on devotional art which inspired feelings of truth as defined by the Council of Trent.¹³¹ The glory of the Counter Reformation is epitomised in Bernini's Cornaro Chapel in Rome (1647-52, figure 36), previously mentioned in Chapter 3. Here, the borderline between all three arts becomes fused; the architectural elements and central sculptural group depicting the *Ecstasy of St Teresa* are interlocked, together with the fresco vault, revealing the heart of Bernini's vision for a beautiful and harmonious whole - *un bel composto*.¹³² By synthesizing all available artistic means, Bernini aspired to proclaim the unity of the Catholic Church and conjure up a vision of heavenly glory for the worshipper.¹³³ Archer by comparison, rarely used colour, and the interiors of his churches were painted white to achieve a dignified and simple Protestant finish. Drawing influence from ancient temples, Andrea Palladio had stipulated in his *I Quattro libri dell'Architettura* (1570) that 'Of all colours none is more suitable... than white, because purity of colour and life would be supremely pleasing to God.'¹³⁴ Casson described the impression of Saint John's interior, as thus, 'all within is quiet

¹²⁹ Pevsner cited in Games, *Pevsner*, p.531.

¹³⁰ Pevsner cited in Games, *Pevsner*, p.531.

¹³¹ Blunt, *Borromini*, p.67.

¹³² F. Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, trans. C. Enggass (Pennsylvania, 2006) p.74.

¹³³ Warwick, *Bernini: Art as Theatre*, p.60.

¹³⁴ A. Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture*, trans. R. Tavernor and R. Schofield (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), p.213.

simplicity.¹³⁵ Indeed, the combination of the imposing height of the central space, pure decoration and bright light emitted from the great Venetian windows would have invoked religious, and contemplative thoughts in the mind of the early eighteenth-century worshipper. Architecturally, the design of the church was thus of extreme importance, not only for the considerable expenditure on behalf of the commissioners but because of its potentially persuasive function.

¹³⁵ Casson, 'St John's Smith Square: History', <http://www.sjss.org.uk> [accessed 10 September 2014].

Conclusion

To conclude, the dissertation has considered three ecclesiastical works of architecture by Thomas Archer within the context of the English Baroque. One can understand Archer's churches in a theatrical manner; at the heart of his dynamic designs were a staged experience for the viewer. Thus, his focus on the physical fabric of the churches was essential for evoking mental and spiritual associations. Today, the parish churches are surviving monuments of the early eighteenth-century societal ideals carved in stone. It was a period of great intellectual freedom, offering artists opportunities to develop their own eccentric styles. As the dissertation has suggested, for Archer this was greatly owed to the Continental baroque. The persuasive powers of the Anglican Church were an essential requirement for the triumphant Tory Government. One could suggest direct parallels between the baroque architectural and spatial effects that Archer employs with the way an orator builds his speech to a dramatic crescendo. Moreover, in response to Counter-Reformation Rome, Archer sought to conserve the claim that the Anglican Church held the unbroken link to the early Church, epitomised as the 'liturgical Golden Age.'¹³⁶ His antiquarian approach to design thus revealed his deep concern with the status of Anglicanism.

While the dissertation has examined the social context of the churches, it should be remembered that the works stood as supreme monuments for Archer's own architectural merit. First and foremost, it demonstrates his seminally agile ability to conceive designs on a monumental scale, which can be equated to the characteristic 'massiveness' employed by Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor.¹³⁷ In addition, he remained an architect distinguished for the vigour and originality of his invention and demonstrated a singular re-working of what he had witnessed on his Grand Tour and what he had absorbed from the written recommendations of Wren, Vanbrugh and Hickeys.

Through the investigation, I hope to have expanded the scope for the on-going investigation into the largely forgotten figure of Thomas Archer and his *oeuvre*. In his list of 'Proposals,' Vanbrugh dwelled on the innovative nature of the 'Fifty New Churches,' claiming 'since Christianity began, there is but [this] one instance, where the Inhabitants of a City have had so Glorious an Occasion...to Adorn both their

¹³⁶ Addleshaw, *High Church Tradition*, p.30.

¹³⁷ Whiffen, *Thomas Archer*, p.23.

Religion and their Towne at once.’¹³⁸ Indeed, subsequent history has verified Vanbrugh’s dictum. There are no examples in the history of Anglican architecture that compete with the great ecclesiastical projects of the early eighteenth-century.

¹³⁸ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p.258.

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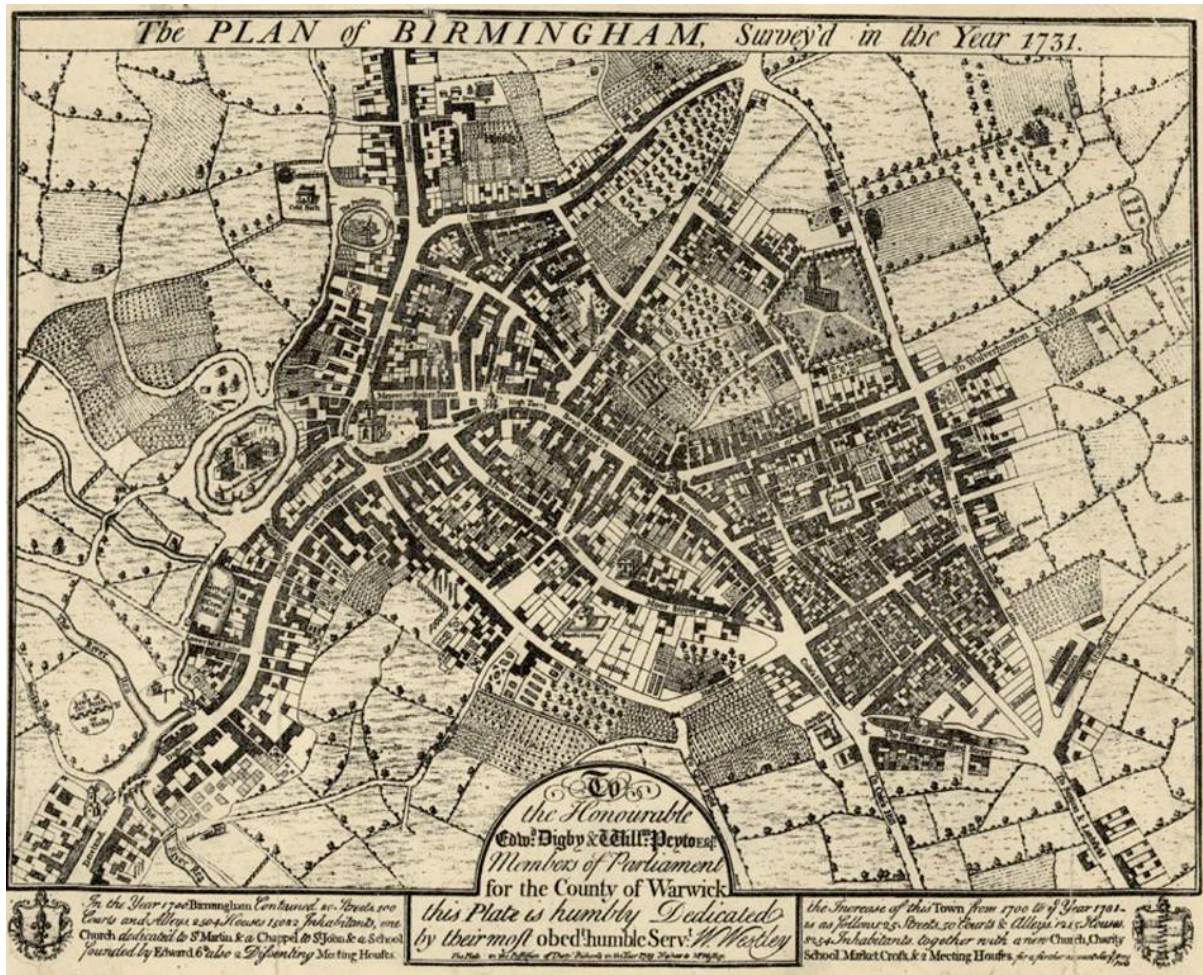


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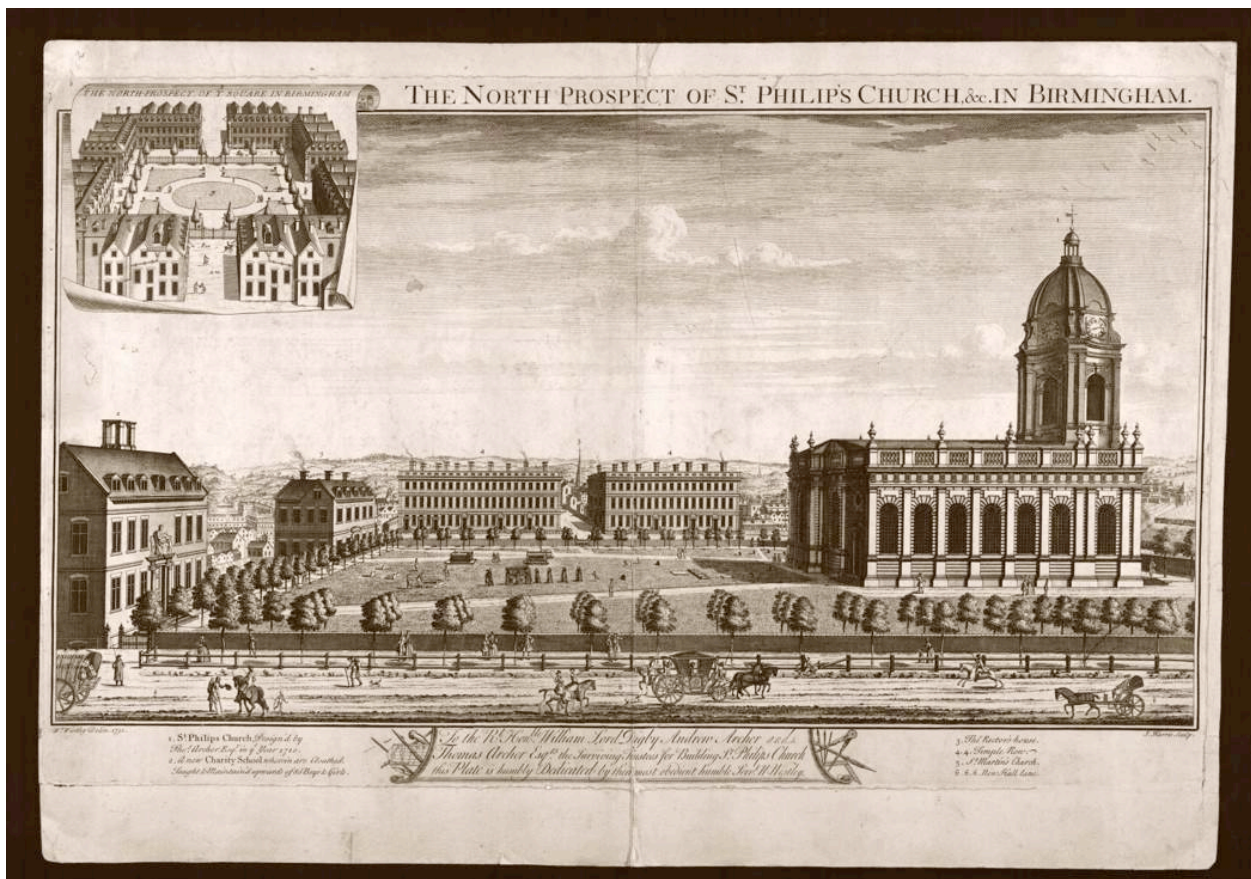


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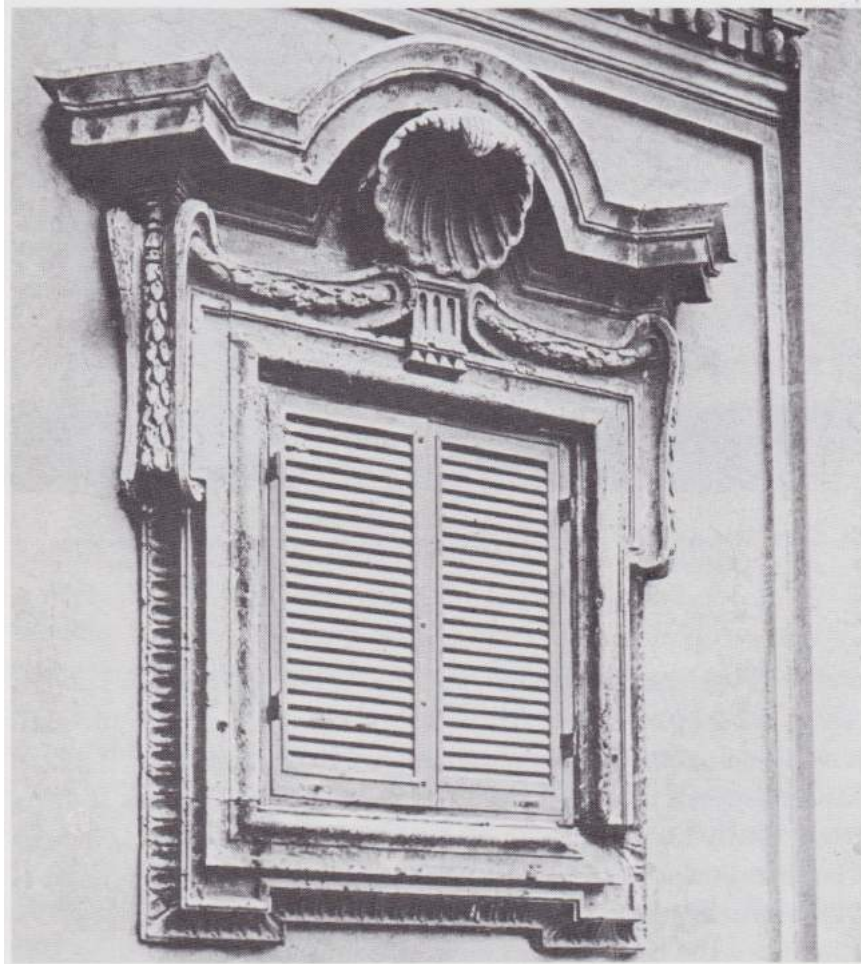


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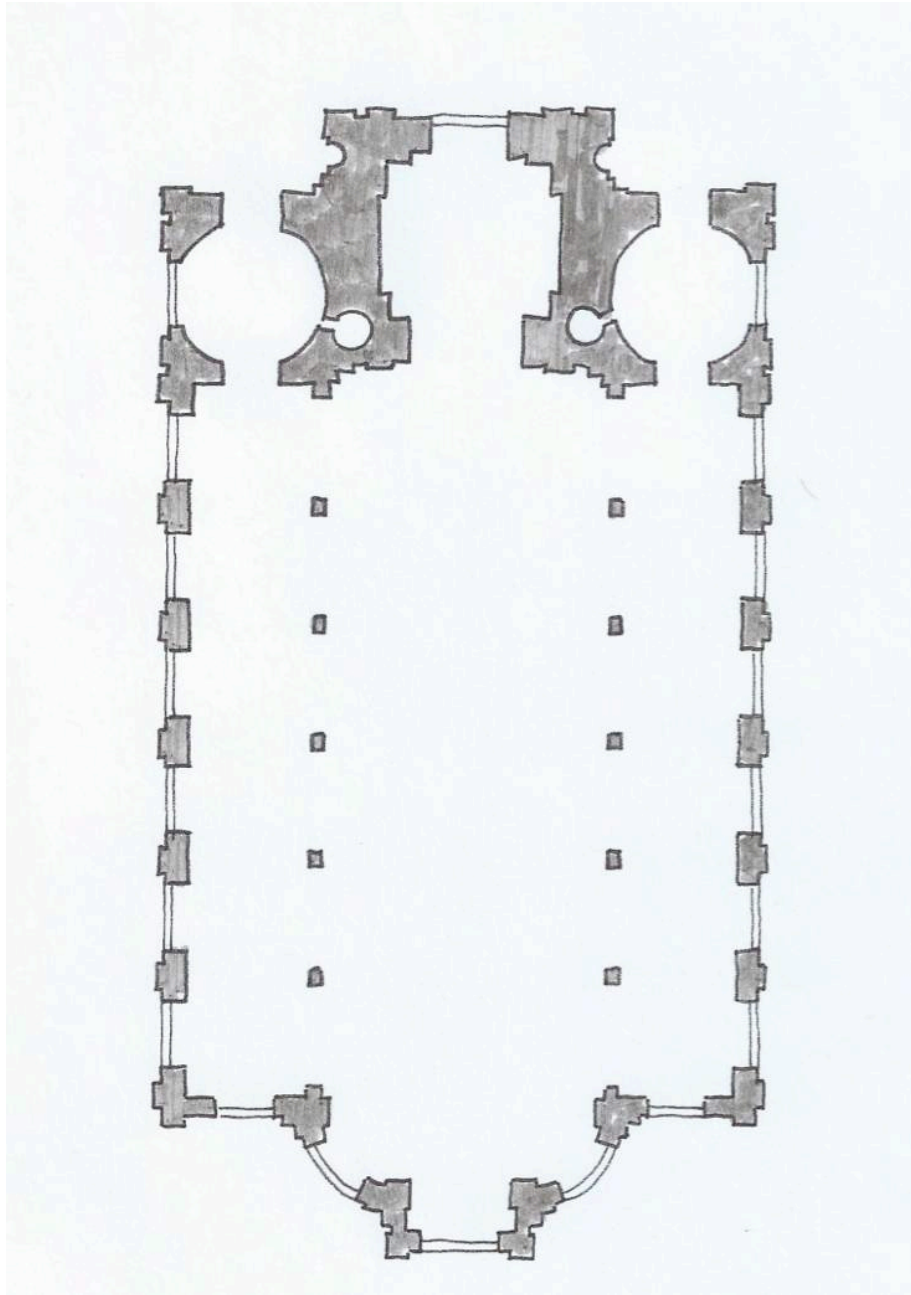


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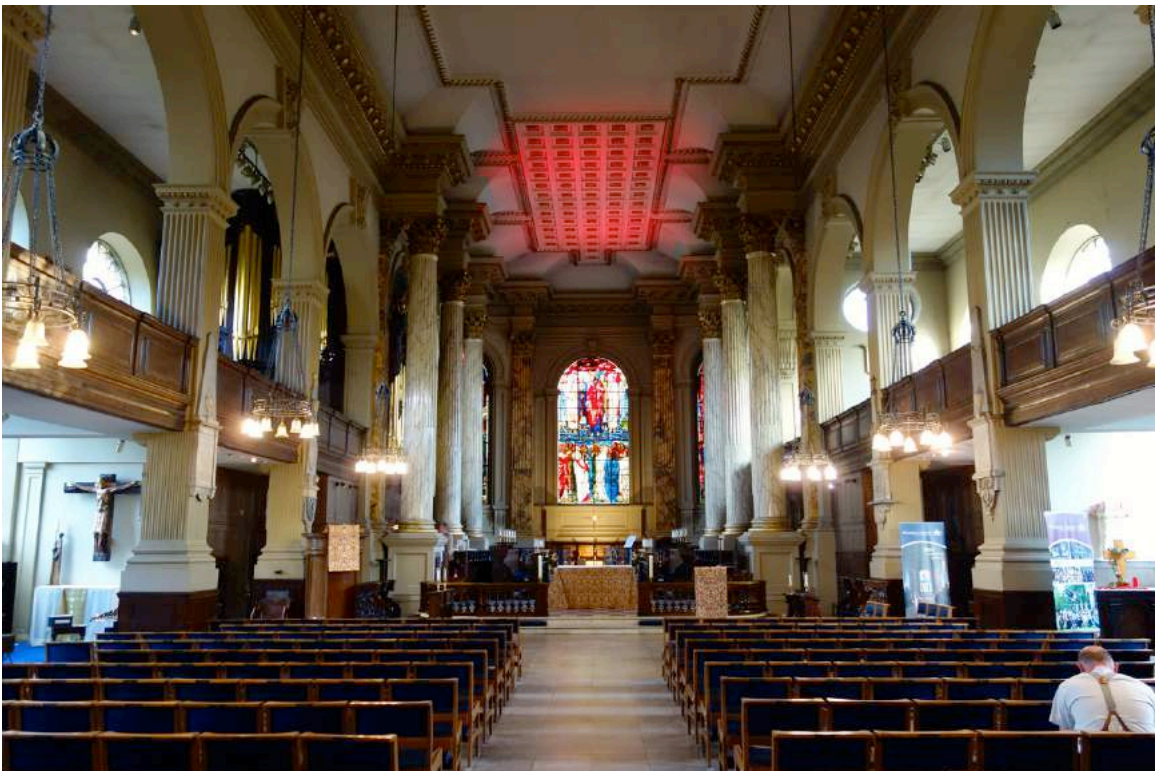


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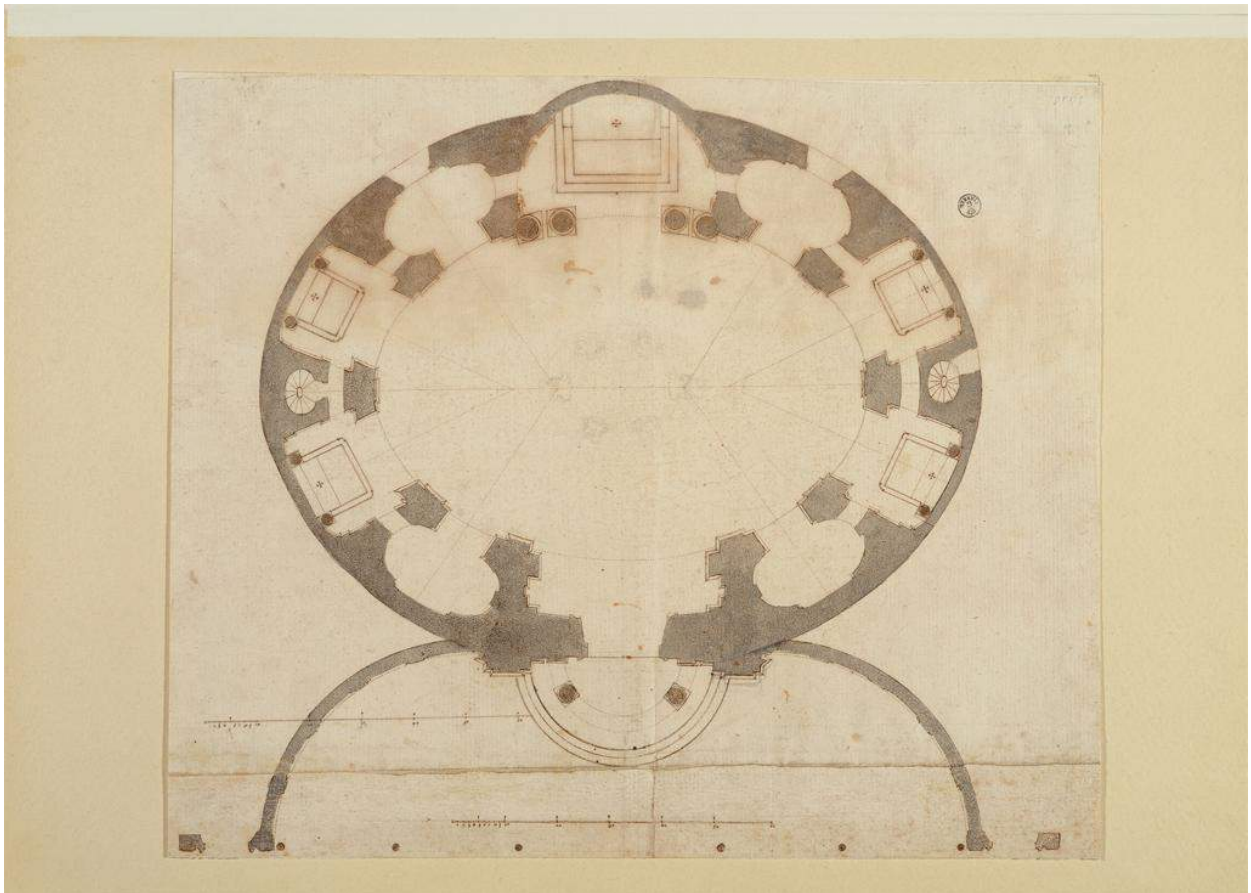


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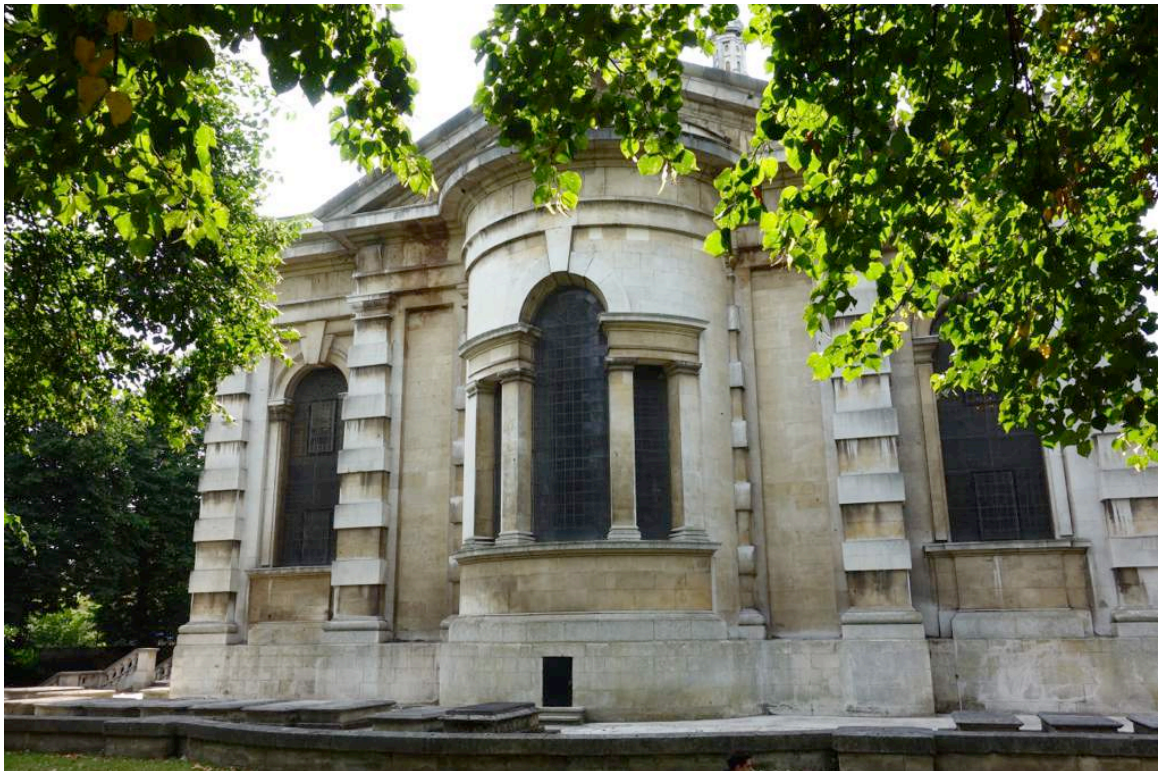


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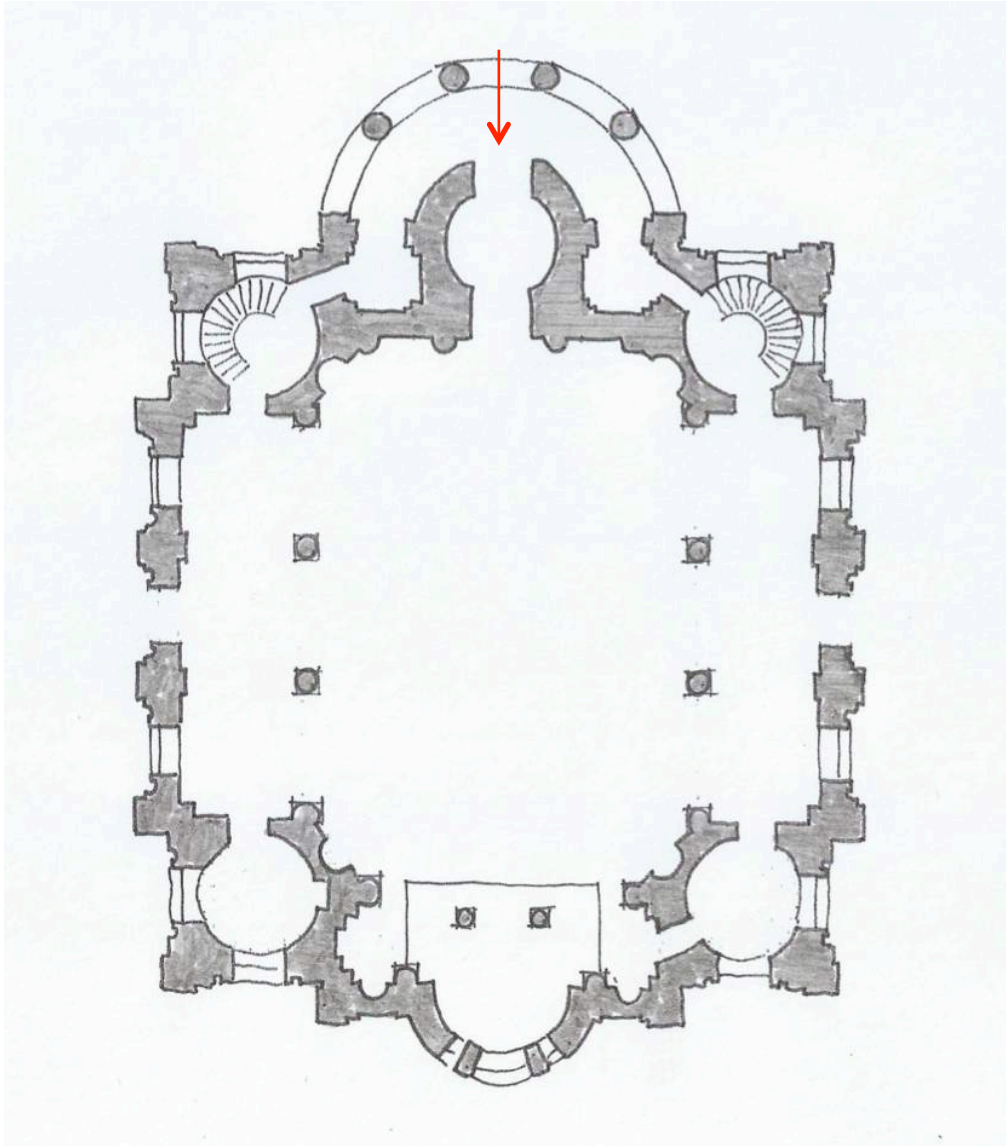


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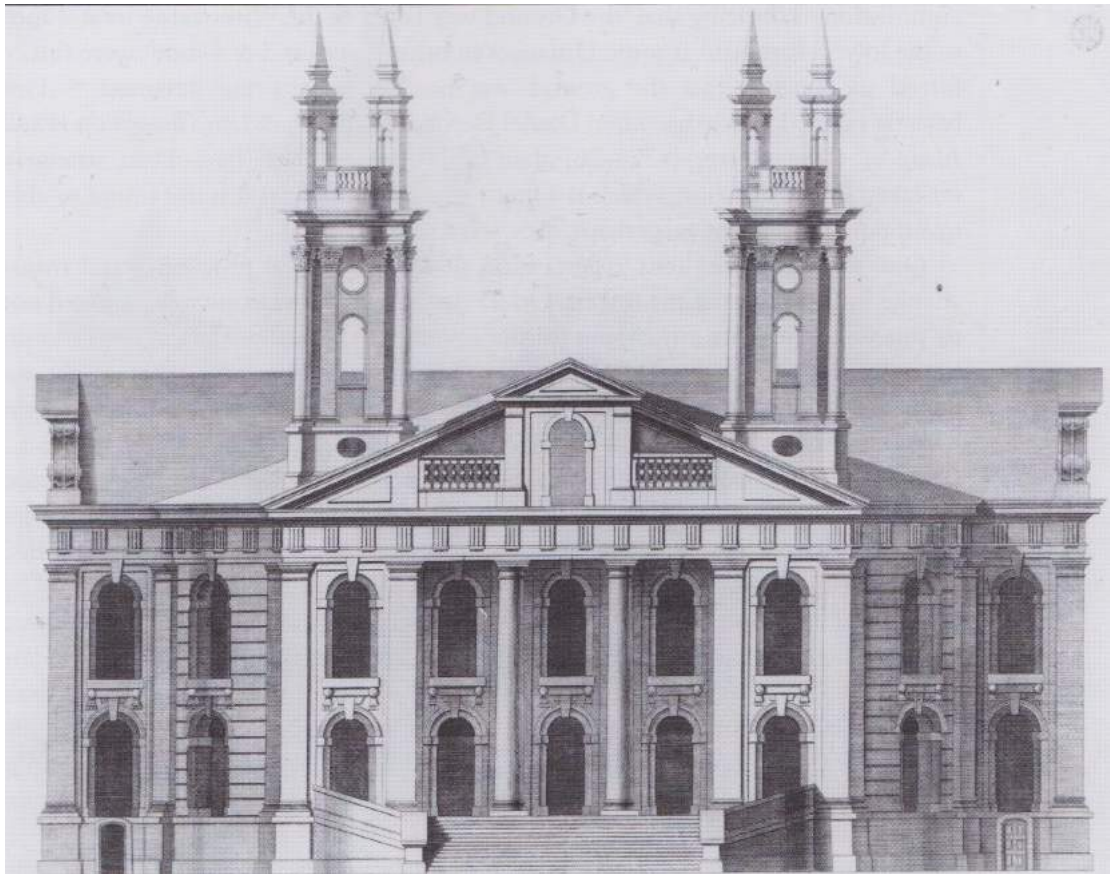


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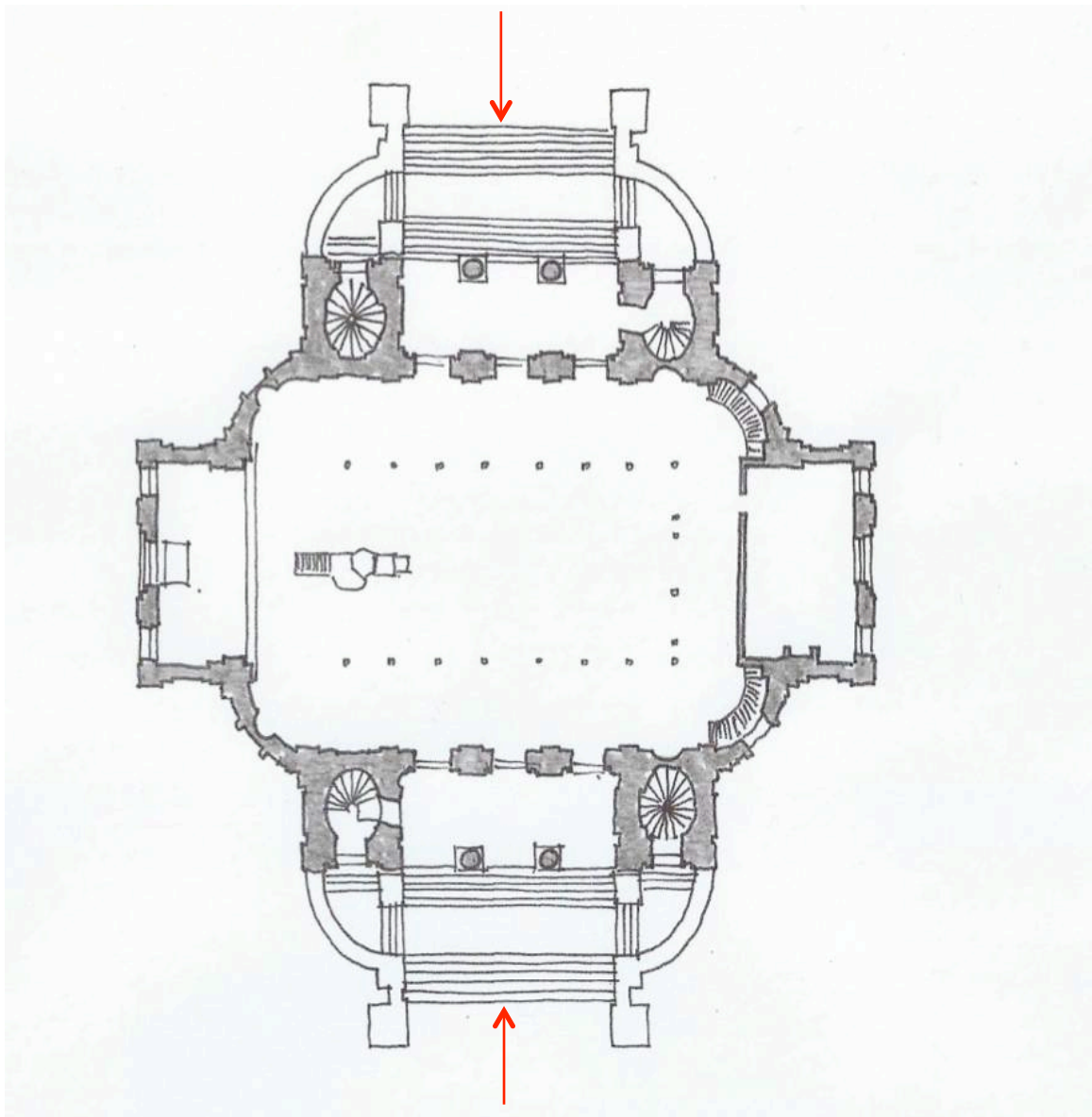


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