On the completion of The Encyclopedia of Religion, the board of editors and the staff pay homage to the memory of Victor Turner and Mircea Eliade, deceased in 1983 and 1986, respectively.
nomens, the archetype is meaningless in any system of thought that denies the reality of a transcendent principle. In other words, the term suggests a view of creation according to which this world depends for its very nature on some reality outside itself.

[See also the biography of C. G. Jung and the entry Transcendence and Immanence. For a discussion of the role of archetypal symbols in the history of religions, see Iconography.]

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Beverly Moon

ARCHITECTURE. [This article presents a thematic overview of religious architecture. Monuments associated with prehistoric religious practices are discussed in Megalithic Religion; Paleolithic Religion; and Prehistoric Religions.]

Architecture may be defined as the art of building, and consequently religious architecture refers to those buildings planned to serve religious purposes. These structures can be either very simple or highly complex. They can take the form of a circle of upright stones (megaliiths) defining a sacred space or they may spread over acres like the sanctuary at Angkor Wat. They can be of any and every material from the mounds of earth reared over royal tombs to the reinforced concrete and glass of twentieth-century houses of worship.

Yet the practice of religion does not of itself require an architectural setting. Sacrifice can be offered to the gods in the open air on a hilltop; the adherents of Islam can perform their daily prayers in a railroad car or even in the street; the Christian Eucharist can be celebrated in a hospital ward. Nevertheless all the major world religions have buildings especially planned for their use, and they constitute an important source of knowledge about these faiths. They can reveal what is believed about the nature of the gods; they can provide insight into the character of the communities for which they were designed and the cultus celebrated therein.

To comprehend and appreciate the significance of these buildings it is necessary to classify them, but their variety is so great that one single method would be incomplete. Hence several typologies have to be devised if the subject matter is to be covered adequately; indeed it is possible to identify at least four. In the first place, the vocabulary applied to religious buildings can be taken as the basis for the formulation of a typology. This, however, is by no means exhaustive, and so it is essential to move on to a second typology derived from the character or nature ascribed to each building, which may differ depending upon whether it is regarded as a divine dwelling, a center of reference, a monument, or a meeting house. A third typology may be presented by analyzing the functions for which each building provides, including the service of the gods, religious teaching, the manifestation of reverence and devotion, congregational worship, and symbolization. A fourth typology is architectural rather than religious but needs to be noted: this is based upon the categories of path and place. Other factors that should be borne in mind for a complete picture relate to the different materials used, the effect of climate, culture and its expression in different styles, and also the influence of patronage.

Classification according to Terms Used. The terms used to refer to religious buildings provide a preliminary indication of both their variety and their significance.

Terms that designate a structure as a shelter. These may be further differentiated according to the class of being or thing associated with them.

For gods. The Hebrew *beit Elohim* is to be translated "house of God," while heikhal, a loanword from Semitic through Babylonian e-kullu, is used for a very special house or palace. In Greek there is naos, from naio, "to dwell in," and kuriakos ("of the Lord") lies at the origin of both *kirk* and *church*. In Latin there is aedes sacra, a "sacred edifice," as well as *domus dei*, a "god's home." Tabernacle (Lat., tabernaculum from taberna, a "hut") has a similar domiciliary connotation. Hinduism has *prâsâda*, or platform of a god, and *devalaya*, a residence of a god, while the Japanese word for shrine is literally "honorable house."

For objects. In English the primary term is *shrine*, derived from *scriptium*, which means a case that contains sacred things. More specifically there is *chapell* from *capella* ("cloak"), referring to the garment of Saint Martin that was venerated in a small building; there is *cathedral*, which shows that the particular church is
where the bishop's cathedra, or throne, is located. Pagoda, which is a deformation of the Sinhala dagoba, is a tower containing relics. Agyari, a place of fire, is the designation of a Parsi temple in which the sacred flame is kept alight. The Temple of the Sleeping Buddha in Peking characterizes the form of the statute within.

For humans. The Latin domus ecclesiae points to the Christian community as the occupant of a building. Beit ha-keneset in Hebrew and sunagōgē in Greek (from sunagō, “to gather together”), with synagogue, as the English transliteration, denote a place of assembly. The term used by Quakers, meeting house, has the same implication.

Terms that indicate the character of a structure. In Greek there is to hagion, the place of dread, from azoneai, “to stand in awe of,” and to hieron, the “holy place.” In Latin adytum is a transliteration of the Greek adition, “not to be entered,” because it is the holy abode of a divinity. Temples is a space cut off; it comes from tempus, meaning a “division” or “section,” which in turn derives from the Greek temenos, referring to an area set apart for a particular purpose such as the service of a god. Temple in English has the same etymology, while sanctuary (sanctus) emphasizes the holiness of the building.

Terms that affirm an association with a person or events. To speak of Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London is to declare a link with the apostle. The Süleymaniye Mosque complex in Istanbul commemorates its patron, Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. The Roman Pantheon, which is latinized Greek (pantheon), was dedicated to “all the gods.” The Anastasis in Jerusalem commemorates the resurrection (anastasis) of Jesus. Basilica denotes a public building with royal (basileus) links. The generic term is martyrion (Lat., martyrrium), from martyr, “to be a witness.” Such an edifice is a monument or memorial; the two terms are synonymous—the one from moneo, “to remind,” and the other from memori, “to remember.” It therefore preserves or promotes the memory of a person or event; the English Cathedral of Saint Albans, for example, commemorates a martyred saint, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem recalls the birth of Christ.

Terms descriptive of the activity for which a building is used. The Hebrew devir, which denotes the holy of holies in the Jerusalem Temple, may suggest an oracle, from a verb meaning “speak” in which case it is similar to the Latin farum, from fari, “to speak,” especially of oracles. Proseuke (Gr.) or oratorium (Lat.), in English oratory, or place of prayer, all point to a particular form of religious devotion. Baptistry (Gr., baptizō, “to dip”) specifies ceremonial action, and mosque (Arab., masjid, “place of prostration” [before God]), the place of an action.

Terms indicative of the shape of the edifice. These relate mainly to funerary architecture: tholos, a “dome” or “vault,” signifies a round tomb; tomb itself comes from tumulus, a sepulchral mound; pyramid suggests a geometric form and is at the same time the designation of a pharaoh’s resting place; maṣṭaba is the Arabic for a bench that describes the shape of a tomb; stūpa, from the Sanskrit stūpa (Pali, dhāra), signifies a reliquary “mound” or tower; ziggurat, from the Babylonian ziggoratu, meaning “mountain peak” or “pinnacle,” is descriptive of the superimposed terraces that make up this structure.

Typology according to Character. Granting the unavoidable overlap, four main types may be specified.

Divine dwelling. Taking pride of place, because the majority of terms in use emphasize this particular category, is the structure that is regarded as a divine habitation. Since the chief occupant enjoys divine status, the model is believed to have been provided from above. Gudea, ruler of Lagash in the third millennium BCE, was shown the plans of his temple by the goddess herself. The shrine of Amaterasu, the Japanese sun goddess, was built according to the directions provided by an oracle. Various passages in the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) indicate that the Tabernacle and the Temple were considered to have transcendent exemplars. Yahweh’s instructions to Moses were to this effect: “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. . . . And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain” (Ex. 25:8f., 25:40). Similarly, when David gave the plans of the Temple of Solomon, it is reported: “All this he made clear by the writing from the hand of the Lord concerning it, all the work to be done according to the plan” (1 Chr. 28:19). In the Wisdom of Solomon, the king is represented as saying that what he has built is “a copy of the holy tabernacle which you did prepare aforesight from the beginning” (9:8). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews reproduces the same idea when he describes the Temple and its furniture as “a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary” and as “copies of the heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5, 9:23). [See Biblical Temple.]

The work of the divine architects is frequently held to include not only god-houses but entire cities. Senamaherib received the design of Nineveh drawn in a heavenly script. The New Jerusalem, in the prophet Ezekiel’s vision, is described in the greatest detail, with precise di-
The Indian holy city of Banaras is thought to have been not only planned but actually built by Śiva. [See Jerusalem and Banaras.]

Similar ideas are present in Christian thought from the fourth century onward. When large churches came to be built, as distinct from the previous small house-churches, recourse was had to the Old Testament for precedent, since the New Testament provided no guidance. Thus the basilica came to be regarded as an imitation of the Jerusalem Temple: the atrium corresponded to the forecourt, the nave to the holy place (heitkhel), and the area round the altar to the holy of holies (devir). By the thirteenth century it was normal to consider a Gothic cathedral as an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, a reflection of heaven on earth.

Divine presence. The presence of the god may be represented in a number of ways, most frequently by statues as, for example, in Egyptian, Greek, and Hindu temples, and alternatively by a bas-relief, as at the Temple of Baal in Palmyra. The building is then appropriately called a shrine. The Hebrews, forbidden to have graven images of deity, which were dismissed as idols, took the ark as the center of their devotion and this eventually was regarded as a throne upon which Yahveh sat invisible. Again, mosaics or paintings can be employed, notably in the apses of early Christian basilicas or on the iconostases of Eastern Orthodox churches. But in certain religions, the entire structure is regarded as a revelation of the deity. Greek sanctuaries were so conceived, and to this day Hindu temples are not only places but objects of reverence, evoking the divine.

Precisely because this type of building is regarded as the mundane dwelling of a deity, constructed according to a transcendent blueprint, it is also understood as a meeting place of gods and humans. So the ziggurat of Larsa, in lower Babylonia, was called “the house of the bond between heaven and earth.” This link may be physically represented by a sacred object (see figure 1).

The Ka’bah in Mecca, the holiest shrine of Islam, is the symbol of the intersection between the vertical axis of the spirit and the horizontal plane of human existence: a hollow cube of stone, it is the axis mundi of Islamic cosmology. In other religions wooden poles or stone pillars fulfill the same function; such were the asherim of the Canaanites reported in the Old Testament. The finial of a Buddhist stupa is conceived to be the top of a pillar passing through the whole structure and providing the point of contact between earth and heaven.

The divine is also associated with mountains that rear up into the sky; Olympus in ancient Greece was one such place, and in the myths of the Maasai, Mount Kilimanjaro on the border of Kenya and Tanzania is dubbed the “house of god.” This symbolism can be applied to the religious building itself. Each Egyptian temple was believed to represent the primordial hillock, while the Babylonian ziggurats were artificial high places. Hindu temples, such as the one at Ellora, are sometimes called Kailasa, which is the name of Śiva’s sacred mountain. Their superstructure is known as the “crest” (śikhara) of a hill, and the contours and tiered arrangement of the whole building derive from a desire to suggest the visual effect of a mountain (see figure 2).

Sacred and profane. As noted above, while a religious building can be called a house, it is not any kind of house: there is something special about it, and hence words denoting “great house” or “palace” are used. But its particular distinction derives from the nature of the being who inhabits it and who invests it with something of his or her own character. In most religions the divine is a being apart; his or her habitation must consequently be a building apart, and so it is regarded as a holy place in sharp opposition to profane space.

To speak of the sacred and the profane in this way is to refer to two antithetical entities. The one is potent, full of power, while the other is powerless. They cannot therefore approach one another without losing their proper nature: either the sacred will consume the profane or the profane will contaminate and enfeeble the sacred. The sacred is therefore dangerous. It both attracts and repels human beings—it attracts them because it is the source of power, and it repels them because to encounter it is to be in peril. The sacred is “the wholly other”; it is a reality of an entirely different order from “natural realities.” Contacts can only be intermittent and must be strictly regulated by rites, which can have either a positive or a negative character. Among the former are rites of consecration whereby someone or something is introduced into the realm of the holy. The negative takes the form of prohibitions, raising barriers between the two. These rites allow a certain coming and going between the two spheres since
they provide the conditions within which intercourse is possible. But any attempt, outside the prescribed limits, to unite sacred and profane brings confusion and disaster.

Underlying all this dualism is the concept of two worlds: a sacred world and a secular world. Two realms of being are envisaged, and this opposition finds its visible expression in holy places. The sacred space, defined by the religious building or precinct, is first of all a means of ensuring the isolation and so the preservation of both the sacred and the profane. The wall that keeps the one out also serves to keep the other in; it is the demarcation line (temenos, tempus, templum) between the two worlds (see figure 3). But within the sacred enclosure, the profane world is transcended and hence the existence of the holy place makes it possible for humans to pass from one world to another. The door or gate is then an object of great importance, for it is the means of moving from profane to sacred space. The name Babylon itself literally means “gate of the gods,” and Jacob at Bethel declared: “This is the gate of heaven.” In the same realm of ideas is to be found the royal doors that provide access through the iconostasis to the altar of the Eastern Orthodox church and the “Gates of Paradise,” which is the name given by Michelangelo to Lorenzo Ghiberti’s sculpted doors at the Florence Baptistery.

The precise location of these holy places is ultimately determined by their association with divine beings. The Nabataean high place at Petra is legitimized by being on a mountain top that, as seen above, has religious connotations. Equally holy were caves, linked in the religious consciousness with the womb, rebirth, the darkness of Hades, initiation rites, and so forth: many a Hindu holy place enshrines a cavern in a cliff. A theophany too constitutes a holy place. David knew where to build the Temple in Jerusalem because of a manifestation at the threshing floor of Araunah (Ornan) the Jebusite. Under the Roman empire, augurs were consulted, sacrifices offered, and the divine will thereby discovered. The shrine at Monte Sant'Angelo in the Gargano (c. 1076) was built because it was believed that the archangel Michael had visited the place. Similarly the sixteenth-century Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, near Mexico City, marks the spot where the Virgin Mary presented herself to a peasant. Rites of consecration can act as substitutes if there is a lack of any definite command from above; by their means a space is declared set apart, and the gods is besought to take up residence with confidence that the prayer will be answered.

**Center of reference.** Both individuals and communities require some center of reference for their lives so that amid the vagaries of a changing world there is a pivot that may provide an anchor in the ultimate. Religious buildings can and do constitute such centers to such an extent that the idea of a middle point has been taken quite literally. Every Egyptian temple was considered to be located where creation began and was therefore the navel of the earth. In Jewish thought the selfsame term has been applied to Jerusalem, and the site of the Temple is held to be the place of the original act of creation. In Greek religion it was the shrine of Apollo at Delphi that was declared to be the earth’s midpoint. According to Hinduism, Meru is the axial...
mountain at the center of the universe, and the name Meru is also used in Bali for the superstructure of a temple. The main shrine of the Tenrikyô sect of Shintô at Tenrihisa marks the cradle of the human race and encloses a sacred column indicating the center of the world.

Within the same ambit of ideas is the view that a religious building may be related to cosmic forces and therefore assist in geomancy. Hence, for example, the monumental structures at Teotihuacán in Mexico are arranged within a vast precinct in such a way as to observe the relations of the earth to the sun. The orientation of Christian churches so that their sanctuary is at the east end is another way of affirming this cosmic link, while the concern of Hindu architects for the proportions and measurements of their designs rests upon the conviction that the universe as a whole has a mathematical basis that must be embodied in every temple.

In Hinduism too the temple plan functions as a mandala—a sacred geometrical diagram of the essential structure of the cosmos. This interpretation of religious buildings is widespread in time and space. The “big house” of the Delaware Indians of North America stands for the world: its floor is the earth, the four walls are the four quarters, and the vault is the sky. An identical understanding of Christian churches is to be found as early as the seventh century and is typical of Eastern Orthodox thought; the roof of Saint Sophia in Edessa was compared to the heavens, its mosaic to the firmament, and its arches to the four corners of the earth. Medieval cathedrals in the West, such as the one at Chartres, were similarly regarded as models of the cosmos and as providing foretastes of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Monument or memorial. The essentials of a sacred place are location and spatial demarcation rather than buildings, but when there are edifices, they too serve to locate and spatially demarcate. Their importance is to be found not so much in the specific area as in the events that occurred there and that they bring to remembrance. In other words the locations are mainly associated with notable happenings in the life of a religious founder or with the exploits of gods and goddesses, and they stand as memorials (memorancers) or monuments (reminders). One of the units in the complex erected by Emperor Constantine in fourth-century Jerusalem was known as the Martyrium, the testimony to or evidence and proof of the reality of Christ’s death and resurrection, which were believed to have occurred at that very site. Also in Jerusalem is the Muslim Dome of the Rock, which enshrines the spot whence the prophet Muhammad is believed to have ascended to heaven (see figure 4), a site already associated in Jewish tradition with Solomon’s Temple, the tomb of Adam, and the sacrifice of Isaac. At Bodh Gaya in the state of Bihar, India, the Mahabodhi Temple is situated in front of the Bodhi Tree under which Gautama attained enlightenment. At Sarnath, near Banaras, a stupa commemorates the Buddha’s first sermon delivered in the Deer Park to five ascetics.

Not only founders but also individual followers may be honored in this way. Numerous stupas are monuments to Buddhist sages, and many a martyr in the days of the early church was set up on the very spot where a martyr (martyr, “witness”) had testified to his faith with his blood. The buildings also serve as shrines to protect their remains and can therefore be classified as tombs. Indeed every tomb that assumes a monumental character is a reminder of the dead, whether in the form of separate memorials to individuals, as found in the Pere-Lachaise cemetery in Paris, or of a single edifice to a person representative of many, such as the tomb of the unknown warrior beneath the Arc de Triomphe in the same city.

Many religious buildings that function as memorials enclose space: the pyramids of Giza have within them the burial chambers of pharaohs; the Cenotaph in London, on the other hand, a monument to the dead of two world wars shelters nothing. It corresponds to the second of the four fundamental modes of monumental architecture. First, there is the precinct, which shows the limits of the memorial area and finally develops through a typological series to the stadium. Second is
the cairn, which makes the site visible from afar and indicates its importance, the ultimate development of this type is the pyramid. Third is the path that signals a direction and can take the sophisticated form of a colonnaded street, thus dignifying the approach to the main shrine. Fourth, there is the hut that acts as a sacred shelter, with the cathedral as one of its most developed types.

**Meetinghouse.** A religious building that is regarded as a divine dwelling, or domus dei, is a meeting place of heaven and earth, but when it is understood as a meetinghouse, it is more correctly styled a domus ecclesiae because it is a building where the people of god assemble. Solomon had been led to question the validity of the temple type when he asked “Will God indeed dwell upon earth?” (I Kgs. 8:27). However, it was not until the birth of Christianity that a full-scale attack was directly launched upon the whole idea of an earthly divine domicile; in the words of Stephen, “The Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands” (Acts 7:48). In the light of the later development of Christian thought it is difficult to appreciate how revolutionary this new attitude was.

The early believers committed themselves to an enfleshed god, to one who was no longer apart or afar off but had drawn near; at his sacrificial death the Temple veil had split in two so that the Holy of Holies was no longer fenced off. The living community now became the temple of the divine presence. A new concept of the holy was minted: there can no longer be anything common or profane for Christians (pro, “in front of,” or outside the fanum) since they constitute the naos of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 3:16). The dining room of a private house is a suitable venue for the assembly; the proud boast is that “we have no temples and no altars” (Minucius Felix, c. 200). All this was to change drastically in the fourth century when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire and took over the public functions of the pagan cults. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the New Testament understanding was given a fresh lease of life when divines such as John Calvin objected to the idea of special holy places (see figure 5). Such a view is not peculiar to Christianity; Judaism has its synagogues for meeting together, and Islam has its mosques, which are equally congregational. If a building as a divine dwelling is at one end of a spectrum, then the meetinghouse is at the other extreme.

**Typology According to Function.** The different types of building just delineated provide for the fulfillment of certain purposes in that they accommodate religious activities; it is consequently both possible and necessary to specify a second typology according to function, which stems from but also complements the previous typology according to character.

**Service of the deities.** At home, resident within their temples, the gods require their devotees to perform certain services for them. Perhaps the most striking illustration of need is provided by the toilet ceremonies of ancient Egypt. Each morning the cult image was asperged, censed, anointed, vested, and crowned. At the present day very similar ceremonies are conducted in Hindu temples, where the images are cooled with water in hot weather, anointed, clad in beautiful clothes, and garlanded. During the day it used to be the custom to divert them with the performances of the devadasis, or temple dancers. At night they are accompanied by a procession to their beds. Food may be provided, from the simple gift of grain in an African village to the hecatombs of Classical Greece. Another normal form of worship is sacrifice, ranging from human victims to a dove or pigeon, from the first fruits of the harvest to shewbread.

**Positive and negative functions.** The motives for such services can be diverse; sometimes they are prompted by the concern to provide sustenance, while at other times they are to establish communion, to propitiate, to seek favors. Functions now become reciprocal: the service of the gods is expected to obtain a response from the gods, in that they now serve human needs. Two examples, for many, will suffice to illustrate this.

Since the temple is a divine dwelling, to enter its precincts is to come into the presence of the god and so be under his or her protection. As a sacred place, the building is inviolable, and no one can be removed from it by force; to do so would be sacrilege, since a person who is inside the area of holiness has been invested with some
of the sacredness inherent in it and thus cannot be touched as long as he or she does not emerge. This is the rationale of sanctuary as it was practiced in the classical world. The most famous case was that of Demosthenes who in 322 BCE sought sanctuary in the Temple of Poseidon on the island of Calauria. When, in the post-Constantine era, church buildings were included in the same class as pagan temples, as specially holy places, it was natural that the idea of sanctuary should also be connected to them. The right of fugitives to remain under the protection of their god became legally recognized and in western Europe continued to be so for centuries; indeed, in England it was not until 1723 that all rights of sanctuary were finally declared null.

The second example of the gods themselves fulfilling a function on behalf of their followers is the practice of incubation. This is a method of obtaining divine favors by passing a length of time in one of their houses, usually sleeping there. Its primary aspect is medical, to obtain a cure, either immediately or after obeying the divine will disclosed in a vision. In the Temple of Ptah at Memphis therapeutic oracles were delivered and various remedies were revealed through dreams to those who slept there. The two principal healing gods in the Greek and Roman pantheons were Asklepios and Sarapis, and there is record of a shrine of the former at Aegae where those who passed the night were restored to health. The apparent success of these two gods ensured their continued popularity, and their cults only fell into disuse when churches replaced their temples as centers of healing believed to be accomplished by Christ through his saints. Among the most successful of the Christian holy men to cure illness were Cosmas and Damian, to whom a church was dedicated in Constantinople. Running this center a close second was the Church of Saint Menas near Alexandria; there some patients stayed for over a year and the church itself was so completely filled with mattresses and couches that they had to overflow into the sacristy. Incubation has had a continuous history down to the present day; in eastern Europe, for example, it can still be witnessed.

These several functions may all be regarded as positive in character, but a corollary of viewing a religious building as a holy place is the requirement for negative rituals to safeguard it by purifying those who wish to enter. Such rituals determine some of the furnishing, and so, for example, the forecourts of mosques have tanks and/or fountains for ablutions. Holy water stoupes are to be found just inside the entrance of Roman Catholic churches; baptismal fonts were originally placed either in rooms separate from the main worship area or in entirely distinct buildings. The removal of shoes before entering a Hindu temple, of hats before going into a Christian church—all of these testify to the seriousness of entering a holy place. Many religious buildings have guardians to protect their entrances. The giant figures in the royal complex at Bangkok, the bull Nandin in the temples of Śiva, the scenes of the Last Judgment in the tympana over the west doors into medieval cathedrals—these are but a few examples.

**Determinateness of form.** The interior disposition of those religious buildings conceived to be divine dwellings is very much determined by the forms of the services offered. Where, for example, processions are a habitual feature of the ceremonial, then corridors for circumambulation have to be designed, as in the complex of Horus at Idfu (see figure 6); this also explains the labyrinthine character of many Hindu temples. When a statue is only to be seen by a special priesthood and has to be shielded from profane gaze, an inner chamber is created, often entirely dark, to protect humanity from the brilliant light of the divine presence, and this sanctuary may be protected itself by a series of surrounding rooms or courtyards. Where there are sacrifices, altars are needed, but these are frequently outside the shrine so that the individual worshipper can actually witness what the priest is doing with his or her gift. Classical Greek temples sheltered statues of the tutelary deities, but the all-important altars were outside; on the Athenian Acropolis, for example, it was in front of the Parthenon. Sometimes altars can themselves be architectural in character: the Altar of Zeus of Pergamum (c. 180 BCE, see figure 7), now in Berlin, has a crepidoma measuring 36.44 by 34.20 meters, and the Altar

![Figure 6. Processional Way and Protected Inner Sanctuary. Ground plan, Temple of Horus, Idfu, Egypt; 237–207. Design allows for circumambulation.](image-url)
of Hieron II (276–222 BCE) at Syracuse is some 200 meters long and 27 wide.

**Conveyance of revelation and teaching.** As a center of reference, a religious building may accommodate activities that convey meaning, guidance, and instruction in the faith. Many Babylonian temples, for example, were sources of divination and even had a full complement of soothsayers, exorcists, and astrologers. Taoist temples equally are resorted to for divinatory purposes. The oracle was consulted at Delphi, to instance the greatest focus of this activity in the ancient world. The Jewish Temple in Jerusalem had cultic prophets on its staff.

Where a sacred book is central to a religion, provision for its reading and exposition has to be made. In synagogues there has to be a shrine for the Torah and a desk from which to comment on the text. In Christian churches there are lecterns for the Bible and pulpits for the sermon. Islam has its stands for the Qur’an, and its mihrab is the equivalent of the Christian pulpit, although the shape differs in that it is a miniature flight of stairs rising away from the congregation whom the preacher faces down the steps. Sikh worship concentrates on the reading of the Granth, which is accompanied by prayers and exposition. In these ways religious buildings function as centers of meaning.

**Manifestation of reverence and celebration of festivals.** The religious building as memorial, it will be recalled, often contains relics of religious founders or particularly saintly people. Reverence for these can be shown by visitation, sometimes to offer thanks for benefits received and sometimes to petition for help. Those who seek healing go in great numbers to the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes to bathe in the sacred spring. The cultus is therefore a cultivating of the gods, a cherishing of them, seeing to their needs; it is the bestowal of labor upon them and the manifestation of regard toward them. There is more than a hint of doing something to obtain a favor, as in the phrase “to cultivate someone’s acquaintance.” Cultus stems from the human side, whereas worship, as it is used here to describe this fourth function, is from the side of the gods. Not only are they the ones who provide the form and matter of worship, but through it they come to encounter their community.

Worship of this kind is characterized as congregational to differentiate it further from cultus, which is primarily individualistic. Worship then is meeting: the religious building is the meeting house. What takes place is not an activity aimed at or on behalf of the gods; the gods take the initiative. Hence worship is a memorial celebration of the saving deeds of the gods, and by it the people are created and renewed again and again. So, in Christian terms, the Body of Christ (the Christian community) progressively becomes what it is by feeding upon the sacramental body of Christ. Worship fosters community identity, and hence in the chapels of Christian monasteries the seating frequently faces inward, thus promoting a family atmosphere.

The precise interior disposition of a building will also depend upon the particular understanding or form of the communal rite. Religions which center on a book of revelation, such as Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism, require auditoria. Protestantism, concentrating upon the word of God, similarly tends to arrange its congregations in rows suitable for an audience (audientes, a group of “hearers”). Roman Catholicism, with its greater emphasis on the Mass, stresses the visual dominance of the altar, which is now no longer outside the building, as with Roman and Greek exemplars, but inside. In this and similar instances the designs of the buildings are affected by the need to accommodate the sick for short or long stays. In the Muslim world the virtue of a saint is believed to be available to those who follow him (or her) or touch some object associated with him. If he be dead, then his tomb, which is his memorial, becomes a center of his supernatural power (barakah) and attracts many visitors. Pilgrimages are one of the forms that these visits may take. So too Hindus travel to Hardwar (North India), which displays a footprint of Vishnu in stone. Jains go to Mount Abu, also in India, where the last tirthanka (guide), named Mahavira, spent the thirty-seventh year of his life. Buddhists go to Adam’s Peak in Sri Lanka, where there is a footprint of Gautama; adherents of Islam make the hajj to Mecca, and indeed it is one of the five duties of Islam. Christians have their holy places in Israel and Jordan or visit the catacombs in Rome.

Festivals are the celebrations of the births or deaths of saints, and they commemorate key events in the sacred history of a religion. For Jews, to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem is a traditional goal. For Christians,
too, there is a certain fittingness in observing Christmas, the Feast of the Nativity, in Bethlehem itself. Religious buildings then function as centers for such celebrations.

**Congregational worship.** It is important, if this particular category is to be appreciated, to distinguish it clearly, despite some overlap, from the service of the deities described above, with which it can easily be confused. The essential difference can be made plain by applying the term *cult* to the first function and reserving *worship* for this fourth one. The basic understanding of *cult* is evident from its etymology. It derives from *colere*, which means "to till the ground" and hence to take care of, or attend to, with the aim that the object of attention should bear fruit or produce some benefit. Next it signifies "to honor" and finally "to worship."

If the act of worship is understood to be conducted by a professional hierarchy on behalf of the community as a whole, then some separation is likely, ranging from the Eastern Orthodox iconostasis at one extreme to communion rails at others. Where there is no sharp differentiation of role, as in Islam (since the imam is simply a prayer leader and is in no sense an ordained minister), the space is not partitioned; instead there is lateral disposition, with the worshipers shoulder to shoulder facing toward Mecca.

**Symbolization.** On whatever basis a typology of religious buildings may be constructed and whatever purposes they may serve, there is one overall function that must be considered: symbolization. Each building proclaims certain beliefs about the deities to whom it is dedicated. One has only to contrast a Gothic cathedral with a Quaker meeting house to appreciate this. The former in all its grandeur speaks of a god who is high and lifted up, remote, awesome in majesty, fearful in judgment, demanding obeisance (see figure 8); the latter in all its simplicity witnesses to a being who is to be known in the midst of life, who is not separate, whose dwelling is with humankind, offering fellowship. The one speaks of power and might, the other of self-emptying and servanthood.

Sometimes the symbolism is intellectually apprehended before it is given visible form, and then it needs interpretation. Baptism, for example, is a sacrament of dying and rising with Christ. A detached baptistery may be hexagonal or octagonal; in the former case it refers to the sixth day of the week, Friday, on which Jesus died and in the latter, to the eighth day, or the first day of a new week when he rose from the dead (see figure 9). The dome, surmounting many a baptistery, is also a habitual feature of Byzantine churches and Muslim mosques, and as the baldachin or canopy it can enshrine any holy object or complete a memorial structure. Its popularity derives from its ideological context: it is a representation of the transcendental realm, an image of heaven. It is a not inappropriate roofing for tombs (see figure 10), and many baptisteries took the shape of contemporary burial edifices precisely because

**Figure 9.** Symbolization of Death and Resurrection. Ground plan, Baptistry of the Cathedral of Aquileia, Italy; sixth century. The hexagonal shape of the font refers to the sixth day of the week, Friday, the day on which Jesus died. The octagonal shape of the building, evoking the number eight, is understood to refer to the first day of a new week, Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection.

**Figure 8.** Manifestation of Power. West front, Cathedral of Reims, France; completed c. 1481. Shape, dimension, and detail underscore the majesty of the divine.
of the meaning of the purificatory rite. Different parts of a building can have their own messages: towers declare heavenly aspirations; monumental doorways can impress with regal authority. Sculpture, painting, mosaic can and do fulfill a symbolic function. Gargoyles ward off evil spirits; paintings recall events or persons in sacred history; Christ as creator mundi holds his worshipers within his downward gaze. The handling of light is frequently symbolic. In a mosque it testifies to God as the light of heaven and earth; in Gothic architecture it is a basic constituent and is regarded as a manifestation of the glory of God.

**Architectural Types.** There is yet another typology to be reviewed that applies to all buildings whatever their function, and religious buildings are no exception. This is a dual typology that divides structures into the categories of path and place. For a path to be identifiable, it must have (1) strong edges, (2) continuity, (3) directionality, (4) recognizable landmarks, (5) a sharp terminal, and (6) end-from-end distinction. For a place to be identifiable, it must be (1) concentrated in form with pronounced borders, (2) a readily comprehensible shape, (3) limited in size, (4) a focus for gathering, (5) capable of being experienced as an inside in contrast to a surrounding exterior, and (6) largely nondirectional.

The application of these types to religious buildings can be briefly illustrated by contrasting a basilica and a centralized mosque. A basilica is a path leading toward the altar; every detail of the design confirms this (see figure 11). The nave, framed by aisles, has firm edges; there is continuity provided by floor patterns and advancing rows of columns, which themselves indicate a direction—everything points toward the holy table framed in a triumphal arch and backed by the embracing shape of the apse. For a pilgrim people, for those who have here no abiding city, such a royal road is obviously very appropriate. A centralized mosque, on the other hand such as those designed by Sinan in Istanbul, suggests no movement, it is a place, a point of reference and gathering, it is concentrated (see figure 12). Once within, there is no incentive to leave and every enticement to stay. Embodying perfect equipoise, it promotes contemplation; it is indeed embracing architecture. Its

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**Figure 10.** Dome as Image of Heaven. Mausoleum of Ismael Samanid, Bukhara (modern Bukhara Oblast, Uzbek S.S.R.); tenth century. The image of heaven canopies the dead.

**Figure 11.** The Path. Ground plan. Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, Italy; 432-440. All attention focuses upon the altar.

**Figure 12.** Gathering Place. Ground plan. Sehzade Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey; 1548. Design and shape illumine the omnipresence of the divine.
spaciousness expresses not the specificity of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation but the omnipresence of the divine; it manifests tawḥīd, which is the metaphysical doctrine of the divine unity as the source and culmination of all diversity.

The difference then between basilica and mosque is not stylistic; they are distinct architectural types, which in these two instances correspond to each religion’s self-understanding. This circumstance does not, however, provide support for the nineteenth-century theory that every religion develops its own supreme architectural form to best express its ethos and spirit. The character of any building at any epoch is affected by many factors: technical aptitude, climate, availability of materials, function, and so on. Patronage has also played an important role. The Temple in Jerusalem, for example, was in origin Solomon’s royal chapel, and indeed, not a few English medieval churches were on the estates of local lords, who regarded them as their own possessions. One effect of this influence was the monumentalization of many religious buildings: they were designed to display the power and authority not only of a heavenly being but of an earthly ruler. In this way many a Mughal mosque in India proclaimed the might of the ruling house. Royal, princely, and ducal boxes and galleries were inserted, and in western Europe the well-to-do could provide for their continued well-being by constructing private chantry chapels within existing parish churches. Communal patronage was not necessarily less concerned with outward show. Civic pride and congregational piety can result in costly programs.

Yet the study of the architecture of the world religions is not just a part of social history; it is an important element in understanding the religious traditions themselves. Since cult or worship is at the heart of any faith, and such an activity can only be studied and appreciated fully within its own special setting, it would be an abstraction to concentrate upon texts alone. Moreover, the symbolic function of architectural forms is in itself an additional source of knowledge to be taken into account.

Throughout the ages human beings have found meaning and succor in sacred places enshrined in their religious buildings. In a secularized society there still survives a need for centers of reference, meeting places, and memorials, but they then become associated with national figures and national identity. The Kremlin wall where leaders of the Russian Revolution are buried, together with Lenin’s tomb, constitute one such place for Soviet citizens. The Lincoln Memorial in Washington has a spacious chamber containing a seated stane and having the words of the Gettysburg and the Second

Figure 13. Center of Reference. Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.; 1911–1922. The physical image and the inscribed words of President Lincoln give focus to national identity.

Inaugural addresses incised on its walls; both president and texts have important contributions to make to United States identity (see figure 13). The White House in Washington and Buckingham Palace in London are seen as the dwellings of those who have about them a semidivine aura. The birthplaces or museums containing souvenirs (relics) of film and pop stars become centers of pilgrimage. A monument to Egypt’s first president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, overlooks the Aswan Dam on the Nile. The former concentration camp at Dachau has become a memorial of the Nazi Holocaust. At the same time temples, cathedrals, mosques, and the like continue to be built: sacred sites, whether overtly religious or not, are a continuing feature of the human scene.

[For further discussion of individual building types, see Basilica, Cathedral, and Church; Monastery; Mosque; Portals; Pyramids; Synagogue; Temple; Tombs; and Towers. See also Biblical Temple and Ka’bah. For discussion of beliefs, practices, and symbols particularly relevant to the relation of religion and architecture, seeAxis Mundi; Circle; Circumambulation; Cities; Labyrinth; Orientation; Pilgrimage; Procession; Relics; Shrines; and various articles under Worship and Cultic Life.]

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