Solomonic Iconography in Early Stuart Oxford: The South Porch of St Mary the Virgin

Robin Usher

ABSTRACT

Oxford was the hub of William Laud's ecclesiological innovations in the 1630s, and the University Church of St Mary the Virgin was its centrepiece. This article identifies the sources for and iconography of the striking Baroque porch attached to the southern aspect of the church in 1637, which had been funded by Bishop Morgan Owen but whose design was apparently mandated by Laud himself. The iconography of the porch pertains to the Temple of Jerusalem, and the sources for the design are Flemish, specifically the high altar of the Jesuit church of St Charles Borromeo in Antwerp. The article builds on the findings of scholars such as John Newman and Geoffrey Tyacke, and extends the discussion into the role of Temple symbolism in British art and architecture of the early seventeenth century.

2014 was the tercentenary of the death of the physician and benefactor of the University of Oxford, Dr John Radcliffe, an event marked by an exhibition at the Bodleian Library, and a book, by Stephen Hebron, describing the history of the bequest and the building with which it is most associated, the Radcliffe Camera.[1] This has just about coincided with reappraisals of the urban and architectural history of the central university area, chief among which is Anthony Geraghty's discovery that William Laud, installed as chancellor of the university in 1630, planned a year earlier to remove examinations and degree ceremonies from the church of St Mary the Virgin on High Street and transfer them to a new structure on the site bounded by St Mary's, the Schools Quadrangle, and All Souls and Brasenose colleges; the district is shown in reasonable detail in Ralph Agas's axonometric view of 1578 (Fig. 1) and in David Loggan's *Oxonia Illustrata*, published in 1675 (Fig. 2).[2] As we know, Laud, influential in Oxford affairs long before his appointment as chancellor, failed in this enterprise: the complicated tenurial history and the cost of buying out the area prevented its clearance until 1721, when Radcliffe's trustees successfully petitioned for an act of parliament enabling the colleges and the parish to part with sections of their freeholds.[3]

Laud's ambition, at national level, was to purge churches of secular activity and to re-establish them as dispensaries of the divine sacrament, which meant curbing traditional festivities such as church ales, and encouraging, through compliant local agents, the re-fitting of places of worship in a manner that emphasised the ritual around the communion table.[4] In Oxford, 'model' improvements were effected by heads of houses who had either benefited from Laud's patronage or who shared his ecclesiastical vision; in the course of the early 1630s, coincident with the framing of new university statues that consolidated the chancellor's power over congregation, the chapels at Balliol, Christ Church, Oriel, Queen's, St John's, and University were equipped with painted glass, pewter, altar hangings and, in a few cases,

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[1]   S. Hebron, *Dr Radcliffe's Library: The Story of the Radcliffe Camera in Oxford* (2014).
[2]   A. Geraghty, *The Sheldonian Theatre: Architecture and Learning in Restoration Oxford* (2013), pp. 21–2.
[3]   Hebron, *Dr Radcliffe's Library*, p. 36.
[4]   P. Lake, 'The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity, and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s', in K. Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–42* (1993), pp. 161–85.
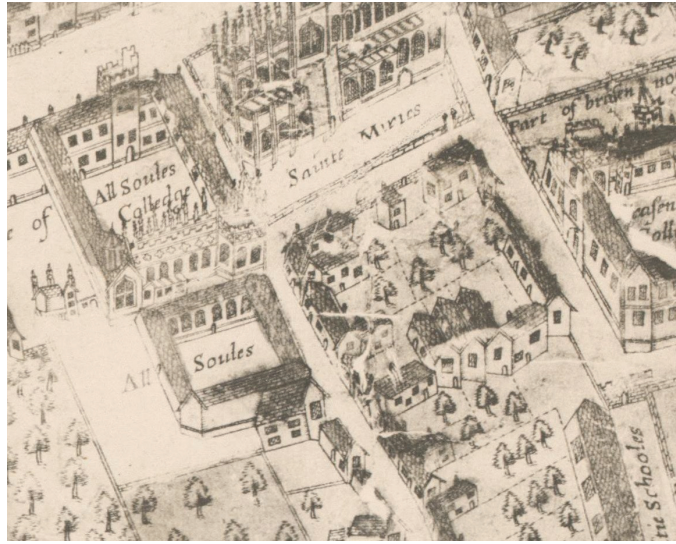
Fig. 1. High Street and precincts, detail from Ralph Agas, Oxonia antiqua illus., *Oxford, 1578. Pen and wash on paper, 30 by 38 cm. Reproduced from OHS,* Old Plans of Oxford *(1884).*
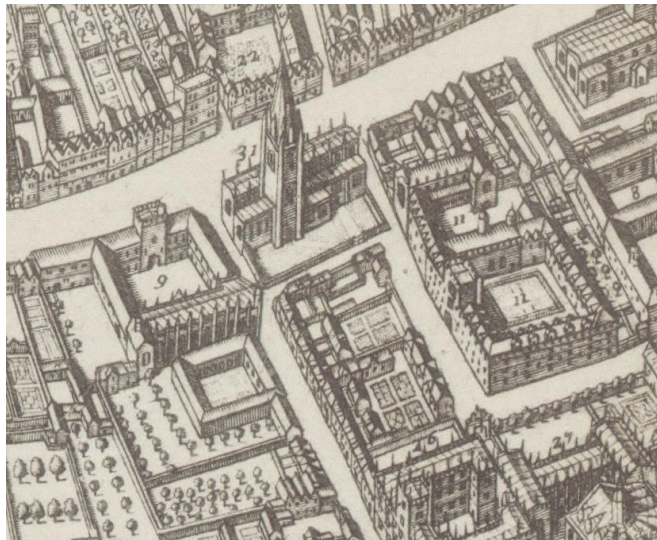

Fig. 2. High Street and precincts, detail from Loggan, 'Nova and Accuratissima Celeberrimae Universitatis Civitatisque Oxoniensis Scenographia', in Oxonia Illustrata *(1675), 34 by 44 cm. Reproduced from OHS,* Old Plans of Oxford *(1884).*

pictures of biblical scenes. Bishop Walter Curle of Winchester, a pointedly 'Laudian' reformer in his own cathedral and diocese, used his platform as visitor of Magdalen to advocate liturgical practice as it was undertaken at the very core of the Stuart state, telling the college president that decorous surroundings must be matched by 'an uniforme reverence in all parts of divine worship and service according to the canonicall injunctions of our Church and the commendable & imitable practice of his majesties chapell, so that God may be worshipped

Fig. 3. St Mary's, High Street, various dates, interior c.1500 with later refurbishments. Photo: Robin Usher.

not only in holinesse but in the beauty of holinesse.'[5] At St Mary's, where members of the university were expected to gather for the weekly Latin sermon, Laud was in a position to dispense with intermediaries and intervene directly.

As Geraghty points out, Laud's main concern about the existing uses of St Mary's was the 'Act', a set of formalised dialogues undertaken by students taking the Master of Arts degree. The Act took up a whole day, was open to the public, and the church could be full to the extent that collapsible timber galleries were required. If this theatrical set-up already seemed too profane for a place of worship, the Act was supplemented by a kind of self-affirming student humour, whereby 'Sons of the Earth' (academic equivalents of the Lords of Misrule at English parish feasts) followed the disputations with jeering or sarcastic commentaries, some bordering on the salacious.[6] Pending the construction of a ceremonial hall between St Mary's and the Schools (an area that Charles I had condemned as congested and unsightly during a visit in 1629), the church itself could also be materially improved.[7]

Alongside changes to the church interior (Fig. 3), such as the raising of the chancel and repainting, the improvement of external aspect must have posed challenges: Oriel leases indicate that the south side of the church, to High Street, was partly built against, by now a common indictment of churches in urban settings.[8] David Sturdy's analysis of Oxford

[5]   K. Fincham, 'Oxford and the Early Stuart Polity', in N. Tyacke (ed.), *Seventeenth-Century Oxford* (1997), pp. 199–210, quotation at 207.
[6]   Geraghty, *The Sheldonian Theatre*, p. 22.
[7]   J. Newman, 'The Architectural Setting', in Tyacke (ed.), *Seventeenth-Century Oxford*, p. 160. In 1643, a Royalist army officer noted considerable local panic when a hole opened 'at least four yards deepe between St Maryes Church and the Schooles', presumably a cellar collapse: I.G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*, 3 vols., ORS, 29, 31, 33 (1950–3), vol. 3, p. 251.
[8]   C.L. Chadwell and H. Salter (eds.), *Oriel College Records* (1926), pp. 109–10. For Oriel's landholdings, see R. Evans and J.P.D. Dunbabin, 'The Estates of Oriel, 1324–1920', in J. Catto (ed.), *Oriel College: A History* (2013),

property records also suggests that in the first half of the seventeenth century the west end of St Mary's had timber beams placed against it, accommodating bookstalls.[9] How these encumbrances were dealt with, if at all, has escaped the record, but we do know that the most significant exterior change to the post-Reformation building came in 1637, Laud noting that 'This year (…) the porch at St Marie's was finisht at the cost of my chaplain Dr Morgan Owen.'[10] The latter was an affluent and ambitious Carmarthenshire cleric who had impressed Laud with his 'zeal and piety', his career culminating in the bishopric of Llandaff; unusually, his gift of £230 for the construction of the porch seems to have been made in lieu of a sermon. Apart from providing funding for the porch and a cemetery wall at St Mary's, there is no evidence that Morgan had any serious interest in or connections to matters of architecture and building, suggesting that Laud – as we shall see – was largely responsible for the commissioning of the work.[11]

The porch itself, replacing a two-storey structure that was used for student disputations until about 1600, consists of a round-headed doorway preceded by twisted composite columns, supporting in turn a curved pediment with a statue of the Madonna and Child on a polygonal pedestal with blind tracery, thus including one of the few examples of externally placed religious sculpture made since the Reformation (Fig. 4).[12] Although it is executed with a finesse that suggests familiarity with the European Baroque and follows a local vogue for attaching classical frontispieces to otherwise orthodox buildings, a trend initiated by the Fellows' Quadrangle at Merton (1608–10) and repeated at Wadham (1610–14) and the Tower of the Orders of the Schools Quadrangle (c.1618-21), older traditions of English monumental sculpture endure, with grotesque consoles, flanking buttresses, crown-topped pinnacles (the crowns deriving from the heraldry of the university), and a fan vault linking the porch to the aisle of the church.[13] However, with the exception of the vault, which has structural purpose, these are subordinate details within the wider morphology of the porch, and if much English architectural classicism of the 1620s and 30s can be characterised as hybrid, this is a monument in which the medievalising elements are in retreat.

While the day-to-day management of the project is undocumented, the archival diligence of Howard Colvin has established that the executant was the London mason-sculptor John Jackson, debunking a tradition that the porch was by Nicholas Stone.[14] Jackson, indeed, was the logical choice for the project: arriving in (or summoned to?) Oxford in 1634, he brought to completion the sculpturally enriched Canterbury Quadrangle at St John's, of which Laud had been president in 1611–21, going on to become the college's most important benefactor of the early seventeenth century. Jackson carved the quad's heraldic shields, busts of the virtues and the liberal arts, and the spandrel ornaments; elsewhere in Oxford, he is known to have worked in some advisory capacity at University College in 1637–8, and in 1641 built an extension to the kitchen at St John's and made a niche for the Bodleian's bust of Charles I.[15] Since Morgan Owen is not mentioned in any connection with Jackson, it is likely that Laud made the contractual arrangements, engaging with a familiar and proven hand.

pp. 476–525. For the cathedrals in the 1630s: I. Atherton, 'Cathedrals, Laudianism, and the British Churches', *Historical Journal*, 53:4 (2010), p. 911.

[9]   D. Sturdy, *Historic Oxford* (2004), p. 149.

[10]   F.W. Faber (ed.), *The Autobiography of Dr William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Martyr, collected from his Remains* (1839), p. 222.

[11]   E. Yardley, *Menevia Sacra*, ed. F. Green (1927), p. 250.

[12]   K. Fincham and N. Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c.1700* (2007), p. 259.

[13]   Newman, 'The Architectural Setting', pp. 149, 153–4, 156, 158; C. Cole, 'The Building of the Tower of the Five Orders in the Schools' Quadrangle at Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 33 (1968), pp. 92–107.

[14]   The assumption seems to have begun with the erroneous list of Stone's works compiled by his nephew, reproduced in W.L. Spiers, (ed.), 'The Notebook and Account Book of Nicholas Stone', *Walpole Society*, 7 (1918–19), p. 137.

[15]   H. Colvin, *The Canterbury Quadrangle, St John's College* (1988), p. 119.

Fig. 4. South porch of St Mary's, by John Jackson, 1637. Height approximately 8 metres. Photo: Robin Usher.

The porch is first illustrated by Loggan, who shows a churchyard wall and gate piers different from the current ones (Fig. 5). It fares poorly in art-historical assessments, its 'wild' exuberance offending the ascetic tastes of Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, and is condemned as a 'florid, ungainly structure' by Sir John Summerson.[16] Only Graham Parry, the author of

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[16] N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974), p. 258; J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530–1830*, 9th edn (1993), p. 163.
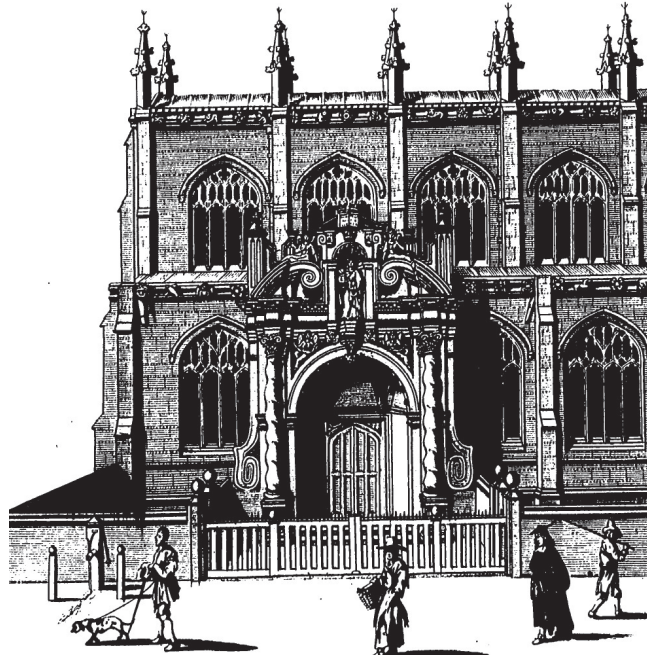
Fig. 5. South porch of St Mary's, detail from David Loggan, 'Marie Virginis', in Oxonia Illustrata *(1675), 34 by 44 cm. Yale Centre for British Art.*

the first synoptic overview of English religious art and architecture in this period, expresses approbation; but even then he fails to take into account some of the relevant secondary literature and gets the identity of the mason wrong.[17] Still, most authorities acknowledge the iconographical freight of the porch, Geraghty noting how the combination of Marian imagery and the helical column – a standard motif in European depictions of the Temple of Solomon – mirrors the combination of Old Testament Type and New Testament Antitype in sermons.[18]

It should be pointed out that Jackson's porch has changed in some particulars. In 1895, amid debate about other restorations at the church, the monopolising Oxford architect Thomas Graham ('Anglo') Jackson carried out a number of non-structural repairs, and the statue of the Virgin, with sceptre, and baby Jesus, with orb (Fig. 6), was removed from its pilastered, shell-hooded niche and replaced by the rather dumpy Madonna and child now in place. Graham Jackson's self-justifying monograph on the church says that the old statue appeared to be a pastiche, the Virgin's head and the Christ figure looking 'modern' while the remainder appeared to be the work of a different mason.[19] These observations support Anthony Wood's otherwise unverified statement that in September of 1642 the statue was shot at by departing soldiers led by the Parliamentary magnate Lord Saye and Sele, and the missing pieces reinstated by the university in 1662.[20] (It should be noted that the angels on top of the pediment date to the 1970s, which in turn replaced the replicas added by George Gilbert Scott in 1856–7.)[21]

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[17]   G. Parry, *Glory, Laud, and Honour: The Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation* (2006), pp. 75–6.
[18]   Geraghty, *The Sheldonian Theatre*, p. 20.
[19]   T.G. Jackson, *The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford* (1897), p. 163.
[20]   A. Clark, (ed.), *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632–1695*, 5 vols., OHS, 19, 21, 26, 30, 40 (1891–1900), vol. 1, pp. 63, 444.
[21]   V. Grylls, *Batsford's Oxford Then and Now* (2009), p. 93.

Fig. 6. Statue of Virgin and Child from St Mary's, by John Jackson, 1637, with restorations of 1662 and possibly later. Height approximately 200 cm. Present whereabouts unknown. Photo from Thomas Graham Jackson, The Church of St. Mary the Virgin *(1897), plate 8.*

In documenting early responses to the porch, marginally more illuminating than Wood is the record of Laud's trial of 1644. In this, the archbishop insists that the statue was unknown to him at the time of its making, a claim out of keeping with his hectoring, micro-managerial style and his documented oversight of the buildings at St John's. In response, Alderman John Nixon, Lord Saye's failed candidate as mayor of Oxford, told the court how passers-by 'put off their hats (…) to that picture', which, Laud argued, could as likely have been an innocent gesture of acknowledgement or deference to another passer-by.[22] Yet tellingly, no criticism of the monument either at the trial or in the other sources goes beyond its Marian imagery. The wider meanings of the structure were either incomprehensible or simply elided.

To European artists and some intellectuals of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, helical columns such as those at St Mary's invoked the Temple of Jerusalem. The connection followed from the twisted, vined columns gifted by the emperor Constantine to St Peter's Basilica in around 313, where they were regarded as Temple *spolia*.[23] The connection between column and the Temple was thus established, despite a total lack of scriptural or archaeological evidence for the twisted column in biblical Israel, be it in the First Temple, founded by Solomon in the 10th century BCE, or the Second, encompassing the Temple built after the Babylonian exile of 587–38 BC, later incorporated into the structure erected by King Herod and celebrated as the place of Christ's ministry.[24]

Besides the Temple link, part of the column's appeal lay in its convoluted geometry, which is

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[22]   T.B. Howell (ed.), *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes*, 21 vols. (1816–28), vol. 4, pp. 474–5.

[23]   J.B. Ward-Perkins, 'The Shrine of St Peter's and its Twelve Spiral Columns', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 42 (1952), pp. 21–33.

[24]   The vast field of Temple scholarship is sensibly condensed in S. Goldhill, *The Temple of Jerusalem* (2005), chs. 2–4, and H. Rosenau, *Vision of the Temple: The Image of the Temple of Jerusalem in Judaism and Christianity* (1979).

Fig. 7. Healing of the Lame Man, *by Raphael,* c.*1515–16. Body colour and charcoal on paper, mounted on canvas, 242 by 536 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, on loan from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.*

set out in a diagram in Giacomo Vignola's *Regola delli cinque ordini* of 1562, a book first recorded in England after it joined the library of the Duke of Northumberland in *c.*1610.[25] This very complexity tied into notions of mathematics as a vehicle for exploring God's ordering of nature and the cosmos.[26] Solomon, after all, was held forth as the divinely inspired sage, also skilled in the mystical arts of alchemy, astrology, and – on occasion – conversation with animals and angels; to practitioners of the 'New Learning', Francis Bacon among them, he was the forebear of the modern natural philosopher.[27] Only a man in communication with God could grasp the labyrinthine intricacies of the world (and, it followed, give a sense of His greatness in built form).

   Popularisation of the *Salomónica* in Renaissance art was gradual, and their deployment suggests some confusion as to the whereabouts of the columns in the original temples. Jean Fouquet's miniature *Pompey in the Temple of Jerusalem*, of *c.*1470–5, places them along the walls of the Holy of Holies, whereas Raphael's *Healing of the Lame Man* of 1515–16 (Fig. 7) – one of ten tapestry cartoons commissioned for the Sistine Chapel, of which seven were acquired by Charles I as Prince of Wales in 1623, now on permanent loan from Her Majesty the Queen to the Victorian and Albert Museum – multiplies the columns into at least four rows. They are clearly meant to form part of the Temple precinct (usually identified as the Beautiful Gate, from the reign of Herod), but not a constituent of the Temple proper.[28] Sculpture could slip this antiquarian net: Bernini's *Baldacchino* in St Peter's, completed by 1633, magnifies the columns into four bronze pylons supporting a canopy, demarcating the tomb of St Peter and thus casting the great Catholic basilica as successor to the Temple of the old religion.[29] Whatever the medium, it rarely seemed to matter that outside the rarefied world of high-end biblical exegesis

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[25]   Namely, plate XXXI therein; L.L. Peck, *Consuming Splendour: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (2005), p. 199.

[26]   For this dimension see G.L. Hersey, *Architecture and Geometry in the Age of the Baroque* (2000), pp. 122–31.

[27]   S. Weitzman, *Solomon: The Lure of Wisdom* (2011), pp. 69–82. Solomonic lore, at least in respect of magic, is explored in P.A. Torijano, *Solomon, the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition* (2002), and a sense of its ubiquity in England conveyed in O. Davies, *Popular Magic: Cunning Folk in English History* (2003), p. 120. The more elite contexts, mostly literary, are surveyed in W. Tate, *Solomonic Iconography in Early Stuart England* (2001).

[28]   G.N. Deutsch, *Iconographie de l'Illustration de Flavius Joséphe au temps de Jean Fouquet* (1986), pp. 45–54; J. Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons* (1972), p. 56.

[29]   G.C. Bauer, 'Bernini and the Baldacchino: On Becoming an Architect in the Seventeenth Century', *Architectura: Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst*, 26 (1996), pp. 144–65.
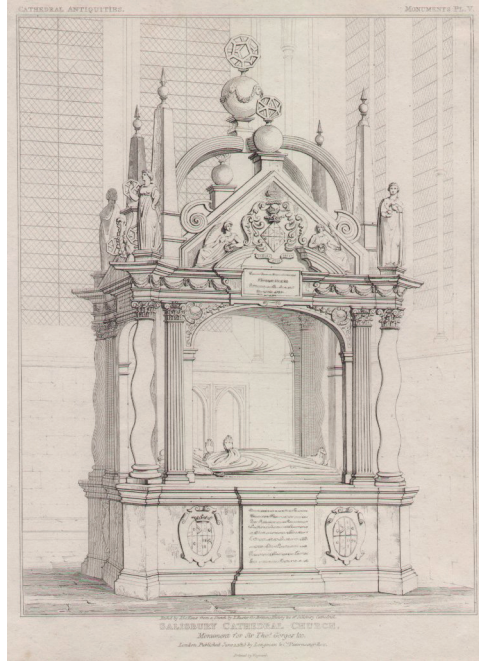
Fig. 8. Tomb of Sir Thomas Gorges and Elin Ulfsdotter Snakenborg, dowager Marchioness of Northampton, Salisbury Cathedral, installed 1635. Sculptor unknown. Height approximately 3 metres. Engraving, 1814, by J. le Keux, 24.2 by 17.2 cm, from John Britton, History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury *(1815).*

the columns mentioned in the Old Testament, Boaz and Jachin, probably stood unabutted in front of the Temple sanctuary and seem to have been cylindrical.[30]

In Britain, places of worship were frequently characterised as 'Temples' in consecration sermons, but the twisted column was a latecomer in ecclesiastical and funerary art and architecture.[31] Bernini has been suggested as the source for the tomb of the diplomat, courtier, and naval administrator Sir Thomas Gorges, and his wife, the Dowager Marchioness of Northampton, in Salisbury Cathedral (Fig. 8). The tomb, whose designer remains unknown, was erected in 1635, after the countess's death (Thomas Gorges died in 1610). Its lower register carries family heraldry and conventional inscriptions about the inevitability of death and the imminence of resurrection, above which lie the effigies. The canopy is supported by pilastered piers, with the corner entablature broken out diagonally over twisted columns. The canopy ribs appear to follow Bernini's open quadrants, although his angels are converted here into the cardinal virtues. The soffit has relief carvings showing the spiritual gifts described by the prophet Isaiah (where Wisdom is personified by the Judgement of Solomon), taken to represent the moral timbre of the English nobility. The top stage is decorated with openwork carvings of the Platonic solids, which were regarded by Johannes Kepler, known in England to mathematicians such as John Dee and Sir Henry Saville, and admired as a Christian reconciler by James I, as representing the meta-structure of the universe.[32] Cosmology notwithstanding,

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[30]   Specifically, I Kings 7:15–22 and 41–2.

[31]   M. Delbeke and A.-F. Morel, 'Metaphors in Action: Early Modern Church Buildings as Spaces of Knowledge', *Architectural History*, 53 (2010), pp. 110–14.

[32]   P. Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (2008), pp. 231–48; D. Wade, *Fantastic Geometry: Polyhedra and the Artistic Imagination in the Renaissance* (2012), pp. 42–4.

sacred shapes obviously interested the Gorges: their seat of Longford Castle in Wiltshire was built in the 1570s on a triangular plan with circular corner towers, resembling the conceptual model of the Holy Trinity. At the tomb, this interest yields a symbolic depiction of heaven in the language of mathematics, pursuits associated with Solomon (and which may have chimed with Gorges' involvement in maritime matters, such as navigation and cartography).[33] If Bernini's example suggested the basic arrangement and the use of the twisted columns, the blend of motifs at Salisbury is nonetheless highly original.

Raphael's English influence is more modest: tubby transcriptions of the columns from *The Healing of the Lame Man* were carved in the 1630s for the fireplace of the withdrawing room at Ham House, commissioned by the courtier William Murray, gentleman of the bedchamber and former whipping-boy to Charles I.[34] These have been interpreted as masonic emblems reflective of Murray's possible membership of some secretive aristocratic fraternity, but their use in a suite hung with royal portraiture and works by European masters such as Titian and Correggio might be more reasonably regarded as an offshoot of the artistic tastes of a royal servant closely associated with the court.[35]

Elsewhere, we can only speculate that the few uses of the twisted column in England are meant to invoke the Temple. The frontispiece to Hugh Broughton's *Concent of Scripture* of 1588 (Fig. 9), a work of biblical chronology by a noted Hebraist, features a pair of garlanded columns flanking the text. These support a decayed impost. The image is probably printers' stock, because the same plate is used in the 1587 edition of Richard Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, which includes *fasti* but no substantial passages of a scriptural character. Still, might its title have prompted a known biblical iconography on the basis that the building of Solomon's Temple is described in the Second Book of Chronicles? Perhaps, at most, the fragments of a derelict building preceding a text of Christian resonance brought to mind the medieval partnering of *Ecclesia et Synagoga*, the church triumphant in contrast to defunct Jewry.

Such conjecture can be tested, briefly and admittedly without conclusive results, against confirmed Temple reconstructions of similar vintage. As Mark Girouard has convincingly demonstrated, the central block of Wollaton Hall, erected by Robert Smythson in 1580–8 for the Nottinghamshire mining tycoon and magistrate, Sir Francis Willoughby, follows Nicholas de Lyra's Temple description as illustrated in a late fifteenth-century German bible, which shows a three-storey elevation with corner bartizans.[36] There is no attached order on this aspect of Wollaton, much less the affectation of a Solomonic column; the only known use of the latter in the Elizabethan country house is in the wooden hall fireplace from Ilam in Staffordshire, dated 1581 and now a door surround at Pinewood Studios, its history and original context awaiting proper research and documentation before any discussion about its possible meanings can take place.[37] The influence of Lyra, but not the twisted column, is visible again in King James VI's rebuilding of Stirling Castle chapel, which was constructed for the baptism of Prince Henry in 1594. The project was carried out by Sir William Schaw, Scottish master of works and master of ceremonies. Its proportions, fenestration, and internal arrangement all adhere to Lyra, with the courtyard doorway, bordered by paired, straight columns, apparently deriving from Roman coins showing the Herodian Temple.[38] Francis Willoughby was a judge, giving some rationale for the Temple as architectural

[33] M. Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture: Its Rise and Fall* (2009), pp. 239–42.
[34] C. Rowell (ed.), *Ham House: Four Hundred Years of Collecting and Patronage* (2013), p. 79.
[35] M.K. Schuchard, *Restoring the Temple of Vision: Cabalisitic Freemasonry and Stuart Culture* (2002), p. 390.
[36] M. Girouard, 'Solomon's Temple in Nottinghamshire', in idem, *Town and Country* (1992), pp. 187–97.
[37] '400-year-old Fireplace gets Makeover at Pinewood', *Timber Trades Journal Online*, 8 June 2011: http://www.ttjonline.com/news/400-year-old-fireplace-gets-makeover-at-pinewood' (accessed 25 March 2015). I am grateful to Dr Charles Robertson for this reference.
[38] I. Campbell and A. MacKechnie, 'The "Great Temple of Solomon" at Stirling Castle', *Architectural History*, 28 (2011), pp. 91–118; R. Bowers, 'James VI, Prince Henry, and *A True Reportarie of Baptism* at Stirling, 1594', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 29:4 (2005), p. 8.

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Fig. 9. William Rogers, frontispiece to Hugh Broughton, A Concent of Scripture *(1588). Engraving, 18 by 12 cm. From* Early English books, 1475–1640, Selected from Pollard and Redgrave's Short-Title Catalogue, *University Microfilms International, University of Michigan, Ann Arbour, 1966, reel position I 180/05.*

exemplar, while James, characterised in verse as the new Solomon, could claim the Temple as his attribute on similar grounds. Clearly, the earliest Temple reconstructions in Britain could make do without the most pervasive motif of that building in European Renaissance culture. Closer to the mark, and closer to Oxford, is James's iconography as King James I of England.

The Stuart court's appropriation of Solomon and his columns had its most famous expression in the ceiling paintings of the Banqueting House at Whitehall, mooted in 1621 and finally installed in 1636, eleven years after the king's death. Then, the funeral sermon preached by Bishop Williams of Lincoln followed the First Book of Kings (11:41–3), describing the deaths of Solomon and James after long periods of tranquillity.[39] James is lionised as a modern

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[39]   J. Doelman, *James I and the Religious Culture of England* (2000), pp. 161–5.

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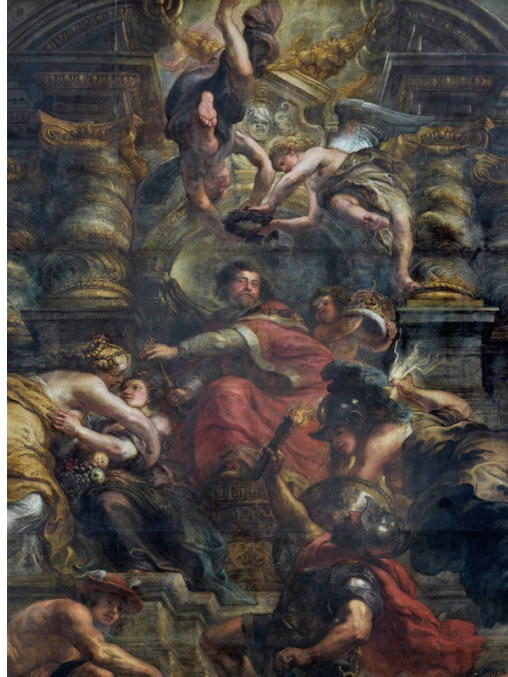
Fig. 10. The Peaceful Reign of King James, by Peter Paul Rubens, installed 1635. Oil on canvas, approximately 9 by 6 metres. Banqueting House, Whitehall. Photo: copyright Historic Royal Palaces.

Temple builder, arbitrating between competing factions in the British churches.[40] James's representation at the Banqueting House was not, however, fully resolved until the late 1620s, when a revised project removed the allegory of the Union of the Crowns from the central oval of the ceiling to the section directly over the hall entrance. The reconceived centre oval contains James's apotheosis, the square over the throne now dealing with the political complexion of the reign.[41] In this (Fig. 10), where Minerva and Mercury expel Mars and Bellona, the enthroned king, ensconced by an apex-broken curved pediment and twisted ionic columns, turns to receive personifications of Peace and Plenty. At cornice level, a cartouche carries a relief carving of a cherub. Given the representational goals of the work and the combination of helical columns and angelic ornament, the king's depiction is clearly Solomonic. Visualisation of the enthroned Solomon had been attempted before in the reign when a statue of James was placed on the Tower of the Orders in the Bodleian Quadrangle in about 1620, the king sitting on a round-backed seat bordered by lions, as described in the First Book of Kings.[42] The introduction of the column into the Whitehall scheme gives the composition obvious tectonic clarity when viewed from an angle of elevation, but also Christianises an image whose iconography is otherwise mythological.[43]

[40] J. Williams, *Great Britains Salomon: A sermon preached at the magnificent funerall, of the most high and mighty king, James* (1625), pp. 24–5.
[41] G. Martin, 'The Banqueting House Ceiling: Two Newly Discovered Projects', *Apollo*, 139 (1994), pp. 29–34.
[42] Namely, 10:19, 'The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.'
[43] D. Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485–1649* (1997), pp. 120–2, accepts the Solomonic interpretation but does not cite a scriptural source.

Fig. 11. High Altar, St Charles Borromeo, Antwerp. Architectural surround designed by Rubens, installed c.1620. Approximately 6 by 4 metres. Photo: Ad Meskens.

While the Whitehall ceiling may have prompted the use of *Salomónica* at St Mary's in Oxford (thus restoring the columns to a correct Temple-type context), other parts of Rubens's oeuvre may be at play. Central to his receiving the commission for Whitehall ceiling was the favourable reception among English connoisseurs of the altarpieces and ceiling paintings in Antwerp's central Jesuit church of St Charles Borromeo. The church was designed by the priest-architect Pieter Huyssens and completed in 1620–1, following consultation with Rubens about the sculptural decoration.[44] The architectural surround for the main altarpiece, *The Miracles of St Charles Borromeo* (Fig. 11), strongly resembles the Oxford porch, comprising a broken

[44]   J.R. Martin, *The Ceiling Paintings for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp* (1968), pp. 24, 29, 40.

segmental pediment with angels on the curves, rising in the centre of which is a canopied and gabled statue of the Virgin and Child. The only difference in articulation is that the entablature in Antwerp is wrapped over two planes, the return sides resting on a second set of composite columns. The columns are not of the twisted type, although Rubens's study for the frame shows helical Ionic columns explicitly modelled on the relics in St Peter's.[45] Twisted columns are, nonetheless, used to enclose the round-headed frame for Rubens's *Assumption of the Virgin* in the adjoining Houtappel chapel (Fig. 12), an amalgamation of Temple column and Madonna that had been first attempted in a modern Catholic context in a print by Nicolas Beatrizet of about 1560 (Fig. 13).[46] It was a combination that harmonised as much with British Protestant assumptions about Biblical typology as it did with the ultramontanism of the Spanish Netherlands.

If this is correct, the exact means of visual transmission from Antwerp to Oxford are – and probably always will be – unknown, and likewise the substance of Laud's exchanges with his mason Jackson, whose own training and travels await documentation. But we do know that Laud was intimately acquainted with the artistic pursuits of the London court and the work of Rubens, that he had an interest in the *mise-en-scène* of contemporary European Catholicism (as evinced by the liturgical works in his library collection, discovered with evident delight by the overseer of his trial, William Prynne), that he wished to foreground the person of the Virgin Mary in the culture of British Protestantism, and that the sophisticated iconographical program at Canterbury Quadrangle had been his creation.[47] Moreover, Antwerp was frequently on the English travellers' trajectory: up to 1624 and after 1630, when peace with Spain was confirmed, English gentry passed through the town on their way to bathe in the healing waters at Spa. The city had also English diplomatic presence, whereby emissaries like Sir Dudley Carleton, arriving in 1616, sought out antiquities and paintings, invariably seeking the artistic as well as political counsel of Rubens. In 1621, Sir Gilbert Chaworth, a diplomat entrusted with the Anglo-Spanish marriage negotiations, admired the new Jesuit church, 'wholly roofed with pictures of Rubens' making', and the duke of Buckingham, more accomplished as a connoisseur than a politician, must surely have explored the basilica at some point during his visit in 1625.[48] Putting the pieces together, it seems safe to conclude that the Antwerp altar was familiar in circles close to Laud's, and if its design was unknown to John Jackson before 1637, he was presented with some written or verbal instruction about it or a design derived from it.

If the columns of the Oxford porch are now relatively unproblematic in terms of iconography and inspiration, the other components raise questions. Framing the uppermost pediment, which supports the arms of the university, are two angels – now modern replicas – evocative of Rubens (Fig. 14). A further, diminutive pair of angels form corbels at the base of the Virgin's niche (Fig. 15). In the spandrel area between the doorway and the principal entablature, another two angels bear long scrolls. The scroll, combined with the image of the Virgin, brings to mind the medieval and Renaissance iconography of the Annunciation, but the blend here seems too general to point to any scriptural episode or representational tradition. Complicating the picture, the composite capitals on top of the twisted columns feature winged cherubs (Fig. 16), an adaption rare though not unknown in European classicism.[49] Even so, the ensemble is surely explained by Temple symbolism. Angels (though with palms) are

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[45]   A. Blunt, 'Rubens and Architecture', *The Burlington Magazine*, 119:894 (1977), p. 614. Rubens uses a similar frame in the high altar at Freising Cathedral, after 1623, and, in timber, in the St Roch altarpiece at St Maartenskerk, Aalst, *c*.1626–33: W. Sauerlander, *The Catholic Rubens: Saints and Martyrs* (2014), pp. 35, 137–41.

[46]   I am once again grateful to Dr Charles Robertson for this reference.

[47]   Parry, *Glory, Laud, and Honour*, pp. 24, 45. I thank Alex Dougherty for his advice about the place of Marian imagery in the early seventeenth century.

[48]   J. Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad, 1604–1667: Their Influence in English Society and Politics* (1989), pp. 208–10.

[49]   M. Waters, 'A Renaissance without Order: Ornament, Single Sheet Engravings, and the Mutability of Architectural Prints', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 71:4 (2012), pp. 498–9.

Fig. 12. Altar of the Lady Chapel, St Charles Borromeo, Antwerp. Architectural surround designed by Rubens, installed c.1620. Approximately 5 by 4 metres. Photo: Paul M.R. Maeyaert.

Fig. 13. Nicholas Beatrizet (c.1515–65), Sancta Maria de Loreto, c.1540–65. Engraving, 34 by 24 cm. British Museum.

Fig. 14. Detail of top register of south porch of St Mary's, by John Jackson, 1637. Photo: Robin Usher.

Fig. 15. Corbel at south porch of St Mary's, by John Jackson, 1637. Photo: Robin Usher.

Fig. 16. Capital at south porch of St Mary's, by John Jackson, 1637. Photo: Robin Usher.

shown in the Temple sanctuary plate in the second volume of Juan Villalpando's *In Ezechiel explanationes et apparatus vrbis, ac templi Hierosolymitani* (1595–1604), a three-volume folio work that was owned by James I, acquired by the Bodleian Library by 1635, and which influenced Inigo Jones's and John Webb's unexecuted designs for Whitehall Palace.[50] Jones's preliminary design for the west front of St Paul's cathedral features recumbent angels over the main door, and in the cathedral as refaced after 1630, cherubs were placed over each of the nave windows, Jones later commenting that 'the Temple of Hierusalem (…) was adorned with the figures of Cherubims, that thereby the Nations of the Earth might know it was the habitation of the living God'.[51]

We must rely on power of suggestion to a greater degree when evaluating the pedestal sculptures beneath the columns (Fig. 17). As at Canterbury Quadrangle (Fig. 18), bucrania with garlanded horns project from the corners, a treatment familiar from Greco-Roman funerary altars of the kind shown in Raphael's *Sacrifice at Lystra*, another of the cartoons in the royal collection.[52] Another possible source is the collection of cylindrical altars taken from Delos by the earl of Arundel *c.*1621 (Fig. 19), which was not brought to Oxford until 1667 but displayed in the sculpture gallery at Arundel's Strand mansion where, according to the

[50] S. Hartlib, 'Ephemerides Anni 1635', Sheffield University Library, MS 29/3/8A ('Iohannes Baptistus Villalpandus. In Ezech. Romæ et Ejusdem Apparatus Vrbis et Templi Hierosolymæ in bibliothecs oxoniensi[.]'); V. Hart, *Inigo Jones: The Architect of Kings* (2011), p. 48; J. Bold, *John Webb: Architectural Theory and Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (1989), pp. 111–12.

[51] Hart, *Inigo Jones*, pp. 47, 222–3 (quotation p. 47). For Jones's interest in the Temple, see T. Morrison, 'Solomon's Temple, Stonehenge, and Divine Architecture in the English Enlightenment', *Parergon*, 29/1 (2012), pp. 141–5.

[52] G.M. Davies, 'Fashion in the Grave: A Study of the Motifs used to Decorate the Grave Altars, Ash Chests and Sarcophagi made in Rome in the Early Empire to the Mid Second Century AD', University of London PhD thesis, 2 vols. (1978), vol. 1, pp. 315–19.

Fig. 17. Column pedestal at south porch of St Mary's, by John Jackson, 1637. Photo: Robin Usher.

Fig. 18. Canterbury Quadrangle, east side, St John's College, Oxford, completed by John Jackson, 1636. Photo: A. Shiva.

Fig. 19. Greco-Roman altar, first century AD, removed from Delos by the earl of Arundel in 1621. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Photo: Robin Usher.

earl of Clarendon, the collection was accessible to visitors.[53] At Canterbury Quad, the altar-cum-pedestal is deployed as a form of erudite decoration complementing an iconographical scheme concerned with the university curriculum, but it surely had more forbidding intent at St Mary's. Altars denote sacrifice, an activity undertaken in the inner courts of the Temple, thus bringing to mind the Host.

As an invocation of the Temple of Jerusalem imbued with Christian denotations, the porch of St Mary's has European contexts that have been sketched above. The British Temple reconstructions of the Elizabethan and early Stuart eras can suggest that it was one of several provincial peculiarities that did not always relate to one another in terms of Temple iconography. In the end, the lead was metropolitan, in the sense that the example of Rubens was transmitted through the Stuart court and was at the crest of continental artistic modernity. Solomonic columns had marked out King James as England's Solomon, and their Marian partnership in Oxford identified the premier parish church of the city and central place of worship for the university as a platform for communication with God. The church-Temple analogy was hardly novel, but the iconographical toolkit of Baroque, Catholic Europe made the association tangible.

For Oxford and for England, the innovative component was, of course, the twisted column. In the Spanish Empire and central Europe the *Salomónica* would spread rapidly, threatening to divorce the motif from its original meaning, but the Oxford porch, in spite of its gothic incidentals, retains its singleness of purpose. Unlike those many European frontispieces and reredoses bracketed by fancy columns, the porch, in its local and national singularity, can be more readily interpreted as an ideological projection specific to its time and location. It originated in the religious affairs of the 1630s, was formulated with reference to an artistic scene far more cosmopolitan than the indigenous; thus it belongs both to the emerging European mainstream and an incipient English classicism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[53]   D. Noy, 'Greco-Roman Altars: From the Central Aegean to Rural England', *Minerva*, 21:3 (2010), p. 22; M. Vickers, *The Arundel and Pomfret Marbles* (2006), p. 10.