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Title:

Narthex Reclaimed: Reinventing Disciplinary Space in the Anglican Mission Field, 1847-1903

Abstract:

This paper explores the reinvention of the narthex in Anglian missionary circles during the second half of the nineteenth century. This was a spatial device used in ancient Christian architecture to hold catechumens, 'inquirers', and those who were seen as violating ecclesiastical discipline. As the Church of England continued to extend its missionary activity throughout the world during this period, an appropriate solution was sought (especially among High Church missionaries) to maintain order and discipline during divine worship, particularly in areas where missionaries encountered large numbers of indigenous non-Christians, namely Asia and Africa. The narthex was seen as an ecclesiological 'correct' method of achieving this, providing a space at the front of a church where non-Christians could 'inquire', and where catechumens could reside before baptism and thus make a symbolic entry into the church of Christ. Although never systematically implemented in the Anglican mission field, the reinvention of this ancient spatial device opens a window onto the practical, scholarly and imaginative capacity of Victorian Anglicanism in its efforts to evangelise the 'heathen' world while remaining within what it saw as a continuous, living tradition dating back to the early Church. Thus, the reinvention of the narthex emerges as a piece of spatial machinery that was at once functional and romantic, modern and historical, inclusive and discriminatory; a space that was clearly used for the purposes of control but one that also encouraged the participation and potential conversion of non-Christians.

Keywords: narthex; Anglican; missionary; church architecture; discipline; imperial networks

Abbreviated title: Disciplinary Space in the Anglian Mission Field

Narthex Reclaimed: Reinventing Disciplinary Space in the Anglican Mission Field, 1847-1903

There was an Arab gentleman, Abdullah bin Mohammed by name, who had been taught by Bishop Steere, and as long as he was only an inquirer he might stand at the end of the Slave Market Church, and no notice was taken. But one day he uncovered his head, and knelt down among the Christians. The next day, the enlightened Seyid Barghash [Sultan] sent him to prison; and there for three and a half weary years he remained, scorning all offers of freedom at the cost of his religion

— A. E. M. Anderson-Morshead (1909)¹

This passage from Mary Anderson-Morshead's account of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa is revealing. It hints at a regime concerning the liturgical arrangement of space that was once present in various parts of the Anglican confession worldwide. Its implementation was not just the product of competing ideologies (local and foreign) but also of new and unfamiliar environs. These 'new' environments were deemed peculiarly demanding in terms of ecclesiastical organisation and discipline, often requiring flexible yet decisive action by those *in situ* if church services were not to be interrupted or descend into chaos.² This was especially the case in parts of the world where Anglican missionaries found themselves labouring in the midst of one or more ancient and dominant religious traditions, such as those in Africa and Asia.

But Anderson-Morshead's account is revealing in at least one other respect. It refers to the conversion of an individual from one Abrahamic faith to another – in this case, from Islam to Christianity. As the Great Sepoy Revolt (Indian Mutiny) of 1857 had demonstrated twenty-five years earlier, apostasy of this kind was potentially dangerous, even fatal, not just to individuals (as in the case of Abdullah bin Mohammed) but to entire civilisations. But these were the circumstances in which the

Universities' Mission found itself in the 1870s, and the risk was apparently considered worthwhile, especially if it might mean abolishing the East African slave trade once and for all.³

In such a context it was not just the obligation to convert non-Christians that mattered but the process behind it. This process was itself a disciplinary one. Here ideas of space and conversion were irrevocably entwined with those of method through the concept of transition – that is, progression from one spiritual state to another in a correct and orderly manner. This process of moving from one state to another – both spatially and spiritually – is akin to what the French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep described as '*rites de passage*', and also involves what he identified as the magico-religious aspect of 'territorial passage', of crossing frontiers.⁴

For those outside the Anglican confession this process of conversion was both mysterious and protracted (even bizarre), with each stage along the way to full communion marked by rites of catechism, baptism and confirmation. Again, as Anderson-Morshead's account of Abdullah bin Mohammed makes clear, in certain parts of the world this process extended to include the strict demarcation of space. That is, the configuration of church interiors to reflect the status accorded each stage in this spiritual rite of passage, which was itself a deliberate 'disciplinary' configuration. Although it could be argued that the liturgical arrangement of space was *sine qua non* with respect to nineteenth-century Anglican ecclesiology, in the case of missionary churches it was generally more pronounced, even exaggerated.

As an ‘inquirer,’ Abdullah was identified as a ‘heathen’ and therefore prohibited from entering the precincts of the church proper. In fact, such was the strict and palpable division of ecclesiastical space in the cathedral at Zanzibar that Abdullah bin Mohammed would have been in no doubt as to which part of the church he could stand in upon entering. In other words, he would have recognised the arcade screen dividing this ‘end’ space from the church proper as a distinct threshold or ‘portal’ demarcating two spatial zones. As a Muslim, such architectural boundary indicators he would have been familiar to him from local Stone Town mosques.

So what exactly was this space – this ‘end’ of the Slave Market church – that Abdullah bin Mohammed was allowed to occupy? Essentially, it was a transitory space – what van Genneep would describe as an extended threshold which, in acquiring its enlarged spatial quality, becomes a distinct ‘zone’. Thus, neither fully inside the church nor out, it may be understood as an ‘in-between’ space, both physically and metaphorically. It was a space set aside for regulated and therefore controlled access to the mysteries of divine worship; a space in which the heathen – or, in this case, ‘Mohammedan’ – could see and be seen without interrupting or defiling the holy sacrament.⁵ Again, following van Genneep, whoever should pass from the ‘outside’ into such a zone, as did Abdullah bin Mohammed, ‘finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds’.⁶ In this sense, the ‘end’ of the Slave Market church was very much a liminal space in the way that the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner might describe it, a zone that was at once marginal and migratory, fixed yet permeable.⁷

This space, deliberately planned, was derived from a device found in primitive Christian and medieval church architecture known as a *pronaos* or narthex (νάρθηξ) – a space of indeterminate size that was literally, as the name suggests, an extension to the west end of a church’s nave. The ultimate function of this device in early Christian churches varied, but its primary function was to contain and control catechumens and penitents during divine worship. To the historically minded architect or clergyman, it therefore presented itself as a model space for the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline and the enabling of *rites de passage*.

Thus, it was through the granting of access to such spaces that the likes of Abdullah bin Mohammed were understood to be taking their first step, as it were, into the living church of Christ. Here, again, the process of conversion was paramount: to move between these ‘zones’ (spatially and spiritually) was to unite oneself with new worlds. Thus, just as Bentham’s Panopticon was the ‘architectural figure’ of his peculiar reforming regime, so too the narthex in the Slave Market church was an architectural device through which spiritual salvation proceeded and was attained.⁸

This liminal quality is important in comprehending how such a space was understood to perform the *rites de passage* associated with Christian communion, and is one that we shall see rehearsed (both rhetorically and actually) time and again through the instances of missionary architecture described below. Although not concerned with the ritual specificity of that process, what follows will examine the quality of such space(s), how we might interpret them as architectural, and suggest ways in which their reinvention, meaning and use were bound up in larger imaginary constructs relating to missionary Tractarianism. This involves considering a number of examples

of narthex space from across the Anglican world, both built and unbuilt, ranging from makeshift ecclesiastical structures to more substantial parish churches and cathedrals. It will explore where the idea originated, how it gained currency and the different ways in which it was both understood and implemented. The narthex will be presented as a kind of connecting space, or one of intersecting spatial fields, that positioned it between sanctified micro-spaces on the one hand, and much more geographically expansive fields of missionary endeavour on the other. Apart from the various physical manifestations of this phenomenon, the essay will attempt to demonstrate how the reinvention of the narthex idea relates to the transmission of specialist knowledge through what might be described as informal clerical networks, especially the reach and influence of the Ecclesiological Society in London, thus evoking notions of imperial networking.

REINVENTING THE NARTHEX

Whatever else the event described above by Anderson-Morshead may signify, it certainly highlights the increased frequency with which liminal spaces such as nartheces could be found in Anglican missionary architecture by the late nineteenth century. Although it cannot be said that such spaces were ever required in the Anglican mission field, they certainly became more numerous as doctrinal attitudes continued to change in the Anglican Church, and the particular ‘problems’ that missionaries faced multiplied. While there was never any diktat from Church authorities regarding their use, for some they became a means of maintaining discipline and alleviating other ‘behavioural’ issues peculiar to missionary contexts. It is impossible to say exactly how many such spaces existed in the wider Anglican world, but one suspects that there were many more than were ever recorded.⁹

The question of whether or not a narthex space would actually be employed in a church was determined almost entirely by the region in which that church was located and, more importantly, by the theological inclination of its incumbent. For these reasons, the use of nartheces was more often than not limited to the highly formalised and disciplined environments of the High Church tradition. By the middle of the nineteenth century this tradition had become increasingly associated with Anglican renewal in the form of Tractarianism. Not exclusively so however, since conventional High churchmanship still prevailed among some clergymen who were not Tractarians, but who were nevertheless open to enforcing liturgical discipline.¹⁰ As we shall see, this included those who were of a more Evangelical persuasion, such as the bishop of Calcutta, Daniel Wilson.

Such high minded clerics (whether Tractarian or conventional) comprised a comparatively small but nonetheless powerful faction within the broader Anglican missionary movement. Generally speaking, they were much more attuned to ideas of history and refinement in church architecture than their more strictly Evangelical counterparts. Therefore, to the High Anglican mind, matters of propriety and ‘correctness’ in the liturgical arrangement of space were paramount, whether in Britain or the colonies. Again, although part of the wider liturgical reform movement within the Anglican Church, nartheces were never a typical or common component of missionary architecture. Rather, they were seen as offering further options in dealing with unique challenges associated with missionary Christianity, especially in the non-European world (as opposed to ‘home missions’ in Britain). For this reason, their use was, as one might expect, more prevalent among particularly High Church missionary

organisations, such as the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) and the Cambridge Mission to Delhi.

Despite these limitations, as an idea, the narthex maintained a certain imaginary currency among High Church Anglicans both in Britain and abroad for its perceived ability to resolve the tension between the increasingly prescribed liturgical strictures of Tractarianism and the complex, unruly, and spiritually hazardous world beyond Europe. This characteristic situates the idea firmly within a kind of global imaginary, the geographical limits of which were determined not only by the reach and efficacy of the networks of clergymen involved in its propagation but also the way in which its circulation at 'home', in Britain, was calculated to stimulate and endorse that propagation. To this extent, the actual prevalence of nartheces was not especially relevant to those driving the agenda in Britain. Its reclamation as an idea was more important in preventing the Tractarian and High Church traditions in the colonies from remaining the preserve of the settler 'suffragan' Church (serving British Anglicans who went to the colonies), and providing its missionary arm with added impetus in seeking out and converting indigenes.

It must also be borne in mind that, although these spaces were concerned with the control of what Mary Douglas in another context has termed 'pollution' – that is, preventing spiritual contradiction through the containment or quarantine of impure and/or 'unclean' influences – their use often overlapped with more mundane and immediately practical considerations, such as protecting the building and its inhabitants from harsh or inclement weather conditions.¹¹ This additional function is evident, for example, not only in the world beyond the British Isles, in places such as

New Zealand and Africa, but also in Britain itself, especially in northern England and Scotland.

Indeed, the liturgical and ritualistic dimension of such liminal spaces had precedent in Britain. Porches on medieval parish churches, for example, in addition to providing shelter, were often used as spaces in which babies and their mothers were held prior to baptism and ritual ‘admission’ into the church. On occasion they were also used for the ritualisation of penance. In such cases the penitent was banished into the porch and thus seen to be outside the community of the parish.¹²

Despite their multiplicity of use and meaning, what is clear about the employment of nartheces is that wherever they were incorporated in a liturgical capacity, particularly in colonial missionary contexts, they represented a conscious and calculated act on the part of the architects and clergymen involved. In other words, their incorporation into Anglican missionary architecture – although sporadic and unfixed – was neither ad hoc nor incidental. Rather, it was the consequence of a concerted effort to define and explicitly promote their use, especially where there was an apparent need for strict discipline.

The idea of reinventing nartheces for the modern world dates back to the 1840s, when colonial clergymen, as well as advocates of ‘correct’ church architecture in Britain, began to consider seriously for the first time the problems associated with Anglican church architecture abroad. The key issue was not only how one might maintain and enforce ancient church practices in different parts of the world – those rites and privileges that were seen to define and distinguish Anglican worship – but also how to

control crowds of on-lookers or ‘inquirers’ that gathered in and around church buildings during divine worship. These thronging masses would often disrupt church services by either causing a ruckus outside the building or trespassing within. Although clergymen would have welcomed the increased attention, hoping to entice new converts, such behaviour was of course unacceptable, so a solution was sought.

By this time certain specialist architectural organisations in England had begun to theorise and historically anchor the use of subsidiary spaces in missionary church architecture. Although the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture was formed first, the Ecclesiological (former Cambridge Camden) Society soon became the more influential. Concerned as they were with historical precedent, the ecclesiologists naturally took their cue from the traditions and customs of the ancient church, identifying the narthex as a space which was sanctioned by both custom and time. It was also something that keyed with the ‘principle of Reserve’ and Tractarian attitudes to catechumenal teaching. Thus, as A. J. B. Beresford Hope, sometime president of the Ecclesiological Society, would later observe, the employment of such spaces in Anglican missionary architecture was considered necessary for ‘practical no less than ecclesiastical reasons.’¹³

Thus, like the revival of Gothic architecture itself, the reintroduction of the narthex was as much about reinventing tradition as it was about continuity, aesthetic integrity, and the maintenance of ancient church ordinances. This connected the idea to a wider imaginary concerning authority and legitimation based upon ancient sources that lay at the heart of Anglican renewal and the perpetuation of High Church principles, the

architectural (or spatial) manifestations of which were seized upon and pursued by the Ecclesiological Society.

LEGITIMATING THE NARTHEX

The Ecclesiological Society was formed in 1839 by a small group of earnest and devout Cambridge undergraduates, and its basic aim was to reform – root and branch – the liturgical practices of modern Anglican worship. A highly active organisation, the Ecclesiological Society was among the more persistent (even imperious) advocates of Gothic Revival architecture in Britain, and through its publications and lectures soon became the most influential and respected authority on the subject of ancient church architecture in the English-speaking world.¹⁴

Less well known, however, is the Ecclesiological Society's interest in church building beyond the British Isles, especially in Britain's former colonial empire.¹⁵ It is here that the Society arguably had its most profound impact. In the early nineteenth century most British colonies had nothing that even approached what could be described as a 'proper' Anglican church. Many such places, including South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, had only recently been colonised, with substantial swathes of their hinterlands amounting to nothing more than 'wilderness.' All this changed, however, with the establishment of the Colonial Bishops' Fund (CBF) in 1841. As the mostly High Church bishops appointed under this scheme left Britain for their new dioceses, they took with them a more sincere and disciplined form of Anglicanism, including a desire to erect churches worthy of the name.¹⁶ A number of these bishops, along with their attendant clergymen, were patrons and members of the architectural societies in Britain and therefore understood fully the principles and

implications of Anglican ecclesiology. In most cases these men were entering lands they could hardly imagine – places that were not only climatically and topographically very different from the British Isles but also culturally alien to them, with large indigenous, non-Christian populations.

As mentioned, these contexts presented a particular challenge with respect to maintaining the solemnity of Anglican worship. Reports began arriving back in England of the difficulties clergymen experienced in attempting to control crowds of on-lookers while administering the holy sacrament. It was at this point that the Ecclesiological Society got involved. At a meeting of the Society in May 1848, John Mason Neale, one of the Society's founding members and leading proponents, raised the issue in a paper he read on the uses of the narthex in early Christian architecture. One of the main points of this paper, it seems, was to encourage the reintroduction of nartheces into colonial missionary contexts.¹⁷

Unfortunately, the contents of this lecture no longer survive. Nevertheless, it is clear that in exploring this topic Neale was sifting through the ancient past for answers to a contemporary problem. The conclusions he reached were sufficiently compelling to have induced the bishop of Fredericton to insist upon the paper's 'speedy' publication. In the end, the paper was never fully reproduced, but its conclusions did begin circulating – or so it seems, at least – within Anglican missionary circles. In his book *A History of the Holy Eastern Church* (1850), Neale later gave a full account of the uses of the narthex in ancient church architecture, but made no further comment on its adaptation to colonial circumstances. Although not concerned specifically with modern colonisation, Neale's account was in its own way a description of missionary

activity in so far as it dealt with the expansion of the early Christian church in eastern Europe.

In the section headed ‘definitions and explanations,’ for example, Neale observed that the interior arrangement of churches in the tradition of the Holy Eastern Church involved a ‘four-fold division’ – the bema or sanctuary, the choir, the nave and the narthex [Fig. 1]. In giving descriptions of various Byzantine and Armenian churches, he noted that nartheces functioned in several different ways, including as a *gynæconitis* or ‘gallery’ for the segregation of women.¹⁸ But the narthex was above all a space designed to contain catechumens and penitents, and it was in this capacity that Neale would have considered it appropriate for modern missionary use. Such spaces were often divided from the main body of the church either by a wall, screen, or colonnade. Some churches even had more than one narthex; the inner one called the *esonarthex* (ἑσωνάρθηξ) and the outer one the *exonarthex* (ἐξωνάρθηξ). It was deemed necessary in some cases to add a further space to the front of the church known as a *proaulion*, or porch, to contain the lowest grade of penitent. This is important, for these multiple spaces were understood to contain different types of people at different stages of communion and/or restoration, some of which were allowed to hear the holy modulation of Psalms and the divine recitation of scripture, but not the ‘mysteries’ that followed.¹⁹ In this sense nartheces were understood as degrees of liminal space in which the spiritual and therefore socio-structural classification of their inhabitants was in a state of flux and consequently unstable: they were, to use the insights of Turner and Douglas, in various stages of ‘transition’ and ritual ‘uncleanliness’.

What this attempt to reclaim the narthex as a species of liturgical machinery demonstrates, given both the Ecclesiological Society's explicit remit to assist the colonies, and the presence of the bishop of Fredericton at Neale's lecture, is how the Church of England was keen to draw upon its global contacts. Now that the CBF had been launched, not only reinvigorating the Church's efforts overseas, but also bestowing that endeavour with a degree of official parliamentary sanction, these contacts effectively became a form of imperial network. It should be emphasised that this network was informal, consisting primarily of the architectural societies in Britain, along with their architects and correspondents. Nevertheless, the authority that these societies had acquired by the late 1840s concerning matters of church design, especially the Ecclesiological Society, meant that their reach was both extensive and profound. The societies' correspondents were in the main Anglican priests stationed throughout Britain's empire. Having been educated at either Oxford or Cambridge, and as members of one or other of the societies, these priests acted as agents in promoting the general cause of ecclesiology abroad. As a consequence, by the 1850s, the Ecclesiological Society in particular had something of a monopoly on the way new churches ought to be built.²⁰

As Alan Lester and others have argued, by understanding British imperial history as geographically extensive and connected in this way – that is, a phenomenon that was both centrifugal and centripetal, as well as trans-colonial – we can see more clearly its mutually constitutive effects.²¹ This is why discussions round the theorisation of the narthex as a 'peripheral' solution to the extension of High Church ideals abroad should not be viewed in isolation. It played into larger debates among architects and ecclesiologists at the time over adaptation and 'development' in Victorian architecture

more generally, whether at home or abroad. Driven by the Ecclesiological Society and its followers, the desire to ‘develop’ architecture in all its forms, including the addition of nartheces, was therefore couched firmly in a wider global imaginary, not merely a local British one.²²

IMPLEMENTING THE NARTHEX

Given the ideological impetus behind global Anglicanism, as well as its networked nature through organisations such as the CBF and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), Neale’s observations on the history and uses of the narthex in early Christian architecture did not go unnoticed. Indeed, they were later reiterated by Beresford Hope in his essay on the condition and prospects of the English cathedral in the nineteenth century (1861), where he observed that ‘a spacious narthex, or western vestibule, is suitable, according to ancient precedent, to a church planted in the midst of a vast heathen population.’²³ In noting this, Hope was referring in particular to one of the first and most deliberate attempts to incorporate a narthex-type space into an Anglican missionary church – that of Christ Church cathedral, Colombo (1847) [Fig. 2]. The then bishop of Colombo, James Chapman, had consulted with the Ecclesiological Society on a number of occasions, both before and after leaving for his new diocese, seeking advice on the cathedral’s design and the best way of adapting gothic forms to a tropical climate.²⁴ In reply, the Society engaged one of its most capable architects, the young but brilliant Richard Cromwell Carpenter. After having addressed the concerns of the bishop directly, the Society advised that it was indeed necessary for a Christian church in such a location to have a narthex for ‘purposes of discipline.’²⁵ This was a recommendation with which the

bishop himself sympathised. Surrounded by a predominantly Buddhist and Roman Catholic population, he soon realised that the enforcing of liturgical discipline was ‘really necessary’ if he was ever to wean the Singhalese from what he considered to be their eccentric and mistaken habits of ‘superstition.’²⁶

The most striking feature of Carpenter’s design is the scale at which it was conceived. For a fledgling mission like that in British Ceylon, it would have been no mean feat to raise such a building, particularly as the bishop relied extensively on handouts from the SPG in London. What Carpenter’s remarkable vision signifies, therefore, is not only the willingness and determination on the part of the Church of England to live up to its perceived obligations with respect to extending the privileges of the church to Englishmen abroad, but also its desire to spread the ‘true’ faith among indigenes. The very ample and spacious narthex included as part of Carpenter’s design was clearly no mere afterthought, nor was it derived from local Buddhist prototypes, as some have suggested. Rather, it was indicative of the Church’s sincerity in wishing to harvest souls for Christ’s sake, and to pursue this solemn undertaking in a thoroughly dignified, correct, and disciplined manner. Thus, the carefully considered nature of Carpenter’s design may be seen to have embodied the reinvigorated missionary agenda of the Anglican Church abroad, with the narthex creating both a form and space that monumentalised the state of ‘militancy’ in which the church found itself at that time and in such a place.

This idea of ‘militancy’ was important because it defined the narthex as a particular type of space, theologically speaking. Hinging on the concept of ‘the Church Militant’, it referred to the Christian community on earth struggling in conflict against

sin, evil, and temptation. By extension, this struggle necessarily implied a *mission* to enlarge the church by taking on and overcoming evil wherever it was seen to exist, with ‘heathenism’ being understood as just such an evil. Therefore, just as the nave of a church is liturgically understood to symbolise the ‘Church Militant’, holding an earthly congregation, the narthex was an especially militant space in the sense that it was not only an interface between the interior and exterior worlds of liturgical formation but also an overtly active space. The presence of a narthex attached to the front of a mission church therefore signified the Church Militant’s task in the field.

In the event, Carpenter’s design was never executed. A much reduced version was erected in 1852, superintended on the spot by British military personnel.²⁷ Although not built, the idea of the narthex at Colombo was very much in accordance with the fundamental tenets of Anglican ecclesiology – a proper and necessary extension of chancel and nave, both in terms of practical accommodation and sequential significance.²⁸ Shortly afterwards Carpenter recycled the idea down the road at All Saints’ church, Point-de-Galle. Although he died before this project was realised, and his plans modified, the essence of the design was carried out, including the addition of a narthex, giving some indication of what the Colombo building might have looked like [Fig. 3].²⁹

The narthex idea next appeared in 1856 in the design competition for the Crimean War Memorial Church at Constantinople. Given the location, it is little wonder that a key criterion of this competition was that the building should contain modifications ‘to suit the climate’, becoming one of the most highly publicised test cases in the history of Victorian architecture for adapting Gothic forms to a foreign climate.³⁰ It

attracted entries from the who's who of the British architectural profession such as William Burges, G. E. Street, William Slater, G. F. Bodley, and William White. Importantly, the 'foreignness' of the setting was seen as pertaining not just to the physical characteristics of the environment but also the cultural and religious disposition of the people. As part of the Ottoman empire, Turkey's population was overwhelmingly Muslim. The Crimean church was therefore intended as both a memorial and mission church in one.

In the end, the competition was won by William Burges with a design based on southern European models, in particular the twelfth-century Italian church of S. Andrea at Vercelli in Piedmont. His original design was for a cruciform structure with a six-bay nave and aisles, crossing with transepts, and an apsidal east end with vaulted ambulatory. In addition, the west front of the building was to have three deeply recessed portals with a low-pitch, overhanging roof approximately ten feet wide. This made for a semi-enclosed space at the front of the building some twenty feet deep.³¹ This space, although intended principally as a shelter from the intense Mediterranean sun, may also have been intended to serve as a *proaulion*, or porch for inquirers, in accordance with the disciplinary requirements of the early Christian church, especially in the East. It is a feature that was mentioned by Neale in his *History* as a kind of 'second narthex.' In fact, the perspective drawing by Burges shows a large number of local inhabitants milling around the front of the church, 'inquiring,' perhaps, as to the goings-on inside **[Fig. 4]**.

The exact function that this feature was intended to serve in Burges's design is unclear. However, we get a better idea at the point when he was forced to revise his

plans.³² It was reported in the August 1861 edition of *The Ecclesiologist* that Burges's new scheme had substituted the western-most bay of the nave for an 'open narthex similar to that of S. Germain l'Auxerrois.' This alteration, it was noted, would still allow room enough 'for any probable congregation, and the accommodation of ample external shade will be given to the native attendants who may be as requisite for the service of the worshippers as they would be undesirable loungers inside the building.'³³

The reference to S. Germain l'Auxerrois in this context is significant. This church would certainly have been known to anyone with a particular interest in ecclesiastical architecture, especially those who had the means and inclination to travel. Even so, its narthex was a rather specific feature for *The Ecclesiologist* to have mentioned. The reference might seem curious, even arbitrary, were it not for the fact that the porch of S. Germain had been described at length (and illustrated) by Viollet-le-Duc only a few years earlier in his *Dictionnaire Raisonné* (1854).³⁴ Like Neale before him, Viollet identified both porches and nartheces as spaces that were used in early medieval times for the accommodation of catechumens and penitents.³⁵ This reference would have been known to British architects, and was no doubt useful to those intent on reintroducing a primitive device such as the narthex into modern church building.

Burges, it turns out, was by no means alone in his concern for the narthex. A number of the other architects who submitted designs to the Crimean War Memorial competition demonstrated a similar interest, including Bodley and Street. In Bodley's entry we find the narthex being used in what appears to have been a more traditional manner. Although, like Burges, Bodley's design was based substantially on southern

European models, it was distinguished by its incorporation of a very long and pronounced narthex. Again, the exact reason for this space is unclear, but one can only presume that it was intended to serve the same function as that in Burges's design. In fact, an architect like Bodley would have been more inclined to adopt such a device for reasons of ordinance and liturgy. He was, after all, among the earliest and most respected architect-members of the Ecclesiological Society, and would no doubt have followed the discussions and debates published in *The Ecclesiologist* on such topics. In Street's design we see something similar, if only more elaborate. Here the entire nave of the building is enveloped in a cloister-cum-aisle, forming a narthex as it crossed the west front [Fig. 5].³⁶

William Slater, who received the 'extra' or fourth prize in the competition, also included a narthex-type space. Like Bodley and Street, Slater designed a number of Anglican churches for the colonies in the 1850s and 1860s, including cathedrals for Adelaide, St. Kitts, and Honolulu. His initial design for Honolulu in 1862 had both a western porch, in the form of an external cloister, and a narthex [Fig. 6]. In this case, the narthex was raised on four steps so as to contain a full-immersion font for adult baptism.³⁷ Again, although somewhat peculiar, this was a feature that not only had authority in ancient church precedent but also one that betrayed the clear missionary intent of the building and its pronounced state of 'militancy.'

What these examples demonstrate is that, although deliberately spatially ambiguous, nartheces were nevertheless seen as performing particular tasks and producing defined outcomes. In this sense they were perceived as real spaces, part of the church itself and connected to the mission field beyond. Through the simple act of opening a door

or walking through an arch, one could move between the narthex and the wider mission field. But this act also highlighted the differing nature of these two spaces. Despite being connected physically and ideologically, both the action and symbolism associated with movement between one and another emphasised the ‘threshold’ characteristics of the narthex. As H. Clay Trumbull observed as far back as the 1890s, such an act would have been loaded with significance, indicating ‘a certain covenant right to participate in the privileges of the house of God’.³⁸ This movement between spaces – between the church, as instrument of conversion, and the wider mission field – can also be understood via van Gennep’s idea of ‘territorial passage’ mentioned earlier; that is, movement between larger, spiritually charged spatial units or ‘worlds’. Here the threshold between ‘territories’ is not so much a door or arch, in the prosaic sense, as it is a portal to another world. Again, for the uninitiated, such an act of ‘passage’ would have carried with it all the magico-religious implications of crossing a frontier.

But the significance of nartheces went further. ‘As the structure of the churches changed’, notes Trumbull, ‘the threshold of the sanctuary [door or arch] came to be in a different portion of the building, or series of buildings [narthex]’. But, importantly, ‘its sacredness remained’.³⁹ In other words, the threshold once represented by an opening had become a zone, or series of zones, of indeterminate size. Here, as observed in the case of Slater’s design for Honolulu, as well as in the Slave Market Church at Zanzibar, the presence of the baptismal font in this zone, as a piece of liturgical machinery, was crucial. To return to van Gennep, it made space for certain transitional rites to occur: forms of ‘purification’, such as washing or cleansing symbolised in the rite of holy baptism, constituting rites of separation from previous

states of being. We can therefore say, following van Gennep, that the rites associated with narthex-type spaces were not ‘union’ ceremonies as such, ‘but rites of preparation for union, themselves preceded by rites of preparation for the transitional stage [catechism]’.⁴⁰ Spiritually speaking, such an understanding posits nartheces in the van Gennepian sense as ‘neutral zones’; or, as Turner would have it, ‘liminal’ spaces in which neophytes, for a ‘period of margin’, could withdraw from their structural positions, which, from a missionary’s perspective, meant dislocation from ‘heathendom’. In such spaces indigenous catechumens and penitents were ‘passengers’ or liminal *personæ*.

Thus, as containers, nartheces represented a species of micro space, which, through their explicit ‘militant’ quality, were at once holding pens and portals to another world, their ultimate purpose being to funnel candidates for conversion. They were akin to a membrane or sieve: only when certain conditions had been met did they become permeable, allowing one to pass through to the other side. While the wider mission field was more an open-ended space of potentiality – a space where the ‘heathen’ could be located on a map, identified, and then engaged in the broadest sense – the narthex was a precise and confined zone of operation, making it a technology for performing treatment of various kinds on those who had been corralled. Thus, it was one thing for missionaries to perceive the territories into which they moved as fields for the ‘harvesting of souls’, but another to actually process those souls. That was the fundamental problem.

EXTENDING THE NARTHEX

These spatial distinctions and divisions are clearly discernible in the small mission church at Umlazi in the diocese of Natal in the Eastern Cape (South Africa) [Fig. 7]. Designed and built in 1857 at the instigation of the mission's priest, the Rev. R. Robertson, this building is among the earliest recorded examples of such a spatial arrangement in modern Africa. Robertson carefully and quite deliberately separated the nave section of his church into two distinct spaces—one for 'Christians' ('C'), and one for 'heathens' ('D'). In so doing he effectively created a narthex in the western portion of the nave for his non-Christian congregation. It is here, in this 'in-between' or liminal space, as 'inquirers' or catechumens, that Robertson's potential new flock would have sat (most likely on the ground, on what would have been an earthen floor) either to consider his enticements or, for those who had committed themselves to his teaching, to receive Christian wisdom in preparation for the initiation rites of baptism.

Given the sophisticated initiation rites of many indigenous African societies, with their often drawn-out periods of structural transition, one can reasonably assume that the liminal state in which catechists found themselves, as well as the spatial confines of the narthex, would have been recognisable. Indeed, as some Anglican missionaries realised, various forms of inculturation were seen as a strategy towards bridging the cultural divide between themselves and their indigenous followers more effectively. This often entailed finding some 'groundwork ... in common customs', as the UMCA missionary Henry Rowley put it.⁴¹ Given Robertson's connection to the UMCA mission, it is not impossible, nor even unlikely, that he appreciated the similarities between the liturgical rites of Anglican Christianity and the initiation rites of African indigenes.⁴² Whatever the case, it was clear that at this stage in the mission's life there

was little need for dedicated ‘Christian’ space, as there were few missionaries and the process of conversion was slow and meticulous.

As knowledge of the narthex and its uses spread throughout the Anglican world, the device appeared with increasing frequency in designs for colonial churches. Even if some of these designs were never realised, such as G. G. Scott’s Patteson Memorial Chapel for Norfolk Island (*c.*1875), or the ‘Galilee porch’ in William Slater’s design for Labuan cathedral (1863), they again point to the idea’s currency.⁴³ Whether based strictly on known precedent, or more generally on a common stock of such subsidiary spaces in medieval church architecture, including Galilee porches in English churches, the narthex made a noticeable return.

However, as with the example at Umlazi, it was in environments where Anglican missionaries found themselves swimming against the tide that the narthex and accompanying notions of ‘disciplinary space’ came into their own. In India and Sub-Saharan Africa Anglican clergymen often struggled to Christianise the indigenous population. In some cases, such as in the Mang’anja highlands of Central Africa, they even faced mortal danger as they laboured in the midst of tropical disease, famine, and political unrest. In fact, by the end of its first year of operation, the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa had lost a significant number of personnel, including its first bishop. At Delhi the situation was little better, with the SPG mission having been ‘completely swept away’ in the aftermath of the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, it was trying circumstances such as these that gave High Anglican missions their peculiar character, and led to their embracing primitive church practices. To be sure, the development of this attitude was dictated in large part by

practicality, but it also gave the more ascetically minded an opportunity to rationalise their austere circumstances by going back to first principles.

This was certainly the case with the Universities' Mission to Central Africa.

Established in 1858, the mission's principal aim was to bring Christianity to what they saw as the most benighted regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, into the area that comprises modern-day Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi. As it was heavily associated with David Livingstone's much celebrated expedition up the Zambezi River in the mid-1850s, its ulterior purpose was to eradicate the East African slave trade, bringing agriculture and 'commerce' in its wake.⁴⁵

Being an especially idealistic enterprise, the UMCA associated itself with the very origins of Christianity. Direct parallels were drawn between the Mission's own aims and aspirations and those of Augustine of Canterbury, as if the UMCA were a direct extension, and rightful inheritor, of that tradition. Indeed, the Shiré River valley was imagined as its Canterbury, and the people as its Anglo-Saxons.⁴⁶ Such a vision brought with it not only a specific historic character but also a distinct disciplinary agenda based on the most fundamental and primitive ordinances of the ancient church. Doctrinally speaking, the UMCA was a back to basics operation – a condition that was reflected in its earliest ecclesiastical buildings.⁴⁷

The idea that architecture might play an important symbolic role in expressing Anglican faith was evident among UMCA clergymen from the very beginning. Arriving at the mouth of the Zambezi in February 1861, the mission experienced great privation and suffered many early setbacks, realising that much of what

Livingstone had promised was essentially a figment of his imagination. Nevertheless, now there, the need to promote 'correct' and worthy church architecture was not abandoned. Indeed, even before the mission had had a chance to erect anything in the way of a permanent building, its missionaries were using what they described as a 'large church-tent, well furnished and appointed.'⁴⁸ As convenient as this makeshift solution was, the UMCA's clergymen wasted little time in erecting a more substantial edifice. By October work on their first permanent church was underway. Their leader and first bishop, Charles Mackenzie, wrote home to England shortly afterwards describing the inaugural event in detail:

After service I went to Scudamore [H. C. Scudamore, clergyman of the mission] to peg out the ground for our church. We had arranged to set up the first post on this day. Accordingly, we laid out the site, making a chancel 30 x 15 to be built first, and a nave 60 x 25 or 30 to come when we need it. ... We have called the church by the name of the great Missionary Apostle [St. Paul].⁴⁹

Although this modest structure was never completed owing to the Mission's retreat from the Mang'anja highlands in April 1862, the seriousness and solemnity with which it was undertaken nevertheless set the tone for future developments. Indeed, as Landeg White has pointed out, the very act of planting a 'corner post' in this context was a significant cultural statement in its own right, for indigenous architecture was circular in plan. Therefore, the church of St. Paul was intended not merely as a space for the inculcation of religious ideas but also an instrument for the transmission of 'rational' principles.⁵⁰

A year later bishop William Tozer (Mackenzie's replacement) was able to report on the progress of a new church further down stream, at Chicama's atop Mount Morambala (southern Malawi), noting that it promised 'to look very well', adding: 'Its east end is apsidal, and we have a screen to divide the building in half; the western place being for the heathen boys, and the eastern arranged as a choir for ourselves, the apse of course reserved for the altar.'⁵¹ Much like the example at Umlazi, the arrangement described by Tozer effectively divided the communal portion of the new church in two, splitting it into *naos* and *pronaos*. Even after the UMCA had retreated to the relative comfort and safety of Zanzibar, there was no appetite to abandon this most basic of liturgical necessities. The idea appeared again almost immediately in the much larger and more elaborate mission cathedral begun by bishop Edward Steere in 1873 in Stone Town. Known as Christ Church – a clear reference to Augustin's mother church at Canterbury – this building was nominally designed by the English architect C. F. Hayward and superintended on the spot by Steere [Fig. 8].⁵²

The division between nave and narthex at Christ Church provided further opportunity for the liturgical manipulation of space. In accordance with ancient church practice, the narthex or *pronaos* space at Christ Church was also adapted into a baptistery; again, positioned in such a way as to signify entry into the living church of Christ [Figs. 9-10]. Thus, the space was already serving the dual function of narthex and baptistery. But Steere went further:

At the west end the font, already given, will be placed in a sort of narthex and Baptising performed in the western most bay of the Church. Over this, arrangements are made for erecting a women's gallery, since in the present state of feeling in Zanzibar, it would be impossible for ladies holding any position to throw themselves on the floor of the Church where the men worship. There are known to be some who would be glad to come if a fitting place were provided for them.⁵³

This is an interesting manoeuvre on Steere's part because it was intended first and foremost as a concession to the strict division between the sexes in Islamic society, particularly in religious spaces. Despite having been converted to Christianity, the Arab men still felt that women ought to be restricted from entering the main body of the church. Left with no option, Steere was forced to create a gallery space for the female converts from where they could observe divine worship in isolation.⁵⁴

Unlike in the other examples discussed so far, the creation of this gallery is one of the rare instances in which the reinvention of disciplinary space in Anglican missionary architecture may be said to have derived inspiration (in part at least) from already established indigenous traditions. Galleries of this kind could be found in a number of the Shi'a mosques in and around Stone Town. Indeed, the narthex space proper at Christ Church cathedral may also be seen to have had its own local progenitor. The manner in which it was used by Steere broadly reflected the *baraza* tradition in Zanzibari architecture, where stone benches were placed abutting the exterior of shops and houses creating interstitial spaces for public or semi-public interaction, and creating a transition zone between inside and outside.⁵⁵ In this sense, the subsidiary

spaces employed at Christ Church cathedral would not have seemed particularly strange or novel to the local inhabitants of Stone Town.

In many ways, the adaptations introduced by Steere were characteristic of the cathedral and the mission as a whole. The building's architecture, for instance, was essentially a hybrid concoction of Arabic and European medieval forms, in recognition of the prevailing social and cultural circumstances in which the mission found itself. In so doing, Steere was able to find a way through the apparent impasse between the social realities of Zanzibar and the need to maintain correct church practices. By reviving the various uses of the narthex and, by extension, reinventing the women's gallery as a way of dealing with the problem of gender division in Muslim society, Steere was able to achieve this. It must have been apparent to him that his strategy had paid off when at the cathedral's opening 'groups of Arabs and Swahili' poured into the narthex 'to see this strange sight, where so often they had bargained for slaves.'⁵⁶

The UMCA continued to use nartheces in various parts of their mission well into the twentieth century. For example, at the cathedral of St. Peter on Likoma Island (Malawi) – the original vision of Bishop Steere – a similar regime of spatial demarcation and discipline prevailed, including separate entrances for men and women.⁵⁷ During the episcopate of Charles Smythies, ancient disciplinary practices were upheld and enthusiastically encouraged throughout the entire UMCA mission field. At Kota Kota (Nkhotakota, Malawi), for instance, there was a desire to divide Christians from catechumens, to the point where each grade of worshiper was expected to reside in a different part of the church. Here also, according to the

doctrine of reserve, a veil was used to screen the Eucharist from view, and it was felt apposite to refrain from teaching catechumens the Creed before Lent and the Lord's Prayer until immediately before baptism.⁵⁸ As bishop Chauncy Maples would later observe: 'so far as possible we have followed the ancient discipline in this respect, and have caused our people to pass through the various grades of 'hearers' and 'catechumens,' while under preparation for holy baptism'.⁵⁹

By presenting itself as an entirely new branch of the catholic and apostolic church, the UMCA perceived itself as bridging and thus telescoping huge gulfs of time and space. This played precisely into the historic and geographical imaginary that surrounded the initial reclamation of the narthex as a device used within the early 'missionary' church. This idea would have had additional meaning and resonance for the clergymen of the UMCA, with northern Africa being one of the strongholds of early missionary Christianity. Mackenzie, Tozer, Steere and their colleagues, could therefore imagine themselves as continuing not only the work of Augustine of Canterbury (as Britons) but also the efforts of the African church fathers into the nineteenth century, some eighteen hundred years after the first Christians appeared on the continent, and within sight of the time of Christ himself.

This sense of spatial and ideological continuity extended to the SPG mission in Delhi, over three thousand miles away. In this case, however, it was not a new Canterbury that was sought, but a new Alexandria, connecting the enterprise back to Africa.⁶⁰ Decimated during the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, the mission sprang back with enthusiasm and vigour (or so we are told) before the dust had even settled. As early as September that year, supposedly while the city was still insecure and in turmoil, a call

was sent out for a ‘clergyman and school-masters to go to Delhi.’⁶¹ Whether the mission was really willing to commit clergymen to so dangerous and unpredictable a situation is debatable.⁶² Nevertheless, a number of young and able men came forward, including Thomas Skelton, Robert R. Winter, J. C. Whitley, and J. H. Crowfoot. They moved fast to restore the foundation of the mission, which included the building of a new church in honour of their colleagues who had been killed during the revolt.

This church, known as St Stephen the Martyr, was consecrated in October 1867 [Fig. 11]. The precise origins of its design are unclear. Although the church as built was devised by the then executive engineer at Delhi (C. Campbell), news of a new ‘mission church at Delhi’ had already been reported in *The Ecclesiologist* in 1861.⁶³

Given that the Christian population (both native and foreign) had all but fled or been destroyed in and around Delhi during the course of the Rebellion, it was clear that the revitalised mission would have to rebuild its congregation from scratch by making many conversions. Under these circumstances the necessity for a device such as a narthex was evident, and was most likely an explicit requirement for the new church.⁶⁴ Indeed, the building’s likeness to Spanish Romanesque models, many of which had prominent porches, such as San Millán and San Esteban in Segovia, suggests that Campbell was looking for an appropriate precedent, from a similar climate, upon which to base his design.⁶⁵

Again, the incorporation of such a space was entirely consistent with the character of the Delhi mission. Like their UMCA counterparts, those among the mission’s new cohort of clergy were all Oxbridge educated men of Tractarian inclination. In fact, as

the mission grew, eventually joining forces with the Cambridge Mission to Delhi (1877), it took on a distinctly ascetic and near monastic disposition, later describing itself as a ‘brotherhood.’ Although, like Tozer and Steere in Africa, these men were sympathetic to certain aspects of native custom and religion, they did not shy away from enforcing correct liturgical discipline.⁶⁶ For example, at the opening of St. Stephen’s on 17 October 1867, Bishop Milman of Calcutta preached, observing that one of the primary functions of the new church was to afford ‘an opportunity [for the heathen] of becoming acquainted with the ritual of the Christian Church and of hearing God’s word read and preached.’⁶⁷ As at Zanzibar, this ‘acquaintance’ was achieved through the incorporation of a narthex, so that ‘the heathen [might] be allowed to stand, except during the celebration of the Holy Communion, and from which they [could] watch the Christians at prayer.’⁶⁸

Again, as at Zanzibar, the narthex at St. Stephen’s was intended to act as both a reception space and a zone of exclusion – restricting non-communicants to a particular area of the church while allowing them to witness certain aspects of the service. Here, too, was located a baptismal font. In the case of St Stephen’s there were two: a normal one for infant baptism, and, as with Slater’s design for Honolulu, a larger, full-immersion one for adults in the shape of a coffin [**Fig. 12**].

In fact, India had several of the earliest examples of this type of spatial division to be found anywhere in the British empire – even earlier than Carpenter’s proposal for Colombo. Perhaps the earliest of these was a plan put forward in 1841 by the Rev. W. T. Humphrey for a church in the diocese of Madras with a choir for ‘the faithful’ cordoned off by an organ screen. Those areas beyond the screen (nave and transepts)

were to be reserved for catechumens and ‘penitents.’ ‘It surely was not intended that unbaptised pagans should enter Christ’s temple with as little ceremony as if walking into a toddy shop,’ declared Humphrey, otherwise ‘we unwittingly bar men’s hearts against its reception [religious truth] by too lavish dispersion ... among those who are not yet prepared by previous discipline to appreciate it.’⁶⁹ In the event, Humphrey’s plans were never realised, his ideas being considered too ‘high’ for both his employer (the CMS) and the bishop of Madras.

In the diocese of Calcutta, however, examples did exist. The most prominent of these is St Paul’s cathedral (1839-47), where it was observed by bishop Daniel Wilson that ‘the Lantern, Transepts, Vestibule, and Verandah will ... receive a large number of Catechetical classes, Normal Schools, Sacramental catechumens, Audiences of Lecturers on the Evidences, &c.’⁷⁰ More specifically, there were three small mission churches built in the early 1840s in which the segregation of catechumens from communicants for reasons of discipline was strictly enforced. These churches, overseen by the Rev. John Driberg (then a Catechist and man of apparent Tractarian persuasion), were erected several miles to the south of Calcutta in the villages of Barripûr (*Baruipur* [now *Kalyanpur*]), Mogra Hât (*Magra Hat*) and Jhanjera.⁷¹ In true High Anglican spirit, it was believed that ‘proper’ churches in such locations would not only ‘prove important auxiliaries to the edification of the converts’, but also ‘promote reverential behaviour’ through their strict liturgical arrangement.⁷² Indeed, the spaces at ground-level beneath the western towers in the buildings at Barripûr and Mogra Hât were designed to form ‘porches’ that would ‘add to the accommodation allowed to the Catechumens’ [Fig. 13]. Although not labelled nartheces as such, it is clear that these spaces were intended to serve that purpose.

There were other places in India where one could find such discipline at work on a much grander scale, such as All Saints' cathedral, Allahabad [Figs. 14-15]. Designed by Sir William Emerson in 1870, All Saints' is a building of magnificent proportions, and is in many ways the final realisation of the vision first given expression by R. C. Carpenter in his design for Colombo some twenty years earlier.⁷³ Emerson's design was a consummate essay in High Victorian revivalism, replete as it was with continental (particularly French) references. As Emerson had been a pupil of William Burges, the building's pedigree runs directly back to the heady days of Anglican ecclesiology in the 1840s and 1850s, when many of the debates and discussions surrounding the cultural and climatic adaptation of gothic forms to non-European contexts were both new and unresolved.

CONCLUSION: NARTHEX RECLAIMED

It is clear that the appearance of liminal spaces such as nartheces in Anglican missionary architecture was neither arbitrary nor coincidental. The narthex was a space that had a defined and acknowledged history in the development of Christian architecture dating back to the sixth century. Considering this history, as Neale and others had done, the applicability of such a device to modern missionary contexts now seems obvious. The meaning and uses of the narthex may have become obsolete in Europe, but they found new and fertile ground in the world beyond.

Be this as it may, it still took the particular theological and antiquarian outlook of organisations such as the Ecclesiological Society to realise this, especially at a time

when the Church of England was undergoing tremendous change, both at home and abroad. It is clear that the idea of the narthex was ‘reinvented’ as part of the wider revival of medieval architecture in Britain following the Oxford Movement. Although used primarily for disciplinary purposes, it would be wrong to regard the narthex as a barrier. As we have seen, its use was not intended to be wholly exclusionary. Rather, it worked to contain, channel, and then ‘filter’ souls from one state of spiritual being to another.

Thus, upon entering a space such as a narthex, those ‘outside the fold’ found themselves at once inside the church and out, excluded from partaking in the sacrament yet ‘becoming acquainted,’ as Milman would have said, with its mysteries. Crucially, this quality of abeyance makes the narthex a deliberately ambiguous space. In hindsight its introduction into Anglican missionary architecture may be seen as a cunning ploy, a strategy that not only worked to keep the infidel and idolater at bay but also to solicit their interest in and potential conversion to the spectacle and solemnity of Anglican worship. Presented here as encompassing states of being associated with *rites de passage*, such a device, to some clergymen at least, appeared as a vital cog in the machinery of conversion, one that both embodied and symbolised a more sincere and disciplined form of Anglican devotion and spirituality. It is no surprise, therefore, that such a space found favour among clergymen and architects of distinct Tractarian leaning.

In this respect, as we have seen, the idea of the narthex had a certain currency, even power, beyond its immediate application. It helped Tractarian-inspired clerics in Britain imagine a new global dimension to their cause by reconciling and potentially

overcoming what many believed would have been severe (even hopeless) liturgical difficulties. This imaginary enabled the narthex to be understood not only as a device that, in a sense, bridged two spatial worlds and their concomitant spiritual conditions, but also romantically anchored the whole High Church missionary enterprise firmly in the tradition of the Church Fathers. Moreover, its appearance in places such as Africa and Asia also indicates that in its real, if limited, application it was an instance of imperial networking in action.

One of the final questions remaining is why the narthex as an architectural device was not deployed more commonly or, indeed, consistently across the Anglican mission field. The answer to this is not straightforward. For a start, as mentioned, there was never any official ruling concerning its implementation. Its application was thus left to the discretion of individual clergymen. Moreover, despite the liturgical arguments put by ecclesiologists, nartheces were not strictly necessary. Therefore, being neither compulsory nor necessary, their incorporation as a basic component of modern church architecture would always be limited. Combined with this, in most if not all cases, was the simple and pragmatic issue of cost. In my recent study of Anglican church architecture in Britain's colonial empire, it was clear that money dictated much of what was possible in any given context, as is usually the case when it comes to the design and construction of buildings. This was especially the case with fledgling, cash-strapped dioceses or missionary enterprises: there were many other competing interests.⁷⁴

In addition to this, for some clergymen and their bishops, the careful but drawn-out process of conversion represented by the introduction of such machinery, though both

dignified and disciplined, was potentially a liability, especially in a context where Anglicans were often competing fiercely with other Christian denominations for converts, and where 'success' determined future funding. For Evangelical clergymen, nartheces would also have carried a distinct whiff of 'Puseyism' (Tractarianism). On this basis, they appealed more to the idealistic and even romantic sentiments of the High Church and especially Tractarian mind set. Nartheces may not have been necessary, but they were considered by many to be a useful and historically sanctioned device that could be employed to resolve tensions around order and liturgical discipline in the mission field, felt more acutely in some places than in others.

Thus, never popular, nor particularly widespread, the narthex and its uses nonetheless offer a fascinating window onto the problems that were seen to face Anglican missionaries during the nineteenth century and how they attempted to solve them, leaving a material legacy that demands closer scrutiny.

Notes

¹ A. E. M. Anderson-Morshead, *The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, London, 1909, 241. Abdullah bin Mohammed was left to die in prison before being baptised around c.1880.

² The term 'discipline' here does not carry any overt punitive or Foucauldian connotations that we would tend to associate with it in a modern sense, although it does have something to do with order and regularity. Rather, as an historical concept and contemporary term, it referred specifically to the strict maintenance of religious ordinance, both in the face of potential disruption and as an essential characteristic of Anglican liturgical practice.

³ See Oxford and Cambridge Mission to Central Africa: Meeting at Cambridge, Tuesday, Nov. 1, 1859 (supplement to the *Colonial Church Chronicle* 13 (1859) 17); *Colonial Church Chronicle* 17 (Jan. 1863) 5.

⁴ A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee, London, 1960 (first published 1909), 15.

⁵ Citing H. Clay Trumbull, van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 19, explicitly identifies such extended threshold spaces with the *pronaos*, the narthex, and the vestibule.

⁶ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 18.

⁷ Betwixt and between: the liminal period in *Rites de Passage*, in: V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca, 1967, 93-111.

⁸ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Harmondsworth, 1991, 200.

⁹ For example, in looking at historic photographs of UMCA mission churches from the early twentieth century, it is clear that the space has been divided up for 'disciplinary' purposes, even though no written confirmation accompanies such images.

¹⁰ For the continuity between Tractarian thought and traditional High churchmanship in the Anglican confession, see P. B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760–1857*, Cambridge, 1994.

¹¹ M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London, 1966.

¹² D. Postles, Micro-spaces: church porches in pre-modern England, *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007) 56-7.

¹³ A. J. B. Beresford Hope, *The English Cathedral in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1861, 84.

¹⁴ For the Ecclesiological Society, see J. F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: the Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival*, Cambridge, 1962; C. Webster, ‘... temples worthy of His presence’: *the Early Publications of the Cambridge Camden Society*, Reading, 2003. The other major architectural society of this type in Britain was the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture, formed in 1839.

¹⁵ For some work in this area, see P. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856*, Baltimore, 1968; J. Kerr, *Our Great Victorian Architect Edmund Thomas Blacket, 1817-1883*, Sydney, 1983; I. Lochhead, *A Dream of Spires: Benjamin Mountfort and the Gothic Revival*, Christchurch, 1999; B. Andrews, *Australian Gothic: The Gothic Revival in Australian Architecture from the 1840s to the 1950s*, Melbourne, 2001; P. Coffman, *Newfoundland Gothic*, Quebec, 2008; M. H. Alington, *An Excellent Recruit: Frederick Thatcher – Architect, Priest and Private Secretary in Early New Zealand*, Auckland, 2007.

¹⁶ H. Cnattinius, *Bishops and Societies: A Study of Anglican Colonial and Missionary Expansion 1698-1850*, London, 1952, 195-229. See also G. A. Bremner, *Imperial Gothic: Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, c.1840-1870*, New Haven, 2013, 1-9.

¹⁷ Neale’s lecture was entitled *Narthex of Ancient – especially the Eastern – Church with Reference to its Adoption in England’s Missionary Colonial Dioceses*. A brief description of its content can be found in *The Ecclesiologist* 5 (June 1848), 30 and 380; Journals of Benjamin Webb (Bodleian Library, Oxford): MSS. Eng. Misc. e. 408 (May 1848).

¹⁸ J. M. Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Church*, London, 1850, 207-10. For nartheces and their various uses, see N. Spatz, Church porches and the liturgy in twelfth-century Rome, in: T. J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter (Eds), *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, Kalamazoo, 2001, 327-67; R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Baltimore, 1965, 19, 69, 361.

¹⁹ Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern*, 208-9.

²⁰ Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*.

²¹ These methodological developments are probably best outlined in A. Lester, Imperial circuits and networks: geographies of the British empire, *History Compass* 4:1 (2006) 124-41.

²² For these debates on ‘development’ in relation to colonial church architecture, see Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, pp. 125-84.

²³ Beresford Hope, *The English Cathedral*, 84.

²⁴ *Ecclesiologist* 2 (May 1846) 11 and 191.

²⁵ *Ecclesiologist* 4 (May 1847) 23 and 170.

²⁶ Chapman was here referring to the precepts of Buddhism and the influence of Roman Catholicism, both of which were prevalent on the island at the time. See Bishop of Colombo to Ernest Hawkins, 4 June 1852, unpublished letter from USPG Archive (Bodleian Library, Oxford): CLR/28 (Colombo).

²⁷ F. Lorenz Bevan (Ed), *A History of the Diocese of Colombo: A Centenary Volume*, Colombo, 1946, 82, 237-40. See also B. F. L. Clarke, *Anglican Cathedrals Outside the British Isles*, London, 1958, 15-16.

²⁸ Neale, *A History*, 207-210.

²⁹ *Ecclesiologist* 9 (Feb 1851), 20-3; *Ecclesiologist* 20 (Feb 1862). See also, Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, 132-134.

³⁰ See the competition regulations reprinted in *The Builder* (12 July 1856), 386, and *Ecclesiologist* 14 (Aug. 1856) 79 and 295.

³¹ *The Builder* (14 March 1857), 150-151.

³² The development of the Crimean War Memorial Church can be traced in detail through USPG Archive, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.: D2 (1856-63); E/15 (Constantinople); C/CRIMEA/3 (Crimean Papers). For an analysis of the Church, see M. Crinson, *Empire Building: Orientalism & Victorian Architecture*, London, 1995, 137-166.

³³ *Ecclesiologist* 19 (August 1861) 109 and 235.

³⁴ See the section on porches in E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire Raisoné de l'Architecture Française du XI^e au XVI^e Siècle* 7, Paris, 1854, 305.

³⁵ Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire* 6 (1853) 411-12; 7 (1854) 259-312. For example, Viollet-le-Duc notes of porches that: 'les plus anciennes églises chrétiennes possédaient, devant la nef réservée aux fidèles, un porche ouvert ou fermé, destiné à contenir les catéchumènes et les pénitents' (259). It was also noted in a lecture before the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1853 by the Rev. Richard Burges that naethex-type spaces were used in ancient times to hold 'pagans, heretics, catechumens, and the second class of penitents called the hearing or listening ones, a motley throng, and all supposed to be under corporal as well as mental discipline.' R. Burges, *The ancient basilica and the early Christian temple, Papers Read at the Royal Institute of British Architects, Session 1853-54*, London, 1854, 5.

³⁶ Crinson, *Empire Building*, 143.

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- ³⁷ *Ecclesiologist*, 20 (June 1862) 114 and 158-160.
- ³⁸ H. Clay Trumbull, *The Threshold Covenant or the Beginning of Religious Rites*, New York, 1896, 136.
- ³⁹ Trumbull, *The Threshold Covenant*, 136.
- ⁴⁰ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 20-21.
- ⁴¹ H. Rowley, *The Story of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, London, 1866, 267-270. See also, C. Maples, On the method of evangelising uncultured races, in: E Maples (Ed), *Journals and Papers of Chauncy Maples: Late Bishop of Likoma Lake Nyasa, Africa*, London, 1899, 175-188.
- ⁴² Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, 174.
- ⁴³ 'Bishop Patteson's Memorial Chapel, Norfolk Island,' n.d., Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Collection: PA 1723/SCGGS [100] 1. For Slater's design, see *Ecclesiologist* 21 (Feb. 1863), 65-66.
- ⁴⁴ F. J. Western, *The Early History of the Cambridge Mission to Delhi*, Delhi, 1950, 35.
- ⁴⁵ For historical accounts of the UMCA, see O. Chadwick, *Mackenzie's Grave*, London, 1959; Anderson-Morshead, *History of the Universities' Mission*; A. Porter, *Religion Versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914*, Manchester, 2004, 230-234; D. O'Connor and others, *Three Centuries of Mission: The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1701-2000*, London, 2000, 62-63; W. M. Jacob, *The Making of the Anglican Church Worldwide*, London, 1997, 215-218.
- ⁴⁶ Canterbury and Central Africa, *Colonial Church Chronicle* 14 (Nov. 1860) 401-406; *Colonial Church Chronicle* 17 (Jan. 1863) 5-8.
- ⁴⁷ G. A. Bremner, The architecture of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa: developing a vernacular tradition in the Anglican mission field, 1861-1908, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68 (2009) 514-539.
- ⁴⁸ *Colonial Church Chronicle* 15 (Feb. 1861) 67.
- ⁴⁹ *Colonial Church Chronicle* 16 (Aug. 1862) 285-286.
- ⁵⁰ L. White, *Magomero: Portrait of an African Village*, Cambridge, 1987, 25.
- ⁵¹ *Colonial Church Chronicle* 18 (April 1864) 142. Edward Steere (the third UMCA bishop), who was part of Tozer's missionary party at Morambala, noted of the church that it 'is to be a grand edifice, 35

feet long and 11 feet wide, with a south porch and a round east end.’ R. M. Heanley, *A Memoir of Edward Steere: Third Missionary Bishop in Central Africa*, London, 1890, 66.

⁵² For his efforts Steere was referred to as the ‘East African William of Wykeham’. Anderson-Morshead, *History of the Universities’ Mission*, 85.

⁵³ UMCA Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford: A1(III)B, 416-425. It was also noted in Anderson-Morshead, *History of the Universities’ Mission*, 87, account that: ‘At the west end is a gallery for such Arab ladies as could not, according to Eastern etiquette, mingle with men on the church floor.’

⁵⁴ This was added in the early 1880s. It was further observed that: ‘There are known to be some [women] who would be glad to come if a fitting place were provided for them.’ UMCA Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford: A1(III)B, 416-425.

⁵⁵ For the meanings and various uses of the term *baraza* in Swahili culture, see A. Haugerud, *The Culture of Politics in Modern Kenya*, Cambridge, 1995, 61-62.

⁵⁶ Anderson-Morshead, *History of the Universities’ Mission*, 87-88; *Mission Field* 23 (April 1878) 185. The church was built over the old Zanzibar slave market, with the high altar supposedly located where the notorious whipping post had once stood.

⁵⁷ *Likoma Diocesan Quarterly Paper* (Oct. 1904-July 1905) 113. Here W. P. Johnson observed that in the original *Missa Catechumenorum* kept at Likoma it was noted that ‘Catechumens were admitted to the first part of the Eucharist’ (128).

⁵⁸ *Likoma Diocesan Quarterly Paper* (Oct. 1904-July 1905) 129.

⁵⁹ C. Maples, Papers from Newalla, in Maples (ed.) *Journals and Papers of Chauncy Maples*, 74.

⁶⁰ For the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, see L. F. Henderson, *The Cambridge Mission to Delhi: A Brief History*, London, 1931; J. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940*, Stanford, 2002, 46-48 and 140.

⁶¹ Anon., *The Story of the Delhi Mission*, Westminster, 1908, 13.

⁶² This was probably suggested by the author of this account to give the protagonists of the story a veneer of romantic bravery beyond the call of duty – like Christ, with a willingness to sacrifice their lives for the cause. Such stories also helped to raise funds. However, as Jenny Sharpe reminds us, we need to be cautious of such narratives. See J. Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Women in the Colonial Text*, Minnesota, 1993, especially 57-112. See also, C. Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma*, Princeton, 2008.

⁶³ *Ecclesiologist* 19 (Aug. 1861) 108 and 282.

⁶⁴ For instance, it was noted in the SPG's annual report for 1864, when preparations for the church were only just underway, that it was 'quite impossible for any of the non-Christian community [currently] to witness the worship of the Christian Church. This latter is one great object of the [new] scheme.' See *Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts: Report for the Year 1863-4*, London, 1864, 99.

⁶⁵ This searching after practical models indicates a link to contemporary literature on architecture, namely G. E. Street's *Gothic Architecture in Spain* (1865) and James Fergusson's *A History of Architecture in All Countries* (vol. II, 1867), both of which illustrated either one or both of these churches. Indeed, Fergusson went so far as to note of the Spanish models that: 'These external porticoes would be admirably adapted for imitation in the climate of India'. See J. Fergusson, *A History of Architecture in All Countries* 2, London, 1867, 135.

⁶⁶ As Jeffrey Cox has pointed out, the strict enforcement of discipline sometimes had adverse effects, such as turning potential converts away from the church. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, 140.

⁶⁷ E. J. Western, *The Early History of the Cambridge Mission to Delhi*, Delhi, 1950, 36.

⁶⁸ *Story of the Delhi Mission*, 22. The bishop's report published in the *Colonial Church Chronicle* 22 (March 1868), 103, noted of the church that: 'At the main entrance a small portion is divided off by pillars, forming a Narthex or unconsecrated outer court for the heathen, which, at the consecration, was crowded with a quiet and respectful congregation of spectators.' It was also reported in the *Mission Field* 13 (May, 1868), 129, that: 'The daily services are attended not only by the Christian congregation, but by many Hindus and Mohometans, especially in the evening, when there are often as many as twenty or thirty in the porch built for them.'

⁶⁹ Humphrey quoted in T. E. Yates, *Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad: the Missionary Policies of Henry Venn and Their Repercussions Upon the Anglican Episcopate of the Colonial Period 1841-1872*, PhD Thesis, University of Uppsala, 1978, 79-80.

⁷⁰ *Final Report of St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta to which is Prefixed the Sermon delivered on the Occasion of the Consecration*, Calcutta, 1847, 11.

⁷¹ Unpublished letter, A. Street to E. Hawkins, 17 Feb. 1843, USPG Archive: CLR/12 (Calcutta).

⁷² The Fourteenth Report of the Calcutta Diocesan Committee, Calcutta, 1845, 5. See also *Quarterly Papers of the SPG* (April 1847) 10-11 and 41.

⁷³ Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, 139-140.

⁷⁴ Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*.