

Architecture: cast aside by Modernists for much of the 20th century, Classicism has a comeback of sorts, with an excellent new book reappraising architecture

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Last month marked the centenary of two great modern English Cathedrals. The Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral, the neo-Byzantine masterpiece of John Francis Bentley, was consecrated on 28 June 1910. The very next day saw the consecration of the first phase of the colossal Anglican cathedral in Liverpool. The competition had been won seven years earlier by Giles Gilbert Scott at the age of only 22. For this first portion, the Lady Chapel, however, Scott had been obliged to collaborate with the elderly and conservative G.F. Bodley. But Bodley died in 1907 and Scott transformed his design into a more monumental and original conception of Gothic. His masterpiece in red Runcorn sandstone would slowly rise until completion in 1978.

These two buildings, so different in style, would dominate church architecture in Britain for the first half of the 20th century. Bentley's round-arched interpretation of the Byzantine in elaborate brickwork would inspire many smaller and simpler churches. Scott's creative development of Gothic demonstrated that the style was not inextricably linked with the Victorian age and that the Gothic Revival still had life in it.

But in 1910 the dominant style in British architecture was in fact classical, in various sophisticated manifestations from Edwardian Baroque to neo-Regency. And it was the classical tradition that carried on vigorously during the inter-war decades, still the style of choice for civic and public buildings as well as for war memorials.

When, in the 1920s, the Roman Catholics of Liverpool decided to build something to challenge the Anglicans' Gothic statement in that very sectarian city, it was to Edwin Lutyens (not a Catholic) they turned and he produced a...

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Classicism in the architecture of Western Europe began in the 17th century under the direct influence of the development of the monarchical regime in these states. This style is based on the ideals of classical antiquity. Classicism has a basis in the form of a certain philosophical direction. In particular, this is Rene Descartes and his ideas about the mathematical construction of the whole world. Classicism in architecture is rational perception of all life, ultimate clarity and clarity of lines, logic and strict hierarchy. In other words, this style celebrates the triumph of the mind. By the mid-20th century, many variations of the International Style had evolved. In Southern California and the American Southwest, architects adapted the International Style to the warm climate and arid terrain, creating an elegant yet informal style known as Desert Modernism, after the climate, or Midcentury Modernism, after the era. Structuralist architecture will have a great deal of complexity within a highly structured framework. For example, a Structuralist design may consist of cell-like honeycomb shapes, intersecting planes, cubed grids, or densely clustered spaces with connecting courtyards. When concrete is cast, the surface will take on imperfections and designs of the form itself, like the wood grain of wooden forms. For more than forty years, the beautifully illustrated *Architecture: Form, Space, and Order* has served as the classic introduction to the basic vocabulary of architectural design. The updated and revised Fourth Edition features the fundamental elements of space and form and is designed to encourage critical thought in order to promote a more evocative understanding of architecture. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, a Roman architect and engineer flourishing in the first century B.C., was the author of the oldest and most influential work on architecture in existence. For hundreds of years, the specific instructions he gave in his "Ten Books on Architecture" were followed faithfully, and major buildings in all parts of the world reveal the widespread influence of his precepts.