15 On Erasures in Modern Architecture: Catholic "Modernism" and the Historiography of Church Building Between the Wars

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Introduction

Much of the historiography of modern architecture remains dominated by an interest in the work of specific individuals or by specific *types* of building. This essay is less concerned with the former, which in many respects perpetuates masculine myths of heroic creative design, than with the latter and the fact that histories of modern architecture tend to privilege certain buildings such as housing estates, factories, office buildings, monuments, warehouses, exhibition buildings and the villas of bourgeois patrons. Conspicuously absent from the list are *churches*. This can be seen in works of traditional scholarship, such as Nikolaus Pevsner's *A History of Building Types*, as well as in subsequent surveys, such as the general histories of modernism by authors such as Kenneth Frampton, Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco dal Co, William Curtis and Jean-Louis Cohen.[1] Nowhere is this selective attention more in evidence than in the study of interwar Vienna, where the focus of interest has almost exclusively been the municipal housing projects of the Social Democratic municipality.[2]

Churches have not been *entirely* invisible in histories of modern architecture, and there are a few exceptions to the general pattern. In Vienna they include Otto Wagner's church for the Steinhof psychiatric hospital (1903–1907), while examples elsewhere include the basilica of la Sagrada Familia in Barcelona by Francisco de Paula del Villar y Lozano and Antoni Gaudí (1882–present), Auguste Perret's Notre Dame du Raincy (1923) in Paris or Le Corbusier's chapel of Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp (1953). These examples, however, tend to be analysed primarily in terms of the technical or aesthetic innovations they exemplify, rather than the theological meanings and functions they serve, which has been a long-established practice. In 1930 the Czech critic Karel Teige, for example, polemically observed that "the Gothic cathedral is more of a construction record than an expression of religious fervour," and we might regard this as summing up a more general attitude in regards to twentieth-century church building.[3] When it comes to Vienna, and Austria more generally, where churches of the interwar period are mentioned at all, it is in connection with the clerical fascism of the authoritarian régime of the 1930s.[4] Theoretical works on church architecture have an equally marginal place in the historiography of modernism. Anthologies devoted to canonical discourses to do with questions of function, typology, mass production, social and political reform and urbanism have little place for publications such as Otto Bartning's *On Modern Church Architecture* of 1919, or *On Building Churches* by Rudolf Schwarz (1938).[5]

This is a general problem in writing on modernism, in which religiously motivated art has been viewed with a degree of awkwardness and scepticism. In the past decade a number of authors have attempted to rectify this erasure, but it continues to occupy a marginal position in the historiography of modern art and architecture.[6] It is all the more striking that there should be such an absence when it comes to Vienna and Austria, given that Catholicism remained a powerful cultural force before and after the First World War. Furthermore, the limited literature on the topic is focused almost entirely on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[7] How might we explain such a phenomenon? Moreover, if we begin to rectify this historiographic omission, what might be the place of ecclesiastical building in the history of modern architecture? Indeed, what does it mean to talk of "modern" church architecture?

The Historiography of Modern Architecture: Values and Presumptions

When we consider interwar Austria, there are generic as well as specific reasons for this erasure. The generic reasons relate to the broad difficulty of finding a place for buildings devoted to the sacred and the community of the faithful in an account in which modernity is equated with secularization. In a teleological narrative such as this, churches can appear to be instruments of a bygone age, and church building seen as having little to do with the tasks of modern architecture. This is especially the case when the "modernity" of modern architecture is conceived in terms of its responses to the social, economic and political challenges posed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Coupled with this is the fact that established churches, and the Catholic Church in particular, viewed the modern era with suspicion and hostility. The papal encyclical of 1909, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, often regarded as a declaration of war on "modernism" (a general term for any deviation from Church orthodoxy) was only the most outspoken expression of a general attitude of opposition harboured by the Vatican and many catholic intellectuals.[8]

The specific reasons for this erasure relate to the social and political role of the Catholic Church in Austria during the first half of the twentieth century, leading to ambivalence on the part of historians towards cultural practices allied with it. The Christian Social Party was founded in 1891 as the political voice of conservative Catholicism, and served as a platform for a variety of reactionary—often antisemitic—policies; after 1918 the Party and the Church were, at best, ambivalent about the democratic Austrian republic that succeeded the Habsburg Empire and, at worst, actively worked to undermine it.[9] The Catholic Church then played a crucial role in lending legitimacy to the dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuss and Kurt Schuschnigg that governed Austria from 1933 to 1938.[10] Against this background it is perhaps no surprise that the attention of historians of modern architecture in Austria has tended to be directed towards the progressive civil building projects sponsored by the Vienna city council. Such a perspective, however, produces a somewhat partial image of the architectural landscape and simplifies the multi-faceted history of church architecture both before and after the Austrian dictatorship was installed in 1933. Church building was a major aspect of architecture activity between the wars, and a significant source of employment for architects and builders (in an era in which expenditure for new buildings sharply declined in light of the post-war economic downturn).

Churches were, of course, important political instruments. Just as the construction of mass housing was important in advancing the political and social goals of the Social Democratic municipality of Vienna in the 1920s, so churches played an equal, contrary, role in the service of the conservative Catholic counter-ideology of the dictatorship. Friedrich Achleitner has rightly noted that one cannot talk of a distinctive "austro-fascist" style of architecture, but it is clear that churches as a building *type* played an important role in furthering its aims.[11] Hence, if the Social Democratic council succeeded in laying claim to various neighbourhoods in the city with its often gigantic housing blocks, so, likewise, churches could be erected as part of an effort to "re-catholicize" parts of the city and exert symbolic control over urban space.[12] There was no systemic policy comparable to that of the municipality, but we may speculate that this may have been driven by a desire to compete with the latter. We might consider, as a notable instance of this phenomenon, the memorial church of the former Austrian chancellor Ignaz Seipel (1876–1932), designed by Clemens Holzmeister and completed in 1934. It was located in the working-class district of Neufünfhaus alongside the Johann-Witzmann-Hof that had been built in 1926–1927 by the city council. The church was intended as a counter to the leftist communal politics of the neighbourhood, and although initiated by a Christian Social party member of parliament associated with a Catholic charity, Dollfuss became personally involved in the project. Indeed, by the time construction was completed in the autumn of 1934 it had taken on an extra significance, for Dollfuss had been assassinated earlier in the same year by Austrian Nazis. The church was then dedicated to the memory of both Dollfuss and Seipel, and turned into a sacralised shrine of the dictatorship. Churches thus became integral to the cultural ideology of the authoritarian state.[13]

When we try to read the cityscape of interwar Vienna, therefore, we fail to understand it if we pass over the numerous churches built in the 1920s and 1930s. Equally, however, it would be mistaken to focus only on the period *after* 1933, even if it assumed an additional ideological impetus. The building activity in the 1920s and 1930s was a delayed response by the Church to major demographic changes of the later nineteenth century. Urban growth during the previous century in the major cities, and not only in Vienna, had led to the creation of new parishes or stretched the resources of existing ones, far outstripping the capacity of existing parish churches to meet the needs of congregations. This continued to be the case after 1918, even though the Austrian Social Democratic Party had led a campaign to encourage Catholic congregations to renounce their membership of the church.

Church Architecture and Catholic Thought

The relative absence of churches from the narrative of architectural history reflects a deeper and wider ambivalence over Austrian history during the period in question; "Red" Vienna has tended to dominate the historical imagination, while the broader spectrum of cultural practices, including church building, has been skirted around. This is evident if we consider some of the most active church architects of the interwar period: Robert Kramreiter (1905–65), Josef Vytiska (1905–86), Karl Holey (1879–1955) and Clemens Holzmeister (1886–1983). Each of them was a prolific designer of churches as well as of notable secular buildings. Kramreiter, for example, was co-designer with Josef Hoffmann of the Austrian pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1934. Holey designed the Austrian Cultural Institute in Rome (1938). It would be easy to

dismiss committed conservative Catholics as servants of the reactionary *Ständestaat*, but the situation was more complex. Holzmeister was the only one to have a significant international profile. He also had the most varied oeuvre. A student, with Josef Frank, of the architect Carl König at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, he is perhaps best known as the architect of the Salzburg Festspielhaus, first in 1926 and then ten years later, followed by the larger Festspiel theatre in the 1950s.[14] Yet even if the Salzburg Festival has been associated with conservative ideologies of Austrian identity, Holzmeister was also involved in some of the most progressive aspects of interwar architecture and urban planning.[15] He was architect of the crematorium in Vienna (1922) at a time when support for cremation was a signature mark of progressive politics. He also designed one of the municipal housing blocks (the Blathof, 1925) for the Social Democratic council and submitted an unsuccessful design for the housing estate in Heiligenstedt that would later be known as the Karl-Marx-Hof.[16] He was the main architect of the government buildings for the new Turkish Republic.[17] It is symptomatic, perhaps, of the erasure of church architecture that his subsequent reputation has rested primarily on these secular and civil projects.[18] However, examination of changing approaches to church design between the wars in Austria highlights both the complex and variegated landscape of architectural modernism as well as the ways in which the values and ideas of the modern movement, including those of CIAM, were appropriated and re-interpreted in the light of Catholic doctrine. Before considering this latter issue further, however, it is instructive to place it in the context of debates *within* the Catholic Church regarding architectural practice.

In 1917 the Vatican issued the Code of Canon Law, the first systematic body of church rules and regulations which had, until then, been formulated on an *ad hoc* basis. Covering a wide range of topics to do with liturgy and the administration of the Church, it is of interest here because it contained stipulations regarding church architecture. They are not extensive but reveal certain themes of significance for understanding the course of church architecture. Specifically, the Code ruled that the design of churches should be in keeping with tradition and that churches should not be made of concrete or steel, but only brick or stone.[19] At first sight we can see, *in nuce*, the Church's attitude towards modernity: resistance towards innovation. Yet its position was more complex than this might first seem. For the term "tradition" was ambiguous. Which tradition was meant? The stipulation could imply one of any number of past architectural languages used in church building. Even though St. Stephen's cathedral in Vienna was an important monument of Gothic architecture, Gothic revivalism was generally avoided in Austria as being too "German." The one exception in Vienna was the Votive Church in Vienna (1856–79) by Heinrich von Ferstel. The Code's stipulation could also be understood in an entirely different way, as simply insisting that the basic elements of the church be retained (e.g. the altar, the chancel, nave and aisles, narthex and so forth). In theory, therefore, provided a church adhered to this basic design plan, *many* architectural languages might be acceptable. Moreover, the Code may have emphasised keeping to tradition, but this did not imply prolonging the historicism of the previous century. Many leading Catholic writers were critical of historicist eclecticism; for many, its pluralism had been symptomatic of the confusion of liberal age and the "loss of the center," as the conservative Catholic art historian—and later Nazi party member—Hans Sedlmayr would later famously put it, was a sign of the disorientation and spiritual alienation of modernity.[20] Consequently, a kind of neo-traditionalism arose as an alternative, combining consciousness of the historical genealogy of

ecclesiastical architecture (and of the authority of the Church) with inventive reinterpretations of what that meant.[21] Some of the most striking examples of this are to be found not in Austria, but in Germany. The Church of Christ the King in Bischofsheim near Darmstadt, for example, designed by Dominikus Böhm and consecrated in 1926, is a reinterpretation of Gothic architecture. The outer brickwork (it was in fact made of concrete) evoked medieval German building, and the massive arch on the West front serves as a metonymic reference to the single most identifiable feature of Gothic architecture. But the deliberate distortion of scale and the jarring contradiction between these historical allusions and the simple geometry of the tower and the West front indicate a willingness to transgress traditional proportions to rhetorical effect.

There are several examples of this neo-traditionalist architecture in Austria, too, although not with the same ambition as Böhm and often not in Vienna. In 1925 Holzmeister designed a parsonage and memorial church to those fallen in the First World War (the so-called Heldendankkirche) in Bregenz (Figure 15.1).

The main body of the church was a rotunda, evoking, perhaps the use of this form in early medieval architecture, and it also had a striking octagonal belltower, which also evoked this kind of structure in Romanesque building. Yet the entrance portico was a cubic structure with unadorned porthole windows. This juxtaposition of elementary volumetric masses suggests anything but a return to historicism and, like the church by Böhm, is a marked experiment with traditional design practices, although one that is less dramatic perhaps. There are numerous other examples of this combination of allusions to different historical idioms with simple geometric masses that are,
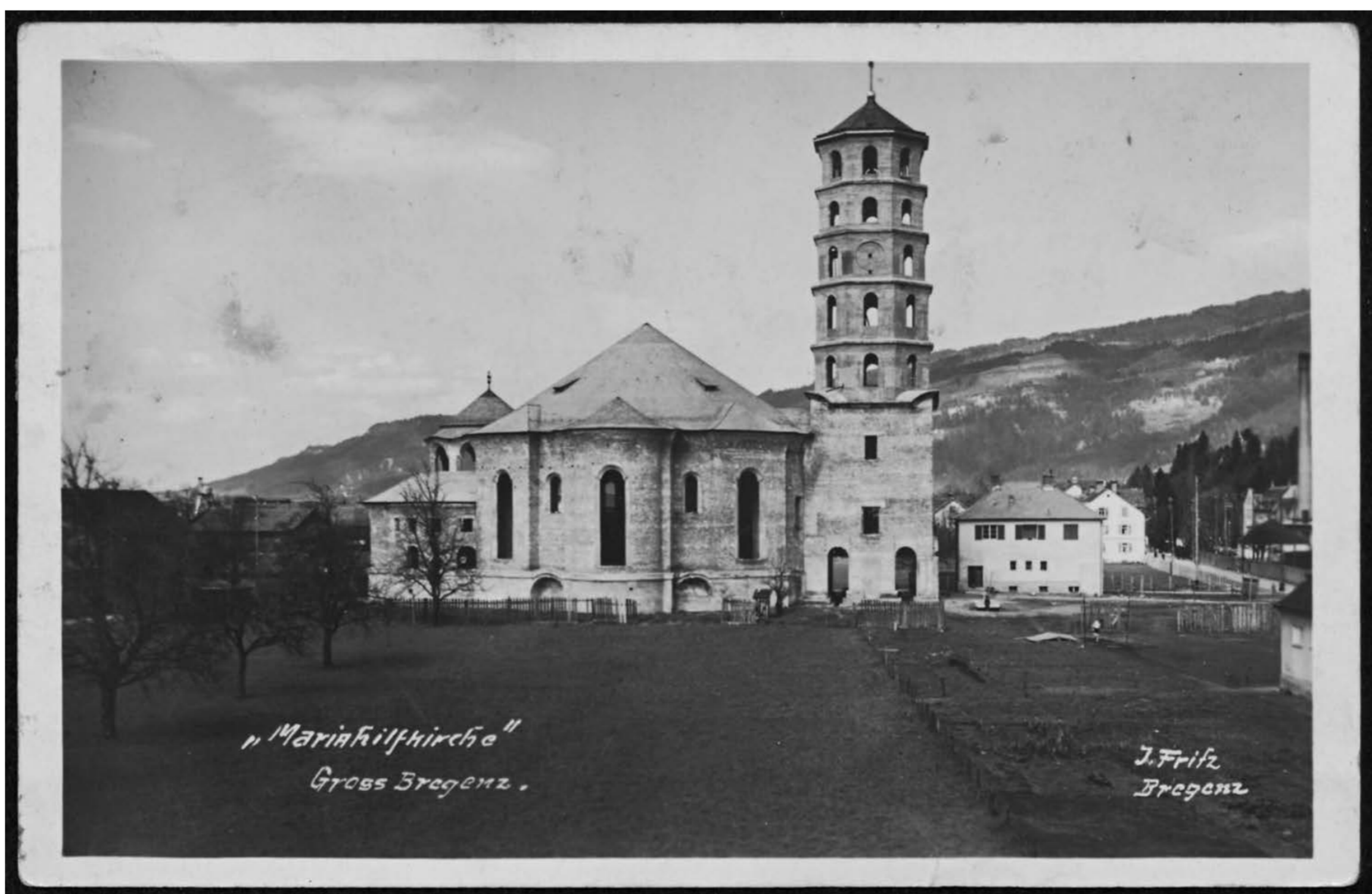
Figure 15.1 Clemens Holzmeister, The Mariahilf Church (Heroes' Memorial Church), Bregenz (1925–31).

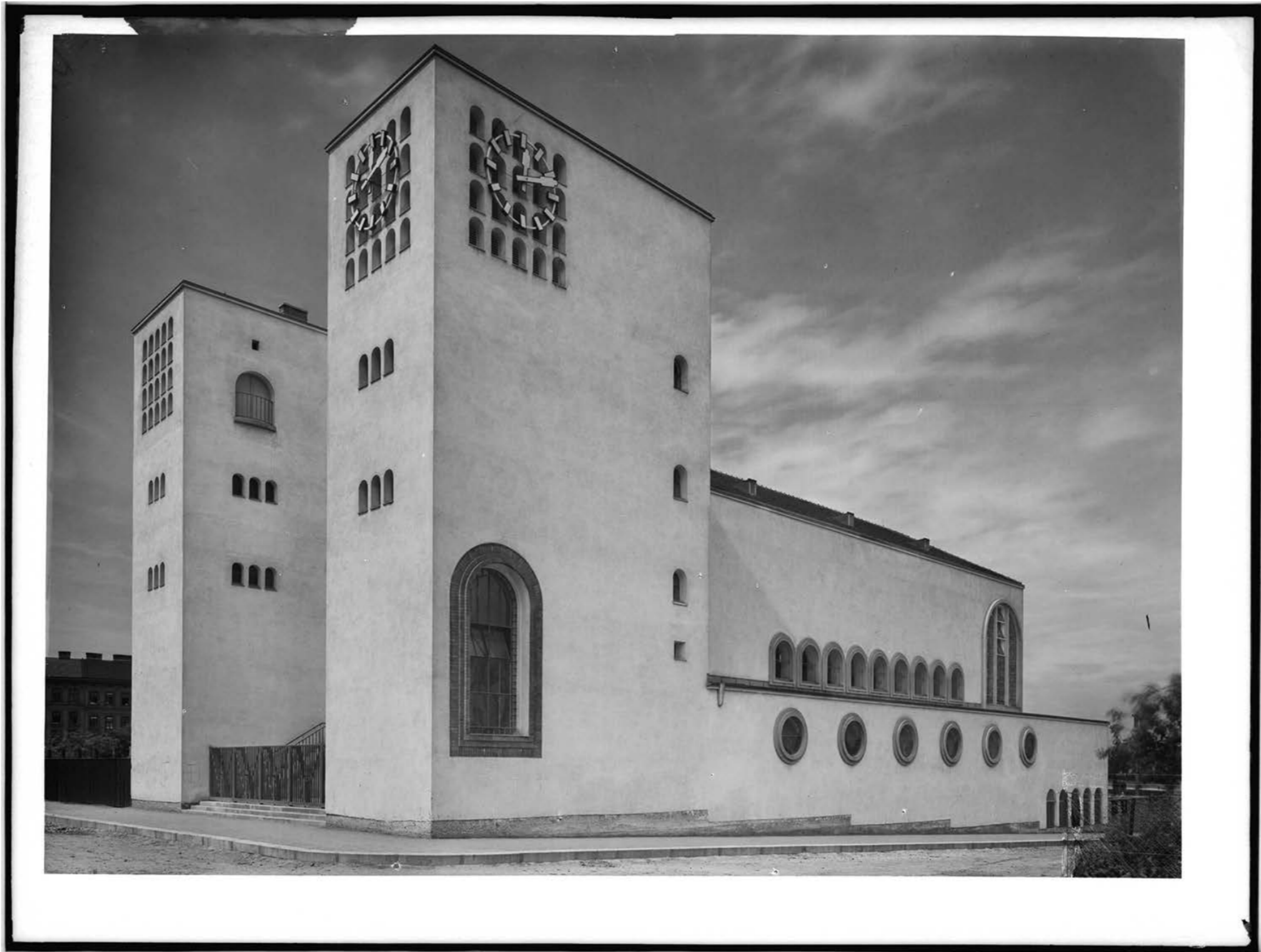Source: Photograph: Vorarlberger Landesbibliothek.

Figure 15.2 Robert Kramreiter, Church of Maria Regina Coeli (Maria Königin des Friedens) in Vienna-Favoriten (1937).

Source: Photo: Martin Gerlach/Wien Museum.

in a concession to contemporary architectural ideas, stripped of ornament, and they continued into the 1930s. Perhaps the most ambitious was the Regina Coeli (Maria Königin des Friedens) church designed by Kramreiter and built in the Vienna suburb of Favoriten between 1933 and 1935 (Figures 15.2 and 15.5).

Its historicising features such as the rose window and arched windows along the side of the nave stand in contrast to the overbearing and stark pylons of the front. Kramreiter designed a number of other such parish churches in the vicinity of Vienna, including in Kledering (1933) and Edlach an der Rax (1936). Not all were successful designs; Kramreiter's church in Edlach is an incoherent medley of different motifs that have no clear relation to each other; it combined a conical central space with rectangular transepts and west front that appear bolted on, and whereas the outsized west front of Böhm's church attains a dramatic rhetorical effect through the massive arched portal, the contradiction between them (the central space is lower than the other parts of the church) just appears to be incoherent.

This kind of neo-traditionalism was a temporary phenomenon; even though the Vatican repeatedly declared its opposition to secular modernity, and leading figures in the Church expressed hostility to modernist architecture, the 1920s and 1930s were a period of considerable change in Catholic thought. This was true of church design,

too, which underwent striking shifts in the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1918 Romano Guardini, chaplain of the Catholic Youth Movement in Germany, published one of the most important theological texts of the twentieth century: *On the Spirit of Liturgy*.[22] Against existing practice, in which churchgoers were merely onlookers of a ritual enacted by clergy, Guardini redefined liturgy as a sacrificial performance in which the whole congregation participated as a community. Sympathetic readers quickly identified the implications of the ideas of what is now known as the liturgical movement for church design. In *Christocentric Church Art*, Johannes van Acken, a priest based near Cologne, argued that the traditional longitudinal ground plan of churches, which reduced congregations to the role of spectator, should be supplanted by alternative designs that enabled this sense of participatory community.[23] The traditional division into nave and aisles broke up the interior space, he argued, and interrupted the sense of community. Obstacles such as the pillars dividing the aisles from the nave obstructed the visibility and physical access to the liturgical performance. The intellectual impetus of the liturgical movement may have come from thinkers in Germany, but was quickly adopted in Austria, a key role being played by Pius Parsch, a priest of one of the parishes of Klosterneuburg who enjoyed close relations with Kramreiter.[24]

The Code of 1917 offered little guidance in this kind of context, and hence it was possible to endorse new designs without seeming to contradict its stipulations. Moreover, even if there were powerful voices of reaction, there were, equally, others who argued for the need for some kind of renewal of Church art and architecture. A growing chorus of Catholic authors across Europe had bemoaned the stagnation and "decadence" of contemporary religious art since the mid-nineteenth century.[25] This included some notable modernist artists, too, such as Maurice Denis, who published articles and two substantial books on religious art.[26] Many of the proposed solutions and prescriptions may have been regressive and reactionary; the Beuron School of Art, for example, launched in Germany and influential across Austria, promoted a program of renewal based on a hieratic neo-Byzantine visual language.[27] However, this is less important perhaps than the *general* fact that a space was growing for discussion of artistic and architectural reform. There was intense discussion in Austria and Germany as to how the Church might respond to modernism and what form "modern" religious art might take.[28] This reflected the larger phenomenon of Catholic modernism, which had initially focused on theological debates but then expanded to include aesthetic and literary questions; the journalist Carl Muth, for example, had established the journal *Das Hochland* in 1903 as a platform for advancing progressive open-minded Catholic engagement with contemporary secular culture.

In architecture, a crucial role was played in these changing attitudes by Holzmeister. Alongside Josef Frank, he was perhaps one of the most prominent and influential architects in interwar Austria. Professor of Architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts from 1924 and, from 1931, its director, he was a chameleon-like figure who, as noted earlier, had worked for the Vienna municipality while openly declaring his Catholic faith. It was on the basis of the latter that, as a personal friend of Dollfuss, he came to be closely allied with the dictatorship after 1933 and the beneficiary of numerous state commissions, including the memorial church in Vienna. Holzmeister was symbolically important since he was able to reconcile adherence to Catholicism with declaration of apparently modernist credentials (he was a member of the Austrian Werkbund and, after 1934, member of the Neuer Werkbund Wiens, as discussed in Elana Shapira's chapter in this volume). In various writings, including the journal *Profil*, which he

set up in 1934, Holzmeister advocated what we might term "clerical modernism," an outlook that combined Catholic social and moral teaching (e.g. maintenance of faith, belief in the family as the basic social unit) with an interest in modern technology, function, mass production and efficiency. He was not an uncontroversial individual; he was in part responsible for hounding Josef Frank out of Austria in 1934 due to a combination of professional rivalry and antisemitic bigotry. Nevertheless, he was instrumental in rendering "modernism" acceptable in various Catholic circles. But what did "modernism" mean in this context?

"Modernism" in Church Architecture

In the immediate post-war years Catholic thinkers and writers were particularly interested in Expressionism.[29] This is hardly surprising, perhaps, given the preoccupations of Kandinsky and *Der Blaue Reiter* artists, amongst others, with spiritual themes. Even though the "spirituality" in question often embraced various occult and esoteric beliefs, there was still a sense that Expressionist forms might be amenable to Catholic values and ideas, especially given how many Expressionist artists, from Emil Nolde to Ernst Barlach, made works based on explicitly Christian motifs. It is pertinent in this context to mention, too, Lyonel Feininger's famous woodcut for the Bauhaus program of 1918, in which he chose, as a symbol of the general post-war spiritual renewal, to depict a cathedral.

The medievalism of such artists also suggested a convergence of interests with the Catholic intelligentsia, for in the early 1920s a cult of the enchanted Middle Ages arose in Austrian and German Catholic circles. Its cause was the profound general disenchantment with liberal modernity, and writers, artists and architects looked to France as a model. Already in the 1890s the movement of Catholic renewal (*le renouveau catholique*) had had a major impact on French artistic and literary culture; Joris Karl Huysmans's novel *The Cathedral* (1898), usually understood to be a testament to his conversion to Catholicism, was the subject of intense commentary and interest.[30] As James Chappel has noted, the thinking was that "If capitalism and the nation-state had caused such catastrophe . . . why not just forget the whole modern experiment and return to an economic and political order grounded in the eternal values of the Church?"[31] This undoubtedly explains why in Germany an architect such as Dominikus Böhm adopted an architectural idiom that had many affinities to the work of contemporary Expressionist architects such as Paul Scheerbart or Fritz Höger. It was a means whereby the Church could claim to be responding to recent architectural innovations but without compromising its principles.

In Austria this medievalism took on a particular significance; the writer Richard Kralik, a prominent conservative Catholic and founder of the reactionary periodical *Der Gral*, saw this directly in terms of a recreation of the Holy Roman Empire and a restoration of the historical mission of Austria as the defender of the Catholic faith.[32] Yet while many members of the Catholic intelligentsia held fast to this utopia, it seldom translated into an interest in Expressionism, in contrast to Germany. This was despite the fact that Kramreiter worked as an assistant to Böhm in Cologne in the 1920s and Holzmeister was a professor at the Academy of Art in nearby Düsseldorf from 1928 to 1933. The zigzag crenelations and pointed archway of Holzmeister's Vienna crematorium (Figure 15.3) may have evoked Gothic building for some, but it was a consciously ecumenical project, detested by the Catholic Church and designed
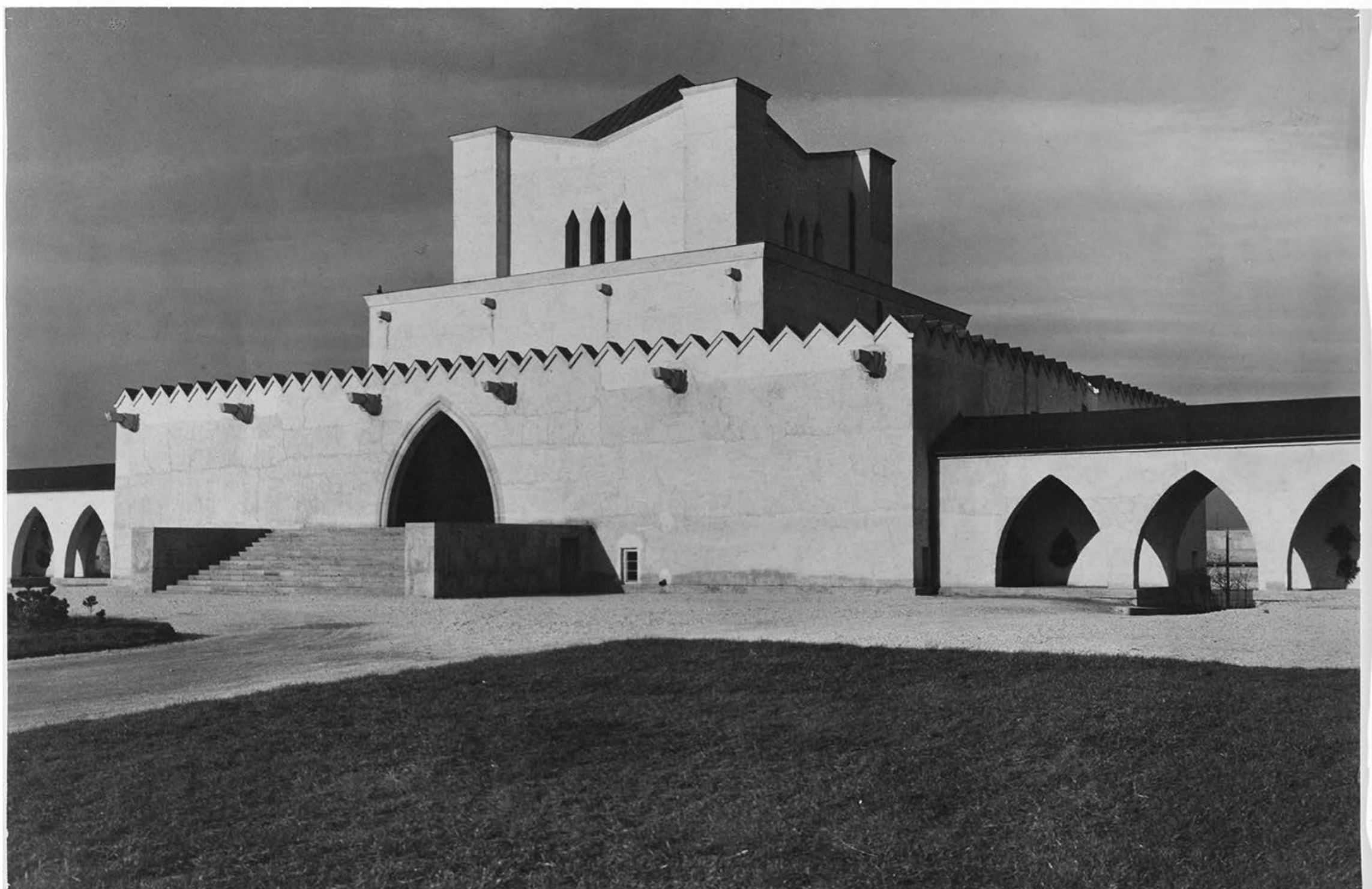
Figure 15.3 Clemens Holzmeister, The Crematorium, Vienna (1922).

Source: Photo: Martin Gerlach/Wien Museum.

to accommodate the sensibilities of free thinkers and atheists as well as those with a vague, non-confessional, sense of the spiritual. It therefore cannot be said to exemplify the Catholic medievalism at issue here.

We may speculate that this was because it was deemed too "German"; even though Böhm was a Catholic, his Gothicising neo-medievalism may have been perceived as too closely associated with Protestantism, for Catholic intellectuals increasingly drew a distinction between Austria and Germany on the basis of denominational difference. In addition, as already noted, there had been no tradition of Gothic revivalism in Austria in the nineteenth century on which to draw, with the one exception of the Votivkirche. Instead, and in a startling shift, neo-traditionalism was replaced by the early 1930s by the adoption of a starkly functionalist approach to design. The first architect to take this step was Karl Holey, who was commissioned to renovate and extend the St. Nicholas parish church in Neusiedl am See in the Burgenland in 1931; although he preserved some of the historic features, the basic structure of the church was stripped of all but the bare minimum of ornament, with simple rectangular punched-in windows and a white-washed exterior that was also applied inside.

The following year, Holzmeister completed two designs that were even more radical: the parish church in Döbling and the remodelled parish church of Saints Peter and Paul in Dornbach, both in Vienna. The church in Döbling in particular was a complete departure from anything Holzmeister had designed hitherto and stands at odds with the architecture of the area; with its small rectangular windows street, simple

Figure 15.4 Josef Vytiska, Parish church of St. Joseph in Vienna-Ottakring (1936).

Source: Photo: Martin Gerlach/Wien Museum.

geometric dimensions, plastered concrete and complete absence of ornamentation, the building could have been mistaken by the casual passer-by as some other kind of structure entirely: an office building or train station, perhaps. Other similar designs followed. Josef Vytiska's parish church of St. Joseph in Ottakring in northwest Vienna (Figure 15.4) was completed in 1936 and in 1937 Kramreiter, perhaps, the most conservative of the major church architects, completed St. Joseph's church in Floridsdorf in a similar vein.

Some of these churches were built as part of a program sponsored by the Dollfuss government, but this was certainly not the case with the earlier examples. The turn is startling because there had been many voices in the Church that were highly critical of functionalist architecture. On New Year's Eve in 1929 Michael Faulhaber, the influential Archbishop of Munich, delivered a sermon in the cathedral in which he referred to it as "an architectural style with which one can build exhibition halls and railway stations, but not churches."[33] His concern was that churches should be distinguishable from other, secular buildings. In 1932 the Conference of Catholic Bishops at Fulda reiterated the basic points of the 1917 Code: the need for adherence to traditional forms, declaring that "designs appropriate for profane structures (railway stations, concert halls, market halls and the like) must not be used for church buildings."[34] The

Austrian Catholic Bishops' Conference held in Salzburg the following year came to a similar conclusion.[35]

The designs of Holey, Holzmeister and others seem to run contrary to these sentiments, which is at first sight perplexing, given that they would only have been possible with the approval of the Austrian church hierarchy. Yet, Holzmeister's church in Döbling was positively welcomed in the Catholic press, demonstrating just how complex the cultural politics of "modern" style actually were as discussed in James Shedel's essay in this volume. The conservative *Reichspost* described it as a "masterpiece of modern church architecture," adding that "The simple lines of this house of God are meant to be . . . an expression of the artistic impulse of the modern age. Its apparent sobriety is a symbol of profound concentration and of pious meditation."[36] This comment provides an indication as to how Catholic attitudes were shifting; not only did the term "modern" connote a positive value, but the comment also suggested a transformation in the *meaning* of functionalism. For the originally materialist conception of architecture design based on using systems of mass production, a moral-technical imperative of transparency and exploitation of the structural and aesthetic affordances of new materials could all be reinterpreted in the light of Catholic doctrine. Indeed, even the very idea of "functionalism" could be reinterpreted, depending on how one defined function. For, as Sandra Wagner-Conzelmann has argued, function or purpose could be understood in terms of serving the needs of liturgy.[37] Given that authors such as van Acken were calling for a rethinking of design in the light of Guardini's redefinition of liturgy, the ideology of functionalism could easily be appropriated and repurposed by the Church. The notion of "truth to materials" too could be re-envisioned as a moral stipulation that was entirely compatible with Catholic teaching, and just as Adolf Loos's famous injunction against ornament twenty-five years earlier in had been couched in moral terms, so, too, a bare, functional, building could be reinterpreted as an expression of pious humility.[38] This emphasis on function and sobriety was often continued into interiors, too; standard features of church design, such as the altar table, the altar piece, font and organ persisted, but the interior of Kramreiter's Regina Coeli church (Figure 15.5), for example, is stripped of almost all architectural decoration, its bare white not only signifying spiritual purity but also deploying an aesthetic idiom more usually associated with the white cube of the modern art gallery.

Finally, we might consider the use of elemental geometric forms that were so central to the visual rhetoric of modernist architecture in the 1920s and 1930s. For if these were supposed to connote the rationalism and order of the machine age, they could also assume other meanings as symbols of a metaphysical order, including one ordained by the divine. Indeed, this was already implicit in the work of many key figures in the development of the modern movement. When Le Corbusier moved from a search for Platonic constants in his purist paintings to the apparently technicist concerns with elementary forms of architectural mass construction, this was merely the translation into a new idiom of the same basic search for universals, one of the key ideas in his programmatic text *Towards a New Architecture* of 1925. Praising the work of engineers in the United States, for example, he had declared that "today they use primary elements and, by co-ordinating them in accordance with the rules, provoke in us, too architectural emotions, and thus make the work of man ring in unison with universal order."[39] A similar observation could be made of the functionalist language used by Holzmeister and his peers. Indeed, as Elizabeth Otto has argued, a concern with spirituality and religious beliefs persisted in the Bauhaus in neighbouring Germany, too,

Figure 15.5 Robert Kramreiter, Interior of the Church of Maria Regina Coeli (Maria Königin des Friedens) in Vienna-Favoriten (1937).

Source: Photograph: Martin Gerlach/Wien Museum. Photo: Association of Austrian Women Artists, VBKÖ Archive Vienna.

even after it became industrially and technically focused in the mid-1920s.[40] Thus, even if certain figures in the Catholic hierarchy remained highly suspicious of functionalism and "modernism" (and of course the term connotated many different kinds of practices), others saw ways in which the apparently technicist language of modern functional architecture might be compatible with the theological and spiritual values of the Church. The early 1930s were a crucial turning point in this regard. After the Second World War, churches of all confessions became the occasion for some of the most radical experiments in architectural form.

Concluding Comments

This chapter has tried to suggest that we need to overcome the one-sided focus of histories of architecture in Austria, and to broaden the gaze beyond just those projects associated with "Red" Vienna. When it comes to modern church architecture this one-sidedness is comprehensible, given that, for many, the Catholic Church was compromised in the historical memory by its opposition to the democratic Republic and its role as an ideological pivot for the dictatorship of the 1930s.

The suggestion we put to one side the erasure of church architecture—a general problem not limited to Austria alone—should not, however, be seen as merely an exercise in rehabilitation. Rather, it is, in part, in order to pose questions about the implicit values and judgements that inform the writing of modern architecture. What image of modernity implicitly underwrites that history when an entire class of buildings is treated as of minor significance? This question is even more pertinent given that ecclesiastical architecture, far from constituting a separate domain unrelated to the wider history of modern architecture, is intimately intertwined with it. Ideas and practices associated with the secular modern movement could be reinterpreted and put into service by a Catholic church that had entirely different values.

Histories of modern architecture have understandably privileged those buildings and structures that played a central role in reshaping of the urban landscape in the twentieth century: mass housing, parks, factories, office buildings and public service buildings, all of which are deemed to signify the profound social and political changes of modernity. In this context, modern churches are often seen as an unwelcome guest, expressions of a set of ideas and beliefs of little relevance to the challenges of modernity. Yet this chapter has argued not only that the face of towns and cities across Austria was continually reshaped by the construction of new churches, but also that far from being just records of construction, as Teige once thought, or as representatives of anti-modern reaction, the churches of designers such as Holzmeister, Kramreiter, Holey and Vytiska attest to the multiple, often contradictory, meanings that could be attached to architectural languages, as well as the multiple narratives of modernism that remain to be told in relation to Vienna and Austria between the wars.

Notes

1. Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976); Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007); Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco dal Co, *Modern Architecture* (New York: Abrams, 1980); William Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (London: Phaidon, 1996) and Jean-Louis Cohen, *The Future of Architecture Since 1889: A World History* (London: Phaidon, 2016).

2. See, for example, Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna 1919–1934* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999); Harald Jahn, *Das Wunder des roten Wien* (Vienna: Phoibos, 2015); Helmut Weihsmann, *Das Rote Wien: Sozialdemokratische Architektur und Kommunalpolitik 1919–1934* (Vienna: Promedia, 2019).

3. Karel Teige, "Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia" (1930) in Teige, *Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia and Other Writings*, Irena Žantovská Murray and David Britt, trans. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2000), 289.

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5. See, for example, Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programme und Manifeste zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2001); Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey 1673–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Ákos Moravánszky, ed., *Architekturtheorie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015). Otto Bartning, *Vom neuen Kirchbau* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1919); Rudolf Schwarz, *Vom Bau der Kirche* (Würzburg: Werkbund Verlag, 1938).

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7. Michaela Klosinski, *Zwischen Moderne und Antimoderne: Die Katholische Literatur Wiens 1890–1918* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2015); Rudolf Leeb, ed., *Die Geburt der Moderne aus dem Geist der Religion? Religion, Weltanschauung und Moderne in Wien um 1900* (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2020).

8. On the theme of modernism and the Catholic Church see Peter Neuner, *Der Streit um den katholischen Modernismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009).

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11. Friedrich Achleitner, "Gibt es eine austrofaschistische Architektur? Bemerkungen, Vermutungen und Fragen," in *Wiener Architektur: Zwischen typologischem Fatalismus und semantischem Schlamassel* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), 93–99.

12. See Andreas Suttner, *Das schwarze Wien: Bautätigkeit im Ständestaat 1934–1938* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), 174–182.

13. On the role of the Church in the formation of Austrian identity see James Shedel, "The Legacy of Empire: History and Austrian Identity in the *Ständestaat*," in *Auf der Suche nach Identität: Festschrift für Dieter Anton Binder*, Georg Kastner, et al., eds. (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015), 93–110.

14. Paul Becker, *Clemens Holzmeister und Salzburg* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1966).

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16. Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 320–321.

17. Holzmeister's commissions in Turkey are discussed in Horst Hambrusch, *Clemens Holzmeister Ankara: Eine Hauptstadt für die neue Türkei* (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2011).

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20. Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit* (Salzburg-Vienna: Otto Müller Verlag, 1948).

21. On neo-traditionalism, see Holger Brülls, *Wiederaufnahme romanischer Bauformen und antimoderne Kulturkritik im Kirchenbau der Weimarer Republik und der NS-Zeit* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1994).

22. Romano Guardini, *Vom Geist der Liturgie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1918).

23. Johannes van Acken, *Christozentrische Kirchenkunst: ein Entwurf zum liturgischen Gesamtkunstwerk* (Gladbeck: A. Theben, 1922).

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26. Maurice Denis, *Nouvelles Théories sur l'art moderne, sur l'art sacré. 1914–1921* (Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1922); *Histoire de l'art religieux* (Paris: Flammarion, 1939).

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Stoclet Frieze: New Considerations of its Egyptianizing Form and Content," *Art Bulletin* 74, no. 1 (1992): 115–134; Hubert Krins, *Beuroner Kunst in der Wiener Sezession 1905–2005* (Beuron: Beuroner Kunsterverlag, 2005).

28. See for example, Gustav Hartlaub, *Kunst und Religion: Ein Versuch über die Möglichkeit neuer religiöser Kunst* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1919).

29. See the discussion in Theodor Wieschebrink, *Die kirchliche Kunstbewegung im Zeitalter des Expressionismus* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1932).

30. On the *renouveau catholique,* see Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, "Marketing the sacred: medieval pilgrimage and the Catholic revival" in *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-siècle France* (London: Routledge, 2003), 143–170; Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris 1919–1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

31. Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 27.

32. On Kralik see Wassermann, *Black Vienna*, 31–33.

33. Michael Faulhaber, "Kirche und Kirchliche Kunst," cited in Franz Hauner, *Licht, Luft, Sonne, Hygiene: Architektur und Moderne in Bayern zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 92.

34. Cited in Robert B. Witte, ed., *Das Katholische Gotteshaus* (Mainz: M. Grünewald, 1939), 4.

35. Archdiocese of Salzburg, *Verordnungsblatt für die Erzdiözese Salzburg 1933*, 1, 181 ff. Cited in Witte, op. cit. 5.

36. Anonymous, "Kirchenweihe in der Krim" in *Reichspost*, July 4, 1932, 4.

37. Sandra Wagner-Conzelmann, "'Alles Bauen muss von einem Zwecke aus begriffen werden . . . so auch der Kirchenbau': Otto Bartning und die Aufgaben der Kirchenbaus," in *"Liturgie als Bauherr"? Moderne Sakralarchitektur und ihre Ausstattung zwischen Funktion und Form*, Hans Körner and Jürgen Wiener, eds. (Essen: Klartext, 2010), 183–190.

38. Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime," in *Programs and Manifestoes*, Ulrich Conrads, ed. (London: Lund Humphreys, 1970), 19–24.

39. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, F. Etchells, trans. (New York: Dover, 1931), 31.

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