# 2

# The Beginnings of Christian Architecture

## Models and Perspectives

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The earliest and most enduring interest in early Christian church buildings and their development has come from the realm of architectural history. Until recently scholars of New Testament and Christian origins have devoted little attention to the topic. This lack of attention was probably because, apart from the literature, there was no clear evidence from the first or second centuries with which to work. The perspective was largely textual and theological. The available archaeological evidence came from later periods and was often used merely to support and illustrate theological ideas from the literature. Architecture, too, was a later development. Because the basilical plan had become so integral to assumptions of all church building, it served as the starting principle for investigations into the origins and development of Christian architecture. Recognizing the New Testament references to household meetings, therefore, only raised the question of how church buildings moved from the house setting to basilical form. Of course, more than just architectural form was at stake, since theological assumption integral to basilical planning presupposed normative patterns of assembly and liturgy. Thus, standard elements in the iconography of basilical architecture were read back into the earliest periods, into the New Testament itself. Such assumptions, therefore, have given fundamental definition to the study of church building which must be considered and evaluated before moving on.

## House Church and Basilical Origins: Theories and Models

The earliest theories of the beginnings of Christian architecture arose in the nineteenth century and tended to discount the New Testament house church.[1] They placed a basilical ideal at the very beginning of the process of erecting church buildings in the pre-Constantinian period. The origins of the basilical form, then, were sought either in classical models of Roman public architecture or in the pattern of underground "chapels" in the Roman catacombs. The latter attempt has been fostered by the continuing popular appeal of the Roman tradition. It is vested in the romantic notion of the earliest Christians hovering among the tombs of the martyrs in order to worship during times of persecution. Such suppositions have long been dismissed as viable explanations for the origins of the basilica, both on historical and archaeological grounds. It is doubtful that the catacombs were ever used for regular assembly and worship, though they do represent a significant element in early Christian piety.[2] Other early theories looked to halls, such as the *scholē* of Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19.9).[3] Others still looked to the Jewish synagogue as a model.[4] In this case, the assumption was that basilical synagogue architecture had already become fixed and normative in Jesus' day. In particular, the basilical lines of "Galilean type" synagogues found at Capernaum and elsewhere seemed to offer a model easily accessible to the emergent Christian church. Only more recently has it been recognized that none of the supposed examples of this synagogue type can be dated securely before the fourth century C.E.[5] Indeed, the discoveries at Dura-Europos shook up many standard assumptions about both Jewish and Christian architectural norms and development during the earlier periods.[6]

### *The "Atrium House" and Basilical Theories*

Some theories began to include the New Testament tradition of private household meetings around the middle of the nineteenth century. In large measure these attempts were stimulated by burgeoning archaeological finds, especially at Rome and in





the rediscovery of Pompeii. Here, frozen in time, were firsthand examples of housing from the Roman world. An early proposal by A. C. Zestermann (1847) was followed by G. Dehio's comprehensive theory in 1882.[7] Dehio's theory recognized the importance of the New Testament house church, going so far as to make it the primary setting for assembly throughout the first three centuries. It was thereupon proposed that one should look to the form of the typical Roman "atrium house" for the basic architectural scheme from which the basilica evolved.[8] Dehio believed that Christians assembled in the central atrium of the house, which became the model for the nave of the basilica. Likewise, the entrance to the tablinum (the main living room) off the atrium, where the household shrine would have stood in pagan families, became the prototype of the apse and altar. Finally, the symmetrical alae flanking the atrium were viewed as the model for the transept.

Although a proposal with immediate appeal and, as we shall see, lasting effects, Dehio's basic theory was questioned on some points. Chiefly it was charged that his typical Roman house was based on the simpler, more regular plan of Republican villas and did not adequately account for diversity in the early Principate.[9] Second, the formal analogies were incomplete, as there was nothing to serve as the model for the atrium-forecourt of the typical Christian basilica. Despite such criticism of detail, the basic view persisted. The growing assumption was that the private house assembly of the New Testament period evolved directly and genetically into the plan of the monumental basilica.

As archaeological work continued Dehio's original house theory was taken over by M. Schultze (1895) and further modified by R. Lemaire (1911). Schultze[10] attempted to account for more diversity in housing and basilica plans, which he traced to the influence of the Hellenistic peristyle house in the east as reflected in Syrian church architecture. In the west basilical architecture followed the more elaborate style of Italian housing found at Pompeii, which introduced a peristyle in the tablinum, while the atrium served as an entry area. Schultze's model attempted thereby to account for all the standard elements of

the basilica (colonnaded nave with apse and forecourt) by analogies to the components of the Italian villa. He argued, moreover, that the evolution from house to basilica was already complete by the mid-third century.

Lemaire[11] basically followed Schultze's model in all respects save one. Seizing on the influence of the Hellenistic peristyle house, he argued that its elaborated oecus (*oecus* is equivalent to the Latin *tablinum*) became the repository for altar and clergy. Customary elaborations of the Roman period included raised exedrae, and thus made it a natural precursor for the apse and the bema. Perhaps more significantly, Lemaire made detailed use of literary sources to correlate with the architectural plans. He postulated the usual practices of worship in the house setting by extrapolation backwards from literary texts and the liturgy of the basilica. Finally, Lemaire concluded that this atrium house setting continued into the second century, but that by the beginning of the third century the evolution to church house (which he termed *domus dei* from liturgical texts), was well on the way to becoming the basilica.

These early house theories never gained wide acceptance among archaeologists and architectural historians, but they have continued to exert considerable influence in some areas connected with the history of earliest Christianity.[12] This may be due largely to the basic evolutionary model espoused in a direct progression from house to basilical church building. The emphasis lay on the continuity of the tradition through theology and liturgy, and evidence was sought to support this view. The central place given to liturgical factors has provided the linchpin for many in this field. It is perhaps nowhere more clear at the turn of the century than in the work of Henri Leclercq, Walter Lowrie, and others seeking archaeological and artistic evidence of early Christian belief and practice.[13]

### *The House Theory and Models of Christian Development*

Continued archaeological work necessitated further modifications in the basic house theory. Thus, by the time Lowrie's revised work[14] on early Christian art and architecture appeared, the arguments against atrium house origins were sufficiently





strong to make his earlier stance untenable. Chief among the discoveries of this era was the Dura-Europos Christian building. To account for this new evidence Lowrie's modified house theory proposed a four-stage evolution from house to basilica: A short-lived first stage occurred at the beginning of the Jerusalem church as reflected in Acts 2–5, when assembly was "from house to house." In the second stage, synagogues served as the primary setting for missionary preaching, while worship proper was set in private homes (cf. Acts 20.7–8). Thus, the first two stages account for the New Testament evidence. The third stage extended from the end of the first century "well into the third century," during which time private houses came to be transformed into church buildings, and here Dura is cited as an early case. The fourth stage, Lowrie concluded, began before the middle of the third century, especially in larger cities where growth and expansion of Christianity would have necessitated construction of large-scale buildings. In this way the basilica, modeled directly after houses and mystery cult chapels (and supported by archaeological examples), was already in use by the third century.[15]

The house theory has persisted especially among ecclesiastical historians, long after it ceased to be used by architectural historians and archaeologists. Its survival has proven particularly influential, though at times implicit, in the area of liturgical development, which as we saw went hand in hand with some of the early house theories. Primary application can be seen in the works of L. Duchesne and Dom Gregory Dix.[16] Starting with the New Testament evidence Dix assumed the private, domestic character of Christian assembly into the second century. On this basis he attempted to detail the typical pattern of worship in the atrium house as the beginning point for liturgical development of later centuries. Here development assumes a high degree of continuity. Already for the New Testament period Dix asserted a fundamental separation between the eucharist and the agape meal. While both would have been set in private homes, only to the former as the corporate assembly of the entire congregation, would he allow the term *church* to be applied.[17]

According to Dix this corporate assembly of the entire congregation would most likely have been held in the houses of wealthier members in order to accommodate the crowds.[18] Consequently, he equated such houses with the elaborate peristyle-atrium houses of Pompeii. From this point he goes on to adopt an implicit formulation of the house theory in order to describe the liturgical practices in this house setting. Thus, Dix said:

> Here ready to hand was the ideal setting for the church's "domestic" worship at eucharist, in surroundings which spoke for themselves of the noblest traditions of family life. The quaint old images of the household gods and the altar must go, of course, along with the sacred hearth and its undying fire. All else was exactly what was needed. The chair of the *pater familias* became the bishop's throne; the heads of the families were replaced by presbyters, and the clansmen by the laity, the members of the household of God. Virgins and widows and others for whom it might be desirable to avoid the crowding in the *atrium* could be placed behind the screens of the *alae*. At the back [of the *atrium*] near the door, where the clients and slaves of the patrician house—attached to it but not of it—had stood at its assemblies, were now to be found the catechumens and enquirers, attached to the church but not yet members of it. The place of the stone table was that of the Christian altar; the tank of the *impluvium* would serve for the solemn immersion of baptism in the presence of the whole church. . . . The dining room of the house (*triclinium*) which usually opened off the *atrium* could be used when needed for the Christian "love feast" (*agape* or "Lord's Supper"; by the second century this had lost its original connection with the eucharist, if indeed it had much connection with it even in later apostolic times).[19]

It is significant that the liturgical practices and ecclesiastical organization ascribed here to the house church are retrojected from third century (or later) sources. Dix argues, for example, that there would be nothing in Hippolytus' eucharistic order





that would have been "repudiated" by this earlier period.[20] He concludes, therefore, by suggesting that the form of worship from this atrium house setting evolved naturally and directly into the liturgical and architectural forms of the basilica by the third century, for which he also cites archaeological support from Dura-Europos and Rome.[21]

The atrium house theory embedded implicitly (for Dix never refers to architectural historians by name!) in the theological substructure of this description has had a pervasive influence down to current scholarship.[22] It portrays a unified landscape of continuity from the New Testament house church worship to the liturgical and architectural development of the basilica. At the same time various historical studies for the New Testament period call into question some of the individual assumptions: the meeting in the atrium, radical separation of eucharist from agape meal, and the social organization of household meetings. The physical and social setting assumed for Paul's discussion of eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11.17–34 is now recognized to be a mixed assembly around the common table of the house after the pattern of typical dinner parties.[23] It is a far cry from the hieratic liturgy assumed by Dix. There is nothing in such a picture of the physical setting on which to pin a direct evolution of architectural elements to basilical form. Contemporary architectural historians and archaeologists consider this notion of basilical origins an issue hardly worth mentioning.[24] Consequently, a new perspective needs to emerge for a historical starting point in the house church setting.

### *House Church and Basilica: The Problem*

The rejection of the atrium house theory as the source pattern for basilical architecture has subtle but fundamental implications for the study of the house church and church building in the pre-Constantinian period. Historical critical problems pinch in from both ends of the developmental spectrum. On one end, a basic assumption of the atrium house theory was that a typical plan (usually drawn from Pompeian villas) existed for Roman housing across the Empire.[25] On the other end, it has been too readily assumed that there was uniform implementa-

tion of basilical architecture by the fourth century. Archaeologi-
cal work has proven both of these assumptions false. For th
early period, diverse housing and widespread adaptations o
private domestic edifices will prove extremely important in ou
study of the religious environment.[26] At the other end, curren
architectural consensus sees the Christian basilica as a direc
result of Constantinian policy in the years following the *Edict o*
*Milan*.[27] It was based on standard forms of monumental publi
architecture at Rome. Derived from civil halls, imperial palaces
or classical hypostyle architecture,[28] it was self-consciousl
adapted to the new social position of the Christian Churc
under imperial patronage.[29]

Basilical form, then, was imposed on—rather than evolvin
genetically from—patterns of church building that existed be
fore the Constantinian era. J. B. Ward-Perkins concluded tha
there was no monumental Christian architecture before 31
C.E. to serve as a model, and that the first basilica (in the stric
sense) was the Church of St. John Lateran, built from an im
perial palace donated in 314.[30] The house church and pre
Constantinian church building must be seen from a new per
spective. While one may look for historical continuity, norms o
spatial articulation and liturgical form from basilical architec
ture cannot simply be retrojected onto the earlier periods. I
one sense this divorces the beginnings of normative Christia
architectural development from the earlier periods.[31] By its ver
nature the house church defies normal canons of architectura
history and iconography, since there was as yet no template o
plan and style. It took the Constantinian revolution to provid
such a template. For the earlier periods, literary, archaeological
and documentary evidences must be allowed to speak on thei
own terms, in their own historical and social context.

The most comprehensive effort to address and examine pre
Constantinian archaeological evidence from the perspective o
architectural history has come in the work of Richard Kraut
heimer at Rome.[32] This enterprise began with the study of th
extensive building levels (first discovered in the eighteenth an
nineteenth centuries) beneath many of the medieval churche
It had been claimed that a number of such discoveries reflecte





Christian usage of houses and baths which were then taken over as basilical church buildings. The archaeological remains and traditions connected with these early parish churches, usually called *tituli* ("title-churches"), have received special attention, resulting in a more critical and nuanced portrayal of the architectural progression there.[33] Based on this work at Rome, Krautheimer's broader survey of the early Christian and Byzantine periods has suggested an architectural periodization ranging from the New Testament to the fourth century.

In the first period (ca. 50–150 C.E.) assembly and worship (following the pattern in Acts) would have been held in the homes of wealthier members. The common meal setting would have meant a location in the dining room (triclinium) or perhaps other larger rooms as that were available. No architectural specialization occurred, however, to provide spatial articulation for religious use. Consequently, as to the general course of development of church building, Krautheimer concludes:

> Until A.D. 200, then, a Christian architecture did not and could not exist. Only the state religion erected temples in the tradition of Greek and Roman architecture. The saviour religions, depending on the specific form of their ritual and the finances of their congregation, built oratories above or below ground, from the simplest to the most lavish but always on a small scale. Christian congregations prior to 200 were limited to the realm of domestic architecture, and further to the inconspicuous dwellings of the lower classes. This limitation and particularly the evasion of the architecture of official worship, is something that becomes decisive for the early development of Christian architecture.[34]

It is most significant, here, that in the absence of purely architectural categories, Krautheimer evaluates development on the basis of two intersecting scales of social context: other "savior cults," and socioeconomic status. Even if one were to quibble with details or implications (such as a strict limitation to the lower classes) this turn to the environment offers important methodological considerations, and it is one which, it will be

argued, occurred throughout the pre-Constantinian development.

Krautheimer's second period (ca. 150–250) is correlated with changes in the position and composition of the Christian movement. In this period the place of assembly began to develop more specialized structural needs. While some congregations might still have been meeting in private homes, others began to own property to meet the manifold needs of community life. The structure itself remained "within the local tradition of domestic building in the Roman-hellenistic world, yet adapted to the new needs of the Christian congregations."[35] Such specialized needs could no longer be met by an unaltered private house or apartment. A regular place of assembly adapted to community use was required, and for this Krautheimer adopts the term *domus ecclesiae* (the "house of the church") as a technical designation.[36]

In the third period (ca. 250–313) Krautheimer sees a continuation of the domus ecclesiae pattern, but allows for a gradual introduction of larger buildings in individual cases. These larger buildings, such as the first church of San Crisogono at Rome, were not yet basilical in form or monumental in size.[37] The fourth period commenced (313), therefore, with the Constantinian revolution and the founding of the Lateran basilica (314).[38]

## House Church and Christian Architecture: Adaptation and Environment

Krautheimer's architectural history suggests a developmental model in stages. It posits two fundamental definitions: that the beginning of basilical form in 313 is distinct from what went before, and that the architectural determinants for worship are distinct from those of the cult of the dead. The growth of Christian cemeteries and memorial practices especially associated with martyrs and saints followed its own path. Thus one should not look to the catacombs or the beginnings of Christian funerary architecture as primary models of assembly, as had been traditionally assumed at Rome. The most significant step





in the prebasilical development of assembly architecture, therefore, is the emergence of the domus ecclesiae. Through physical adaptation an existing edifice, such as that at Dura-Europos, became formally a church building and functionally, at least, the property of the church.[39] Yet, it must be conceded that Krautheimer's study remains limited to the field of architectural history, and his treatment of prebasilical Christian buildings is quite brief. A more detailed historical treatment is still in order for this development.

In so doing some definitions are needed. A key point arises from the fact that there can be no archaeological evidence for the earliest household meetings (the house church proper). By definition, then, there was no architectural adaptation and, consequently, nothing distinctively Christian about the physical setting.[40] By definition, too, domus ecclesiae comes to designate any building specifically adapted or renovated for such religious use. Some typical assumptions regarding the development also need to be tested and reexamined. On the social level, it is regularly assumed that the earliest Christians met in houses in order to avoid the idolatrous practices of Greek and Roman temples, and because the Christian movement came from among the poor and dispossessed.[41] On the architectural level, it is too often assumed that there was little or no direct line of continuity from the domus ecclesiae to the basilica,[42] and that after 314 basilical form universally and almost immediately superseded all existing church buildings.[43] In the course of the present study we shall see that none of these assumptions can be upheld. These definitional matters set the question in a historical perspective and call for further attention to the development and its context. What is needed is a more detailed model for the process of architectural adaptation.

### *Archaeological Evidence of Adaptation and Development*

The Dura-Europos Christian building remains our clearest example of a domus ecclesiae; however, it cannot simply be projected backward onto the house church situation of an earlier period.[44] It owes its form as a church building to specific points of adaptation predicated on the form of the existing edifice.

Architectural development from house church to domus ecclesiae assumes adaptation and renovation. An aspect of development that has not received adequate notice is partial adaptation or renovation in successive stages. Archaeological evidence for this is rare. Even at Dura there is no evidence whatsoever that the building was used for Christian worship prior to its present renovated form. Still, some evidence exists that suggests the possibility of partial adaptation, especially in the villa beneath the basilica Euphrasiana at Parentium, Istria and in the Roman villa at Lullingstone, England (Roman Britannia).[45]

There is also evidence for subsequent stages of renovation from the domus ecclesiae, which might suggest transitional development or enlargement prior to the basilica. To Krautheimer's prime example, San Crisogono at Rome, we may add two cases from Roman Syria/Arabia, at Qirqbize and the "Julianos' Church" at Umm el-Jimal.[46] Less certain, but worth noting, are the North Hall of the church of Bishop Theodore at Aquileia and a newly discovered hall under the octagonal Byzantine church at Philippi.[47] In each case, the adaptation or construction resulted in a rectangular hall plan, but with none of the formal trappings of basilical architecture. The dates range from the mid-third century (Dura) throughout the fourth century (Umm el-Jimal and Lullingstone). Moreover, there are other indications of buildings which, having already undergone adaptation to domus ecclesiae, were subsequently remodeled as large hall structures. Included are the sites at Parentium and both SS. Giovanni e Paolo and San Clemente at Rome.[48] These cases suggest that the process of adaptation and renovation continued throughout the early period and that an additional transitional category might be recognized. For this move to a more formally defined hall structure (though still not a basilica per se) we may suggest the term *aula ecclesiae* as a technical designation.[49]

In addition to offering a more detailed picture of pre-Constantinian development, this notion of adaptation may also help explain the transformation from domus ecclesiae to basilica. Some lines of continuity have been suggested, as in the work of Jean Lassus on the great Syrian ecclesiastical complexes.[50]





While the house was not a genetic model for the architecture as such, its rooms, turned to specific religious functions, grew into the specialized buildings (some of them basilicas) of the larger church complex. For Lassus, then, *church* becomes the designation for the entire complex (as it would for the Dura Christian building), not just the main basilica. He has also argued this perspective from more recent archaeological evidence in other parts of the Roman world. For example, at Hippo Regius (Roman Numidia) he maintains that a Christian quarter had grown up around the cathedral by Augustine's day; however, the complex had evolved naturally from a peristyle house earlier used as a church and found contiguous to the episcopal basilica.[51] This suggestion offers further insights into social issues connected with the growing Christian population of the empire and the emergence of Christian quarters in larger cities.[52]

One must also begin to question the notion, often implicitly presupposed in recent architectural histories, that the church's fortunes under Constantine brought about a universal transformation to basilical architecture virtually overnight. On the contrary, the archaeological evidence indicates that domus ecclesiae and aula ecclesiae forms continued well after that point when basilicas had supposedly become the norm. Thus we find that while monumental basilicas were springing up under the aegis of Constantine, other churches were still being founded following prebasilical patterns. A good example is at Qirqbize, Syria, established in the first third of the fourth century as a rectangular hall. Only later, near the end of the century, did this aula ecclesiae begin to assume interior basilical trappings, when basilical architecture was penetrating the region between Antioch and Aleppo.[53]

The process is not limited to outlying provinces; it can be seen at Rome as well. There, several of the earlier titular churches continued to operate untouched by the new style of the Lateran or Saint Peter's. The first plain hall structure of San Crisogono was modified to basilical form only in the fifth century.[54] The same is evident at both SS. Giovanni e Paolo and San Clemente, two of the earliest known sites from Rome. In neither case was basilical form introduced before the beginning

of the fifth century. In SS. Giovanni e Paolo the year was 410, and the construction represented a sharp change in plan.[55] In both cases, then, existing church buildings, which had emerged through the adaptation of domus ecclesiae, continued to operate alongside and untouched by monumental Constantinian basilicas for several generations.

In other areas of the empire, especially outlying regions of the provinces, the emergence of basilical church buildings appears to have been scattered, and often quite late. In his survey of the archaeological remains of Libya (Roman Tripolitania) Ward-Perkins notes that almost all the surviving churches are of classical basilical type. But none can be dated before the fifth century, while the majority belong to the sixth century. In an effort to account for the data, he points to the slow progress of the spread of Christianity in the region due to its predominantly nonurban character. In other words, the architectural development was dependent on the social environment. Then, he suggests (almost as an afterthought) that the evidence of Christianity down to the fifth century probably presupposes a continued use of the domus ecclesiae.[56] These suggestions for North Africa (like Syria) find analogies in the provinces of Hispania and Britannia as well.[57]

From this preliminary survey of the archaeological evidence some observations may be drawn. Once we have severed any genetic evolution from house church to basilica, we must look to the progression from house to domus ecclesiae on its own terms. While the Dura Christian building remains the only clear and uncontested example prior to Constantine, the growing archaeological data suggest models of development in two ways. First, we must recognize a subtle process of architectural adaptation through incremental renovation of existing structures. Second, we must broaden our field of vision to account for the continuation of this pattern after the basilica has been introduced.

The body of data is annoyingly diverse and does not readily allow systematization, especially in traditional architectural terms. Of the cases known from archaeological remains no two are quite alike. There is no domus ecclesiae type as such. Instead, each one derives its form through adaptation (to greater or lesser degrees) of an existing edifice. Thus, local conditions relating to the type of building and the social circumstances of the Christian community played a more central role than abstract notions of architectural style. Indeed, in the absence of a normative architecture by which to evaluate archaeological peculiarities, social or communal factors tend to bear the weight of conjectural restoration among archaeologists, architects, and historians alike.[58] Krautheimer suggests three areas of historical development that affected architectural decisions: first, liturgical formalization, second, organization of the clergy, and third, other community functions (e.g., baptism).[59] Yet this array of factors falls largely in the category of worship needs, while attendant social factors are not considered. Carl Kraeling concurs in the light of the Dura Christian building. He suggests that continued adaptation and renovation were necessary to accommodate new needs and changing circumstances of Christian communities, especially prior to Constantine. He consciously looks to the character of particular physical adaptations as a clue to function and social-historical context.[60]



At this point the focus shifts away from architecture in the strictly aesthetic sense. We are concerned, rather, with the architectural definition and elaboration of communal worship space through adaptation and renovation of existing buildings. We must be concerned with both how and why such changes occurred, insofar as the archaeological evidence allows us to speculate. In the final analysis, it may be axiomatic that any decision on the part of a religious community to alter its place of assembly implies correlative and conscious needs or changes within the group itself. Thus, the recognition of architectural adaptation shifts the focus to the social circumstances and the environmental factors in this process.

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1. For discussion of early architectural theories see the survey of E. H. Swift, *Roman Sources of Christian Art* (New York 1951) 12–30; F. Deichmann, "Basilika," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. T. Klauser, vol. I (Leipzig-Stuttgart 1941) 1225–59.

2. The persistence of these theories can still be seen in some popular treatments and a few church histories, e.g., J. Lebreton and J. Zeiller, *Histoire de l'Église Primitive*; English trans., *A History of the Early Church: Volume II, The Emergence of the Church in the Roman World* (New York 1962) 226. There is neither literary nor archaeological evidence of underground meetings to escape persecution. Archaeologically, the so-called underground basilicas have been shown to be of later date, after the persecutions had ceased. In any case it would be hard to project such practice outside of Rome itself. Cf. Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 3rd ed. (New York 1979) 32.

3. K. von Lange, *Haus und Halle* (Leipzig 1885) 270–336.

4. See H. Kohl and C. Watzinger, *Antike Synagogen in Galilaea* (Leipzig 1916) passim.

5. Michael Avi-Yonah, "Ancient Synagogues," *Ariel, a Quarterly Review of Arts and Letters in Israel* 32 (1973) 29–43, repr. in *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology, and Architecture*, ed. J. Gutmann (New York 1975) 95–109. For implications in discussions of synagogue architecture, especially in the Diaspora, see below chap. 4 and L. M. White, "The Delos Synagogue Revisited: Recent Fieldwork in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora," HTR 80 (1987) 133–60.

6. In sharp contrast to the traditional views of synagogue influences stands the recent evidence of the basilical structure at Sardis. See A. T. Kraabel, "Impact of the Discovery of the Sardis Synagogue," in *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times: Results of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis 1958–1975*, ed. G. M. A. Hanfmann (Cambridge, MA, 1983) 178–90.

7. A. C. Zestermann, *Die antike und christlichen Basiliken* (Leipzig 1847) 158ff. proposed an eclectic theory in which both house and synagogue provided models for certain features of the basilica. G. Dehio, *Die Genesis der christlichen Basilika* (Sitzungsbericht der k. bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-historische Klasse XII, Munich 1882) 301f.

8. Some of this early Italian work can be seen in A. Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, English trans., F. Kelsey (New York 1899); E. Brizio, "Relazione degli scavi eseguiti a Marzabotto presso Bologna," *Monumenta antichi* 1891, 249–442.

9. One of the earliest to posit a more complex development in Roman housing was G. Patroni in *Rendiconti dell' Accademia dei Lincei* 1902, 467–507, who argued for the tablinum as the center of family life, over earlier views of the atrium. See also L. Crema, *L'Architettura romana (Encyclopedia Classica III, vol. 12, Turin 1959) 105ff.; J. W. Graham, "The Greek and the Roman House," Phoenix 20 (1966) 3–31.*

10. *M. V. Schultze, Archäologie der altchristlichen Kunst (Munich 1895) 37ff.*

11. R. Lemaire, *L'Origine de la basilique Latine* (Brussels 1911) 62–82.

12. S. Lang, "A Few Suggestions toward the Solution of the Origin of the Early Christian Basilica," RDAC 30 (1954) 189; R. Krautheimer, ECBA, 482 n. 24.

13. Walter Lowrie, *Monuments of the Early Church* (New York 1901) 94–101. Other proponents include: Henri Leclercq, "Basilique," *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et la liturgie*, vol. II (Paris 1921) 1:526ff.; Heinrich Holtzinger, *Die altchristliche Architektur in systematischer Darstellung* (Stuttgart 1899); G. Dehio and G. Von Betzold, *Die kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes*, 2 vols. and 5 folios (Stuttgart 1887–1901); O. Marucchi, *Éléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, 3 vols. (Paris 1899–1903). Lowrie especially followed the work of Joseph Wilpert, cf. his *Roma Sotterranea: Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau 1903).

14. *Art in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (New York 1947) 105–28.

15. Ibid., 110–11. Lowrie here shifts from his earlier emphasis on the atrium and suggests diverse lines of influence, but he continues to favor the house form as the direct line to the basilica through what he calls a *Kunstwollen* ("will-to-form") deriving from the household liturgy. For Lowrie the archaeological proof for the existence of basilical churches before the middle of the third century is adduced from the church at Emmaus, which is dated erroneously to ca. 220. Cf. CDEE, Appendix A, no. 1.





16. L. Duchesne, *Les origines du culte chrétien*, 3rd ed. (Paris 1903); English trans., *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution*, by M. L. McClure (London 1903) 11ff.; Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (London 1945) 19–35.

17. Ibid., 19, 21, cf. 35.

18. Ibid., 22. Dix cites Ignatius (*Mag.* 7.1; *Philad.* 4.1; and esp. *Smyrn.* 8.1); however, his description of the details is more in keeping with Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* XXVI.1–12.

19. Ibid., 23, cf. 28, 34. On his assumption that the agapē was always separate from the eucharist proper, cf. 96f.

20. Ibid., 160. Cf. n. 18 above.

21. Ibid., 26f., 32. For Dix, Dura-Europos proves that basilicas did evolve directly from private house churches.

22. See for example J. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN, 1959) 14f.; J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington, DE, 1983) 156f.

23. Cf. Dennis E. Smith, "Social Obligation in the Context of Communal Meals: A Study of the Christian Meal in 1 Corinthians in Comparison with Graeco-Roman Meals" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1980); G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York 1969) 123ff.; Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT, 1983) 68.

24. R. Krautheimer, ECBA, 482 n. 24.

25. The point is made explicit in Lowrie (cf. *Art in the Early Church*, 110 and pl. 34) but is implicit in Dix.

26. A. G. McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World* (London 1975) 30ff.; cf. John Percival, *The Roman Villa: A Historical Introduction* (London 1976).

27. R. Krautheimer, RER 3 (1939) 144f.; cf. ECBA, 40f.; J. B. Ward-Perkins, "Constantine and the Origins of the Christian Basilica," PBSR 22 (1954) 69–90.

28. S. Lang, RDAC 30 (1954) 189ff. Lang, along with J. B. Ward-Perkins and L. Voelkl, "Die konstantinischen Kirchenbauten nach Eusebius," RDAC 29 (1953) 60–64, makes much of the term *basilica* due to its use by Eusebius and its "royal" etymology. The term did not have a technical architectural definition in antiquity. On the hypostyle see G. Leroux, *Les Origines de l'édifice hypostyle en Grèce, en Orient, et chez les Romains* (Paris 1913), which was used by V. Müller, "The Roman Basilica," AJA 41 (1937) 250–61; R. Bernheimer, "An Ancient Oriental Source of Christian Sacred Architecture," AJA 43 (1939) 647–68; cf. J. B. Ward-Perkins, PBSR 22 (1954) 71f.

29. ECBA, 42f.; RER 3 (1939) 145f.; Ward-Perkins, PBSR 22 (1954) 87.

30. PBSR 22 (1954) 85. The date of the beginning of construction in the Lateran basilica is not certain; it was probably completed by 319/320.

31. Cf. William MacDonald, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (New York 1977) 1ff. The first to make the distinction sharply was Krautheimer, RER 3 (1939) 144f.

32. CBCR, 5 vols. (Vatican City 1939–1956). The planned scope of the project is as yet incomplete.

33. The nineteenth-century work is summarized by J. P. Kirsch, *Die römische Titelkirchen im Altertum* (Paderborn 1918) passim. That some of the so-called pre-Constantinian *tituli* appear in my collection (CDEE) in Appendix A reflects Krautheimer's critical judgments on the claims for Christian use of earlier buildings. The stress on the distinct character of pre-Constantinian architecture has led Krautheimer to posit two different lines of architectural development which begin to merge after Constantine. These are the church buildings proper (architecture of assembly) and funerary structures (memorial architecture). Cf. ECBA, 28–38.

34. ECBA, 24f. The date 200 is taken from the reference in Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.15 (usually dated ca. 197), but it may also derive from Harnack. More recently Graydon Snyder, *ANTE PACEM: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon, GA, 1985) 164f. adopts a similar periodization, but with different implications.

35. ECBA, 26.

36. Ibid., 27. Here Krautheimer discusses Dura-Europos as a prime example along with the evidence from two sites at Rome (SS. Giovanni e Paolo and San Clemente). The term *domus ecclesiae* is taken over from Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, English trans. from 2nd German ed. by J. Moffatt, 2 vols. (London 1908) II:86f. (cf. II:610–18 in the 4th German ed.; Leipzig 1924).

37. ECBA, 37f.; 482 n. 22; Cf. CDEE, no. 55.

38. Ibid., 39, 46; cf. Ward-Perkins, PBSR 22 (1954) 81.

39. So also DEF VIII.2, 129.

40. Michael Gough, *The Early Christians* (New York 1961) 59; Kraeling, DEF VIII.2, 139f.

41. Cf. J. G. Davies, *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (New York 1968) 1–3; ECBA, 24, 26.

42. Cf. Michael Gough, *The Early Christians* 61; cf. J. B. Ward-Perkins, PBSR 22 (1954) 81.

43. Cf. P. Testini, *Archeologia Christiana: Nosioni generali delle origini all fine del sec. VI* (Rome 1958) 559f.; Gough, *The Early Christians*, 62f.

44. Thus, note Gerd Theissen's erroneous use of Dura-Europos as an example of the earliest type of Pauline "house church" in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia 1982) 114 n. 45.





45. See CDEE, nos. 50, 57.

46. See CDEE, nos. 39, 41.

47. See CDEE, Appendix A, nos. 4, 8. See also Chapter 5, pg. 134, and Figure 27, below.

48. See CDEE, nos. 50, 52, 53, and perhaps no. 54.

49. The term *aula ecclesiae* is used here with some caution and reservation. In ancient sources *aula* (like *aedes* or *oikos*) could be used of almost any type of building, and had no explicitly technical architectural connotation. Cf. L. Voelkl, RDAC 29 (1953) 50f. The term is coined here for two reasons: to describe the hall-type rooms found in a number of prebasilical churches, and to retain a sense of continuity with the term *domus ecclesiae*, as would seem appropriate in the case of Dura-Europos. Thus, C. H. Kraeling (DEF VIII.2, 133f.) adopts the phrase "hall-like structure," while A. Harnack uses the term *Saalkirchen* (*Mission und Ausbreitung*, 4th ed., II:615f.). Our term *aula ecclesiae*, however, is not meant to connote any of the technical features of the basilica, save the rectangular plan. It does not suggest a direct line of evolution from house to basilica as suggested by Heinz Kähler, *Die spätantiken Bauten unter dem Dom von Aquileia und ihre Stellung innerhalb der Geschichte des frühchristlichen Kirchenbaues* (Saarbrücken 1957) 42ff.

50. Jean Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiennes de Syrie* (Paris 1947) 22f.; ibid., "Syrie," *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et la liturgie*, vol. XI (Paris 1951) 1855ff.

51. Jean Lassus, "Les édifices du culte autour de la basilique," CIAC VI, 581–610, esp. 588. See also H. I. Marrou, "La basilique chrétienne d'Hippo d'après le résultat des derniers fouilles," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 6 (1960) 109ff.

52. Cf. S. L. Greenslade, "Christian Topography,"; W. H. C. Frend, "The Early Christian Church in Carthage," in *Excavations at Carthage 1976, Conducted by the University of Michigan, III*, ed. J. H. Humphrey (Ann Arbor, MI, 1977) 21–40.

53. See CDEE, no. 39, and Georges Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syria du Nord*, 3 vols. (Paris 1953–1958)) I:332f.

54. CBCR I:146–64. See CDEE, no. 55. Cf. ECBA, 38 and 482 n. 22.

55. CBCR I:267–303. (See CDEE, no. 52); CBCR I:117f. (See CDEE, no. 53).

56. J. B. Ward-Perkins, "Recent Work and Problems in Libya," CIAC VIII, 219, 232, 236. He cites as a possible example of such a domus ecclesiae an atypical fourth-century church building from el Msufiin (Henschir Taglissi) in the Western gebel. Cf. J. B. Ward-

Perkins and R. G. Goodchild, "The Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania," *Archaeologica* 95 (1953) 39–41 and fig. 19. See CDEE, Appendix A, no. 11 for discussion and the text of a pertinent inscription.

57. Recent work on the progress of Christianity in rural Hispania in the fifth century has prompted Pedro de Palol to suggest an architectural development beginning in large estate villas which then gave rise to basilicas. Pedro de Palol, "Los monumentos de Hispania en la arqueología paleocristiana," CIAC VIII, 167–85. See CDEE, Appendix A, no. 13 for additional sites and references.

In Roman Britannia the few extant buildings from before the barbarian invasions (late fourth century) are generally small nonbasilical halls (as at Silchester, dated ca. 360) or chapels in houses (as at Hinton St. Mary's). Cf. K. S. Painter, "Villas and Christianity in Roman Britain," CIAC VIII, 149–66; and "Christianity in Roman Britain, Recent Finds: 1962–1969," CIAC VIII 373f. For discussion of the sites see CDEE, Appendix A, no. 12. Cf. P. Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford 1981) 380ff.; A. L. F. Rivet, ed., *The Roman Villa in Britain* (London 1969); C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain* (London 1976).

58. ECBA, 26, 28; cf. M. Gough, *The Early Christians*, 68f.

59. ECBA, 27, 28–30.

60. DEF VIII.2, 139–40.

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# Building God's House in the Roman World

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## Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians

L. MICHAEL WHITE

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**For Gloria, Jessica, and Travis**